

AN EXPOSITION OF
SECOND SAMUEL

by
Tim James



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An Exposition of the Book of 2 Samuel as Delivered in a
Series of Messages to the Congregation of Sequoyah
Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, Cherokee, NC.

by
Tim James

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May our God continue to make his “work appear unto [his] servants, and [his] glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it” (Psalm 90:16-17).

CONTENTS

THE COMFORTING LIE	
2 Samuel 1	11
THE FALLEN MIGHTY	
2 Samuel 1:19, 25, 27	19
TWO KINGDOMS	
2 Samuel 2:1-11	25
THE BATTLE CONTINUES	
2 Samuel 2:12-32	31
THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD	
2 Samuel 3	39
SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD	
2 Samuel 4	49
CORONATION	
2 Samuel 5:1-5	57
THE BLIND AND LAME	
2 Samuel 5:6-10	63
SOUND IN THE MULBERRY	
2 Samuel 5:13-25	69
BEST INTENTIONS	
2 Samuel 6:1-11	75
THE RIGHT ORDER	
2 Samuel 6:12-19	81
JOY IN CHRIST	
2 Samuel 6:16-23	87
INTENTION OVERRIDE	
2 Samuel 7:1-17	93
A CONCISE HISTORY	
2 Samuel 7:8-9	101
PRAYER'S PURPOSE	
2 Samuel 7:18-29	107
PRAYER FROM KNOWING	
2 Samuel 7:22-29	113
CONQUERING	
2 Samuel 8	119

TO MINISTER TO	
2 Samuel 9	127
KINDNESS	
2 Samuel 10:1-5	133
SAFE HARBOR	
2 Samuel 10:4-5	141
DAVID'S SIN	
2 Samuel 11	147
YOU ARE THE MAN	
2 Samuel 12:1-14.....	153
WAGES	
2 Samuel 12:14-23	159
AN ASTOUNDING STATEMENT	
2 Samuel 12:24	167
VENGEANCE	
2 Samuel 12:26-31	171
CHASTISEMENT CONTINUED	
2 Samuel 13	177
LOVE OF A FATHER	
2 Samuel 14:1-23.....	187
IMPOTENT LOVE	
2 Samuel 14:24-33	195
REBELLION	
2 Samuel 15:1-6.....	203
THE SMILE AND FROWN OF PROVIDENCE	
2 Samuel 15:7-17	211
THE NATURE OF THE BEAST	
2 Sam. 15:12, 31, 34; 2 Sam. 16:15, 20; 17:1-3, 14, 23 ..	217
PLACES (1)	
2 Samuel 15:23	225
PLACES(2)	
2 Samuel 15:30-31	233
DAVID'S ERROR	
2 Samuel 16:1- 4.....	239
IN GOD	
2 Samuel 16:5-14.....	245
AHITHOPHEL AND HUSHAI	
2 Samuel 17:1-14.....	251

FRIENDS OF THE KING	
2 Samuel 17:15-29	259
ABSALOM'S END	
2 Samuel 18:1-17	265
IS ABSALOM SAFE?	
2 Samuel 18:21-33	273
DAVID, THE KING	
2 Samuel 18:33-19:15.....	281
AT MERCY'S DOOR (1)	
2 Samuel 19:15-30	289
AT MERCY'S DOOR (2)	
2 Samuel 19:24-30	297
A VERY GREAT MAN	
2 Samuel 19:31-40	303
JEALOUSY	
2 Samuel 19:40-20:2.....	309
PLANS OF MEN	
2 Samuel 20:1-13	315
THWARTED	
2 Samuel 20:14-25	321
GIBEONITES	
2 Samuel 21:1	327
JUSTICE	
2 Samuel 21:1-7	337
LAW AND JUSTICE	
2 Samuel 21:8-14	343
LIFE AFTER DELIVERANCE	
2 Samuel 21:15-21	349
THE FAINTING WARRIOR'S SONG	
2 Samuel 22:1-7	355
INCOMPREHENSIBLE	
2 Samuel 22:8-20	361
TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS	
2 Samuel 22:21-27	369
HELP FOR THE MIGHTY	
2 Samuel 22:28-51	373
LAST WORDS	
2 Samuel 23:1-7	379

FOR HIS GLORY	
2 Samuel 23:8-23	385
NUMBERING THE PEOPLE	
2 Samuel 24:1-9	391
CONVICTION	
2 Samuel 24:10, 17	397
JUSTICE AND SACRIFICE	
2 Samuel 24:11-25	403

THE COMFORTING LIE

2 SAMUEL 1

1, Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abode two days in Ziklag;

2, It came even to pass on the third day, that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance.

3, And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped.

4, And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee, tell me. And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also.

5, And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead?

6, And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him.

7, And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, Here am I.

8, And he said unto me, Who art thou? And I answered him, I am an Amalekite.

9, He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me: for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me.

10, So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I

took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord.

11, Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that were with him:

12, And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword.

13, And David said unto the young man that told him, Whence art thou? And he answered, I am the son of a stranger, an Amalekite.

14, And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the LORD'S anointed?

15, And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, and fall upon him. And he smote him that he died.

16, And David said unto him, Thy blood be upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the LORD'S anointed.

17, And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son:

18, (Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jasher.)

19, The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!

20, Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

21, Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.

22, From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the

sword of Saul returned not empty.

23, Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

24, Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

25, How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places.

26, I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

27, How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

This first chapter of 2 Samuel is an introduction to the reign of David as the King of Judah—the rightful king—an anointed king as a type of Christ and His eternal reign. It is also the record of the lamentation of David on behalf of Saul and Jonathan set forth in poetic song. This song is not a Psalm because it is not about God’s bringing an end to Saul as He had promised, but rather a record of David’s *personal* emotions and sentiments concerning the death of one dear to him and the fall of a king. The overall theme of these words of David are to comfort the people concerning the death of the king.

Though the children of God are people of faith, for the most part that faith is “little faith.” Likewise, though we believe, we often find ourselves anxious about how things are going to turn out. What we know by faith is always assaulted by what we experience in the flesh. The constant barrage of hard circumstance, and the tumult of the tempest of trouble that attends being born of woman, challenge what we know. This is revealed in the Word both in the Old Testament and New Testament as we find our Lord as well as His apostles telling believers to “fear not.” Such language

would be foolish if the people did not actually fear. Faith is about trusting Christ. The flesh is about destroying that trust and causing the believer to logically assess circumstance.

So, David, the true king, takes his office as comforter of the people. His poem is a eulogy that gives one king the authority to declare his kingdom has begun because the former king is dead. Even taking the human emotion of the moment, these words reflect the future King of kings in his greatest hour of royalty and humanity. David is saying, concerning the reign of Saul, “It is finished. . . How the mighty are fallen.” The words of kindness toward his fallen enemy are comparable to the words of the great King when He said, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” David’s words were designed to allay the fears of the people who at that moment had no coronated king, much as our Lord told John to take care of His mother and His mother to care for John. That He spoke as King was not a matter of doubt to those who heard Him, as on the cross the penitent thief cried, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into that kingdom.” Our Lord said to his disciples, “fear not little children, for it is the Lord’s pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

I want—or rather, sadly feel it necessary—to address the words of David concerning Jonathan in verse 26. I say “sadly” because of the evolution of language. In this day there is an element of society that cannot use the word “love” except in reference to sexuality. In fact, that blessed word has fallen on difficult times in this day. David is not talking about sex when he said that Jonathan’s “love to him was wonderful, passing the love of women.” He was speaking of love in its true and actual meaning. The word “wonderful” means “extraordinary” or “surpassing.” Jonathan had chosen David even above his father Saul, had willingly cast his lot with David at the expense of even his family and

his rightful ascendancy to the throne. The wonder of Jonathan's love for Dave exemplifies what love really is. It is an interest in the glory of *David's* throne. It has to do with putting the *loved one* first, or for being concerned for the well-being of the loved one more one's own life. Hereby we perceive the love of God, that He laid down his life for us. As to "passing the love of women," you'll notice that "women" is plural and that word is translated "wife," or in this case "wives," more than any other way in the Bible. The Targum translates these words as "the love of two women." David had two wives, so his words reflect that his perception of Jonathan's allegiance and love surpassed even that of his two wives.

Also, the word "love" in Scripture is rarely used to even hint as having to do with sexuality. Gomer spoke of her "lovers," and that was used in reference to adultery. When the act of sex is referred to, it is spoken of as "knowing," not loving. Knowing has to do with intimate knowledge. Loving has to do with extraordinary concern accompanied with always acting in the best interest of the one loved. Love is not about "feeling;" it is about action. Jonathan's love for David was revealed in his extraordinary actions toward David.

What I want us to consider primarily is the words of this Amalekite who brought a tall tale to David, and his lie cost him his life (vv. 2-16). What, I ask, prompted this fellow to take credit for the death of one king and bring his crown to another? We will not deal with the inconsistencies of this fellow's story to show that it was a lie; the record in the last chapter of I Samuel reveals that. The "why" of the lie is what is important in this context. This man's actions paint an accurate picture of the motive of freewill religion. Actions are weighed by God because they reveal motive. The motive of freewill religion is to take credit for salvation. Whether in part or in full-out blasphemy, false Christianity

must make God a receiver rather than a giver. Freewill religion must hold that the glory of God is dependent upon its actions. This man had a plan that involved the exaltation of self under the guise of doing a good thing for the king. This man could have gone on his way and blended into society without any recognition, and that would have been what he deserved. But he saw an opportunity (or at least thought it so) to ingratiate himself with the king, or to obligate the king to give him recognition. He wanted to be named in transactions with which he had nothing to do. He wanted to insinuate himself into something that he had absolutely no part in. And so does everyone who believes that salvation is conditioned on man's choice or decision rather than the singular act of God.

The plan was well-rehearsed. The lie rose to the heights of great fiction. The approach rather than faith. First, he came as a penitent man, bowing to the king. His clothing and his appearance were indicative of one seeking to prove his sincerity. He tore his clothes, feigning an attitude of horror at what had transpired. He put dirt on his head, feigning repentance and unworthiness. He paid obeisance to David, feigning that he acknowledged David was rightful king. Adherents of freewill religion thrive on the accouterments of repentance. They sound and appear humble as they boast of the sin that they have overcome. They cry "mea culpa, mea culpa, mea culpa maxima" at testimony meetings. They weep and bawl because tears make people think they are sincere.

When asked how Saul died, the pretending penitent man became the brave warrior. "I killed the king," said he. We know that Saul is a picture of our flesh, and no religious story is more exalted than the "ex"-story. Religion drools over the ex-drunk, the ex-hooker, and the ex-thief because it is like proof of repentance to the unbelieving mind. "I killed the king" is the same as saying "I got right with God,"

or “I straightened up and flew right,” or “I turned my life around,” or “I turned over a new leaf,” or “I got religion,” or “I decided for Jesus.” This man didn’t kill the king. The king killed himself to protect his own self-image. Thus, religion will self-murder rather than have its presumed honor destroyed. This man took credit that was not due him.

Also note that he took possession of the crown and the bracelet of the warrior king and presented them to David. This was his way of acknowledging David as king. What’s wrong with that? In this man’s mind, he had the power to crown David as king. According to the principles of war, the spoils belonged to him who took them. This was his crown and his bracelet, and they would be David’s only by the possessor’s decision. This man, by his will, was going to make David “king of his life.” Have you ever wondered why phrases like “Make Jesus your Lord,” “Won’t you invite Jesus into your heart?” or “Won’t you let Jesus save you?” are such basic tenets of freewillism. It is because the power belongs to the one who can accept or reject, who can give or withhold. This man’s plan was to make David king, but the problem was that God had already beat him to it.

The end of this man is the end of all such presumed falsehood; and make no mistake, from the beginning, any endeavor to take credit for anything that the Scripture squarely declares belongs only to God is a lie. It is not an opposing theory of theology, or a differing opinion. It is a lie, and the end of that lie is death (Luke 19:27¹). I do not wish ill to anyone, but glory belongs to God. In the end, the elaborate plan of this man earned him what he was due: “the

¹ Luke 19:27, But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). This man’s lie was born of no fear toward God (v. 14; Prov. 9:10; Rom. 3:18¹).

¹ **Prov. 9:10**; The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

Rom. 3:18; There is no fear of God before their eyes.

THE FALLEN MIGHTY

2 SAMUEL 1:19, 25, 27

19, The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places:
how are the mighty fallen!

25, How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the
battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places.

27, How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of
war perished!

The poetic lamentation of David in vv. 17- 27 is very intriguing. There is no doubt as to its sincerity. I believe the sorrow was expressed primarily for the loss of Jonathan, but that does not diminish what David felt for the death of Saul. One of the reasons it intrigues me is that I'm not sure I could be so gracious at the demise of the man who had hounded me and sought to kill me on so many occasions. There is no doubt that David was acting according to the will of God concerning our attitude toward those whom God has appointed to governmental rule over us (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:17-18¹). Saul had been

¹ **Rom. 13:1-7;** Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

anointed as king in the governmental sense but not as a picture of the coming King of kings. David's lamentation was in many ways a politically astute poem, and it was spoken as a new king who must unite a kingdom under his rule.

As the new king, he must consider that many who had followed Saul still hold him (David) in low esteem. I say this lamentation is political not to diminish David's true feelings but to assert that the duties of a king often do not reflect the personal feelings of the king. These words are not included in the Psalms because they do not reflect the shepherd-psalmist's feelings but rather the king-poet's duty to his kingdom. The Psalms more readily reflect the psalmist's relationship to God rather than the king's relationship to his kingdom (Psa. 119:158; 139:19-22¹). The words of the lamentation of our text do not mention Saul or Jonathan's actions toward God but rather their benefits and actions toward the people and the enemies of the kingdom. David did not mention Saul's enmity and hatred for him. This may appear a small distinction, but it is worthy of consideration.

I say this because of a thrice-repeated phrase in this lovely poem of sorrow. David repeated this phrase, "How the mighty are fallen." This phrase found purchase in my mind because, in a very true sense, it is the end of all who oppose God and of everything that is born in the vast realm of humanity. It is the epitaph of the carnal creature, and it

1 Peter 2:17-18; Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

¹ **Psa. 119:158;** I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.

Psa. 139:19-22; Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.

might be placed on every headstone and emblazoned on the door of ever mausoleum that peppers the earth with sepulchers. “How the mighty are fallen!” This is *our history*, the history of fallen humanity.

This is the *history of Adam*, the first man: Made in God’s image, ruler of the world, caretaker of paradise, having dominion over all of God’s creation, the federal head and representative of mankind. What true thing can be said of this great one, this mighty one? Only this: “How the mighty are fallen.” In the blink of an eye the mighty is reduced to hiding his sin with fig leaves, to trying to escape blame for his sin by blaming God for giving him a wife who he likewise blames for his fall.

It is the history of Lucifer, a mighty angel, one whose might could be challenged by no other creature (Jude 1:9¹). This one harbored pipedreams of deity and thought no creature could withstand him. Yet he was of little consequence and certainly no match for his maker (Isa. 14:14-20; Rev. 8:10; 9:1; Luke 10:18; John 12:31²). Now he

¹ **Jude 1:9**; Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

² **Isa. 14:14-20**; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners? All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house. But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcass trodden under feet. Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people: the seed of evildoers shall never be renowned.

Rev. 8:10; And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;

is chained and made to do the bidding of his maker, crawling on his belly, and reduced to begging to touch one of the Lord's anointed; and his touch, though malicious with intent, does but serve and help those whom he despises (Heb. 1:14¹; i.e. Job and Peter). "How the mighty are fallen!"

This is the *history of every saint*. The children of God are a veritable "fallen" hall of fame—Adam's sin; Noah's drunkenness after the flood; Abraham's lies; Lot's choice of Zoar after Sodom; Jacob's trickery and subtle supplanting; Samson's weakness before Delilah; David's trek in Gath and his obsequiousness before Achish, his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah; Simon Peter's denial of Christ and his quitting the ministry; Paul's misguided employment of Jewish ceremony; Mark's refusal to serve; the apostle's desire to have a higher place in glory than others; every believer's efforts of the flesh to accomplish the will of God. And the cards and letters keep coming, and all redound with one sentiment: "How the mighty are fallen!" Oh, but how the saints are raised up in spite of themselves (Psa. 37:23-24; 2 Tim.2:13²).

This is the *history of all false, works-based, freewill religion*. What a mighty thing is carnal religion. Man is born with it, and though it has taken on a multitude of titles and

Rev. 9:1; And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

Luke 10:18; And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

John 12:31; Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

¹ **Heb. 1:14;** Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

² **Psa. 37:23-24;** The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.

2 Tim.2:13; If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

denominations, it is just one religion: The religion that opposes Christ. This is Armageddon, the battle that began in Eden, which rages in our bosoms and will culminate when the word of the Lord decimates Great Babylon, the harlot religion of the human heart (Rev. 18:1-10¹). “How the mighty are fallen!”

Every endeavor of humanity (in the flesh) has this tag line—this stinger—inscribed upon its foul record of rebellion: “How the mighty are fallen!” Humanity is not a success story. It is a story replete with multiple recordings of complete failure, save for one human being. This one human being—born of a woman, the seed of woman, born without the taint of Adam’s transgress, born among sinners, numbered with the transgressors yet was without sin—lived a perfect life and died a perfect (and perfecting) death in the place and stead of his people. In His weakest moment He did not fall, nor was He discouraged. This man gave His

¹ Rev. 18:1-10; And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the LORD God who judgeth her. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.

life, was buried, resurrected, and ascended on high, having led captivity captive (Psa. 68:18¹), who sits at the right hand of the majesty on high; of Him only can it be said, “The mighty is not fallen. The mighty is exalted” (Phil. 2:5-11; Rev. 5:9-10²).

¹ **Psa. 68:18**; Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them

² **Phil. 2:5-11**; Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Rev. 5:9-10; And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

TWO KINGDOMS

2 SAMUEL 2:1-11

1, And it came to pass after this, that David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron.

2, So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail Nabal's wife the Carmelite.

3, And his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron.

4, And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, That the men of Jabeshgilead were they that buried Saul.

5, And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabeshgilead, and said unto them, Blessed be ye of the LORD, that ye have shewed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him.

6, And now the LORD shew kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing.

7, Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them.

8, But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim;

9, And made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel.

10, Ishbosheth Saul's son was forty years old when he

began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David.

11, And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

This is the historical account of the division of Israel into two kingdoms, and it pictures the truth of glorious success of our Lord in the salvation of His people and the subsequent reaction of the intractable carnal mind against Christ. When Paul said, “With my mind I serve the law of God but with my flesh I serve the law of sin and death,” he was declaring what was pictured years before in these eleven verses. Likewise, this is a picture of the bruising of Satan’s head and his utter defeat at the hands of Christ, and it is the story of the masses that will not willingly have Christ rule over them but will blindly follow the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2¹). Also in these verses we see the immediate reaction of the flesh to any victory of the spirit. No sooner is David, the rightful king of Israel, made king in Judah, Abner—the captain of the host of the former king (now dead)—raises up another king in the place of Saul. All this true history is indeed specific concerning Christ, His people, and those that oppose Him.

David, having mourned the death of Saul with a poem of lamentation, is now returned to Ziklag, and inquires of the Lord concerning what to do (v. 1). His actions picture the mind of Christ as He walked upon the earth, always about the Father’s business. We read of the Lord that He pleased not Himself (Rom. 15:3²), that He resigned His will

¹ Eph. 2:2; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

² Rom. 15:3; For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

to the will of the Father (Psa. 40:7-8; Heb. 10:7¹), and that the words He spoke were not His own but that He spoke what the Father told Him to say (John 14:24²), and that He did not come by His own will but by the will of the Father which had sent Him (John 5:30³). Christ—though God, the Son of God, and the anointed King—was the obedient servant of the Father. David does not strike out on his own, nor does he apply to the wisdom of the flesh. He in effect is saying, “Not my will but thine be done.”

The LORD directs David to go to Hebron, a city or group of cities in the tribal province of Judah. “Hebron” means “association” or “gathering.” This is prophetic of the gathering of the people to Christ (Gen. 49:10; Isa. 11:10⁴). We see this taking place and described more fully in 1 Chronicles 12:23-40. Also significant is the fact that Hebron is one of the cities of refuge. In Hebron David will be designated as King of Judah.

The actions of David in verses 2-7 reveal the work of Christ on behalf of His people. Verses 2-3 are descriptions of those who were with Christ when He was anointed King. In verse 2, his wives are with him. This pictures the church, the bride of Christ, being with Him and in Him; it is a

¹ Psa. 40:7-8; Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

Heb. 10:7; Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

² John 14:24, He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

³ John 5:30; I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

⁴ Gen. 49:10; The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Isa. 11:10; And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

picture of all His intercessory work. In verse 3, the church is again represented as all those who follow Christ: His army, and all the families from each of the tribes (Rev. 5:9¹). They have suffered with Him and now shall reign with Him (Rom. 8:17; Matt. 19:28²). The fact that substitution pictures the entirety of Christ's life for His people (and their being *in* Him) is seen in His words when He was baptized by John: "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh *us* to fulfil *all* righteousness."

In verse 4, the men of Judah come and anoint Him as king of Judah. This anointing is not like that of Samuel or of God but is rather a recognition and a declaration of faith that David is the one who God has anointed, much like the words of Peter in Matthew 16 and John 6: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Believers do not make Christ to be king; by faith they acknowledge that God has anointed Him King.

In verses 5-6, David recognized the men of Jabesh-Gilead for their honor and loyalty to the government of God in retrieving the body of Saul from the Philistines and burying his bones. They did not do what they did because they sought recognition but rather for love of the honor of the king. It is not they who recognize this as a good work; it is king David who puts his stamp of approval upon it. David prays the Lord's blessings upon them.

¹ Rev. 5:9; And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

² Rom. 8:17; And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Matt. 19:28; And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

In verse 7, David sets things in their proper order. Christ did this in all His ministry on this earth (John 5:39; Matt. 9:13, 12:34; Luke 16:13; Col. 3:1-3¹).

As soon as word gets out that David has been anointed as King of Judah, the enemy immediately responds. This is always the course of things in this world. How many have personally experienced this? Being a product of false religion since early on, you hear the gospel at an appointed time and immediately declare Christ—the sovereign Christ—to be King of salvation. But they who believe what you now reject go to war, immediately take up arms, and try to resurrect the dead king. Abner, the dead king's captain, anoints Ishbosheth as king of the Israel (vv. 8-9). Immediately after our Lord was coronated at His baptism, the next words we read are that He was led into the wilderness to be tempted of Satan. Religion will not give up on the dead king and will never recognize the One to whom you bow as king. The name "Ishbosheth" is another name for the son of Saul who was also called Eshbaal. "Ishbosheth" means "man of shame." Eshbaal means "man of Baal." In other words, he is a man of the shameful idol Baal. The false king is therefore resurrected in the mind of the infidel.

¹ **John 5:39**; Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

Matt. 9:13; But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Matt. 12:34; O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Luke 16:13; No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Col. 3:1-3; If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

This is how it is, and how it will remain, until the truly anointed King destroys the false one. The flesh will always oppose the spirit, but the spirit will ultimately prevail. “God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

THE BATTLE CONTINUES

2 SAMUEL 2:12-32

12, And Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon.

13, And Joab the son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out, and met together by the pool of Gibeon: and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool.

14, And Abner said to Joab, Let the young men now arise, and play before us. And Joab said, Let them arise.

15, Then there arose and went over by number twelve of Benjamin, which pertained to Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David.

16, And they caught every one his fellow by the head, and thrust his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together: wherefore that place was called Helkathhazzurim, which is in Gibeon.

17, And there was a very sore battle that day; and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David.

18, And there were three sons of Zeruiah there, Joab, and Abishai, and Asahel: and Asahel was as light of foot as a wild roe.

19, And Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he turned not to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner.

20, Then Abner looked behind him, and said, Art thou Asahel? And he answered, I am.

21, And Abner said to him, Turn thee aside to thy right hand or to thy left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and take thee his armour. But Asahel would not turn aside from following of him.

22, And Abner said again to Asahel, Turn thee aside

from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? how then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?

23, Howbeit he refused to turn aside: wherefore Abner with the hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth rib, that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place: and it came to pass, that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still.

24, Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah, that lieth before Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

25, And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner, and became one troop, and stood on the top of an hill.

26, Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?

27, And Joab said, As God liveth, unless thou hadst spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother.

28, So Joab blew a trumpet, and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more.

29, And Abner and his men walked all that night through the plain, and passed over Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and they came to Mahanaim.

30, And Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel.

31, But the servants of David had smitten of Benjamin, and of Abner's men, so that three hundred and threescore men died.

32, And they took up Asahel, and buried him in the sepulchre of his father, which was in Bethlehem. And

Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at break of day.

In our last lesson we saw the true source of trouble between truth and error and the flesh and the spirit. The source of the trouble is always the same: Declaration of the gospel. When the gospel is declared, the first thing proclaimed and acknowledged is that Jesus Christ is the rightful sovereign, the anointed, the Christ, and is Lord over all creation, providence, and salvation. Ultimately this is the thing that sticks in the craw of anyone that feels that they have something to do with their salvation. The damage that the truth does to those who hold themselves in such high esteem causes a visceral, immediate response. They come against the truth with a king of their own making. They refuse to acknowledge that Jesus is king, though they may apply that title to Him. Their words and methods betray them.

No matter how much they may claim to follow Christ, and invoke His name in what they do, it is they who make him what He is—it is they who make the decision of whether they are saved. It is they who can give Jesus power to save by their will. It is they who control the efficaciousness of salvation. It is they who rip salvation, already accomplished in the past, and deposit it squarely in the present. It is they who by words, works, message, and methods oppose and exalt themselves “above all that is called God or that is worshipped” and, as if they were God, sit in the temple of God, showing themselves that they are God (Rom. 1:20-24; 2 Thess. 2:3-4¹). We see this in the first part of the chapter.

¹ Rom. 1:20-24; For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful;

When David is named King, the followers of the former false king—even though he is dead, lifeless, impotent, and buried—refuse to let him go. Abner anoints Saul's son, Eshbaal Ishbosheth (the man of shame, the son of Baal) as king. Abner is an Israelite, and the knowledge that God, through Samuel, anointed David as king is not foreign to him. He knows that David is the rightful king. He knows that David is king. His problem is not that he is ignorant of the truth; he simply cannot stomach it. False religionists may claim that they are confused, or that the doctrine of grace and the sovereignty of Christ is complicated, but that is a smoke screen in efforts to hide the fact that they cannot abide the truth. It is offensive to them (Gal. 5:11¹) and they cannot receive it (John 8:42-45; 14:16-17; 15:18-19²).

but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

2 Thess. 2:3-4; Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

¹ **Gal. 5:11;** And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

² **John 8:42-45;** Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.

John 14:16-17; And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

What follows in the last part of this chapter is the account of Abner pursuing the exaltation of his choice of king. The things that occur are accurately reported. Abner is the aggressor. His goal is to have his king be victorious and for David to go down in defeat. Of the twelve tribes, only Judah stands with David. Abner has an apparent numeric advantage and in the visible world that is obvious, but in the spiritual world mathematics is an entirely different equation (2 Kings 6:15-17¹).

Abner's words about the young men playing were a challenge, and the language reveals that Abner's men were again the aggressors. The playing (so called) was more akin to what gladiators do than what we might think of as games. The intent was to kill David's men, and though the outcome is not perfectly clear, I think all 24 young warriors died that day. I think it is safe to say, by Joab's reaction to these deaths, that he was surprised at what took place and was incensed, which indicates that he probably was fooled by Abner's misuse of the word "play." Twenty-four lives were lost, and immediately, Joab routed Abner and his army. There is a very basic lesson to be learned by believers: If we engage the enemy on their terms nobody will win. Our battles are fought with words, or better yet with the Word.

John 15:18-19; And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

¹ **2 Kings 6:15-17,** And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

That two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12¹) will know no defeat. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the gospel (Matt. 16:18²). The enemy misuses words like “play,” “peace,” and “fellowship” when their real agenda is to destroy.

The death of Asahel teaches us several lessons. The first lesson is very important. Asahel was a gallant warrior and very fast on his feet. Abner could not outrun him, but killed him in the end. Believers, because they are human beings, often fall victim to their own self esteem. Asahel was not malleable. He was confident and single minded—“he turned not to the right hand nor to the left” (v. 19). He “knew” he was on the side of right. He believed, by his skills, he could win the day. Remember, the battle is the Lord’s. He may give skills and does give His people skills and gifts, but no battle is ever won by what we have. The gifts and skills are for our function in the church. We overcome the world by faith in the Lord, not by the abilities that we have been given. “Not to the strong is the battle, nor to the swift is the race” (Eccl. 9:11); “our Lord is a man of war and the victory belongs only to him” (Ex. 15:3).

Another thing about Asahel’s death is that it stupefied many of David’s men. The last phrase of v. 23 declares that when Joab’s men came to the place where Asahel fell, they stood still. Here is another difficulty that faces believer. We are tempted to invest too much in another human being. I’ve seen many a church fold because their pastor died or made some error. Every pastor in God’s church is loved and cherished for the gospel’s sake, but that should always be the

¹ Heb. 4:12; For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

² Matt. 16:18; And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

center of it. It is the office that is to be esteemed. But, like every man, pastors pass off the scene. This is not my ministry; it is the Lord's ministry. "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). The Lord employs a man for a time and replaces him when His purpose is fulfilled.

Finally, Abner's push for peace and the end of conflict is very revealing. He puts the onus for ending the fighting upon Joab. However, it was Abner who despised Joab's king and raised up another. It was Abner who started the battle with his challenge to play. It was Abner who killed Asahel. It was Abner who was running for his life. Yet he blamed Joab for the conflict. False religion seeks a kind of peace. It is the kind of peace that can be attained if only two things take place. Religion will let us get along with them if we forget that they hate our King and if we promise not to acknowledge Christ as the sovereign King. They put the blame for the conflict on those who refuse to have any King but Jesus.

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

2 SAMUEL 3

1, Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.

2, And unto David were sons born in Hebron: and his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess;

3, And his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur;

4, And the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital;

5, And the sixth, Ithream, by Eglah David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron.

6, And it came to pass, while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul.

7, And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and Ishbosheth said to Abner, Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father's concubine?

8, Then was Abner very wroth for the words of Ishbosheth, and said, Am I a dog's head, which against Judah do shew kindness this day unto the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren, and to his friends, and have not delivered thee into the hand of David, that thou chargest me to day with a fault concerning this woman?

9, So do God to Abner, and more also, except, as the LORD hath sworn to David, even so I do to him;

10, To translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba.

11, And he could not answer Abner a word again,

because he feared him.

12, And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, Whose is the land? saying also, Make thy league with me, and, behold, my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee.

13, And he said, Well; I will make a league with thee: but one thing I require of thee, that is, Thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face.

14, And David sent messengers to Ishbosheth Saul's son, saying, Deliver me my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for an hundred foreskins of the Philistines.

15, And Ishbosheth sent, and took her from her husband, even from Phaltiel the son of Laish.

16, And her husband went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim. Then said Abner unto him, Go, return. And he returned.

17, And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you:

18, Now then do it: for the LORD hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies.

19, And Abner also spake in the ears of Benjamin: and Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel, and that seemed good to the whole house of Benjamin.

20, So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him. And David made Abner and the men that were with him a feast.

21, And Abner said unto David, I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away; and he went in peace.

22, And, behold, the servants of David and Joab came

from pursuing a troop, and brought in a great spoil with them: but Abner was not with David in Hebron; for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace.

23, When Joab and all the host that was with him were come, they told Joab, saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he hath sent him away, and he is gone in peace.

24, Then Joab came to the king, and said, What hast thou done? behold, Abner came unto thee; why is it that thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone?

25, Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest.

26, And when Joab was come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, which brought him again from the well of Sirah: but David knew it not.

27, And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother.

28, And afterward when David heard it, he said, I and my kingdom are guiltless before the LORD for ever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner:

29, Let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house; and let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread.

30, So Joab and Abishai his brother slew Abner, because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle.

31, And David said to Joab, and to all the people that were with him, Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And king David himself followed the bier.

32, And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept.

33, And the king lamented over Abner, and said,
Died Abner as a fool dieth?

34, Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into
fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest
thou. And all the people wept again over him.

35, And when all the people came to cause David to
eat meat while it was yet day, David sware, saying, So
do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or ought
else, till the sun be down.

36, And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased
them: as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people.

37, For all the people and all Israel understood that
day that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of
Ner.

38, And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not
that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in
Israel?

39, And I am this day weak, though anointed king;
and these men the sons of Zeruah be too hard for me:
the LORD shall reward the doer of evil according to his
wickedness.

In the last study, we looked at the first verse of this chapter as it pictured the ultimate victory of the spirit over the flesh and the end of the believer's struggle with the inward principle of the flesh. In this study, we will look at this entire chapter, as it pictures the victory of the church over all that opposes Christ. The chapter takes place in the seven-and-a-half years that David ruled in Judah, the culmination of which is David's rule of Israel after doing away with all of Saul's house. The chapter begins with the declaration of the end of Saul's house in language that is positive and assuring.

The next thing we see in these verses is the naming of David's sons born to him of his various wives. Only the sons are named because, though in Israel women were treated

better than in other Middle Eastern countries, they were still only truly defined in relationship to their husbands. This may seem archaic to us, but it is still the practice in many countries today. Also, in a spiritual sense, the fact that a woman was defined by her marriage relationship is a picture of Christ and His church. She is a well-loved and privileged woman, having need of nothing, and is heir of all things, but she is defined by her relationship with Christ. As the moon has no light of her own but is merely a reflector of the light of the sun, so the bride of Christ has no intrinsic glory of her own and is only visible as the light of Christ shines on her.

The sons mentioned made no great inroads in history. The first son mentioned grew up to become an incestuous rapist. Another sought to dethrone his father, and yet others joined with the traitor against David. One son is mentioned here and never again in Scripture. This may be, in the end, an indictment against polygamous marriage, of which David was a guilty participant. But as providence is the final arbiter in such matters, each transgression will prove a lesson in the grand scheme of salvation by Christ.

Before us in this chapter are many things that teach us about the church and the world, the church and the false church, and the nature of humanity. First there is recorded for us a conflict between Abner—who declared Ishbosheth a king in place of the one whom the Lord had anointed—and Ishbosheth, the false king. Ishbosheth accuses Abner of sleeping with one of Saul’s concubines. Whether this accusation is true or not, we are not told. However, Abner’s response to the accusation tends to suggest that it is true. He does not deny it but rather plays the “indignant and appalled” card. This is one of the psychological “tells” of one who is guilty. Paraphrased, verse 8 could read as, “After all I’ve done for you, how could you accuse me of such a thing!” The lesson learned here is that, among those who oppose

the true King, there is no honor or true brotherhood; there is only distrust born of self-interest and self-promotion. If you have manufactured your own king, then he gets his power from you. That being the case, the concept of where the power really lies will always be a point of contention. False religion is a self-serving man's religion, and the end of it will always be, "What's in it for me?" This is often seen in the ease with which members of those churches are discarded and shunned.

Now Abner, who is in control of Saul's army and has their allegiance, leaves Ishbosheth—the king he himself made—in the lurch, and decides to align himself with David, asserting that David is the true king. This indicates that he knew the truth all along but refused to acknowledge it until he saw some benefit for himself (vv. 9-11). False religion knows that it is false, but the cost of changing is too great unless it can gain power by acknowledging the truth. To natural man, religion is a tool that is employed to benefit his own design of self-deification or to better his estate. Abner has no interest in David except to save his own hide and to make himself a beneficial political ally. Religion is often used as a politically astute device to garner power.

Abner solicits David for allegiance and David responds positively, but with a caveat. David requires Abner to return Michal his wife to him. Michal, now married to another man, is taken from him, and returned to David at the order of Ishbosheth. Evidently the false king has decided that his days are numbered because he now obeys the true king. The false king and the religion he represents will be forced to give up the wife of the true king. "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4).

Abner keeps his word to David and begins to tout the glories of David as the true king. David receives Abner and makes a feast for him and his men, indicating that David

has accepted Abner and his gesture. After Abner promises to spread the word throughout Israel that David is the rightful king, David sends him on his way. Here David pictures the believer in the matter of mercy. We are privy to the knowledge of Abner's ways so we would have reasonable doubt concerning him. David acts as mercy always acts. If there is the appearance of repentance, then the believer is ready to forgive, and that is the way it should be. In doing so we may find that we have been duped, but that is better than living a life of suspicion. We are ready to forgive because of all we have been forgiven.

Joab, whose brother died at the hands of Abner, is not so ready to forgive. When he hears that David has allied with Abner, he sets about to put an end to Abner. Joab's brother had died as a casualty of war and as a result of trusting in his own ability. But that did not matter to Joab; he had murder in his heart and eventually slew Abner, even going against the word of his own king. This is what must be gained in this episode: If the motive of those who have allied themselves with the true king is anything other than the glory of the true king, their end will be death. Likewise, false religion is doomed. (Matt. 7:21-23; Luke 13:25-28; Mark 8:35¹).

¹ **Matt. 7:21-23;** Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Luke 13:25-28; When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see

At the end of the chapter when David gets word of what Joab has done, he proclaims his innocence in the death of Abner, pronounces woe on the house of Joab, and laments the death of Abner. Though this must be Abner's end, the way it happened is the issue. David's lamentation for Abner is that he was murdered. Even though the death was inevitable, murder is sin and is never acceptable. David is weak (v. 39 "tender") because Abner was not slain in war but by one to whom vengeance did not belong. Though the enemy will perish, and should, vengeance belongs to the Lord. The believer will be part of that great army, led by Christ at the end of time, and the last enemy will be destroyed. The enemy's death will be the result of war. We are not to seek to expedite the matter by our own hands. In fact, until that great day, we are to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44¹), "pray for them that despitefully use us" (Luke 6:28) and to bear up under persecution with joy (2 Cor. 12:10²). The Lord will fight for us; vengeance belongs to Him (Isa. 63:4³).

The attitude that David displays toward Abner pictures the great King of kings as He cried from the place where men had hung Him in shame, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Also, this speaks to the believer's attitude toward the enemy. As Stephen was

Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

Mark 8:35; For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

¹ **Matt. 5:44;** But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

² **2 Cor. 12:10;** Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

³ **Isa. 63:4;** For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.

being stoned by those who hated Christ, he prayed, “lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60).

SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD

2 SAMUEL 4

1, And when Saul's son heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his hands were feeble, and all the Israelites were troubled.

2, And Saul's son had two men that were captains of bands: the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon a Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin: (for Beeroth also was reckoned to Benjamin:

3, And the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and were sojourners there until this day.)

4, And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that was lame of his feet. He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.

5, And the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, went, and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ishbosheth, who lay on a bed at noon.

6, And they came thither into the midst of the house, as though they would have fetched wheat; and they smote him under the fifth rib: and Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped.

7, For when they came into the house, he lay on his bed in his bedchamber, and they smote him, and slew him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and gat them away through the plain all night.

8, And they brought the head of Ishbosheth unto David to Hebron, and said to the king, Behold the head of Ishbosheth the son of Saul thine enemy, which sought thy life; and the LORD hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed.

9, And David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said unto them, As the LORD liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity,

10, When one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, thinking to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who thought that I would have given him a reward for his tidings:

11, How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed? shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth?

12, And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up over the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth, and buried it in the sepulchre of Abner in Hebron.

This is the record of the end of the reign of the house of Saul. The business of a new king is to make sure that there is no threat to his throne from the royal family of the former king. The traditional way of accomplishing this is to order the death of any who might claim rights to the throne. The most efficient way is to kill the entire former house. In this chapter the viable threat is done in, but not at the order of the new king, David, who is the true and anointed king. David has been most gracious to those who have opposed him. Twice he had opportunity to slay Saul but spared his life. He greatly lamented the deaths of Saul and Jonathan and slew the man who thought to gain political favor by claiming to have slain David's enemy. David has relied on God to order the particulars of his ascent to the throne, refusing to take matters in his own hands, and he has punished those who sought to "help" God with the process.

Ishbosheth was a king made so by a man. That man was Abner, the captain of Saul's army, and Abner had been slain by Joab in revenge for the death of Joab's brother. What happens to a man who is made king by another man when his maker is dead? The record before us is plain. Ishbosheth falls apart and his behavior suggests that he went into a state of utter despair and depression. He becomes weak and is the subject of pity and can no longer be relied upon. He takes to his bed, and it is there that he meets his end. There is a strong parallel here to the erroneous belief that relies on the will and the decision of man to assure the success of Christ. Since man proposes (wills) but then lacks the power to perform, the one who he has made king—this false god—becomes the object of pity, and for all practical purposes takes to his bed or looks over the banisters of heaven hoping against hope that some man will let him have his way. Such a “king” is a candidate for therapy. When Paul spoke to the Greeks on Mars Hill about the “Unknown God” he used this very concept (Acts 17:22-31¹). The word translated

¹ Acts 17:22-31; Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he

“worshipped” in Acts 17:25 is actually “helped,” and the original word is where we get our word “therapy.” The actual wording reads, the true God (unknown to the Greeks) “is not helped by man as though He needed therapy.” Any king who is made king by man’s decision, and who saves by man’s will and decision (including Ishbosheth), is in need of therapy. He is a neurotic failure who “wants to” but can’t, who “tries” but whose efforts rely on his creatures, who takes to his bed because his “maker” is dead, impotent, and buried. There is a God, a King who needs no therapy (See Psa. 115, 135). But Ishbosheth is not that king. He is as false as the day is long, and we find him upon the bed that will prove his bier, at a loss, broken, and in despair—sad king this.

As the ersatz sovereign wanes upon his pillow in sloth and prostrated despondency, two men, soldiers in dead Abner’s doomed brigade, and members of the tribe of Saul, plot to garner favor with David. At noon they pretend to gather wheat for the troops and sneak into the useless king’s bedchamber and end his existence. To put a cap, so to speak, on their deed, they remove the head that wears the crown, probably to show David, in no uncertain terms, that they have assured David’s reign. These men are murderous decapitators and have put an end to Saul’s house.

In between their introduction (v. 2) and their felony (vv. 5-7) there is a kind of parenthetical historical interlude. Another of Saul’s progeny is revealed. He is the son of Jonathan, and in time he would be a rightful heir to the throne of Saul’s house. His name is Mephibosheth, and his history is inserted here to show that though he is a possible heir, he is not a viable one. Mephibosheth is broken. When Saul and Jonathan had died, the woman who was

hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead

Mephibosheth's nurse had fled with him to preserve his life. In her effort to escape, the young child was dropped and was made lame from that day forward. This bit of history is inserted here to reveal that the two murderers did not count Mephibosheth a threat. However, that child, ruined in a fall, is a greater story: A story of sovereign grace and of Christ the anointed king saving a fallen man. For now, he is discounted as a threat to the throne of the king, and the murderers have bigger fish to fry.

Once the deed is done, these two men run all night to get their reward. They've switched allegiances and they believe they will be rewarded for it. Their true allegiance has not changed; their true allegiance is to themselves, and they hope for a promotion. Their thinking is fundamentally flawed. They think they have helped David, and this reveals they think David *needs* help. They have fallen into the trap of spiritual deadness. God is David's help, and David, as the anointed of God, needs no help but God. These two men are, in effect, following the pattern of their dead captain, Abner, who thought to raise up a king by his own will. They even ascribe their evil deed to the LORD Jehovah (v. 8). These two have done the same as Abner. They believe that they have assured the reign of David by their willful actions. A man-made king is poorly made and, sadly, is subject to his maker. But these men have not known a true king. Their kings have been madmen and sycophants, and they ruled in mediocrity. Their kings have been created by men's choices and have followed the whims of those who were supposed to be in subjection to the throne. Now, with their former king's head in a tow sack, they are about to meet a real king, a king whose throne is established by divine edict and is undergirded by the entire power of heaven. Likewise, what

will be the reaction of those who meet the true King when time is no more (Matt. 7:21-23; Rev. 6:15-17¹)?

David's response is that of true authority, born of the knowledge that God is his help (v. 9). He has no need to confer with flesh and blood. David reminds these two killers that the consequence for merely claiming to kill his enemy had resulted in the death of the claimer. How sorer a punishment is due to men who have shed innocent blood. David calls Ishbosheth "righteous," but that is to be taken only in the sense of comparison. These men have claimed that they acted in righteousness, but David says that Ishbosheth, by comparison, was more righteous than they. David commands that these two murderers meet their just end. Their hands and feet are removed as symbolic gestures to declare that their hands and feet were swift to shed blood (Prov. 1:16; Rom. 3:15²).

The chapter ends in an odd fashion. The head of Ishbosheth is taken and placed in the tomb of Abner. This gesture is probably done by David to proclaim his innocence in the death of Ishbosheth, since he had already named Abner a "great prince in Israel" and had evidently had the sepulcher prepared in honor of Abner. But there is more to this. Think for a moment of this tomb. Picture what lies

¹ **Matt. 7:21-23;** Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Rev. 6:15-17; And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

² **Prov. 1:16;** For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.

Rom. 3:15; Their feet are swift to shed blood:

within this small cavern hewn out of rock. Saul is no more. The people's choice of a king, in abject rebellion against the command of God, is dead, his charred bones buried under a tree in Jabesh. His head is on a Philistine pike touring the temples of Philistine idols. And now his son, the choice of Abner, is dead, and his head lies interred with the body of his maker.

What a picture this makes: One grave, one body, and two heads. This is the picture of the end of all who would deify themselves to enthrone a king of their own making. There is nothing left of the king but a head, and his maker is intact but dead; one body and two heads. This is false religion personified. Men claim to "make" Jesus Lord and King, yet by that belief He is only so by their will and their choice. They call him "sovereign" and "Lord" but they are really the head that wears the crown. Religion is a two-headed mutant monster, entombed in darkest night. Two heads make two masters, and no man can truly "serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24). Men may make a cursory acknowledgement of Christ as king and head of the church, but if they can frustrate His will or give Him His power to reign by their will, they have a two-headed monster, and the grave is where they belong and where they will end.

Providence has employed the wickedness and self-centeredness of men once again, and the result is that the anointed king sits enthroned on Zion's holy hill (Psa. 76:10; Isa. 45:5-9; Acts 4:25-28; Proverbs 16:4¹).

¹ Psa. 76:10; Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

Isa. 45:5-9; I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring

up together; I the LORD have created it. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?

Acts 4:25-28; Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

Proverbs 16:4; The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

CORONATION

2 SAMUEL 5:1-5

1, Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh.

2, Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel.

3, So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel.

4, David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years.

5, In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah.

This is one of those chapters that are chock-full of gospel type and shadow. It is the story of David's third anointing by men and a fulfillment of the singular anointing of God, which is the basis for these other three anointings. They were merely acknowledgment of the fact that God had anointed David to be king. Likewise, when men come to Christ for salvation—when they cast their lot with Christ, when they approach in faith—they are putting the crown of salvation on the head of the King of kings.

These who gather themselves to David do not do so in fear of rejection. There is no hint that they fear repercussions for their former allegiance to the enemies of David. This would seem strange were it not that they typify

how a ruined sinner comes to Christ. Though a man has been the enemy of God, a rebel against God's commands, and full of hatred for God, when he comes to God he comes in faith and confidence that he will be accepted because he has *already* been accepted (Heb. 11:6; Ephesians 1:3-6¹).

Men come to Christ because they want to. Men come to Christ because they need to. They have a "thirst" and "hunger" (Matt. 5:6²). Also, men come to Christ because there is nowhere else to go. Men come because all other ways have been fruitless; every effort has met with failure, such as the woman with the issue of blood in Mark 5:25-26³. The saddest thing about the carnal nature is that it will seek anything other than Christ and will do so until every hope is dashed, and every former king and former god is dead (John 5:40⁴). The gospel is not an offer; it is an ultimatum. Before our Lord bid men to come to Him and find rest, He made sure they understood that there was nowhere else to turn (Matt. 11:25-28⁵). Every believer

¹ Heb. 11:6; But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Ephesians 1:3-6; Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

² Matt. 5:6; Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

³ Mark 5:25; And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.

⁴ John 5:40; And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

⁵ Matt. 11:25-28; At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the

confesses that he does real business with God from the end of his rope.

These men come because their steps are ordained; but as for their reasons, they come because there is nowhere else to go. In our study text, Saul is dead, Jonathan is dead, Abner and his self-made king Ishbosheth are dead, the last viable member of Saul's royal realm is dead—everything that these men had counted on is now as a vapor. Now is the time of reality. Acknowledge David as king or perish at the end of his sword. When God has put down the resistance and set His King on Zion's holy hill, His command is “kiss the Son, lest He be angry and thou art consumed when His wrath is kindled but a little” (Psa. 2:12¹) These men come to acknowledge David as king, and they come in faith believing that they are already in his favor. This is the king that they were promised (Deut. 17:14-15²).

We can see the confidence of faith in the words that they speak to David. They declare themselves to be the “flesh and bone” of David. To them this is a declaration that they were one with David, that he had their full allegiance, and that their hearts were fixed on him as their indisputable king. They declare also that they are all of the same blood, sons of Jacob and children of Israel. But herein is a sweet shadow of the relationship of Christ and His church. The phrase “flesh and bone,” used in this context, is first used in

Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

¹ Psa. 2:12; Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

² Deut. 17:14-15; When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.

the beginning of creation when God made for Adam a suitable companion (Gen. 2:23-24¹). What a picture this is of the declaration of the bride of Christ to her Groom and He to her (Mark 10:7-9²). These men approach David as their head and take their place as his body.

This also addresses the doctrine of successful, particular redemption. The text says that all the tribes of Israel came to David (v 1). We know that in the future of David's reign many will assault his realm, but these words are symbolic of the successful work of Christ. No type stands up to the substance as to explicit detail. All the tribes represent all the elect, who are the true Israel of God, given to Christ before the world began. They all will come to Christ (John 6:37, 45³). Christ must bring them (John 10:15-16⁴). They all will be saved (Matt. 1:21; Rom. 11:26-27⁵). If one is ultimately lost, Christ, as savior and substitute, will have failed (Eph.

¹ **Gen. 2:23-24**; And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

² **Mark 10:7-9**; For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

³ **John 6:37, 45**; All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. . . It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

⁴ **John 10:15-16**; As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

⁵ **Matt. 1:21**; And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Rom. 11:26-27; And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

1:22-23¹). All the tribes of Israel come to David, as do all the redeemed come to Christ.

In verse 2 the leaders of the tribe further state their case for joining with David. Unlike Saul, who took from them, David had always acted in the best interest of Israel. David had lead Israel out against the enemy had had fought for them. He was their true captain and true king. They invoke the name of the LORD and the declaration that David was the anointed of God. The further description of David is not found in the initial words of anointing in what we just read in our text. This is, however, referred to concerning David in other places (Psa. 78:71-72; Ezek. 34:23-24; Ezek. 37:24²). But more than that, these words speak of our heavenly David, the great Shepherd (Isa. 40:9-11; Heb. 13:20³).

¹ **Eph. 1:22-23**; And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

² **Psa. 78:71-72**; From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

Ezek. 34:23-24; And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it.

Ezek. 37:24; And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.

³ **Isa. 40:9-11**; O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the LORD God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

Heb. 13:20; Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.

Verses 3-4 account the anointing of David as king of all Israel. It has been a long road for David from the sheep's pen to the throne. His journey has been fraught with hindrances, but all according to providence. His life to this place is a picture of the life of every child of God. Our end is secure, but the journey is full of seeming mishaps and trouble; yet believe, beloved, your day of full deliverance has never been in doubt (John 6:38¹).

One final thing: Verse 5 declares the reign of David; forty years in total—seven-and-a-half years in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. This is a shadow of the reign of Christ in the church. Hebron was the city of priests and Jerusalem the city of kings. Christ is the great High Priest and the King of kings (Josh. 14:14-15; Zech. 6:12-13; Isa. 52:7²).

¹ **John 6:38**; For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

² **Josh. 14:14-15**; Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel. And the name of Hebron before was Kirjatharba; which Arba was a great man among the Anakims. And the land had rest from war.

Zech. 6:12-13; And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

Isa. 52:7; How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

THE BLIND AND LAME

2 SAMUEL 5:6-10

6, And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither.

7, Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David.

8, And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind, that are hated of David's soul, he shall be chief and captain. Wherefore they said, The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.

9, So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward.

10, And David went on, and grew great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him.

This is the record of David capturing Jerusalem and building his house on Zion's hill. So much of Old Testament prophecy is about this chapter in Israel's history. It is the story, in picture and type, of our Lord's victory in the salvation of true Israel, the church. The supposed hindrance to David's occupation of what was rightfully his as king of Israel is the Canaanite-like tribe of the Jebusites. Their present occupation of Jerusalem and the fortress of Zion is a direct result of the failure of both the tribe of Benjamin and the tribe of Judah to possess the land

that the Lord had promised them (Josh. 15:63; Judg. 1:21¹). Their failure was marked in infamy so much so that Jerusalem was at this time called the city of Jebus (Judg. 19:10-11²). The presence of the Jebusites was a mockery to David, further amplified because the Jebusites had so much confidence in their fortress that they ridiculed David at the thought that he could capture the city.

The confidence was so high that the guards of the city were called “the lame and the blind” (v. 6). When the lame and the blind are referred to as those whom the Lord came to save, the description is one of pity. This description identifies the elect in their utter ruin in Adam, the spiritual condition that makes salvation impossible in themselves. If the lame and the blind refer to the elect here it would speak to the miracle of grace by which the Lord gives the seeing eye and the hearing ear, and by which the lame is made to take up his bed and walk—thereby recovering the besieged city. But the context does not lean that way. These lame and blind are not the objects of David’s love and mercy but rather the objects of his hatred and vengeance (v. 8).

Who are the lame and the blind? There are two possible interpretations. Remember that this is the record of David taking back what rightfully belonged to Israel. The city is fortified by high walls that seem impenetrable. The occupants of the city are sure that David cannot overthrow

¹ **Josh. 15:63**; As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day.

Judg. 1:21; And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day.

² **Judg. 19:10-11**; But the man would not tarry that night, but he rose up and departed, and came over against Jebus, which is Jerusalem; and there were with him two asses saddled, his concubine also was with him. And when they were by Jebus, the day was far spent; and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn in into this city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it.

them. Their confidence is expressed by the employment of the lame and the blind as its guardians. The first interpretation is literal: These lame and blind are actually *men* who have these maladies. This would be a way for the Jebusites to express their confidence in the walls that they have built. So great are these walls in the minds of the Jebusites that they need not acquire the services of powerful guards, but, as a mockery to any foe, they place on the walls those who cannot even defend themselves and deride their enemies with sarcasm. “All you have to do to defeat us is to overcome the lame and the blind.” This would certainly be an effective psychological tool in the arsenal of the Jebusites.

One thing that supports this interpretation is David’s challenge and promise in verse 8. The idea put forth is that the lame and the blind will be cast into the gutter, often meaning a ditch or a mote surrounding the fortress. Their end will be one of derision as the God of Heaven mocks and laughs at them (Psa. 2:4-5¹). Those who refused Christ in His day had great confidence in the high walls of their religion and their piety. They openly mocked Christ, calling him a wino, and possessed of the Devil. As he hung of the cross, they said, “He saved others; himself he cannot save” (Matt. 27:42). Yet the gathered mobs were standing in the way of divine purpose, and in all their mockery and confidence, they were but blind and lame and leaders of the blind and they both will end up in the ditch (gutter) (Matt. 15:14²). The king is coming, and the opposition will be as chaff on the wind.

The second possible interpretation of the blind and the lame is that they refer to the gods, or images that idolatrous

¹ Psa. 2:4-5; He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

² Matt. 15:14; Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

nations often put on the walls of their fortresses. They may have been carved in relief or even carved as outstanding gargoyle-like sculptures to scare off enemies. If this were the case, naming them “the lame and the blind” would have been David’s estimation of these ersatz deities and the impotency of those who foolishly trust in them for protection (Psa. 115:4-8¹).

One does not have to stretch the imagination to see that the god of today’s Christianity (so-called) is often described in such terminology. He is described as one whose hands are tied, as one who relies on his supplicants to put feet to their prayers, as one who cannot act without the will and approval of his creatures (in their reality, his creators), and it is even said of him that the only hands he has are your hands and the only feet he has are your feet. It can be rightly stated that such a god is lame and blind and nothing other than an idol, mounted in picture frames and made into phony symbols to spook the enemies of religion. If Jerusalem is to be taken, if Zion is to be occupied by the true king, then the false deities must be cast into the ditch. Man-made religion feels safe in the house of Satan. Its walls are fortified, and its images scare the superstitious, but they will fall when the King of glory comes in (Luke 11:20-22²). The blind and the lame—whether they are puny, impotent men or false, man-

¹ Psa. 115:4-8; Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.

² Luke 11:20-22; But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

manufactured deities—cannot prevail. They will not come into the house of the Lord (v. 8).

Sometimes the lack of description is a great tool of language. There is no description of the battle that ensued. There is no head count of the enemy destroyed. There is none of the gore of beheaded bodies and heads on pikes. As if to say that this victory was merely a matter of course, the Word of God simply states in no uncertain terms, “Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion” (v. 7). And so it must be that the anointed king shall prevail; He cannot fail (Isa. 42:4¹).

After he puts down the Jebusites and takes the stronghold of Zion, David builds his home there, in Zion. Zion represents the church, and that is where the Spirit of Christ has set up house. Christ is in the midst of the church (Rev. 1:12-13; Ephesians 2:19-22²).

Verse 10 is the end of every story concerning Christ. “He went on and grew great” (2 Sam. 3:1; Luke 1:32; Job 17:9; Isa. 9:6-7; Dan. 2:44³). The reason is plain: “The

¹ Isa. 42:4; He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

² Rev. 1:12-13; And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

Eph. 2:19-22; Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

³ 2 Sam. 3:1; Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.

Luke 1:32; He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the LORD God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.

Job 17:9; The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.

LORD God of hosts was with him” (Psa. 22:9-10; 46:11; Isa. 8:9-10¹).

Praise His Name! The salvation of the elect is sure!

Isa. 9:6-7; For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Dan. 2:44; And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

¹ **Psa. 22:9-10;** But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.

Psa. 46:11; The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

Isa. 8:9-10; Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us.

SOUND IN THE MULBERRY

2 SAMUEL 5:13-25

13, And David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David.

14, And these be the names of those that were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shammua, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon,

15, Ibhar also, and Elishua, and Nepheg, and Japhia,

16, And Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphalet.

17, But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the hold.

18, The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.

19, And David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the LORD said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand.

20, And David came to Baalperazim, and David smote them there, and said, The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place Baalperazim.

21, And there they left their images, and David and his men burned them.

22, And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.

23, And when David enquired of the LORD, he said, Thou shalt not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees.

24, And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a

going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines.

25, And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer.

After the report of David's understanding that God had, indeed, established him king over Israel and had exalted his kingdom for Israel's sake (v. 12), we find that David proves that he is but a type of Christ and not the real thing. Type and picture are not substance, and along with every Old Testament type and picture, the Lord makes us to know for certain that types and picture are perishable things, temporal things, things of the earth, and things plagued with sin. With verse 13 we are confronted with the glaring insufficiency of humanity. David multiplies his harem of wives and concubines in direct disobedience to God's command (Deut. 17:17). Carnal men may look at this scenario and say, "It's nice to be the king."

In the realm of kingdoms, kings suffer opposition to themselves. To oppose the king is treason, so men might look at this episode and say, "Who could oppose him, or bring his sin to light?" Others—who oppose any idea of power being invested in one individual—might apply the old adage, "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." There is no doubt that power, wealth and authority open many doors for men who possess them. Avenues for corruption are widened when men are placed in a position that isolates them from censure and criticism. But wealth and power are ultimately just doors and avenues, and men choose to walk through them or on them. Power does not corrupt, and absolute power does not absolutely corrupt, because God alone has absolute power, and He is perfect and holy. He cannot be questioned because all He does is

right and good. Power, like all other things among men, is fleeting and soon gone. Power is a force, but it does not corrupt; sinful men corrupt power (2 Peter 2:14¹). Outside forces do not corrupt us. Sin is not in a box or a bottle or in a position; it flows from the heart and corrupts whatever it encounters (Mark 7:15²).

The idea that power corrupts comes from the false notion that man is innately good. But man is innately evil, born that way and lives that way unless his career is interrupted by Sovereign grace. David, though anointed king, is honestly presented as a man, a sinner. This is providential instruction that we might cease from hero-worship and know what we are. Paul, in Acts 17, spoke of God as winking at these times of ignorance. Men sometimes take that to mean that God condoned such behavior. But the fact is, God never ceased to remind His people of what they truly are. He often suffers us to have the carnal desires of our heart to bring us to the end of ourselves (Psa. 81:12; Acts 14:16; Acts 17:30³). David did wrong, and the honest report of this episode simply declares that man at his best state is just a man. There has only been one man who never sinned—the anointed, the Christ of God. The rest of us are sinners and, left to ourselves, we will soon make the fact obvious.

¹ **2 Peter 2:14**; Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children.

² **Mark 7:15**; There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.

³ **Psa. 81:12**; So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.

Acts 14:16; Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

Acts 17:30; And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.

But thankfully the report of the sinful child of God is that he is, by grace, brought back to his moorings. In verses 17-18 we see the Philistines gather against Israel. The reason they put themselves in battle array is both obvious and instructive. When they heard that David had been anointed king of Israel, they immediately went into battle mode. The enemy is incited when the people crown the King and acknowledge His sovereign realm. So it is with false religion. So-called Christianity is at peace with differences in ecclesiology and eschatology and even in denominational variations, but will come to arms when God's people crown him with the many crowns He is due, and when they declare and acknowledge Him for who He is in His sovereign majesty. Religion loves a miracle-working, sickness-healing, ever-ready Jesus, but they cannot abide an absolutely sovereign King who does as He pleases, when He pleases, and with whom He pleases, and is acknowledged as such by those who love Him. When the Philistines heard, they sought to put an end to it.

In verse 19, David is brought again to depend on God. This is a great lesson and well-learned by the people of God. Whether in moments of error or in times of victory, we need Christ. The more we know Him, the more we see our need of Him. David consults the Lord for guidance, and the victory belongs to the Lord (v. 20b). David named the place of victory Baalperazim. This literally means "the lord (lower case "l") of the breach" or "the breaks." It is commonly interpreted "the plain of the breaches." This is where God breached the enemy and gave Israel the victory. The Philistines had brought along their gods to the battle, but when they had been routed, they left their gods behind. Verse 21 declares that David burned them (also translated as "carried them away"). If a god can be burned, its deity must

be called into question. The Philistine's gods did not fare well against the God of Israel (1 Sam. 5:3-7¹).

When the Philistines gathered again for battle (sans their ersatz deities), David again inquires of the Lord and the Lord directs him to circle around the Philistines and get behind them (v. 23) and await a signal from the Lord (v. 24). The signal David is to wait for is the sound of the wind in the top of the mulberry trees, and when he hears it he is to get ready because the Lord is going to go out before Him and smite the enemy.

This is a picture of the preaching of the gospel with the Holy Spirit that comes down from heaven. When the gospel began to be preached, the Apostles were told to wait for a sign from God (Acts 1:4, 8²). How was that promise realized? It was recorded in Acts 2:1-2. The Lord had declared that this is the manner of the Spirit: It is like the sound of the wind (John 3:3-8; Ezek. 37:9³). Now, we don't

¹ 1 Sam. 5:3-7; And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again. And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him. Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day. But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof. And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god.

² Acts 1:4, And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

8; But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

³ John 3:3-8; Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he

have to wait on a sign. The Spirit has come. He indwells His people. He takes the things of Christ and shows them to His people. When we preach the gospel, the Holy Spirit goes before us, plows up the fallow ground, breaks up the stony hearts, opens the ears, and gives sight to the eyes. When the gospel is preached the sheep hear the voice of Christ and follow Him. When you truly hear the gospel or truly preach the gospel, it is because the Holy Spirit has gone before you to smite the enemy and guarantee the victory.

enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Ezek. 37:9; Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the LORD God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.

BEST INTENTIONS

2 SAMUEL 6:1-11

1, Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand.

2, And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims.

3, And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart.

4, And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark.

5, And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.

6, And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it.

7, And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.

8, And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perezuzzah to this day.

9, And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?

10, So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obedom the Gittite.

11, And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obededom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obededom, and all his household.

When this episode takes place, the ark of the Covenant has been outside Shiloh for some fifty years. That fact in itself is remarkable. We know from our study of 1 Samuel that the religion of the Jews had become utterly corrupt. In the sixth chapter of that book, the ark fell into the hands of the Philistines. For a brief time, the Philistines considered this a great thing and placed the ark in the chamber of Dagon, which began with a smack-down and consummated with dismemberment and decapitation of Dagon. As if the decimation of their deity was not enough, the Lord directed Israel to slice off the buttocks of the slain soldiers, and He smote the living with hemorrhoids (tumors), which was no small thing to a horse culture.

In order to alleviate their pain and discomfort, the Philistines made an oxcart, placed the ark upon it (along with golden images of mice and emeralds), and sent it on its way, hoping that by providence or by chance it would wind up in Israel. When the cows pulling it were directed by the hand of God to go to Bethshemesh, there was great celebration. The Bethshemites dismantled the cart, sacrificed the cows, and rejoiced that God was among them. Some of the men looked into the ark and God killed 50,070 men for the sin of the few that sought to peer into the secrets of God. The Bethshemites wanted nothing more to do with the ark and called to the men of Kirjathjearim to fetch it. They did and they put it the house of Abinadab where Eleazar was set apart to keep it. Fifty years later, David decides to bring the ark to the city of David.

Two things are obvious in these historical accounts. The first thing is that there is little difference among the Jews,

the Philistines, and the Bethshemites. All of them view the ark as an icon or a god. The Jews looked to it for salvation, the Philistines gave it a place in their pantheon and eventually offered sacrifices to it (rodents and tumors), and the Bethshemites offered a sacrifice to it. But the ark's value was in what it represented and whom it signified: the person and effectual sacrifice of Christ before God. "It is the glory of the Lord to conceal a thing" (Proverbs 25:2), and that which is concealed will remain so until the Lord reveals it. It is ever the error of religion to attribute qualities of deity to created and natural objects, among which even those objects sanctified by God have passed off the scene with the institution of the New Covenant. Nothing that can be seen is of any spiritual or eternal value, except in a purely representative or memorial nature. A natural thing may represent a spiritual thing, but no natural or created thing is spiritual.

The second thing that is obvious is that the central aspect of Old Covenant ceremonial worship had not been done in fifty years. Without the ark, there had been no day of atonement accomplished for five decades. As far as atonement for sin, the Israelites had been without it—and therefore uncovered—for fifty years. Whether the ceremonies during this time were practiced is not known, but if they were, without the ark, they were fake, a sham, and they were religious chicanery much like the wizard of Oz behind the magic curtain pulling levers that create nothing more than smoke and illusions. Religious objects, when given deified attributes, always put men's eyes off Christ and move them away from faith.

Here in our text, fifty years have passed and David desires to bring the ark out of Abinadab's house and set it up in the city of David. I have no doubt that he has the best intentions. It would indeed be a good thing to have the ark back in a place where the worship of God might be

resumed. As we have just read, things did not go as planned. This episode is recorded in greater detail in 1 Chronicles 13:1-14. Though David's plan is well intended, it was fraught with error.

The entire plan smacks of religious fervor without a single thought toward God. Several things:

There is no indication that in all of this, God was consulted or even mentioned, except in a subsidiary role. David consulted men and based his decision on the premise that if those consulted agreed, that would indicate that the Lord sanctioned what they planned. But God is greater than man. That's the simple truth, and no matter the favorable opinion of man, an agreement on man's part never indicates God's sanction. Since God is greater than man, He alone is to be consulted no matter the opinion of man (vv. 1-2).

God's will is never a matter of consensus. I know that Baptists believe in congregational rule by majority vote. But remember that a vote, by design, divides rather than unites. Congregations do not rule, preachers do not rule—God rules. Christ is the head of the church, and all matters spiritual are clearly covered, not by Robert's Rules of Parliamentary Order, but by the words of Christ that are spirit and life. Whatever the outcome of David's well-intended venture, it is doomed to fail because God was not in it.

David gets all the big dogs to join in. The captains, the leaders, and the Levites from the cities and the suburbs, are gathered together to bring back the ark. When David says, "Can I get an 'Amen,'" he gets a rousing one (v. 4).

David has a new cart made. No old cart for this deal; nothing too good for our God. David gets two fine, healthy young men (Ahio and Uzza) to drive the cart, and the celebration begins. Today this would be called a Holy Ghost meeting (v. 8). They are not honoring Baal or Dagon; the songs they sing, the instruments they play, the dancing they

do is done for what they believe is the glory of the true God. They are as happy as hogs in a wallow, hardly a dry eye in the house. These are not pagans lasciviously cavorting around some stone or stump. These are the people of God, about the business of rescuing the ark of God, in joyous hope and expectation of reinstating the worship of God. What could possibly be wrong with that?

Evidently, plenty is wrong. When the oxen stumble and the ark shakes on its cart, Uzza puts out his hand to stabilize it. At that moment the celebration falls silent because, right before the eyes of the well-intended, fervent crowd, Uzza is struck down by God. Uzza doesn't just fall over dead; God slaughters him. Why? Surely others had touched the ark to place it on the ark. Uzza had only tried to keep the ark from tipping. Why now did God display his wrath and make His displeasure known? Though David was immediately angry at God (v. 11-12), after he has some time to think, he realizes why God acted in this manner. We see this in David's explanation of the celebration shut down with the "breach" of Uzza (1 Chron. 15:13¹). Their intentions and desires to bring back the ark were not wrong. It was right, noble, and good, but it was done, not only the wrong way, but in the wrong order. Our God is a God of order, and though men may have good intentions, there is a right order in the worship of God, an order that is specifically prescribed in His Word. We'll look at that proper order next study. For now, we need to realize and remember that consensus and fervor, even if they are for what we deem a good cause, are doomed if God's order is not followed. The ark is not returned home, and instead it is taken to the house of Obededom, and his house is blessed while it is there.

¹ 1 Chron. 15:13; For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.

THE RIGHT ORDER

2 SAMUEL 6:12-19

12, And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obededom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obededom into the city of David with gladness.

13, And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings.

14, And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod.

15, So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

16, And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.

17, And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.

18, And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts.

19, And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed every one to his house.

In our last study, we saw how the good intentions of David in recovering the ark were stopped in their tracks when God “breached” Uzza. David realized that his error had cost the life of Uzza; not because his intentions were bad but that he had not sought God after the right order (1 Chron. 15:13¹). The words of David in Chronicles reveal much. Not only do they reveal an error in process but also an error in object. David was seeking the ark, but the slaying of Uzza reminded him that the ark was a mere piece of tabernacle furniture and was of no value except as it related to the God who had commanded its making. The ark had to do with God, and in a very particular manner. It was in the holy of holies that God was appeased for the sins of the people for one year on the Day of Atonement.

Up to this time David had sought the ark. He had sought to return the ark. The primary error in the matter of right order was the failure to realize that the ark has to do with seeking God, not the furniture. So David reveals in his statement that he was seeking the wrong thing. He did not say, “we sought it not after the right order” but “we sought him not after the right order.” The value of the ark was, when in its proper place, where God manifest His Shekinah glory. There, and there alone—because of the work of atonement, the appeasement of God for a year by the blood of the lamb—God would commune with His people’s representative, the high priest (Ex. 25:21-22²). All of this was typical, a picture of Christ and his substitutionary work,

¹ 1 Chron. 15:13; For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.

² Ex. 25:21-22; And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.

which was not an atonement but a propitiation, and declared that the only place that God would meet with men was in their representative: the great high priest, Jesus Christ, based upon the fact that their sins had been paid for by His singular sacrifice. The right order is to seek God through the offering of the high priest. The right order is: priest, altar, sacrifice.

When David went to Obedom's house to recover the ark the second time, he did not consult the congregation or the men of rank and stature and did not celebrate until these things were accomplished. We see this in summary form in verse 13. Two things are obvious, and one is suggested. First, there were those that bare the ark (no oxcart this time). Secondly, there were blood sacrifices. That which is suggested was an altar upon which the sacrifices were laid (Ex. 20:24-26¹).

These things are more clearly elaborated in 1 Chronicles 15. The first thing we see is that the priest and the Levites sanctified themselves, which was required of them for service to the Lord. This involved bathing and washing of clothes to typify the purity of Christ as high priest (1 Chron. 15:14²). The sons of Kohath, of the Levites, were assigned to bear the ark on their shoulders with golden staves inserted through golden rings attached to the side of the ark. This was according to command (v. 15; Exo.

¹ Ex. 20:24-26; An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.

² 1 Chron. 15:14; So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel.

25:14¹). In verses 16-24 (1 Chron. 15²), David assigned the chief of the Levites to make up choirs and bands of various instruments to be used when the ark was returned to its rightful place.

In verse 26 there is another plain revelation; “And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet thereof.” God helps the Levites that carried the ark. There are no oxen to pull the man-made cart—there is no cart. There are no men assigned to ensure the stabilization of the ark on the trip. God helps these men. First, he helps them with strength for the task, and secondly, He helps them with joy and comfort in the task considering what had been done to Uzza. As God is sought after the right order, the sons of Kohath (pictures of preachers of the gospel) are aided by God in carrying the ark (picturing the gospel, of which the primary aspect is the propitiation, satisfaction for the broken Law, and blood on the mercy seat before the glory of God). On

¹ **Exodus 25:14**; And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them.

² **1 Chron. 15:16-24**; And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of musick, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy. So the Levites appointed Heman the son of Joel; and of his brethren, Asaph the son of Berechiah; and of the sons of Merari their brethren, Ethan the son of Kushaiah; And with them their brethren of the second degree, Zechariah, Ben, and Jaaziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, Eliab, and Benaiah, and Maaseiah, and Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, and Mikneiah, and Obedom, and Jeiel, the porters. So the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were appointed to sound with cymbals of brass; And Zechariah, and Aziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, and Eliab, and Maaseiah, and Benaiah, with psalteries on Alamoth; And Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, and Mikneiah, and Obedom, and Jeiel, and Azaziah, with harps on the Sheminith to excel. And Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was for song: he instructed about the song, because he was skilful. And Berechiah and Elkanah were doorkeepers for the ark. And Shebaniah, and Jehoshaphat, and Nethaneel, and Amasai, and Zechariah, and Benaiah, and Eliezer, the priests, did blow with the trumpets before the ark of God: and Obedom and Jehiah were doorkeepers for the ark.

the first venture of David, God did not help; He shut the celebration down. Now He helps.

When David and the priests see that the Lord helped the bearers of the ark, they stop and offer up seven bulls and seven rams (a doubly perfect offering). These were offerings of thanksgiving and praise. In verse 13 the word says that the bearers of the ark only take six steps when they stop to offer these sacrifices. This is mentioned to show us that what God had done to Uzza was prominent in their minds. These six steps are taken in great trepidation, and when they see that they were not being slaughtered, they understand that God is helping them. Rather than take another step they stop to praise God, and thank Him for His mercy because they now know they are seeking Him after the right order. When the ark is in its proper place, offerings will be made to declare what God had done, accepting the sacrifice in their stead. This offering is in the way, to thank God for what he had not done. He has not slain them as he had done to Uzza. Our prayers are often tendered this way. We thank God for His mercy, for keeping us back from what we deserve. In wrath, he remembers mercy, and for this we are eternally grateful (Psa. 100:5¹).

So the ark is returned to the tabernacle that David has erected for its return. There is great joy that day because God had been sought after the right order. And so it is still when the preachers of the gospel carry the gospel to its rightful place, the place where God exhibits His glory, in the face of Jesus Christ: our mercy seat and our propitiation.

¹ Psa. 100:5; For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

JOY IN CHRIST

2 SAMUEL 6:16-23

16, And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.

17, And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.

18, And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts.

19, And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed every one to his house.

20, Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!

21, And David said unto Michal, It was before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD.

22, And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour.

23, Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death.

This portion of the chapter addresses the results and consequences of joy in the Lord. For the believer there is no downside in rejoicing in the Lord.

Though the world will account the self-abasing attitude of the believer as foolishness and embarrassing, the believer is to rejoice when they are despitely used of men for Christ's sake. David's joy is exhibited in his wearing of the ephod and in his leaping and dancing before the ark without any regard to how he might appear before men. He lays aside his armor and his robes of royalty and clothes himself with the flimsy ephod. He does so because his joy is not about him but rather about the glory of God. The glory of man "is as the flower of the field" (Isa. 40:6), soon to wither, but the glory of the Lord is everlasting.

The return of the ark and the placement of it in the tabernacle is the source of joy, not only in the fact that the Lord has helped the people, but even more so for the truth that there is now the expectation of the atonement. David makes a fool of himself for Christ's sake, because he knows that not far hence there will once again be blood before the Lord, sprinkled on that ark before the glory of God for the sins of the people. This beautifully pictures the believer's singular source of joy, described by Simon Peter as "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). The believer has joy because God has been fully honored and glorified in the salvation of the elect by the substitutionary, propitious blood and death of the Lamb of God, for sinners wounded. The believer, as it were, when worshipping God, strips himself of all righteousness, lays aside station and reputation, and like David puts on the lowliest of personal covering, takes the lowest seat, and refuses any glory for himself. "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). In this passage we are presented with the results and the consequences of the singular worship of Christ.

The first thing we see is the reaction of the world to such a display of joyous worship. In verse 16, Michal, David's wife, reveals the thoughts and intents of her heart. When she saw David leaping before the ark, she despised him in her heart. She held him in contempt and considered him contemptible. There are many possible reasons for her reaction. I think there is a hint in how the Holy Spirit inspires the writer to describe her. She is not described as David's wife but rather as Saul's daughter. These words may seem insignificant, but they are tantamount to describing her as the daughter of Adam rather than the bride of Christ. She is Saul's daughter, and her actions and words are, on some level, a defense of Saul in opposition to David. With the demise of her father's house came the demise of her former glory. This is also suggested in the fact that she seems not to consider that her status has actually been elevated. She is the wife of the king of God's choice and anointing, yet she evidently values the ruins and trappings of a rejected royal carcass.

A second thing is that she has no regard for God. She is at heart an idolater (1 Sam. 19:13¹). Teraphims were idols or little statues of gods that were thought to bring good fortune to those who had them. For her the ark would have possibly had less significance than the household gods she adored. A third thing is an evident disregard for David and an unthankful heart. David had refused to accept the crown until Michal was returned safely to him, yet she still despises him in her heart. Primarily, however, I believe her reaction to David was born of self-righteousness. There is a general, yet visceral, disdain for abasement of man in religion. Religion loves its trappings and its play-pretties. To be seen in the most opulent and ostentatious light is at the heart of

¹ 1 Sam. 19:13; And Michal took an image, and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth.

religion. Religion loves the concept of “splendida peccata” or “splendid sins.” Religion needs its silver slippers and brocade robes on display and despises the plain, singular, foolish notion that the worship of God begins with men willfully abasing themselves. Michal’s sense of propriety and piety is assaulted and embarrassed by David’s worship of God. We can be sure that this was in her heart because “out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34).

Michal’s heart, thankfully, is not indicative of a believer’s heart. The believer’s response is seen in David’s self-abasement and also in the response of the people to the return of the ark. First, there is joy and celebration, not for the ark but for the God who helped the sons of Levi to return it to its rightful place: the place where God is worshipped, glorified, and honored by the representative high priest with the blood of the sacrifice before the Shekinah Glory (v. 15). The response of the believer is thanksgiving (vv. 17-18). All true worship has at its source the thankful heart for what God has done. The burnt offering represents the accepted sacrifice of Christ instead of the elect. The peace offering is the offering of praise and thanksgiving for the fact that God has accepted the believer conditioned on the sacrifice of Christ. Knowing that we are accepted and accounted as righteous (Gal. 3:6¹) because of Christ’s work alone, is the source of joy in the believer’s heart.

Michal’s words to David fall fast on the heels of David’s blessing of the people. There is a real correlation here between David’s blessing and Michal’s words. David blesses all the people equally with bread, meat, and wine (each representative of Christ and His work). David, by the manner of his blessing, reveals that there is no hierarchy in

¹ Galatians 3:6; Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

the body of Christ: Every believer is the same and regarded as equal. They are equally righteous, equally forgiven, and equally loved. Though each has their own ordained function in the body, they are all one in Christ. Michal's words in verse 20 reveal that she does not believe in the equality of all believers. One can almost feel the bile in her words. The sarcasm is as thick as pea soup. The disdain is palpable.

David's response to her is very telling. First, he declares that what he is doing is worshipping God, saying "it was before the LORD." Secondly, he is worshipping the LORD of distinguishing grace, saying "which chose me before thy father." These words also state, in no uncertain terms, that David knows where Michal's allegiances are. She sought to honor her dead father rather than to honor the LORD's anointed. How much different is Michal's allegiance to her dead father than religion's allegiance to Adam in asserting that salvation is by man's will or decision rather than through the successful work of the anointed king of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ? David declares that his salvation is of the Lord and only the Lord, and therefore he will play before the Lord (Neh. 8:9-12; Zech. 8:5¹). Play suggests a joyful, liberal, free, exuberant expression of thanksgiving. David says that if his play before the Lord is demeaning in men's eyes, he will abase himself even more so that the Lord

¹ Neh. 8:9-12; And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength. So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

Zech. 8:5; And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.

will receive all glory and he receive none. He that abases himself, God will exalt (Matt. 23:12¹).

The consequence of speaking against the Lord's anointed, of despising the singular one in whom God is honored, is barrenness (v. 23). The only fruit born of the love for the dead king is fruit unto death (Rom. 7:5²).

¹ **Matt. 23:12**; And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

² **Rom. 7:5**; For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

INTENTION OVERRIDE

2 SAMUEL 7:1-17

1, And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies;

2, That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.

3, And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee.

4, And it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying,

5, Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?

6, Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle.

7, In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?

8, Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the shepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel:

9, And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth.

10, Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the

children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime,

11, And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house.

12, And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.

13, He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

14, I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men:

15, But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.

16, And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.

17, According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

In this study, I want to look at these first 17 verses in an overview and do so with a focus on the *purpose* of God. This part of chapter 7 is very plain in its teaching. In short, David had an idea, one that was from his heart, full of love to God. He desired to build a house for the ark of God. His interest was for the glory of God, and his proposal was not an error. He, as king, had not only the intent but also had the wherewithal to accomplish the desire of his heart. He was initially given the “green light” by Nathan, the prophet of God. God Himself had purposed to have such a house built, but David was forbidden to build the house himself. Everything about what David desired to do was “right,” but he was forbidden because it was not the appointed time, and he was not the right king. His

intentions, though good (and would see fruition), were overridden because God's purpose covers every aspect of time and tide. What men may consider minutia are the axles upon which the wheels of providence turn (Eccl. 3:14-15¹). History is littered with the ruins of the purposes of men who desired to hurry along a particular aspect of revealed purpose. Many a religious politician tried to gain office so that they could hasten the day of Armageddon. There are Christians (so-called) in this day that want to get all Jews back to Israel because their view of eschatology is that Christ will return only when all Jews are in the homeland. God has a plan and a purpose, and it will come to pass in the precise manner ordained and at the appointed time.

Time is God's creation; as Creator, His time is merely a tool in His toolbox. His house will be built. God has purposed it, but it will be built by the as-yet unborn son of David, Solomon, and its typification will become substance in the hands of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ (Zech. 6:12-13; John 2:18-21²). In your desire to honor and glorify God, remember that your doings will change no aspect of God's will of purpose. Paul lived to preach the gospel and he spent himself in that endeavor. He purposed

¹ Eccl. 3:14-15; I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.

² Zech. 6:12-13; And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

John 2:18-21; Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body.

to do it everywhere, but on occasion he was forbidden according to God's purpose (Acts 16:7¹). The plan and every aspect of it has been set by eternal decree, even to the thoughts and intents of men's hearts, and so also with the words upon their tongues (Psa. 139:4²). Men may (and do) disobey the Lord's commands, but even in doing so they fulfill His purpose (Gen. 50:20³). Do good, seek to please the Lord, seek to glorify him, be an obedient servant, plan and purpose and prepare with the glad understanding that your God will accomplish His purpose.

Several things: First, when you are given a time of quiet from turmoil, use it to meditate and contemplate on the glory of God. That is how we find David in our main text. The warrior king's enemies are all defeated, and as he sits in his house made of cedar, his thoughts turn to what he might do to honor God. His desires are born of a comparison of his estate to the estate of the ark. From a sense of true humility and equity, he is embarrassed that his dwelling is superior to that of the ark, where the Shekinah glory of God is. This desire is both right and wrong. Under the principles of the law of Moses, with its many rites and ceremonies that make up the Old Covenant, visible activities and places are important even though they are temporal in nature and will be finished with the arrival and death of the Messiah. For that time, David's desire was both right and good. However, it was "wrong" in that it did not consider the purpose of God but was born of personal sentiment. It was also wrong in that God's house is built by God and not man (Isa. 66:1-

¹ Acts 16:7; After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

² Psa. 139:4; For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

³ Gen. 50:20; But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

2¹). God's house is Christ, and He is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (John 17:21-23; Col. 2:9²).

Second, even if those who speak for God are aligned with you, it does not necessarily mean that your desires will be realized (v. 2). Nathan gave David the "green light." And why not? David's desire to honor God was real and worthy. Sometimes we feel that if we get support for ideas, that support makes them take on a kind of power, or at least permission.

There were a couple of reasons why David was not to build the temple, according to the word of God.

First, the temple would be built in Jerusalem, the city of peace, by a man of peace, and David was a man of war (vv. 12-13; 1 Chron. 22:7-10³). Jesus once said, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight." Christ has established peace through the blood of His cross. He is our peace. His gospel

¹ Isa. 66:1-2; Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

² John 17:21-23; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Col. 2:9; For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

³ 1 Chron. 22:7-10; And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God: But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever.

is called the gospel of peace. He is the Prince of Peace. Peace is the effect of His imputed righteousness (Isa. 32:17¹). The temple of God—the house of God—is His *people*, and their war is spiritual and internal, not external, or political.

Second, the reason that David was not to build the temple was because God did not ask him to or tell him to (vv. 5-7). This tells us that no matter our intentions, they must align with the will of God revealed in the Scriptures. The Bible is the source of our doctrine and practice.

David's life and kingdom were according to God's purpose, and God reminded David that he did not plan or purpose his own estate. We will learn, over time and experience, that the God who saved us is also the God who is the keeper and director of our steps. He does not need any help in caring for His own, and He seeks no input, even if it is a plan to do something to honor Him. The way we honor God is to believe Him. If you read the account of David's rise to his throne, you will find not one fingerprint of David on the whole affair (v. 8-11). In these words of Nathan, I see the real job of the preacher. The preacher of the gospel is used to check men in their plans, not by ruling them, controlling them, or driving them, but by reminding them over and over again that they are *what* they are, and *where* they are, and will be where they *shall be* by the grace of God, according to the purpose of God. Our past, our present, and our future are God's. He will not use you to fulfill a purpose that He has ordained for another, but He will use you to fulfill His purpose for you (Jer. 10:23; Psa. 37:23; 2 Sam. 23:5²).

¹ Isa. 32:17; And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

² Jer. 10:23; O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

Psa. 37:23; The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.

2 Sam. 23:5, Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.

A CONCISE HISTORY

2 SAMUEL 7:8-9

8, Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel:

9, And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth.

There is in these two verses a concise history of our salvation. Those who have been taught of God, those who by revelation have learned the gospel, find themselves often taken up with the meditation of their salvation. To most of religion, salvation is but a starting place, a past experience that sets them on a path of religious life. Their emphasis tends toward stopping or starting certain behaviors, separation from certain things that are deemed evil, and embracing certain things that are deemed good. Since they believe they assisted God by their will or decision in their salvation, they now operate on the premise that God assists them in their pious life. They assert that God played a primary role in their salvation but now the major role in righteousness belongs to them, with God assisting when they need assistance. They firmly believe that salvation and the “Christian life” are a kind of partnership (or cooperation) between God and man. Since they hold that salvation is but a beginning, they have invented quick and efficient means to (in their minds) accomplish it, get it out of the way, and get on with the important business of salvation, such as the higher life,

deeper life, or ways to achieve deeper commitment. We see evidence of this everywhere: simple plans of salvation, public profession by aisle-trotting, self-help books about how to get started or about finding the purposeful life; they all have little or nothing to do with salvation, but rather serve only to dress Adam's carcass in a saintly suit of splendid sins.

What Paul called the "glorious gospel" and the "unsearchable riches of Christ" is put on a backburner while the "mulligan stew" of the "Christian Life" simmers over the flames of personal merit. But the believer—the sinner saved by grace—knowing what he is by birth and that the great gulf between himself and God has been bridged by Christ, is ever-mindful of the wonder of his salvation. John Newton wrote "Amazing Grace" because he never got over the fact that God had been gracious to a slaver—a seller of men—and turned him into a fisher of men. The believer knows his circumstances were so dire, his ruin so complete, his condemnation so just, that only an act of supreme, sovereign power could pluck him from the abyss of hopeless despair, what Bunyan called the "slough of despond." So, at any given moment, the believer's mind is occupied with this great and wondrous thing called "salvation."

In this passage, Nathan is directed to rehearse to David just how He came to be the king. This pictures the salvation of every sinner whom God has sovereignly brought to Christ. As we look at these words the first thing to notice is that there is zero action or even mindfulness on the part of David. The first word from God is "I." God is the Alpha and Omega of salvation. Here the believer joys to replay his salvation because he knows that the One who has undertaken his cause is none other than the great "I AM." The great "I," the One that the Greek philosophers called "Ens" or "the being," is the same who declared "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions" (Isa. 43:25). Concerning your salvation, Nathan and every gospel

preacher reports the word of God, declaring how God has saved His people by addressing five basic and essential truths.

1. “I took thee....” (v.8). This word “took” covers a multitude of words that teach the electing grace of God, words like “buy,” “receive,” “marry,” and “fetch” are but a few. It can mean “draw as a net or sword” (John 6:44; Jer. 31:3¹). The sinner does not fetch himself; God takes him and apprehends him. Jehoiada Brewer wrote in *Hail, Sovereign Love*, “But thus the eternal council ran, ‘Almighty Love, arrest that man!’”

2. “I established thee....” (v.8). When our Lord speaks of taking David from the sheepfold to the throne, he is speaking in extremes. He is speaking in terms that generally are not considered except in dreams and fantasies. Rags-to-riches stories are few and far between and generally speak of the determination of the man in rags that bring him, through much effort, to the place of riches. These words declare that it is God who takes the sinner from rags to riches. What conceivable distance describes your happy estate? It may seem equidistant to the condescension of the Son of God, who laid aside His Glory to become a man and to be made sin for His people; but as far as we have been brought from our depravity to our sainthood, it does not compare with the great gulf that Christ spanned to save us. He did span that gulf and has established us as kings, to reign with Him on earth. We are what we are by the grace of God. He “has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father” (Rev. 1:6).

¹ John 6:44; No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Jer. 31:3; The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

3. “I escorted thee....” (v. 9). He is with His people, in every situation, no matter what it is (Isa. 43:1-2¹). The steps of the good man are ordered by the Lord. The distance from ruin to reign is in Christ (John 14:6²—“way” means “road,” “journey,” “distance,” and implies progress made).

4. “I eliminated your enemies....” (v. 9). He bruised and defeated Satan, fulfilled the Law, and abolished its rights over you (Col. 2:13-14; Rom. 6:14³), overcame the penalty, guilt, and power of sin, and silenced your conscience (Isa. 54:16-17⁴).

5. “I exalted you....” (v. 9). He humbled us and exalted us (1 Sam. 2:6-11⁵).

¹ Isa. 43:1-2; But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

² John 14:6; Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

³ Col. 2:13-14; And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.

Rom. 6:14; For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

⁴ Isa. 54:16-17; Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.

⁵ 1 Sam. 2:6-11; The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifeth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifeth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he

He did it all (Heb. 13:20-21¹).

thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed. And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest.

¹ **Heb. 13:20-21**; Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever.

PRAYER'S PURPOSE

2 SAMUEL 7:18-29

18, Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who am I, O LORD God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?

19, And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O LORD God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O LORD God?

20, And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, LORD God, knowest thy servant.

21, For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them.

22, Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

23, And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods?

24, For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever: and thou, LORD, art become their God.

25, And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said.

26, And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee.

27, For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an

house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee.

28, And now, O LORD God, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant:

29, Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O LORD God, hast spoken it: and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.

Prayer is a subject of various interpretations and machinations in this religious world. There is a plethora of opinion on the subject. Prayer is a vital tool in the commerce of religion. Men and women who claim to have “power of prayer” bilk millions of dollars out of the ignorant masses with trinkets such as prayer cloths, prayer mugs, and prayer rugs that have been prayed over by some charlatan cleric, supposedly possessing some inside line to God. Others come on the TV with their desks covered with prayer requests and weep and slobber over them, some even going so far as to command God to answer. Of course, the preacher’s prayers have already been answered: The requests have come with a bounty of the faithful’s filthy lucre as an expression of the requestor’s hope.

One famous preacher who was caught with his hand in the till claimed temporary insanity caused by absorption of the printer’s ink found on the abundance of prayer requests. Other inventions concerning invoking God are things like prayer chains, which are designed with the idea of “ganging up” on God, or the “sinner’s prayer” designed to put in the fix for someone in “getting saved.” There is the ever-so-popular “prayin’ through,” which suggests that length and fervency of the prayer will surely activate God. Another is “being prayed up,” as if to say that prayer is a commodity,

and somewhere there is a receptacle that can be filled to ensure a blessed life. Not long ago a fellow who apparently enjoyed the preaching said to me, “You must be prayed up.” I told him that I was not sure what that meant.

In these practices is the underlying notion that God is not ready to give to His people but is withholding grace until the petitioner works up a sweat to get it. Prayer is often the theme of self-justifiers who preface the explanation of doing what they want to do or have already done by saying, “I’ve prayed about this.” This is designed to give credence to their action and to quell any possible negative response. Prayer is not a tool of commerce. Prayer is not a sacrament that opens the floodgates of favor whereby grace is transported to the supplicant.

I know that the Scriptures teach us to “ask, and it shall be given,” and that to ask in the name of Christ is a guarantee from God that your request will be granted, and believers should avail themselves to their God. What must be noted is that this element of prayer is underwritten by the sense of need and dependence upon God. Those admonitions were not given to ensure personal gain but rather were given to needy sinners as an assurance of help in a time of need. Many use prayer as an objection to predestination and sovereign providence. It *is* reasonable to wonder about the place of prayer as to how it fits within the concept of predestination and providence. These two things do not fit the scheme of natural logic, and that is because natural logic assumes that to do such a thing as praying surely must have a qualitative recompense. The common question asked is, “If God controls all things by His sovereign will, why pray?”

Before us in this passage is a prayer of David. God has told him, through Nathan the prophet, that though he will not build God’s house, God will build his house and make his name great in perpetuity. This is a promise (and

therefore a guarantee) that these things will come to pass. God has predetermined (or predestinated) that these things will be done for David's house, so David is assured that what God has promised, He will also perform. David does not doubt God, yet immediately upon that absolute assurance from God, we find David in prayer (v. 18). The text says that David sat before the LORD. The Targum interprets the Hebrew as "King David came and continued in prayer before the Lord."

Evidently, the knowledge of predestination did not hinder David from praying. To the contrary, the words of David declare that the assurance of his future estate, and that of his house as well with all Israel, was the catalyst and reason why he prayed ("therefore" in verse 27). The knowledge that his destiny was established did not cause David to sit down and twiddle his thumbs until it came to fruition. Rather—in a wonder that defies human logic and lays the ax to the root of false Christianity's assertion that its prayers have power—David, because God is the sovereign arranger, discovers that his heart longs to pray to God. Could it be that true prayer is born in the understanding that God is absolutely sovereign? I know that true prayer depends on the belief that God is absolutely sovereign! I ask, "Why pray?" but my question is directed to those who do not believe God is in control. Why pray to Him if He is not in absolute control?

David's prayer is an example of why we pray. Prayer is a form of worship. Most of the times in Scripture when we see the word "worship" it has to do with public worship, but every time you see the word "prayer" or "pray" in Scripture it has to do with private and personal worship. Worship is praising God and thanking God for what He has done and what He has promised. It is a matter of the heart, so it has little to do with posture and everything to do with giving God His due. There is an acronym that is often applied to

prayer, which is ACTS: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication. These things speak to worship. David's prayer is an outline of what to pray and why to pray. David sat down and worshipped the Lord.

Verse 18 is a confession that his unworthiness is not a hindrance to God's grace, and it is praise and thanksgiving for that sovereign grace.

Verse 19 is praise and thanksgiving for the promise of the Messiah. The phrase "for a great while to come" is the same language applied to Christ by the Father concerning time invested only in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. Also, this is a proclamation that God's gracious dealings with the unworthy are not like the dealings of men (v. 19).

Verse 20 is a confession that David's words are not intended to change anything, but rather are spoken with an understanding that God knows what is in his heart (Psa. 139:4; Matt. 6:8).

Verse 21 is a declaration that what David knows is by divine revelation.

Verses 22-29 are praise and thanksgiving for God's sovereignty in salvation. The last phrase is the reason for the fact of prayer. Men pray because of what God has promised, and He has also established that His people will ask him for it (Ezek. 36:37¹). God's providence is wonderful in its complexity and in its simplicity. Detail upon detail is ordained, and it is no minor detail that God has ordained that His people will ask Him for it. Thus we see that prayer is not employed to change things but employed by God in the accomplishment of His purpose. God ordained my salvation for all eternity, and He put it in my mother's heart to pray for it.

¹ Ezek. 36:37; Thus saith the LORD God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.

Consider Paul, who also knew that God would save the elect. The most profound exposition of that fact is seen in Romans 8 and 9. Salvation belongs to God and Paul knew it, and we find him praying in the first three verses in chapter 9. Prayer is worship and praise, and since God put the desire to pray in the heart of His people, we can be sure that it is ordained for the accomplishment of His purpose. Men ought to pray and not to faint, and to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17).

PRAYER FROM KNOWING

2 SAMUEL 7:22-29

22, Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

23, And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods?

24, For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever: and thou, LORD, art become their God.

25, And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said.

26, And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee.

27, For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee.

28, And now, O LORD God, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant:

29, Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O LORD God, hast spoken it: and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.

This prayer of David is a jewel of theological understanding. This prayer is a prayer of one who knows with whom he is speaking and it suggests a real and vital principle of prayer: In order to truly pray, you must know God. This does not discount the multitude of invocations offered and the pleas made to the throne by those who are in dire circumstance. Men and women who otherwise have no interest in Christ have, in times of severe straits, called upon God for help.

There are some who take the words of the Pharisees in John 9 as a theological tenet (John 9:31). Their words are not theological tenet. Their words were spoken to disavow Christ as to healing this blind man by the power and will of God. Any and every effort to deny Christ cannot be used as a viable theological tenet. Does God hear and sometimes answer the prayers of the oppressed and diseased, though throughout their lives they have no real interest in Him? I do not know for sure, but our Lord healed nine lepers once and only one returned to thank Him. Now, this fact does not qualify as a theological tenet either. Even children of God can be unthankful yet receive the blessing of God.

However, I think it does suggest a broader truth: The rain and the sunshine fall on the just and the unjust, but they fall for the just. Proximity to the believer often ensures that the unbeliever, next door, will benefit from the sustenance poured out upon the believer. Though the plowing of the wicked is an abomination to God, when the rain falls on the field of the elect, the infidel gets his crops fed too. The fact is that humanity, both elect and non-elect, are in the hands of the mediator, Jesus Christ. They live and breathe and prosper in this world because they are under the authority of the mediator, that He would “give eternal life to as many as God has given him” (John 17:2). Therefore, their survival and existence are owed to the fact that there is an elect multitude that must be brought to Christ, and without

the wicked either knowing or volunteering, they are used of God for the benefit of the elect. They are not in Hell yet because the elect are still in the earth (Rom. 9:22-24¹). I said all that in order to say this: David's prayer is the prayer of a man who knows God. His prayer is true prayer.

David knows God the only way a sinner can know God—by divine revelation (v. 21; Matt. 11:27²). That revelation exists in a single manner (v. 22 “LORD”). This is Jehovah, the name employed by the saved people; Jehovah Savior—those who know God in this capacity are those whom God has redeemed (v. 23c). Those who know God in this capacity are those who have heard the gospel with the hearing ear of God-given faith (22c; Rom. 10:14-17³). This is the way a person knows God, and the prayer he offers reveals that he does.

The description of God that David renders is a repetition of how God, throughout Scripture, defines Himself. When the believer describes God, he does not venture into the cloudy realm of imagination and fantasy. He has neither right nor warrant to do so (Prov. 30:5-6⁴).

¹ **Rom. 9:22-24**; What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

² **Matt. 11:27**; All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

³ **Rom. 10:14-17**; How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

⁴ **Prov. 30:5-6**; Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

The believer does not compare God with anything or anyone because there is no comparison. God is like nothing or no one else.

The prayer of David, inspired and recorded for us by the Holy Spirit, is a declaration of the glory and magnificence of his Sovereign, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 22. “Wherefore thou art *great*, O Lord God.” “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness” (Ps. 48:1-2). “And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the LORD God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:31-33).

Verse 22bc. The Glory and magnificence of Christ is *singular*. There is “none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee.” “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

Verse 23. The Glory and magnificence of Christ is that of *Redeemer* (Luke. 1:68; Gal 3:13; 1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 5:9¹).

Verse 24. The glory and magnificence of Christ is that of *establisher*. “*He* hath confirmed.” “For thou hast confirmed to *thyself* thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever” (Deut. 26:18). “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation

¹ **Luke. 1:68**; Blessed be the LORD God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people.

Gal 3:13; Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.

1 Pet. 1:19; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Rev. 5:9, And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

of the world” (Matt. 25:34). “And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory” (Rom. 9:23). “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Cor. 2:9). “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev. 21:2).

Verse 26. “And let thy name be magnified for ever.” All glory is due to Christ alone. (See Ps. 29 and Isa. 40:9-31). “And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” (Dan. 4:34-35).

CONQUERING

2 SAMUEL 8

1, And after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Methegammah out of the hand of the Philistines.

2, And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive. And so the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts.

3, David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates.

4, And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: and David houghed all the chariot horses, but reserved of them for an hundred chariots.

5, And when the Syrians of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men.

6, Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts. And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.

7, And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem.

8, And from Betah, and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, king David took exceeding much brass.

9, When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer,

10, Then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David, to salute him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him: for Hadadezer had

wars with Toi. And Joram brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass:

11, Which also king David did dedicate unto the LORD, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued;

12, Of Syria, and of Moab, and of the children of Ammon, and of the Philistines, and of Amalek, and of the spoil of Hadadezer, son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

13, And David gat him a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of salt, being eighteen thousand men.

14, And he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all they of Edom became David's servants. And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.

15, And David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people.

16, And Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the host; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder;

17, And Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, were the priests; and Seraiah was the scribe;

18, And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief rulers.

This chapter is the record of David, having had his enemies put down by the Lord, now pursuing the promise given to Abraham to possess the lands of Canaan even to the river Euphrates. David is not operating against an attacking enemy, nor is he conquering for the purpose of war; he is taking care of unfinished business, the business of realizing a promise and fulfilling a prophecy. Figuratively and typically, this is a double picture of Christ having conquered and conquering still, and it is also a picture of the church going into the world with the gospel, having every enemy destroyed by the work of Christ.

She marches under divine authority, undergirded with the power of God, to lay claim to what was lost by Adam in the fall. This is the church militant, armed not with carnal weapons of warfare, but with the Sword of the Word, piercing the hearts of men with the truth, executing justice, and revealing mercy. The gospel is not a religious “play pretty;” it is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16¹) and unto condemnation, for therein is both the righteousness and the judgment of God revealed. The historical aspect of these victories pale in comparison to the spiritual victories they portray.

First, this chapter begins with David going for the head of the snake (v. 1). He takes Methegammah, a major city whose name means “the bridle of Ammah,” or in other words, that which controls Ammah and turns it here and there. With this city sacked, the Philistines have no central authority, no prince of power to govern their ways. What a picture this is of our Lord bruising the serpent’s head, casting Satan down by the power of His substitutionary sacrifice (Gen. 3:15; Eph. 2:1-4²).

Second, the destruction of the old enemy of Israel, the Moabites, is significant on many levels. First, it was a

¹ **Rom. 1:16;** For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

² **Gen. 3:15;** And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Eph. 2:1-4; And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.

fulfillment of the prophecy of Balaam (Num. 24:17¹). It was yet a greater prophecy of the coming of Christ and His victory over everyone that opposes God. Secondly, this lining up of the enemy in two lines, one for death and another for life, is an example of a couple of things.

It is a bold statement that the authority over life and death belongs to the king. Conceptually, the idea of such authority being vested in one man is difficult for Americans. The fact is that David put these conquered soldiers in two lines. One line he slew, and the other he allowed to live and made them his servants. That authority, which is commonly put in the hands of fallible men, is fully and righteously realized in the hands of the King of kings (Rev. 1:18²).

Derivatively, that authority is in the gospel that is placed in the hands of the children of God (2 Cor. 2:14-17³). The world is completely ignorant of the fact that those who they mock and abuse hold in their hands and heart that which determines their eternal destiny. The day of reckoning will be a hard day for the infidel. But also in this incident is another picture. Every enemy of God deserves to die; their crimes are capitol in nature, and yet, in wrath, mercy was remembered. Again we see that mercy and grace are sovereign attributes of God (Rom. 9:14-18⁴).

¹ Num. 24:17; I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.

² Rev. 1:18; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

³ 2 Cor. 2:14-17; Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

⁴ Rom. 9:14-18; What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will

Third, the “houghing” (v. 4: means “hamstrung”) of the horses was to prevent them from being used in war, but it was first an obedience to the Lord commands, so that Israel would not trust in the power of men but in the power of God (Josh. 11:6; Deut. 17:16; Isa. 31:1¹).

Fourth, the gifts of gold, silver and brass, David dedicated to the Lord, sanctified for the Lord’s use. It would be used in the building of the temple in Solomon’s day (v. 11; 1 Kings 7:51²). This pictures the children of God laying up their treasures in heaven, where moth and rust doth not corrupt (Matt. 6:19³).

Fifth, verse 13 is the fulfillment of promise (2 Sam. 7:9). It is also a prophecy of the coming King, whose name is above every name (Acts 3:16; 4:10-12⁴).

have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

¹ **Josh. 11:6;** And the LORD said unto Joshua, Be not afraid because of them: for to morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire.

Deut. 17:16; But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.

Isa. 31:1; Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!

² **1 Kings 7:51,** So was ended all the work that king Solomon made for the house of the LORD. And Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated; even the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, did he put among the treasures of the house of the LORD.

³ **Matt. 6:19,** Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.

⁴ **Acts 3:16;** And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Sixth, “Edom” literally means “red.” It comes from the name “Adam,” which means “red man,” or “man of the earth” (1 Cor. 15:47-48¹). In verse 14 we see David putting garrisons in Edom. A garrison is a deputy or prefect. It is a high official put in place to subdue insurrection or sedition. This is a beautiful picture of the indwelling Spirit of Christ. Our “red dirt man”—our Adamic nature, our carnal nature—is subdued by the Spirit of God, the divine sovereign deputy, the absolute prefect, by whom we mortify the deeds of the flesh (Rom. 8:13-14²), the Edom, the “red dirt man” in all of us. God the Spirit is our garrison. Also in this verse we see the prevailing power that assured the victories of David. God preserved him. One of the doctrines that composes the Doctrine of Grace is the preservation of the saints. Like the old preacher said, “God preserves His people, and everybody that has put up preserves knows they don’t spoil, they just turn to sugar and get sweet as the days go by.”

Finally, in verse 15 the accolade laid upon David is purely a reference to Jesus Christ (Isa. 9:6-7; 11:5; 42:1-4; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16³).

4:10-12, Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

¹ 1 Cor. 15:47-48, The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

² Rom. 8:13-14, For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

³ Isa. 9:6-7; For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish

it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

11:5; And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

42:1-4; Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

Jer. 23:5-6; Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

33:15-16; In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, **The LORD our righteousness.**

TO MINISTER TO

2 SAMUEL 9

1, And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?

2, And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he.

3, And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet.

4, And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lodebar.

5, Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lodebar.

6, Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant!

7, And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.

8, And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?

9, Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house.

10, Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the

fruits, that thy master's son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat bread alway at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.

11, Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons.

12, And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Micha. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth.

13, So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet.

This is, plain and simple, the story of grace, sovereign grace. In this chapter, David is a picture of the heavenly David, the anointed King of kings, who of His own will and according to His merciful heart sought out and found one to whom He would show kindness and tender mercies.

1. Why show mercy to anyone in Saul's lineage? David would show kindness because of a promise he made. He promised Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:14-17¹). This promise was a covenant promise (1 Sam. 18:3²). The object of this grace was Mephibosheth who was, being the son of Jonathan, a rightful heir to the throne of Saul. This fact shows further the illegitimacy of Abner making Ishbosheth king. This is a

¹ 1 Sam. 20:14-17; And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not: But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies. And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.

² 1 Sam. 18:3; Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

picture of Christ coming to save those whom God, in covenant love, had promised to make heirs of salvation.

2. Where Mephibosheth resided is a picture of the desperate condition of humanity. He was in Lodebar (v. 4). This means a place of no pasture, which is metaphorical language describing what it is to be in a state of unrest, without Christ (John 10:9; Zeph. 3:13¹). It speaks of a dry, arid place without water—without Christ, who is the water of life.

3. Mephibosheth's physical condition pictures the spiritual deadness and inability and impotency of humanity (v. 3c; dead in trespasses and sin, lame, halting, diseased, ruined, impotent, and undone). He was lame in both feet. He became lame in a fall (2 Samuel 4:4²).

4. Mephibosheth was, naturally speaking, a condemned man. He was in line for the throne of David's former enemy, who was now dead. The family of the dead king was considered to be nits and were to be killed before they became lice. All that Mephibosheth could possibly expect, as far as he could understand, was the hostility and vengeance of David, and rightly so. Even though David had merciful designs on Mephibosheth, Mephibosheth did not know it and had no reason to think that such a thing could be. Is God angry with the elect? No, but until grace comes, the elect do not know that God has gracious intents toward them and have no reason to believe that they are not under His wrath. What can we say about God's love? Of what

¹ John 10:9; I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

Zeph. 3:13; The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.

² 2 Samuel 4:4; And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that was lame of his feet. He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.

value is God's love if, as it is preached in false Christianity, those He loves can perish in hell?

5. Grace, however, does not address men's ability as to its power or intent. This is David the *king*: If *he* will show grace, it will come as sovereign edict. ("I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" Matt. 20:28.) Grace is unstoppable. David does not appeal to Mephibosheth's will or his ability. David is about to be kind, and no force on earth can withhold him. David "sent and fetched him" from Lodebar (v. 5). He fetches him from where he was. He does not invite him, offer him anything, and he does not request Mephibosheth's cooperation. David fetches him as a shepherd fetches a lost sheep. This verb "fetched" is in the imperfect tense. The imperfect tense not only states the fact of a thing but also addresses the process, adding color and light and inflection. In this tense, the meaning is that David "took him by the hand and brought him," the action being David's alone (the same as our salvation).

6. When Mephibosheth is brought before David he does not come with a sense of entitlement. He takes the posture of every sinner who has been fetched by grace. He hits the dirt and reveres the King. He does not plead his cause but rather bows down and waits for the word of the king. Whether he has been told that the king would show him kindness or not is not known. Either way the posture is the same. Religion has been successful in convincing men that Jesus is a pitiful character, on a cross or in a manger, or thwarted in His efforts to save mankind, and so they approach without fear. But Jesus is Lord, and if you are found of Him, He will be approached as such. David calls Mephibosheth by name (John 10:27¹) and Mephibosheth's

¹ John 10:27; My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

response was, “behold thy servant.” He takes the position of submission.

7. Immediately, David quells the fears of Mephibosheth. “Fear not, I’m going to do you good. I will shew you kindness.” What joy fills the heart to hear the king say “I will.” No matter the prattle of the naysayers or the cries of the legalists of “show me some evidence of your worthiness,” the king has said “I will be kind to you.” This is the heart of the gospel. God will be merciful to His people, His chosen, His elect, His fetched.” “I will do them good,” says the Lord (Jer. 32: 38-41¹). David says, “I will return all you lost in your dead father’s rebellion. You are coming to live in my house as the king’s son” (Gal. 4:7, adopted into God’s family).

8. Mephibosheth’s response to this unbelievable grace and mercy—“I am but a dead dog, I have nothing to offer, I can be of no help to you, I can add nothing to you”—is an evidence of grace. Grace gives, and it asks nothing in return. Christ came into this world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15²). Grace strips the sinner and shuts one up to God!

9. The heritage of Mephibosheth is the heritage of every believer. He sits at the King’s table (v. 13), though as far as his flesh is concerned, he is still lame in both feet. This beautiful picture suggests that, as he sits at the master’s table, his malady cannot be seen.

¹ Jer. 32: 38-41; And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.

² 1 Tim. 1:15; This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

KINDNESS

2 SAMUEL 10:1-5

1, And it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead.

2, Then said David, I will shew kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father shewed kindness unto me. And David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants for his father. And David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon.

3, And the princes of the children of Ammon said unto Hanun their lord, Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? hath not David rather sent his servants unto thee, to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it?

4, Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away.

5, When they told it unto David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed: and the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and then return.

This is the historical account of David showing kindness to the son of a dead king of the Ammonites. Though the incident is not found in Scripture, this now-dead king had shown kindness to David when he was fleeing from Saul. We do know that in 1 Samuel it is recorded that Saul had delivered Jabeshgilead from the hands of Nahash, the king who had died. This kindness David mentioned could be "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," but whatever it was, it meant enough

to David to send ambassadors to Hanun, to comfort him in the time of his loss. Perhaps David even sent some spoils of war with his servants that Saul had taken from Nahash as proof of his intent. It was seemingly to no avail because, rather than believing David's kindness, his ambassadors were rejected, shamed, and sent on their way. When David heard of his ambassadors being openly disgraced, he had them tarry until they recovered and then return home.

These first five verses of this chapter are a chronological lesson in the eternal covenant of grace. Last study we looked at the gracious treatment of Mephibosheth as an exemplary picture of the sovereignty of God in the salvation of an undeserving sinner. Everything done was by the sovereign will of the king on behalf of the impotent enemy for the sake of one with whom the king had entered into a covenant of promise. Election, predestination, grace and mercy were all preeminently displayed in David's great exhibition of grace. In the verses of our text, the grand scheme of salvation is further revealed. These verses picture the ambassadors of Christ going into the world with the gospel, and the true kindness of God toward all men, though many, because of suspicion, reject the good tidings of great things.

This story begins with the death of a king. The gospel addresses the death of two kings. One king's death plunged the entire company whom he represented into the sorrow and woe of sin. The other King's death marked the recovery of all those whom He represented and resulted in the expiation of their sin and entrance into eternal life. The preaching of the gospel begins with the reason for the gospel. There is absolute proof that sin has entered the world. People die; everybody dies. Men may rename sins and give them less offensive, more palatable definitions, but the fact that sin is in the world is proved by the landmasses

used to entomb the dead (Rom. 5:12-14¹). The fact that there is death also proves that there is transgression of the law because sin is the transgression of the law. Were that the end of the story, the world would lie forever in the throes of despair. But the death of the other King—the King of kings—is the full remedy for sin and death, and that King, now residing at the right hand of God, has sent His ambassadors into the world with the message of comfort and consolation and recovery of all that was lost.

To those who have suffered ruin because of the sin and death of their federal head, the Lord sends his ambassadors with the gospel (2 Cor. 5:19-20²). They are told to preach the gospel to every creature, to spread the word of the gospel throughout the entire world. Some, even among those who believe the report of the sovereign grace of God in salvation, have difficulty as to the intent of God in sending the gospel to those whom He has not purposed to give faith. The enemies of the gospel declare that if God did not intend to save all men when He sent men into the world with the word, then He was not sincere in what the gospel message is. They thus turn the gospel into an offer or an invitation to accept. Sadly, many theologians, in an effort to appease men, try to make the gospel an offer of salvation to all, to explain what they feel is a contradiction between intent and design. This ultimately leads to some idea of God's love

¹ **Rom. 5:12-14**; Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

² **2 Cor. 5:19-20**; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

being an offer, otherwise how can the care and feeding of His creatures be explained? The problem with this thinking is that it approaches things from the wrong end. It seeks to prove the value of God's kindness on the basis of man's ability to accept it.

If man has no ability to accept it, then the intent of that kindness must be questioned. Taking our text as an example, the question that clears up the whole mess is, "Did David intend to offer kindness or did he actually show kindness?" In other words, when God sends His preachers into the world with the gospel, is He showing kindness or merely intending to offer kindness?

One scenario declares the gospel and its results as finished and done, and it resides in the hands of the unchangeable God; the other scenario presents the gospel and its results to be an undone and unfinished thing that is left to the will of men. Christ said, "It is finished," and I'm going to take His word for it. The preaching of the gospel is God showing kindness to all His creatures. The fact that such good news exists in a hell-deserving world is inestimably and undeniably kindness, fully shown.

In the midst of darkness, God has sent His preachers with light, and that light "lighteth every man," but some love darkness better (John 1:9; 3:19¹). David did not send to fetch the grieving son of the dead king because he had made no covenant with anyone to do so. He sent his messengers with news that he was the source of the mourner's comfort. The ambassadors went with good news, but they were rejected. This passage is about what God's preachers do. They go into the world with a wonderful report; they desire the salvation of everyone they preach to. Their news is good

¹ **John 1:9**; That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

3:19; And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

news to ruined men; to hear of it is the declaration of the kindness of God. Further proof that God is showing kindness: Those who reject the gospel and even seek to shame the preachers of it are not immediately destroyed. Why not? Because they are in the hands of the Mediator of that gospel covenant, until that day when all accounts are finally settled.

This is also ample proof that the kindness of God does not prevent men from obtaining salvation. The covenant assures the salvation of the elect, but it also does not prevent the salvation of those who have no part in the covenant. The gospel is a report saying that God has been good to sinners. Those who bring that message seek the conversion of their hearers. If the preachers and their message are rejected, the fact of the good news is not changed, nor the fact that God is kind to all not changed. Nor does the fact that the elect have been redeemed, and some have no use for it, change the kindness of God (Titus 3:3-7¹). Preachers bring with them the proof of God's kindness, not the offer of that kindness. David's servants brought with them the proof of his kindness, not the offer of it. God is good. He is good to all His creatures, and the gospel in the world is proof of it.

But David's servants and their free gift were rejected. Why? Why is it that when you tell people of the free gift of sovereign grace, that they have to do nothing to receive it, that they reject it? Men are naturally suspicious. We know this from the temptation of Eve. The serpent was able to convince Eve that God was hiding something, that if she

¹ Titus 3:3-7; For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

would do something she could get and be more. The serpent was saying that the only way to get more than she had was by her will. God had given her all. Satan offered her more. The fact that she responded favorably to the serpent's temptation was proof that suspicion is part of human nature. God's preachers preach full, complete salvation by Christ. Apart from a work of sovereign grace men are suspicious. They cannot receive that which excludes them from earning what they obtain (How easy is it for you to receive help). How many times I've heard men say "It can't be that simple." Men fear that those whom God has sent, will discover them. God's preachers seem like spies, because what they preach discovers the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The treatment of David's ambassadors is very telling. They do two things to these preachers, and they do them publicly. First, they shave off half their beards. For the ambassadors, it is a symbol of shame and repentance or disdain. They are being publicly displayed as liars in their effort to deliver the free gift from their king. For the persecutors, this action is a means of public mocking, a kind of side-show humiliation. They also cut their robes off at the waist to expose their buttocks. This was a common tactic in the East and in Rome designed to publicly humiliate, and was especially practical in the humiliation of those who sought to be modest. Metaphorically, this act presents the manner in which the preacher is often humiliated. His hinder pads—his past, what he has done—is exposed in order to bring into question his fitness to speak for God.

Finally, we see that the Lord will take care of His own. When David finds out what has been done to his servants, he tells them to tarry until evidence of their shame is removed (v. 5). Though they are humiliated and hated by the world, they are loved by their master. He fixes it so that

their shame is put away, fixes it so that their shame is covered. Though the accusers and persecutors might make charges, the targets of their hatred are hidden by the King, and the servants will come out of the ordeal with everything intact and the message unchanged (Isa. 54:17; Matt. 5:10-12; Rom. 8:33-39¹).

¹ Isa. 54:17; No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.

Matt. 5:10-12; Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Rom. 8:33-39; Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

SAFE HARBOR

2 SAMUEL 10:4-5

4, Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away.

5, When they told it unto David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed: and the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and then return.

In the last study, we saw how that Hunan and the Ammonites abused those who brought the message of good tidings from king David. We saw how that the message of the gospel is that God is gracious, and being a report, it is a finished thing, not affected by the fact that some will reject it. All men by nature reject the gospel. God has ensured that some people (His elect) will receive the truth and be delivered by it, but that in no way removes the responsibility of everyone who hears it to believe and repent. The gospel commands belief and repentance, and since no man will naturally believe, God has ordained and provided faith and repentance to a chosen multitude. Men will be religious, will study the Bible, but will not come to Christ for life (John 5:40¹). The will that is connected to the carnal nature will never choose to do anything spiritual. Men do what they love and, by nature, men love darkness rather than light (John 3:19²). If God has given you faith, thank Him that He did not leave you in your romance with

¹ John 5:40; And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

² John 3:19; And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

darkness. Those who bring the message of the goodness of God toward sinners do so with a desire to see men receive it. However, since it is a report of a finished thing, they know that they have nothing to do with the outcome, and therefore do not occupy themselves with the result. The preacher tells out; he does not tally up.

These messengers from the king were maltreated and publicly shamed. They were mocked and slandered, and thus it remains to this day. The message of the gospel does not flatter man; instead, it honors God, and all manner of lies will be lodged against the messengers who bring it (Rom. 3:8¹). The gospel is the report of salvation accomplished, not the declaration that salvation is possible. This grates on the religious nature of merit before God and causes suspicion among unbelievers because it seems unreasonable that the merit of men is not a consideration. In the heart of religious calculation is the false equation that salvation is a reward for good behavior, not a gracious action on behalf of those who have nothing but bad behavior.

The remainder of the story before us is a stern reminder that God will avenge his elect, and part of that vengeance comes as retribution for the ill treatment of His people (Luke 10:16; Ps. 105:15²). It is also the story of natural intractability. Rather than repent for their ill treatment of the king's messengers, when they knew that what they had done made them "stink" before David, they hired mercenaries and formed a confederacy with the enemies of David to war against him. Rather than believe the Christ, Herod and Pilate laid aside their hatred for each other and

¹ Rom. 3:8; And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.

² Luke 10:16; He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

Ps. 105:15; Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.

became friends in enmity against the King of kings. Likewise, the Jews and the gentiles become nations of one accord against the Lord and His anointed. Let the gospel come into play amidst enemies and they will become friends in their war against the truth. But the Lord will settle it all in due time, and even those who have joined forces will turn and devour one another. The Lord will “avenge His elect.”

What I want us to consider now is verses 4 and 5, especially verse 5. These abused and mocked messengers were directed by the king to stay in Jericho “until their beards be grown and then return.” Why Jericho? The city had not yet been rebuilt in its new location. It was a city that lay in ruins. It was virtually uninhabited. It was the first city that had been destroyed as Joshua began to take possession of the Promised Land. Its history is rich in a singular manner: It was there that the great, great, great grandmother of our Lord, a harlot named Rahab, was spared from destruction because she was a chosen vessel of the Lord who had aided the men of Israel sent to reconnoiter the land. She had let them climb down the wall on a scarlet cord and later hung that cord in her window as a safety barrier against destruction. That cord represented Christ and his blood, which is both deliverance and safety. Now the city is little more than rubble, and it is the place where the messengers were to take haven until the evidence of their abuse was no longer visible. Jericho, this leveled city, is safe harbor for the messengers of the King and typically it is safe harbor for the messengers of the gospel. Consider three things about this city as they relate to the accomplishment of the salvation of God’s elect by the substitutionary death of Christ.

First, Jericho was virtually unoccupied. In effect, because no one is there to see their shame, they are no longer shamed. They are not harbored in a populated city where their shame would be evident; they are in a place

where their shame is unnoticed. How this pictures the love of the King of kings; His love covers a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8¹). Likewise, if there are no inhabitants in this city it is because the Lord has put them away—He has silenced the enemy. Who, then, is there to accuse or further mock, condemn, or bring charges (John. 8:1-11; Rom. 8:33-34²)? The children of God live in a “city of refuge” where their fellow inhabitants are just like them. No accuser or foul bird is allowed there, and even among the inhabitants if any such a thing would arise, they are protected by God (Matt. 18:10-11³).

Secondly, Jericho was a place where God has saved His people. Rahab the harlot had been graciously delivered from the wrath and judgment of God. The messengers were where God had been gracious. This pictures Jericho as the church, the place where God has been gracious. It is no small thing that the church is in the world and is a haven for those who have suffered for the cause of Christ. The church is as a fountain opened, a place where God has shown mercy, a place where those who have been shamed by the world can find mercy and peace until all their shame is gone.

Thirdly, Jericho is a place where God’s wrath has been vented. This is a picture of Christ’s accomplished salvation

¹ **1 Pet. 4:8**; And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

² **John. 8:10-11**; When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

Rom. 8:33-34; Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

³ **Matt. 18:10-11** Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

(burnt ground is the safest place in a fire). These men were safe in Jericho because God had already destroyed the place. Believers are safe in Christ because He has already consumed the wrath of God and fulfilled and satisfied justice by His death. He is burnt ground, and in Him no wrath of God will ever touch you. Come judgment of the world, it cannot touch the believer because he has already been judged in Christ; he is on burnt ground; the former has been destroyed. The enemies that inhabited the city are gone and the ersatz king that sat on the throne of that city had been destroyed and disabled, his head crushed under the heel of the savior (Gen. 3:15¹). If you have been abused and shamed by men for preaching the truth, for giving out the report of the finished salvation, be not afraid. God will house you in a place where your shame will not be disclosed, where no accuser will be allowed, a place where His mercy and grace have been manifested, and a place where no wrath or judgment can touch you. Until your wounds are healed and you are ready to return home, you are protected and safe in Christ. Tarry at Jericho till your beards are grown and then return.

¹ **Gen. 3:15**; And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

DAVID'S SIN

2 SAMUEL 11

1, And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.

2, And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.

3, And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?

4, And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.

5, And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child.

6, And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David.

7, And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered.

8, And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king's house, and there followed him a mess of meat from the king.

9, But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house.

10, And when they had told David, saying, Uriah

went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from thy journey? why then didst thou not go down unto thine house?

11, And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.

12, And David said to Uriah, Tarry here to day also, and to morrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow.

13, And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house.

14, And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah.

15, And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.

16, And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men were.

17, And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also.

18, Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war;

19, And charged the messenger, saying, When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king,

20, And if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall?

21, Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him

from the wall, that he died in Thebez? why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

22, So the messenger went, and came and shewed David all that Joab had sent him for.

23, And the messenger said unto David, Surely the men prevailed against us, and came out unto us into the field, and we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate.

24, And the shooters shot from off the wall upon thy servants; and some of the king's servants be dead, and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

25, Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it: and encourage thou him.

26, And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.

27, And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

The biographies that men write are prone to cover up the shady sides of those who they are writing about. The Bible—the blessed truth inspired by God—takes no prisoners when it comes to the matter of disclosing the basest sort of behavior, even among those who are God's beloved and forgiven saints. There is a very basic and important reason that saints are shown, warts and all. Believer's need to be reminded daily that their carnal nature never improves, never changes, and at any moment a saint can and will do the worst kind of sinful things. A believer will do anything an unbeliever will do if God suffers him to be himself and for a moment lifts His restraining hand. David—the apple of God's eye, the man after God's

own heart—by his actions reveals that the integrity of humanity can never be truly trusted. We are all but one glimpse or one thought from utter putrescence. Also, in this chapter we see that the same hand that suffered David to exercise his basest instincts kept Uriah the Hittite in a state of integrity, and his wife to give-in to David.

Most everyone who has spent some time in Christian religion, so-called, is familiar with this episode in the life of David. It has even been the subject of Hollywood movies. But what it teaches is often lost in the seedier side of the episode.

The first lesson is found in verse 1. Though no real accusation is made against David, the wording sets the stage by implication. It is the time of year the kings go to war. David is king, a great warrior, and has sent his army out to battle. With the little conjunction “but,” it is suggested that David’s actions are opposite of what kings generally do. Though we cannot presume to place more emphasis on this than is due, the fact that the Holy Spirit inspired this to be recorded gives us pause, to at least imply that David is not where he should be in his mind. Perhaps this is a subtle warning to keep our thoughts and eyes where they should be lest our carnality begin its treacherous course toward our heart. This verse suggests that David is letting things slip from his grasp. Had he been in the right frame of mind and attending to his duty as warrior king, none of this would have taken place. But by the same note, believers would have not been presented with a necessary lesson in natural depravity.

Verses 2-4 are the account of David's adultery. The Lord said, “But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt. 5:28). From David's rooftop, “he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.” Often these washings were more

than just a bath and probably involved purification from some ceremonial pollution. She was a believer. Was she taken advantage of? Surely. Was she guiltless? Surely not.

What follows is the lesson that sin has a beginning and an end. It is a progressive process that begins with a look and ends in death. This is a clear representation of—

James 1:13-16.

13, Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

14, But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

15, Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

16, Do not err, my beloved brethren.

In verse 1 of our study's text, Davis's actions reveal a lapse in responsibility. David's responsibility was to be with his troops in battle, not taking an afternoon nap. He was not tempted of God to lust after this woman (James 1:13). Had he been where a king was supposed to be, this could not have taken place.

In verse 2, He lusted from his heart. This was revealed in the lust of his eyes. He was tempted when he was drawn away with his own lust, enticed (Jas. 1:14).

The law said, "thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife." A man covets what he sees but does not have. Covetousness begins with a look ("whosoever *looketh* on a woman to lust after her" (Matt. 5:28)). David, acting on the impulse generated in his heart, lust fully conceived, began a scenario that was initiated in sin and consummated in death (Jas. 1:15¹).

¹ Jas. 1:15; Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

When Bathsheba was found pregnant. David tried to cover up his adultery by bringing her husband, Uriah, back from the war-front and having him sleep with his wife and account that the baby was a result of their conjugal visit. Uriah, being a soldier and knowing his duty was not connubial congress but to be at the front with his fellow soldiers, refused to bed Bathsheba (vv. 6-11).

David's first cover story foiled, he involved another (Joab) to hide his deed from public knowledge. He told Joab to put Uriah in the heat of the battle—so he would be killed. And so it was (vv. 14-17; Jas. 1:15). Having accomplished his callous cover-up, David's vile self-justification is clearly revealed. When the report of Uriah's demise reaches his ears, he as much as says, "Well that's war for you, people die" (v. 25). David is off the hook.

The entire episode is labeled for what it is in verse 27, "But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord." In this sad scenario, David, for a moment, David, the man after God's own heart, joined the ranks of so many of the kings of Israel who "did evil in the sight of the Lord."

YOU ARE THE MAN

2 SAMUEL 12:1-14

1, And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.

2, The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds:

3, But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

4, And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

5, And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die:

6, And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

7, And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;

8, And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

9, Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his

wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

10, Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

11, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.

12, For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

13, And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

14, Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

Chapter 12 should begin with the last phrase of verse 27 in chapter 11, “But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.” The meaning of this sentence is that what David did was evil in the sight of the Lord. That which had been done in secret was not hidden from God, and each step committed by David to cover up his deeds was glaringly exposed before the omniscient God. I think it is important to note that the Holy Spirit designates the “thing,” the sins, as that which is evil, and later that which meets with great consequence.

The Lord suffered David to act in his own self-interest and self-indulgence for a time, but also suffered David’s sin to follow its natural course and to attain its natural end. Throughout this, David’s standing before God did not change, though clearly his relationship with God was marred. This is an important thing to consider and know,

but such knowledge will only be important to those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious (1 Pet. 2:3¹). David suffers the conviction of soul that attends the believer when he strays from God, but it is his sin that will bear the providential rod of God's displeasure (Ps. 89:30-35). Believers suffer because of sin, but they do not suffer legally at the hand of God; rather they suffer the consequences of their actions as a reasonable corollary effect of sin itself. Mark well that if David had been dealt with legally, he would be dead, because he had broken the sixth and seventh commandments and his sin fell under the sentence of death (Gen. 9:6; Ex. 20:13-14; Lev. 20:10²).

At the opening of this chapter, we find (at least suggested) David in a state of calm and ease. He thinks that he has pulled it off. There is no mention of remorse or repentance for his awful deeds. He has practiced the age-old art of self-deceit born with the fall of Adam. He has justified himself to himself, and the reason that men do that is to establish a self-righteousness (Luke 10:29³). Self-justification is self-righteousness, and it is a burning stench in the nostrils of God. One of the reasons this is clear is David's righteously indignant reaction to the parable of Nathan (vv. 5-6). It seems over-the-top until you realize that divine providence and the word of God had brought David to the place of self-condemnation. Thievery is not a crime that is punishable by death, but David says that such a one shall surely die. Verse 6 is the proper punishment for thievery, but David's fiery indignation comes from a place of

¹ 1 Pet. 2:3; If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

² Gen. 9:6; Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man. Ex. 20:13-14; Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Lev. 20:10; And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

³ Luke 10:29; But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

self-righteousness. Also, it is evident that self-deceit is the state of David's heart because there is no indication that the man sent from God to David is a troubling thing to David at all. Even when the story is told, David does not make the connection. The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. Who can know it? (Jer. 17:9¹). Mark well that when a believer whose eyes are on Christ hears of some horrid sin, his first consideration is his own sin. He points the finger of accusation at himself and not another. Seeing David's reaction reveals that he is not looking to Christ (Luke 18:9²).

When the preacher brings the truth home to David and the Holy Spirit shatters David's heart, hardened to stone by self-justification, we see things come to their proper light (vv. 7-9). It is not conscience that is awakened but rather his spirit is stirred from the narcotic of self-delusion to see what is true.

In vv. 10-12 and 14, the consequence of sin is clearly seen. David will not spend his reign as the builder of Israel but rather as the warrior of Israel. The sword that occupied David's hand in the murder of Uriah was actually the employment of the enemies of Israel. There is no honor among thieves. David, by doing what he did, acted as the enemy of God. His collusion made him a confederate of the Ammonites, and they became the sword in David's hand. Because of that, David will see nothing but battle for the remainder of his days. Secondly, his own household will betray him, and his wives will be whored out before his eyes. This may seem a hard punishment from God, but in truth it is God suffering sin to run its course. Could David expect anything less from his own murderous and adulterous

¹ Jer. 17:9; The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

² Luke 18:9; And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.

behavior? Sin begets sin. Also, God declares that the consequences will not be hidden in a corner but will be made in public display. This will assure that even if the details of David's sin are not disclosed, the trouble that visits his house will be the fodder of gossipers and whisperers.

Also, David's actions and the visible consequences give occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme God. How so? They blaspheme God by declaring that He cannot be much of a God if His people act accordingly as David had. This is a religious reaction, born of ignorance of grace, but it is nonetheless a reasonable reaction, a logical conclusion of the carnal mind. Remember this, that in everything you do, say, or react to, if you are a believer, the finger of accusation from religion and the world will be pointed at the gospel you profess and the God you worship. The world's religion waits patiently, but with bated breath, to see the believer of the gospel give opportunity to question the doctrine of grace.

Finally, as to the consequence of sin: The child born of the illicit relationship will not live (v. 14). Is there a more obvious conclusion to the fact that when lust is conceived, it brings forth death? Also, does not this infant's death reverberate with the truth that "that which is born of the flesh is flesh?"

With all the sadness and sinfulness that plays into this story, it is still (and wonderfully so) a story of grace, revealed in simplicity. When David is finally brought to point the finger of blame at himself, his repentance is met with wonderful words of life. The phrase "hath put away" (v. 13) actually means "hath passed over," and is no vague reference to the paschal lamb, which is Christ. David's words of repentance reveal the understanding of the heart touched by grace. "I have sinned against the Lord" (v. 13). All he had done against Bathsheba, Uriah, Joab, and Israel was against God only, and the word from God is that your sin has been

passed over because of the blood of the Lamb (Psa. 51:1-12¹). He shall not die. Why? Because the law has been satisfied for him (Gal. 3:13²).

¹ **Psa. 51:1-12**; To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

² **Gal. 3:13**; Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.

WAGES

2 SAMUEL 12:14-23

14, Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

15, And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick.

16, David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.

17, And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them.

18, And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead?

19, But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead.

20, Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat.

21, Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread.

22, And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?

23, But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

The life and times of David are made richer for us because many of the occurrences in his life are accompanied by a psalm that defines his heart at the time of the occurrence. The 51st psalm was probably penned during this time of great sadness that was brought about by David's sin. The introduction to the psalm put the time of its writing when David was visited by Nathan. Certain phrases suggest that the psalm was written during the time before the child died, as David seems to be resigned to the fact that God would take the child (Ps. 51:4¹). What we know from the psalm is that David had true remorse and true repentance for the horrible deeds he had done and that he was the cause of blasphemy against God. There is a great deal for us in this account in 2 Samuel.

The visitation of God against David's transgression is that the child born of the adultery of David and Bathsheba will die (v. 14). This passage covers the seven days that the child lived and David's reaction to the judgment of God while the child lived until the child dies.

The word "and" at the beginning of verse 15 suggests an immediacy and continuation of the last phrase of verse 14. Nathan, as soon as he told David of the child's destiny, departed from the presence of the king. There was no counsel given, no prayer, no sermon on repentance, and no

¹ Ps. 51:4; Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

effort to make David take the place of the penitent. Neither did Nathan wait to see some sort of evidence that David's acknowledgement of his sin was true and heartfelt. He had told David of his sin, had heard and accepted David's acknowledgement, had declared the gospel in that God had forgiven David and that he would not die, though his sin was legally a capital offense, had told David of the consequence of his sin (the child's demise), and then had simply walked away. This is the real picture of what the preacher of the gospel does. It is not his job nor his calling to look for, wait for, or bring about any result. It is his to declare the truth and walk away, leaving the rest to God. He has neither part nor parcel with the outcome of his message, and if he has any sense at all, he wants none. His is to declare and that alone. So Nathan, having fulfilled his calling, departs, leaving David with his God. Those who know the gospel trust that the gospel will do its business and are content to declare it and not insert themselves in what might come as a result of preaching it.

The last phrase of verse 15 is the beginning of the fourfold condemnation that David brought upon himself with his own words: First, verse 6 in his reply to Nathan the prophet (Job 9:1-2, 20¹); second, the rape of Tamar; third, Absalom's murdering the king's sons; and fourth, Absalom's death.

David's actions are indicative of both repentance and supplication. The cause of the tragedy—that the child would die—is David's sin. So in seeking the Lord on the child's behalf, he is admitting that he is the cause and that the child has done nothing worthy of death. The child, however, is a product of debauchery of the flesh, and his

¹ Job 9:1-2; Then Job answered and said, I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God? 20; If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.

death is both reasonable as a son of Adam and symbolically as the result of all endeavors of the flesh. At the end of seven days the child dies. David's servants, having watched their master's posture (fasting and praying) and heard his groaning in spirit, are afraid to tell him of the death of the child. While they are whispering, David perceives that the child has died, and when he asks them, they tell him the truth. Then what David does amazes his servants. Instead of mourning the death of the child, he cleans up, anoints himself, and goes to the house of the Lord and worships (praises and thanks) God, and when the servants bring him food, he eats. They are astonished at what he has done (v. 21). It seems unreasonable to them.

David's answer teaches us several things (vv. 22-23).

First, David's actions teach us that while there is life there is hope; and for the living, prayer is to be made. Praying for the dead is useless because their spirits have returned to Him who made them, and as they go to that estate they shall forever remain (Rev. 22:11¹).

Second, David's actions reveal that praying to the Lord on behalf of one whom the Lord has condemned is done in the understanding that God is God and that He is slow to anger and plenteous in mercy, that He knows our frame, and He remembers that we are dust. No human being can fully be sure of what God will do. Even our Lord, in his humanity, prayed to remove the cup from Him, if it were possible; but then He submitted to God's will. Under the Old Covenant, God often repented. Repentance, when attributed to God under the Old Covenant, does not mean sorrow after a Godly sort but rather a difference in the course than what is expected. David's prayers were to this

¹ Rev. 22:11; He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

end, but he fully understood that God would do what He would. Knowing that God is sovereign is reason enough to beseech Him to do other than what is reasonably expected (Joel 2:13-14; Jonah 3:9-10¹). Remember that the Old Covenant was conditional, and the blessing (or lack thereof) was conditioned upon obedience of the people (2 Chron. 7:14²).

Third, once the sentence of justice has been executed, then the law is satisfied and there is nothing left to do but rejoice. To some degree it is what we, as believers, do when we rehearse the gospel and remember that, because Christ has borne the sentence of death, that justice is satisfied and will not be executed upon us, though it is clearly deserved. The entirety of Christianity rests on the death of Christ. It is the answer to the singular and profound question, "How can a man be just with God?" Men may take delight in debate over this or that aspect of Christianity, but true rejoicing comes when the knowledge of justice satisfied comes to the fore. The child is dead and justice is done. To God be the glory.

Fourth, David's words in verse 23 are a simple declaration that he will, like the child, die one day. However, that does not discount the eternal aspect of the statement. Death is not the end of things. In truth it is the beginning of things. When a person dies, his body returns

¹ **Joel 2:13-14;** And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?

Jonah 3:9-10; Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

² **2 Chron. 7:14;** If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

to the earth but his spirit returns to his Maker (Eccl. 12:7¹). Whether David was speaking of the grave or the presence of God, both would be true. When Solomon wrote those words, it was in consideration of himself, and more than likely he was speaking as a believer whose hope was in God, though application could be made to every man is the sense that all souls belong to God by right of creation and some by the right of the new creation.

Since David's child by Bathsheba was born into the family of Israel, David may have been referring to everlasting life in the presence of God because this child was an Israelite. However, physically the child died before he could bear the mark of a child of Abraham. Having died the seventh day, and circumcision being accomplished on the eighth day, the child died in the ranks of the uncircumcised. All these things make for much conjecture. I think it best to just take David's remarks as the words of a man who understood and was thankful and full of praise for the fact that God does as He pleases.

Some have used this verse to support the doctrine that children who die in infancy are the elect of God and are accepted into the presence of God. I don't believe that this verse can be used to support that, though if men want to do so I wouldn't try to correct them. Let me say also, that though I don't have any scriptural proof, I believe that those who die in infancy and those whose minds are providentially darkened are the elect, and when they die they are welcomed into God's presence. I do not state this as theology or doctrinal edict; it is simply what I believe.

Whatever the meaning if these words, David says them as an explanation of why he worshipped God when the child died. Of this we can be sure: True worship is based on

¹ Eccl. 12:7; Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

justice satisfied by the death of Christ. It is in that death that we truly worship God.

AN ASTOUNDING STATEMENT

2 SAMUEL 12:24

24, And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the LORD loved him.

This is the account of David, having been forgiven his sin, comforting his wife with the promise of God concerning a son to be born to them that would reign in David's stead and would build the temple of the Lord. This is the first time that Bathsheba is designated as David's wife. Until this point in history, though David had taken Bathsheba as his wife, she was referred to as the wife of Uriah. This was designed to keep David's sin before his eyes until he was granted repentance for it.

David names the child Solomon, a derivative of the word Shalom, which means "peace." Also the name designates the estate of Israel under his reign. To name him thusly is a promise of a difference between David's reign and that of this child. The sword would never leave the house of David, but the sword would never enter the house of Solomon. He was named Solomon according to the direction of God (1 Chron. 22:9¹). According to verse 25, ²Solomon is given another name by which David and the prophet Nathan are to call him. That name is Jedidiah, a name that means "beloved of the Lord" and which typifies

¹ 1 Chron. 22:9; Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days.

² verse 25; And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD.

our messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. His name means peace, and our Lord is the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6¹). He is our peace, and His reign is over a kingdom at peace (John 14:27; Isa. 32:17²). The Church of our Lord is at peace, and though much of so-called Christian religion is a hornet nest, the true church is marked by the fact that, where the Spirit is, there is peace.

I want us to consider an astounding statement, the last phrase of verse 24, “and the LORD loved him (Solomon).” Before he gained fame and honor for his wit and wisdom, before he had done any good or evil, it is recorded for us that the LORD loved him, and His love is such that the Lord gives him a second name, which is a declaration of that love. Now I know that to most of religion such language has become a given for the Lord’s feeling for all humanity. Every religion that exists under the vast umbrella called Christianity (save one) has as its cardinal doctrine the universal love of God. Love is never general; no one says, “I love everybody.” If you listen to common religion, their tag line is “God loves you.” Such unrestrained employment of that false doctrine has succeeded in making men comfortable with the concept of God. They have no fear of God, and reasonably so, because who fears someone who loves you? This has bred a strange familiarity with God, whereby men speak of Him in vile and callous terms, having neither respect nor reverence for His name. Religion, because it believes this lie, has successfully marketed that lie to the detriment of mankind. The truth is that God does

¹ Isa. 9:6; For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

² John 14:27; Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Isa. 32:17; And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

not love all men; he hates some men. On this, Scripture is clear. There is no doubt, however, of God's affection for the child born to David and Bathsheba: "and the LORD loved him." Any man to whom God has granted the understanding of his vile estate is astonished at the fact that God could love him. If God loves you or me, the consequences of that love are momentous, wonderful, pressed down, and overflowing with blessing. What does this statement entail, what blessings are contained in these words: "and the LORD loved him!"

Several things. The word "loved," though spoken in the sense of the present, does not say that the LORD began to love him, or that the Lord fell in love with him, or the Lord saw something in him that would cause that love. This is the general use of the word "loved" as it references God's love for His own. There is rarely an instance in the Bible where it is said that God "loves;" but almost exclusively it refers to His love as restricted to the past tense. This means that if God loves you, He has always loved you. God's love for Solomon is as eternal as it is with every one of His own (Isa. 43:4; Jer. 31:3; John. 13:1¹).

1. If the LORD has loved you, He chose you unto salvation. Election is an act born of love (John 15:13,19; 2 Thess. 2:13²). Election is the doctrine of love.

¹ Isa. 43:4; Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.

Jer. 31:3; The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

John. 13:1; Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

² John 15:13; Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

2. If the LORD has loved you, He predestinated you to be a member of His eternal family (Eph. 1:4-5¹).

3. If the LORD has loved you, He has saved you (1 John 3:16-18²).

4. If the LORD has loved you, He chastises you (Heb. 12:5-8³).

5. If the LORD has loved you, no harm will come.

6. If God has loved you, all is well, and He has done all things necessary for your protection and eternal welfare.

19; If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

2 **Thess. 2:13**; But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

¹ **Eph. 1:4-5**; According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

² **1 John 3:16-18**; Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

³ **Heb. 12:5-8**; ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

VENGEANCE

2 SAMUEL 12:26-31

26, And Joab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city.

27, And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters.

28, Now therefore gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it: lest I take the city, and it be called after my name.

29, And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it.

30, And he took their king's crown from off his head, the weight whereof was a talent of gold with the precious stones: and it was set on David's head. And he brought forth the spoil of the city in great abundance.

31, And he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brickkiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon. So David and all the people returned unto Jerusalem.

I thought, as I looked at the close of this chapter, to touch lightly on the history of it and a few points that speak to some aspects of the gospel. But after I read the passage a few times, I couldn't seem to put it out of mind, and found this is a profound passage as it sets forth many things that pertain to justice. This battle began in the eleventh chapter when David sent his army to war but did not go with them. That act resulted in David's adultery, the conception of a child that died shortly after birth, and the

murderous contract put out on Uriah causing subsequent death.

David, in self-righteous indignation and by his own words, brought about the four-fold consequence of his sin. The battle and what follows have been put, by some, at the time of David's transgression because of the apparent cruelty of David recorded in verse 31. Their argument is that, since David acts without mercy against Uriah, his actions found in verse 31 line up with his apparent mindset at the time. Chronologically, this view creates some problems, since it appears that two children have been born, both being carried to full term. More than likely this battle occurred after some time, possibly after years of siege and withdrawal, and represents the beginning of the end of the Ammonites. We will address David's obviously vengeful actions latter in this study.

The first thing that is here for us is a simple declaration of the interest of the servant relative to his master (vv. 26-28). Joab, the captain of David's army, besieges and captures the royal city—the chief city—and the residence of the king of the Ammonites. The enemy's ability to mount a resistance is gone, and all that is left is for Joab to walk in and finish the job. But instead, he calls for his king to come to the battle (again, David is not found on the battlefield), in order that David might take the city and get the glory for the victory. This is the heart of every true servant and every true soldier in the army of Christ.

Our King, who is our Man of war, is not physically with us as we go headlong against the enemy armed with the sword of the Lord and protected with the armor of the gospel. Our victory is assured because it is our Lord, through His Spirit, that fights for us. Our Lord yet gives us credit out of the abundance of His grace, but all glory belongs to him. The thing that is important to note is the attitude of Joab. It never enters his mind to exalt his own

name in this victory (v. 12:28). As I read this, I remember my years in useless religion, in the time of Jack Hyles and of Jerry Falwell's soul winning campaigns that gave men a spreadsheet mentality whereby they could keep account of the number of folks they had won for Christ. For truth, every victory in which the believer is involved is a victory that belongs to the Lord. It is His gospel, the power of God unto salvation, that assures victory, not our paltry efforts. The believer that has experienced the victory of the gospel immediately removes himself from salvation's equation. He denies himself as having anything to do with the salvation of sinners. "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9) and all the glory of it belongs to Him.

The mark of the believer's heart is that his "bond-servant" heart is sold out to the honor and glory of his Master and King. He loves his Master and family. Even among natural men who love their king, this heart is likewise displayed. Craterus at the siege of Artacacna was prepared to take the city, but waited for the arrival of Alexander, so his leader might have the honor of it. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory" (Ps. 115:1).

The fact that Joab's desire is both reasonable and right is revealed in what takes place in verse 30. After David has joined the fray and the city is taken, the crown that had once set upon the head of the enemy's king is placed on David's head. The *crown* is not the most important thing, though it is of great value; the *crowning* is that which carries great import. It symbolically—and in this case fundamentally—declares that, even in the midst of the enemy, there is but one true king and he gets all the glory. The glory of the crown is that only one man may wear it—the *true* king. Our King (the one true King, the King of kings) rules in the midst of His enemies and is mighty to

save (Ps. 110:1-2; Zeph. 3:14-17¹). David takes the spoils of the city, and they are great spoils. They belong to him because he has destroyed the former king (Luke 11:21-22²).

The words of verse 31 are stirring, and they evoke a visceral response to say the least. The treatment of these prisoners, without question, is accomplished without mercy. Some have a hard time with David acting in this manner and have spent a great deal of time trying to explain this away as an anomaly. Gill gives one author some credibility: In defending or excusing behavior, this author gives this meaning for verse 31, saying, “and he obliged the people that were in it to go out, and put them to the saw,’ to cut stones; ‘and to the iron mines,’ to dig there; ‘and to the axes of iron,’ to cut wood, with; ‘after he had made them to pass with their king’ out of the city.” Though, I suppose, this could be a reasonable explanation under some rules that apply to prisoner-of-war treatment, in 1 Chron. 20:3³, it is clear that what David does to the Ammonites is not “job placement.” These enemies are destroyed in a harsh and

¹ Ps. 110:1-2; The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

Zeph. 3:14-17; Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

² Luke 11:21-22; When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

³ 1 Chron. 20:3; And he brought out the people that were in it, and cut them with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes. Even so dealt David with all the cities of the children of Ammon. And David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

unmerciful manner. To understand the cruelty of the justice meted out we must first consider the enemy. The Ammonites were vicious in their cruelty against Israel (Judg. 8:6,7; 1 Sam. 11:2; 15:33; Amos 1:13¹). Their penalty matches their criminality. They are sawed, crushed, cut to pieces, and made to pass through the brick kiln to be burned alive—significantly, Molech was their chief god. This is not a pretty sight, but it is a picture of justice meted out without a hint of mercy.

In truth justice has no mercy. When men are judged at the final bar of God, mercy and grace will not enter the picture. In the great flood we see justice and mercy, but they are not intermingled. At Sodom we see justice and mercy, but they are mutually exclusive of one another. There is only one place where justice and mercy are united—on the cross of Calvary. There in the person of the substitute, God shows Himself as the just God and the Savior. There in the body and soul of the sweet suffering One is justice fully exacted, wrath fully spent, and the words of the substitute ring to the heavens: “Father forgive them for they not what they do.” Mercy flies to the elect on the wings of satisfied

¹ **Judg. 8:6,7;** And the princes of Succoth said, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army? And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.

1 Sam. 11:2; And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel.

15:33; And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

Amos 1:13; Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the womcccen with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border:

justice (Psa. 85:10¹). The elect's death and life are the result of justice and mercy. Those who remain enemies of the gospel will receive justice without mercy (Heb. 10:28-31²). The descriptions of that great judgment even exceed the reported cruelty of David. The fires of Molech would be like a warm Spring breeze compared to that horrible judgment where the "worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." Barnard said, "If you think God is monstrous, get ready to meet a monster." Justice is true, real, exacting, unquenchably harsh, and it is right (Gen. 18:25³). A sinner's only hope is that the justice of God was consumed in the person of that great substitute, Jesus Christ the Lord.

¹ Psa. 85:10; Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

² Heb. 10:28-31; He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

³ Gen. 18:25; That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

CHASTISEMENT CONTINUED

2 SAMUEL 13

1, And it came to pass after this, that Absalom the son of David had a fair sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her.

2, And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do any thing to her.

3, But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab was a very subtil man.

4, And he said unto him, Why art thou, being the king's son, lean from day to day? wilt thou not tell me? And Amnon said unto him, I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister.

5, And Jonadab said unto him, Lay thee down on thy bed, and make thyself sick: and when thy father cometh to see thee, say unto him, I pray thee, let my sister Tamar come, and give me meat, and dress the meat in my sight, that I may see it, and eat it at her hand.

6, So Amnon lay down, and made himself sick: and when the king was come to see him, Amnon said unto the king, I pray thee, let Tamar my sister come, and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat at her hand.

7, Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, Go now to thy brother Amnon's house, and dress him meat.

8, So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house; and he was laid down. And she took flour, and kneaded it, and made cakes in his sight, and did bake the cakes.

9, And she took a pan, and poured them out before him; but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, Have out all men from me. And they went out every man from him.

10, And Amnon said unto Tamar, Bring the meat into the chamber, that I may eat of thine hand. And Tamar took the cakes which she had made, and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother.

11, And when she had brought them unto him to eat, he took hold of her, and said unto her, Come lie with me, my sister.

12, And she answered him, Nay, my brother, do not force me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel: do not thou this folly.

13, And I, whither shall I cause my shame to go? and as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, I pray thee, speak unto the king; for he will not withhold me from thee.

14, Howbeit he would not hearken unto her voice: but, being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her.

15, Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her. And Amnon said unto her, Arise, be gone.

16, And she said unto him, There is no cause: this evil in sending me away is greater than the other that thou didst unto me. But he would not hearken unto her.

17, Then he called his servant that ministered unto him, and said, Put now this woman out from me, and bolt the door after her.

18, And she had a garment of divers colours upon her: for with such robes were the king's daughters that were virgins apparelled. Then his servant brought her out, and bolted the door after her.

19, And Tamar put ashes on her head, and rent her garment of divers colours that was on her, and laid her hand on her head, and went on crying.

20, And Absalom her brother said unto her, Hath Amnon thy brother been with thee? but hold now thy peace, my sister: he is thy brother; regard not this thing. So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's

house.

21, But when king David heard of all these things, he was very wroth.

22, And Absalom spake unto his brother Amnon neither good nor bad: for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar.

23, And it came to pass after two full years, that Absalom had sheepshearers in Baalhazor, which is beside Ephraim: and Absalom invited all the king's sons.

24, And Absalom came to the king, and said, Behold now, thy servant hath sheepshearers; let the king, I beseech thee, and his servants go with thy servant.

25, And the king said to Absalom, Nay, my son, let us not all now go, lest we be chargeable unto thee. And he pressed him: howbeit he would not go, but blessed him.

26, Then said Absalom, If not, I pray thee, let my brother Amnon go with us. And the king said unto him, Why should he go with thee?

27, But Absalom pressed him, that he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him.

28, Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, Mark ye now when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon; then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you? be courageous, and be valiant.

29, And the servants of Absalom did unto Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and every man gat him up upon his mule, and fled.

30, And it came to pass, while they were in the way, that tidings came to David, saying, Absalom hath slain all the king's sons, and there is not one of them left.

31, Then the king arose, and tare his garments, and lay on the earth; and all his servants stood by with their clothes rent.

32, And Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's

brother, answered and said, Let not my lord suppose that they have slain all the young men the king's sons; for Amnon only is dead: for by the appointment of Absalom this hath been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar.

33, Now therefore let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead: for Amnon only is dead.

34, But Absalom fled. And the young man that kept the watch lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came much people by the way of the hill side behind him.

35, And Jonadab said unto the king, Behold, the king's sons come: as thy servant said, so it is.

36, And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of speaking, that, behold, the king's sons came, and lifted up their voice and wept: and the king also and all his servants wept very sore.

37, But Absalom fled, and went to Talmai, the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son every day.

38, So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years.

39, And the soul of king David longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead.

Before we look at this passage, I want us to look at a couple of verses that deal with the true subject of this chapter.

Prov. 3:11

11, My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction.

Heb. 12:5-11

5, And ye have forgotten the exhortation which

speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

6, For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

7, If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

8, But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

9, Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

10, For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

11, Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Perhaps the most difficult thing about reading this account of the rape of Tamar by Amnon and his subsequent hatred of her, and the murder of Amnon at the command of Absalom because of what he had done, is that this record is not really about Amnon, Tamar, or Absalom. This is about the chastisement of David for his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah. David had been pardoned, forgiven for that sinfulness, but the consequences (the process of sin) must run its course. David had condemned his own actions with his fourfold condemnation, and beginning with the death of the son born of the adulterous union, the fulfillment continues. Chastisement is not punishment; it is not judicial or legal, but when it is taking place, it certainly feels like it. In the last study, we saw what the end of justice was—exact and hard and without any

mercy. That is what awaits every sinner that is without Christ.

Now we see chastisement, the loving correction of a Father toward his son. God has forgotten David's sin, but David never would (2 Sam. 23:5¹). I know that there is a popular notion that we can forgive ourselves, but I've never seen that concept in Scripture. The believer does not forgive himself; he trusts that by the meritorious sacrifice of Christ, he has been forgiven his sin. Everything a child of God does toward God—worship, baptism, prayer, receiving the Lord's Table—is done in confession of sin and need, as well as thanksgiving for Christ.

In the book of Revelation, the sweetest praise is done in the remembrance of sin (Rev. 5:9-10²). This does not mean that we are to dwell on our sin, because that would keep us in a state of sorrow. But God has wired us so that our sin will never be forgotten, and when we need reminding, providence will order life experience to trigger memory of sin that we might look to Christ and praise Him for his lovingkindness and tender mercies (e.g. Paul: "I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10); "I am the chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15), "I am less than the least" (Eph. 3:8)).

If we could forgive ourselves, what need would we have of Christ's forgiveness? Such psychobabble for self-justification and self-deification reeks of the "conscience seared with a hot iron." Such pious prattle is just another hoax, a foolhardy flim-flam of freewill falsehood. David has been forgiven, but his chastisement has no design in

¹ 2 Sam. 23:5; Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.

² Rev. 5:9-10; And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

judgment; it will ultimately bring him to the feet of the Savior. As we have seen in the study of James, sin has a course that it runs, a process that it follows (James 1:13-16¹). Though it always runs on this track, it does not operate in a vacuum. Sin operates in the realm of sovereign providence and according to the will of Almighty God. For the child of God, this is good news because sin will be suffered to operate only so far as it serves to bring the child of God to repentance (1 Cor. 10:13²).

God does not cause his children to sin, but He does suffer them to do so and will use that experience to bring them to the feet of the Savior. The mechanics of it are far beyond any human being's ability to understand, but the fact of it can be related by every child of God. The horrible things in this chapter and the wickedness performed because of sinful and impenitent hearts will run its course for every felonious actor, but all they do serves divine providence to David's good end. These things occur because God keeps His promise and orders all things for David according to the covenant of grace (1 Sam. 12:11a³).

Rather than dealing with the sordid details, we will look at the deeds done as they mirror the deeds of David and call to his remembrance the words of his own mouth (2 Sam. 12:5-6⁴).

¹ **James 1:13-16**; Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren.

² **1 Cor. 10:13**; There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

³ **1 Sam. 12:11a**; Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house

⁴ **2 Sam. 12:5-6**; And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this

1. Ammon's lust for his sister mirrors the illicit lust that David had for Bathsheba.

2. Jonadab's subtle collusion with Ammon, and his plot to seduce Tamar, mirrors the collusion of David with Joab to persuade Uriah to assume responsibility for Bathsheba's pregnancy.

3. Ammon's ravishing of Tamar mirrors David's taking of Uriah's wife. Though there is no indication that David raped Bathsheba, by virtue of the fact that He was king, it certainly calls into question her ability to refuse his advances.

4. Ammon's false pretense of sickness mirrors David's calling Uriah from the battle under the guise of a furlough to get Uriah to lie with Bathsheba.

5. Ammon's cold and wicked abuse of Tamar, after the fact, mirrors David's seemingly callous disregard for the news of Uriah's death after he had put a contract out on him and was responsible for his demise.

6. Absalom's subtle plot to kill Ammon mirrors David's plot to kill Uriah.

7. Absalom's murder of Ammon mirrors the murder of Uriah, in that both had to do with illicit sin.

8. Absalom's indignation toward Ammon mirrors David's indignation upon hearing the parable spoken by Nathan.

David, being a man after God's own heart and a forgiven sinner, is suffering under chastisement, and though his physical losses are great it is the affliction of his soul that bears the brunt of his sin. He is, according to his writings, a man sensitive to the fact of his sin, aware continually of the struggles of his heart, a man often disquieted in his soul. We have but to read Psalm 51 to know that David, though

thing shall surely die: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

trusting God for forgiveness, never forgot that his sin was "ever before me." Read also Ps. 130. Man is fearfully and wonderfully made, and part of that make up is memory, a necessary element in the employment of chastisement and driving men to Christ (See Lam. 3:1-26). When the child of God, through chastisement, is made to remember what he is, he will fly to Christ as his only hope. "There is forgiveness with Thee" (Psa. 130:4). Mark well the remembrance of sin, for without it you would never look to Christ. Faith and repentance are Siamese twins, joined forever in the gray matter of redeemed sinners.

This story is about David's chastisement, but the wheel of providence here turns thus for yet a greater purpose. Amnon is heir to the throne as David's firstborn. Absalom is second in line for the throne and this could have played in Absalom's decision to kill Amnon. But there is another whom God has declared would sit on David's throne, even Solomon, whom God loved. The sin and wrath of Amnon and the wrathful retribution of Absalom, his flight from harm and his ultimate rebellion and pursuit of David's throne by coup de' tat, are the instrument of divine providence that assure that neither Amnon nor Absalom will assume what they believe is their rightful place. Both will be rotting in their graves when Solomon assumes the throne to which he was predestined. "The wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Psa. 76:10).

"To God be the glory—Great things He has done."

LOVE OF A FATHER

2 SAMUEL 14:1-23

1, Now Joab the son of Zeruah perceived that the king's heart was toward Absalom.

2, And Joab sent to Tekoah, and fetched thence a wise woman, and said unto her, I pray thee, feign thyself to be a mourner, and put on now mourning apparel, and anoint not thyself with oil, but be as a woman that had a long time mourned for the dead:

3, And come to the king, and speak on this manner unto him. So Joab put the words in her mouth.

4, And when the woman of Tekoah spake to the king, she fell on her face to the ground, and did obeisance, and said, Help, O king.

5, And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, I am indeed a widow woman, and mine husband is dead.

6, And thy handmaid had two sons, and they two strove together in the field, and there was none to part them, but the one smote the other, and slew him.

7, And, behold, the whole family is risen against thine handmaid, and they said, Deliver him that smote his brother, that we may kill him, for the life of his brother whom he slew; and we will destroy the heir also: and so they shall quench my coal which is left, and shall not leave to my husband neither name nor remainder upon the earth.

8, And the king said unto the woman, Go to thine house, and I will give charge concerning thee.

9, And the woman of Tekoah said unto the king, My lord, O king, the iniquity be on me, and on my father's house: and the king and his throne be guiltless.

10, And the king said, Whosoever saith ought unto thee, bring him to me, and he shall not touch thee any

more.

11, Then said she, I pray thee, let the king remember the LORD thy God, that thou wouldest not suffer the revengers of blood to destroy any more, lest they destroy my son. And he said, As the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth.

12, Then the woman said, Let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak one word unto my lord the king. And he said, Say on.

13, And the woman said, Wherefore then hast thou thought such a thing against the people of God? for the king doth speak this thing as one which is faulty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished.

14, For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.

15, Now therefore that I am come to speak of this thing unto my lord the king, it is because the people have made me afraid: and thy handmaid said, I will now speak unto the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his handmaid.

16, For the king will hear, to deliver his handmaid out of the hand of the man that would destroy me and my son together out of the inheritance of God.

17, Then thine handmaid said, The word of my lord the king shall now be comfortable: for as an angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad: therefore the LORD thy God will be with thee.

18, Then the king answered and said unto the woman, Hide not from me, I pray thee, the thing that I shall ask thee. And the woman said, Let my lord the king now speak.

19, And the king said, Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this? And the woman answered and said, As thy soul liveth, my lord the king, none can turn to the right hand or to the left from ought that my lord the king hath spoken: for thy servant Joab, he bade me, and

he put all these words in the mouth of thine handmaid:

20, To fetch about this form of speech hath thy servant Joab done this thing: and my lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth.

21, And the king said unto Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again.

22, And Joab fell to the ground on his face, and bowed himself, and thanked the king: and Joab said, To day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant.

23, So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem.

This story is the report of people playing on the heartstrings of the king. The first verse sets the tone for what takes place. Those words reveal Joab's perception of David's heart towards Absalom (2 Sam. 13:39¹). That last verse of chapter 13 certainly suggests that David is inclined toward forgiveness concerning Absalom even though he had committed a capital crime worthy of death. However, since the king had made no obvious attempt of reconciliation toward Absalom and he was still in exile, the desire of the people for justice for Amnon was fomenting. Joab, a man at David's right hand and David's instrument in the death of Uriah, devises a means by which Absalom can be retrieved. He employs a widow of Tekoah to spin a tale, a parable to excite the conscience of David by enticing the king's sense of justice and righteousness.

¹ 2 Sam. 13:39; And the soul of king David longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead.

Several things in this contrived fable are designed to appeal to David's love for the commands of the Lord.

1. She comes as a woman in mourning. David's heart is already tender, and her instruction to come as a mourner were designed to play on that tenderness.

2. She immediately declares her true widowhood. This plays to David's position as king and caretaker of the people. Many times, our Lord has set forth the care of the widow and the fatherless as a supreme command (James 1:27¹).

3. The story of the fight between her two sons that culminated in the death of one son surely played to the memory of Absalom and Amnon, and that by design.

4. The matter of inheritance is paramount in the Law. When she brings up the possibility of losing her other son to the wrath of the avenger of blood, and thus having no heir to care for her, it becomes a matter of honoring the law (Deut. 25:5-10²; See also Num. 27:1-11; Ruth 4:1-7). This, no doubt, has an eye toward the covenant of grace wherein the inheritance of the elect is predestinated by "Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph.

¹ James 1:27; Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

² Deut. 25:5-10; If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel. And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed.

1:11). The firstborn (Jesus) lives forever, and all his brothers and sisters are joint heirs with Him.

5. David's assurance to this woman—that her son would live—once again seals David in his words and assures the deliverance of Absalom.

But all this is made possible because David loves Absalom and is ready, in his heart, to save him. There can be no doubt that David, during this time, has been seeking a way to be a just king and simultaneously a savior toward Absalom. There are many things about this love of David toward Absalom that reveal the utter frailty and impotency of human love, but we must view this considering divine love. This must be seen in light of the manner in which love always works. Love, even human love, always seeks the salvation of the loved one. A father's love for his son will always seek a means by which the son, if in trouble, would be delivered. The words of this passage prove that when opportunity and means avail themselves, David sends to fetch Absalom home.

This is also about the Father's love, and the words of this woman and David's response speak to the truth of divine and eternal love. We have but to look at Absalom and compare our own estate with his as we hide from God, exiled from paradise in our father Adam, having sinned and become fit only for death.

Consider yourself as you read the words of verse 14. See the love of the Father for his wayward, guilty child.

1. We "must needs die." In this verse, the widow speaks the words given to her by Joab, and they specifically address the fact that David will, by death, one day vacate the throne, and the next in line is Absalom. It is interesting to note that Solomon, the king that God has ordained to occupy the throne in David's absence, is not mentioned. This smacks of the same attitude of the people when they would have Saul, though he was rejected of God. Absalom has already been

rejected. But that's not the story. This is about our salvation, our recovery, our reconciliation, and the first things declared is that we must die. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20¹).

2. We are like water spilt on the ground. We are poured out, running to the lowest place, traveling the path of least resistance, taking the form of whatever hole we are in, being soaked up by the curse that is upon us and the curse that is upon the dirt and filth that soaks us up.

3. Once poured out, "we cannot be gathered up again." This is a hopeless situation and proclaims our hopelessness. The way is not in man to direct his steps (Jer. 10:23²).

4. "Neither doth God respect any person." This, at first glance, seems to increase the idea of hopelessness, but it does not. Not every guilty sinner remains ultimately lost. This is only a bad thing for those who feel that God should respect them for their efforts. For the sinner, this is good news because it puts everybody in the same boat and assures them that God will not save man based on respect for the man. This is a clear declaration that salvation is all of grace because God is not a respecter of persons. He respects Himself.

5. Yet, He has devised a means whereby "His banished be not expelled from Him." It has been this way since the fall when the means devised to cover His fallen pair was the blood and coats of beasts. Indeed, He has devised the means (Rom. 3:24-26; Gal. 3:13; 2 Tim. 1:9³). Though David's

¹ Ezek. 18:20; The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

² Jer. 10:23; O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

³ Rom. 3:24-26; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the

recovery of Absalom out of a father's love does not turn out well, every elect sinner—every son of the heavenly Father's love—will be reconciled to Him and will be given all things that pertain to godliness and life. “For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him”.

remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Gal. 3:13; Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.

2 Tim. 1:9; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

IMPOTENT LOVE

2 SAMUEL 14:24-33

24, And the king said, Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king's face.

25, But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.

26, And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled it: because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he polled it:) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight.

27, And unto Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter, whose name was Tamar: she was a woman of a fair countenance.

28, So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face.

29, Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king; but he would not come to him: and when he sent again the second time, he would not come.

30, Therefore he said unto his servants, See, Joab's field is near mine, and he hath barley there; go and set it on fire. And Absalom's servants set the field on fire.

31, Then Joab arose, and came to Absalom unto his house, and said unto him, Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire?

32, And Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, Come hither, that I may send thee to the king, to say, Wherefore am I come from Geshur? it had been good for me to have been there still: now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me.

33, So Joab came to the king, and told him: and when

he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom.

In our last study, we looked at a father's love, particularly dealing with the concept of love concerning how love acts toward the beloved. We looked at love, the love of David toward Absalom relative to God the Father's love toward His chosen sinners, and what that love demanded as to their salvation. The Father's love was manifested in devising a means whereby "His banished be not expelled from Him" (2 Sam. 14:14).

Now, let us look at David's love for Absalom, which is a contrast to the love of God, and seek to show the impotency of human love to actually save or redeem, even though it may be true and fervent. David, though he loves Absalom, does not and cannot change Absalom. Though Absalom returns to Jerusalem after his years of self-imposed exile, he returns unchanged from the murderer he was. His living body is returned to his father, but his mind and heart are the same as when he had Amnon murdered. Human beings, out of love, can often save the bodies of those they love. Many have changed their lives and their behavior because they have been well-loved by friends, relatives, and even religious groups. Religion is filled with "ex"-men who are former addicts, philanderers, or criminals, who may never return to their former lives, yet without their true mind and heart ever being affected. Thank God that, when He saves His people, He makes sure that the necessary thing is secured for the allegiance of the recipient (Jer. 32:38-40; Heb. 10:16¹).

¹ Jer. 32:38-40; And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do

David's love, as real as it is toward his wayward son, cannot accomplish this. When Absalom returns, he is still the same man that had fled. He is still the same rebellious son. He is still a murderer. He still has designs for the throne of his father.

Joab's role here is interesting. His motives are not clear in the recovery of Absalom, but given the fact that he has "the goods" on David regarding Uriah's murder, he stands to gain political power whether the throne remains David's or it goes to Absalom. Up until his fields are burned, he probably felt it was more beneficial to stay close to the one who was, at the moment, on the throne. He keeps quiet while David refuses to see Absalom, even to the point of twice disregarding Absalom's summons. He does not act until he suffers financial loss.

David's refusal to allow Absalom to see his face is not clearly defined. Perhaps he has some conviction that he has allowed both the sin of Amnon against Tamar and the murder of Amnon to go unpunished, making it difficult to look Absalom in the face, and he is preserving his own feelings, saving himself from pain. Perhaps he feels that, to some degree, this is his way of punishing Absalom. The psalms may give us something to guide our thinking about this time of David's life. Many commentators assert that the 41st and 55th psalms were penned during the four years of Absalom's conspiracy. They may explain why David, during this time, is seemingly so passive to all that is happening. Though he had been pardoned for his sin against God relating to Bathsheba and Uriah, it is evident that David suffered in his soul for his past deeds. And although it is

them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.

Heb. 10:16; This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

clear from many psalms that David had a real tendency to melancholy, these two psalms speak of a frame of mind so inflicted that it leads to real sickness, perhaps an ailment born of severe depression that affects both mind and body (Ps. 41:4-9; 55:12-14, 21¹). David's passiveness (no immediate action concerning the murders and rape and no pursuit of Absalom) may well have been the result of a paralyzing depression that kept him in fear of making any decision. He more or less followed the ideas of Joab and based his own decision on the fable devised by Joab, all designed to play on his weakness and his enflamed conscience, further exacerbated by the plague of mind that raged in his body. Whatever the reason, it is obvious that David is incapacitated and utterly passive during this time, even to the point of fleeing from Absalom at last. David's love for Absalom does not win Absalom; Absalom uses it against him. David's love for Absalom, rather than being strong, proves a weakness.

The remarkable contrast between the results of human love and that of God's love are manifold. The primary aspect of it all is that David's love is without consideration of the requirements of the Law. David allows the return of

¹ Ps. 41:4-9; I said, LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee. Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish? And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it. All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt. An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more. Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

55:12-14; For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.

21; The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.

his wayward son without the satisfaction of the Law. He allows the return of Absalom without addressing his felonies. Divine love, on the other hand, is not passive in this matter; it is active. God's love for His wayward, rightly condemned, felonious elect, is manifest in the full payment of the Law's demands through the acceptable, efficacious, substitutionary death of His dear Son. God does not remain passive. He actively executes the salvation of His elect by honoring the Law, satisfying its last demand, and sending His Spirit to fetch the wayward and bring them safely into the fold.

Further proof of the contrast between human love and that of the Divine is revealed in the effect it has on the loved one. In the case of David's love toward Absalom, there is no effect at all except that it emboldens Absalom's interest in dethroning his father. His heart and mind remain fixed on one thing—himself. He does not love his father; he loves himself. He is entirely egocentric. The opposite of love is not hate. The opposite of love is self. Absalom is pretty and he knows it, and everybody in Israel feeds into his vanity (v. 25). His heart is as black as coal but his outward appearance is spotless. Man looks on the outward appearance, while God looks on the heart. When he cuts his hair once a year it weighs about five pounds. Who does that? Who would publish the weight of his long, lovely locks? Is not hair the crowning glory of a woman?

Some Jewish authors say that Absalom was a Nazarite, but there is no Scriptural support for that premise. He was a self-involved rock star with questionable gender issues. Perhaps that is why it is immediately reported that he is married with children, whose names soon perish from Holy Writ. Being who he is (or at least whom he esteemed himself to be), he decides that he has a right to see the king and he tries to get hold of Joab twice but to no avail. Does Absalom love his neighbor? No, he loves himself. He sets

his neighbor's fields on fire just to get his attention and to assert his entitlement. He will not be ignored—after all, he is the darling of Israel—and to his unbelieving mind he is the next in line for the throne. Often those who are given peer adoration, and are sold out on their own worth, feel an entitlement to acceptance in the presence of God, but God is not so easily impressed with beauty that fades and self-worth that amounts to nothing (Ps. 39:5-6¹).

Having convinced Joab of his determination, and Joab having felt the pain of Absalom's determination, Joab makes a decision of self-preservation. As for Absalom, he is so sure that he has done nothing wrong, and that the king is too weak to hurt him, that he is willing to put forth his own merit as well as the absence of his guilt (v. 32). How many in this religious day feel that they are good people, and that when they stand before the weak, impotent god of this age, believe that he will be obliged to accept them?

David receives Absalom with a kiss, and by doing so he simply disregards his guilt. David does not put himself in the place of Absalom or offer up an offering for him as patriarch of his house. He just lets it go. This is the deficiency of human love, and it is sad to say, but this weak, puny, impotent affection is attributed by false Christianity to the true and living God. Such is not the case. Divine love saves the loved one and does so at the price of redemption and the satisfaction of the Law through the punishment of sin. God's love fixes it so everyone whom He loves is changed forever by the indwelling Spirit of grace. Repentance—a radical change of mind—is granted. Faith is given to believe God and give praise to Him for His grace.

¹ Ps. 39:5-6; Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah. Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

It is God who makes them to differ (1 Cor. 4:7¹), and they do differ. David's love does nothing for Absalom but free him up to further his own rebellious agenda. God is greater than man.

¹ 1 Cor. 4:7; For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

REBELLION

2 SAMUEL 15:1-6

1, And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

2, And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel.

3, And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee.

4, Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!

5, And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him.

6, And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

As we begin to look at the sinful efforts of Absalom to overthrow the king, we are made aware of the heart of rebellion. All sin is rebellion against God, and at the heart of it is the hatred of authority. From the beginning when Eve was deceived and Adam rebelled, it was at the enticement by the one who owns the title of “rebellion incarnate.” The serpent deceived Eve by calling into question the veracity of God, and thereby calling His authority into question. All sin, all transgression, and all

iniquity is against God and therefore an assault on His person and His authority. In the end it will all come to naught, and it will instead fulfill the sovereign purpose in the government and disposal of His creation. Only the person who has been given life in Christ understands rebellion. The believer knows what is in man, and because he has the mind of Christ, he sees all things in a spiritual perspective. Spiritually, the believer knows the ins and outs of the spirit of man (1 Cor. 2:11¹). Sometimes, when we read the Bible, we forget to look at the actions of rebellious men with the understanding we have of our own flesh.

Rebellion operates according to a pattern and with a singular intent. Its design is always—always!—about making God like men and deifying man. It may take a thousand courses or appear with a thousand faces, but no matter how it rears its ugly head, it means to dethrone God and put man in His place. Whether it is the papist priest who can make men believe he has the power of absolving a man of his sins, or the fundamentalist pastor who tells his hearers that God loves everybody, that Christ died for everybody, that man by his “free will” can thwart God’s will, that sin itself can be categorized into venial or mortal acts, that man can and must establish an acceptable righteousness for God’s acceptance by keeping the Law, that by doing the best he can with the light he has, or that by various formulas whereby a man can “loose” the power of the Holy Spirit and by doing so have power over the elements, over poverty and over sickness—all these are simply rebellion against the authority of God and a denial that His Word is true.

Mark this well: Any insertion of man into the government of the universe or into the salvation of the elect

¹ 1 Cor. 2:11; For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

is a wholesale affront against the sovereign God. Though it will prove an utterly foolish endeavor, it is yet a precise description of the heart designs of man from when he was born in this world. Do not pass over these reports of rebellion, but rather ask the question; “Why would I do that or what is in me that would cause me to act thusly?” The Bible must be read and understood personally, not according to personal interpretation but with an understanding of what we are by nature and what we are by the Spirit. Employing that understanding, we will see that the actions of Absalom are our own actions, were it not for the grace of God overriding and subduing our carnal flesh. A look at Absalom ought to result in a thankful and praising heart that our gracious Lord did not (and does not) suffer us to be what we are by nature—a pretender to the throne.

Every act of Absalom reveals the nature of rebellion. As we have seen in Absalom’s actions thus far, he operates from a sense of personal entitlement. His goal is plain, and his subtlety does not hide his intent. He believes the throne is rightfully his and he means to have it. The more I see of his character revealed, the more I think that the murder of Amnon was inevitable and the rape of his sister only served him with political expediency. Amnon and Tamar were collateral damage on Absalom’s road to the palace.

In the first verse of our passage Absalom is seen to gather forces around himself in direct rebellion against God (1 Sam. 8:11; 1 Kings. 1:5; Ps. 20:7; Prov. 17:19¹). We

¹ 1 Sam. 8:11; And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.

1 Kings. 1:5; Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him.

Ps. 20:7; Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

know that when we act against authority, it is better (logistically speaking) to circle our wagons and gain presumed power by sheer numerical advantage.

Secondly, in vv. 2-3, we see that rebellion is dedicated and diligent. “Absalom rose up early” (Job 24:14; Prov. 4:16; Matt. 27:1¹). When we get in a bad way, pursuing our own lusts, our minds know no rest. We are consumed with our rebellious intent.

Thirdly, in order to gain influence, we must set ourselves up in a place where we can begin to assume authority. When men approach the palace to seek the king to adjudicate some matter of law, Absalom puts himself between the true authority and the one in need. Likewise, wickedness thrives on the principle of cutting men off before they get to Christ (Matt. 23:13²). Absalom sets himself up in the place to meet the needs of men, to decide their matter. And notice, he exalts the seeker, telling him that what he is doing is right and good and will surely end in favor of the seeker. The judgment is made without hearing both sides; the “fix” is in and the reason is clear—gather support! In truth, fools declare that that they are in the place of the king. Men often precede their beginnings of rebellion with the words, “I’ve prayed about this.” This is saying that they have a “leg up” on the outcome.

Prov. 17:19; He loveth transgression that loveth strife: and he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction.

¹ **Job 24:14;** The murderer rising with the light killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief.

Prov. 4:16; For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.

Matt. 27:1; When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death:

² **Matt. 23:13;** But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Fourthly, in order to further your rebellious cause, you must somehow diminish the value of the King's judgment, persuading others that the King is not doing His job and therefore does not truly care for His creation (v. 3c). The world is full of critics who, when faced with some tragedy, cry, "Where is God?" or "Why did God let this happen?" This tactic is employed by the unregenerate, carnal mind and is designed to subtly say, "I would have handled it better," undergirded by the suspicion that God is little more than a casual observer of what goes on in His universe (2 Peter 3:3-4¹). God doesn't let things happen; He makes things happen according to His purpose (Eph. 1:11²). If you can make the king appear to be lacking in control, you have the ear of the masses.

Fifthly, Absalom's rebellion is designed to make him a mediator between the king and the people (v. 4). Whether it is Mary as a mediatrix, some priest who mediates with Mary who then mediates with the King of kings, or the religious rock star who makes men believe that his prayers have more authority with God than other men, the scheme is the same: To convince you to come to him instead of to the king, and he will do right by you (Prov. 25:6³). This is rebellion (Num. 16:3; Dan. 11:21; 2 Peter 2:10, 17⁴). In all this,

¹ 2 Peter 3:3-4; Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

² Eph. 1:11; In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

³ Prov. 25:6; Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men.

⁴ Num. 16:3; And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?

Absalom is breaking the commandment of God to honor his father and mother.

Sixthly, Absalom feigns love for the people who come to him, not because he is interested in their welfare but so that they will be beholden to him (v. 5). Rebellion is about exalting the rebel (Ps. 55:21; Prov. 26:25¹). Ultimately the rebel begins to believe his own lies and puts confidence in his own “press reports.” By embracing his “subjects” and putting forth his hand to be kissed, Absalom sets himself up as king (2 Thes. 2:3-4²). In the equation of government and salvation, somebody is gonna be God; either God is, or man is!

Finally, rebellion works and garners carnal admiration for a time but is ultimately doomed to utter failure (2 Sam. 18:9, 14; Isa. 52:7; 1 Cor. 15:25; Luke 1:33; Rev. 11:15³).

Dan. 11:21; And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.

2 Peter 2:10, But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

17; These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.

¹ **Ps. 55:21;** The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.

Prov. 26:25; When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart.

² **2 Thes. 2:3-4;** Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

³ **2 Sam. 18:9;** And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away.

14; Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak.

Rebellion is nothing more than the musings and decisions born of the delusions of vanity. Vanity cannot produce substance.

Isa. 52:7; How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

1 Cor. 15:25; For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

Luke 1:33; He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Rev. 11:15; And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

THE SMILE AND FROWN OF PROVIDENCE

2 SAMUEL 15:7-17

7, And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron.

8, For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the LORD shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.

9, And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron.

10, But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.

11, And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing.

12, And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

13, And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom.

14, And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.

15, And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint.

16, And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women, which were concubines, to keep the house.

17, And the king went forth, and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off.

This is the account of the overt rebellion of Absalom and the flight of David and his followers to the wilderness. There is an important principle to remember as we read this report. The word of God, penned under inspiration by David during this time of his flight, says, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way” (Ps. 37:23). David’s life, while often a picture of our Lord as king and as our Lord when “despised and rejected of men,” is also a picture of the life of the child of God as a stranger and pilgrim in the world. The one who now flees is the anointed shepherd, the poet-king. We see him in times of great joy, slaying the giant, dancing before the ark, being gracious to Mephibosheth; and we see him in great sorrow fleeing the javelin of Saul, committing adultery and murder, living in a state of sorrow with a seeming inability to act. “They that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). “We must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). “Many are the afflictions of the righteous” (Ps. 34:19). David’s life is full of both difficult and joyous episodes, and so it is that the lessons of life are designed to bring us to Christ (Phil. 4:11-13¹). The smile and the frown of providence are both designed for the good of the child of God.

David has suffered for doing what is right. In the house of Saul, he dealt with the anger and jealousy of Saul with grace and meekness, and Saul did not relent in his hatred for

¹ **Phil. 4:11-13**; Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

David. Now he suffers in conscience and anguish of soul because of his sin against God concerning Bathsheba and Uriah. Knowing David to be a thoughtful and sensitive man, it is not hard to understand why David, the great warrior king, flees at the threat of Absalom. Shakespeare said, “Conscience makes cowards of us all.” To some degree this fact was in play, but I think a better answer for David’s actions are found in his belief of God’s promise (2 Sam. 12:9-12¹).

Everything about his life is a constant reminder of his sin. His flight from Absalom is more than likely a resolution and resignation to take the evil that came upon him as clear evidence that the Lord is keeping His promise. Surely conscience oppressed him; of that there can be no doubt—he was made to feel the consequence of his sin (Ex. 10:21²). Though his sin had been forgiven and God remembered it no more, David is living out the consequences minute by minute. When Absalom begins his coup-de-tat, David sees it as something that he has, himself, brought about. His actions were the same as saying, “I did the crime, I deserve whatever comes my way.” His actions mirror the words of old Eli: “It is the Lord, let him do what is good in His sight” (1 Sam. 3:18).

¹ 2 Sam. 12:9-12; Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

² Ex. 10:21; And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt.

As we saw last time, Absalom's rebellion was politically motivated. He had designs for the throne. He did not honor his father but rather sought to destroy him, and thus gave us a glimpse of our own carnal nature. In this part of the account, we are spectators of that conspiracy coming to full fruition. He lies to his father about paying a vow he made while in exile, a vow to serve the Lord. He goes to Hebron, where David was crowned, and begins his assault on the king. The sound of the trumpet is the call to arms (v. 10). He calls two hundred men to the sacrifice and attendant feast, and they go, not knowing that there is a conspiracy afoot (v. 11).

A key player, perhaps the key player, is a man whom David referred to in his psalms as "a faithful friend, counselor and guide" (Ps. 55:12-13; Micah 7:5¹). Ahithophel had been David's confidant and he had David's trust. Why does Ahithophel join with Absalom and collude against David. There are several reasons. The first and most obvious is that he has no honor. Secondly, he is a man of wisdom concerning what is politically astute. There is a hint of something not quite right between David and Ahithophel in verse 12. Ahithophel, David's counselor, is not by David's side but has retired to his hometown. Is there a rift between king and counselor that has made Ahithophel so ready to ally with Absalom? *David's sin is behind it all*. David does not seem at all surprised by Ahithophel's action but rather turns it over to the power of God (15:31²). Ahithophel is

¹ Ps. 55:12-13; For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.

Micah 7:5; Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.

² 15:31; And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.

ready to betray David because David's sin has directly touched his own family. In 2 Samuel 23 there is a list of David's mighty captains. We find there that one of the captains is a man named Eliam, the son of Ahithophel, and another named Uriah the Hittite. Being captains, they were compatriots and surely knew each other. Eliam had a daughter. Her name was Bathsheba, and she was given in marriage to his army buddy, Uriah.

David had committed adultery with Ahithophel's granddaughter and had murdered his granddaughter's husband. It is no wonder that Ahithophel has retired to his hometown. Nor is it a wonder that Ahithophel is inclined to betray David. David's sin has caused him much sorrow and pain. Absalom knows this and is prompted to draft Ahithophel. The latter part of verse 12 could even indicate that Ahithophel might already be counseling Absalom. The language seems to indicate that this may be a culmination rather than a beginning. Immediately after declaring that Ahithophel is summoned, we read the words, "And the conspiracy was strong" (v. 12). From Ahithophel's counsel to Absalom in the following chapters, it appears evident that Ahithophel is not late to the party but is probably a key instigator of the initial beginning of the assault against David.

Whether David is privy to this is not known, but his knowledge of his own sin, and the hurt he has caused Ahithophel, and Ahithophel's absence from his side as counselor, surely plays a part in David's flight from Absalom. Ahithophel is considered by many in Israel as a prophet (2 Sam. 16:23¹). Such a man would be a powerful influence in gathering men to his cause (12c).

¹ 2 Sam. 16:23; And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

So the king becomes the exile, taking with him those who are loyal to him. He leaves behind ten of his concubines to take care of the house and in doing so, unbeknownst to him, they are left according to promise. Sovereign providence rules! These 10 wives of concubinage will be the victims of Absalom as the fulfillment of God's visitation upon David's sin (2 Sam. 12:11; 16:20-22¹). In all this, David is the anointed one and his end secure. "The wrath of men shall praise God, the rest He will restrain" (Ps. 76:10). David, for this time as need be, travels under a pall of cloudy skies, but the frown of providence will soon be turned to the smile of providence—and this is your life, dear child of God. "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29). "Tell the righteous, it shall be well with him" (Ps. 30:1-5).

¹ 2 Sam. 12:11; Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.

16:20-22; Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do. And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong. So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel

THE NATURE OF THE BEAST

2 SAMUEL 15:12, 31, 34; 16:15, 20; 17:1-3, 14, 23

2 Samuel 15:

12, And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

31, And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.

34, But if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king; as I have been thy father's servant hitherto, so will I now also be thy servant: then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel.

2 Samuel 16:

15, And Absalom, and all the people the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him.

20, Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do.

2 Samuel 17:

1, Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night:

2, And I will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only:

3, And I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seekest is as if all returned: so all the

people shall be in peace.

14, And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom.

23, And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulcher of his father.

These few verses are the historical account of a man who had his fifteen minutes. In one sense, this is the account of all sons of Adam. They live and they die.

This particular man is a trusted guide and counselor to David as well as to David's rebellious son Absalom. There was probably a time when he loved David, but in this account of his life he is filled with hateful vengeance against David. Part of that hate is most assuredly the fact that David had committed adultery with Ahithophel's granddaughter Bathsheba and had her husband, Uriah, his grandson's best friend, killed to cover up his sin. It was easy for Absalom to turn Ahithophel because they shared a common hatred for David.

Ahithophel's rise and fall are like those of every false prophet. They are shooting stars, clouds without water, a sinful brief blip on the radar of human history. In these verses, we will look at the nature of the beast, but as we consider the heart of rebellion it is important to remember that Ahithophel is but an instrument in God's toolbox, a "vessel of wrath fitted for destruction" (Rom. 9:22) to be employed until its usefulness ended and cast upon the heap with the rest of the potsherds that have striven against God

(Isa. 45:9¹). “The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Prov. 16:4). Every bit of hatred, every design of vengeance, and every cruel counsel that resides in Ahithophel’s heart is under the control of Sovereign providence. David writes in the Psalms, “Surely the wrath of man shall praise God, the rest he will restrain” (Ex. 9:16).

As I was reading these passages I began to think of the nature of unbelief. Unbelief is rebellion and rebellion is the nature of carnal humanity, the beast that resides in the bosom of every man born of woman. One of the prime examples of unbelief is seen in Numbers 14, when the children of Israel decided that they would go in and take the Promised Land. It would seem they had finally arrived at agreement with God, but there was a problem. God had forbidden them to enter because of the unbelief they had exhibited when they refused to enter the land for fear of the giants and had rejected the council of the two true spies: Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh.

What they did revealed that unbelief is always unbelief. They would not believe God when He told them to enter the land, and they would not believe God when He told them that they couldn’t enter the land. Unbelief can never turn into belief. Man does not *transition* from unbelief to belief. Our carnal nature always acts in unbelief. We will not believe unless God gives us faith, and that faith, by the Spirit, subdues our unbelief but does not remove it. Ahithophel was an unbeliever when he served David and was an unbeliever when he served Absalom. And as an unbeliever, his primary interest was his own importance. Politically, he was very savvy. Personally, he was as every

¹ Isa. 45:9; Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?

other man since the first man, seeking that which enhanced his status among other men. It worked for a while, but so it is with every endeavor of the flesh, there is but one end—death.

Unbelief is always rebellion, and rebellion does not exist in a vacuum. There must be someone in a place of authority to rebel against. Rebellion is against established authority. Rebellion is against the king. David is the anointed of God, and both Ahithophel and Absalom rebel against him. This pictures the true anointed—the Christ, the King of kings—and the response of humanity toward Him. Man is not in some state of limbo, nor is he dangling between good and evil in some state of probation. He is born in rebellion, and if he is not checked in his career by the sovereign grace of God, he will spend his days devising means whereby he may unseat the king and inaugurate himself to the place of sovereign.

All rebellion is against God and His Christ, the King. Men may balk at this because they hold Jesus in some esteem, but when it comes down to where the rubber hits the road, they believe that their will is the final and absolute sovereign. In their mind, their decision is of such power that it holds Christ in limbo, waiting for them to let Him do His will. Though men would never admit it in that light, they yet believe that they are the final arbiters in the salvation of their souls; that makes them the authority and makes Christ to be only a nominal king in the service of their own majesty.

Rebellion has a course it follows. It is as predictable as the rising of the sun.

1. Rebellion begins with hatred for God, despising His sovereignty (Rom. 8:7-8; Luke 19:14¹). Hatred is simply love of self above all else. Ahithophel hated David. Men as they are born in this world hate Christ.

2. Rebellion gives counsel that is designed to destroy the king. The false gospel that is declared in this day has its roots in the serpent's sermon in the garden, and it is designed to diminish the value of Christ's work and the excellence of His person. Ahithophel's counsel concerning the king's concubines reveals how God uses and overrules the wickedness of men to bring about His will. Ahithophel's counsel fulfilled the promise of chastisement that God revealed to David (2 Sam. 12:11²). Ahithophel, however, is not interested in fulfilling God's words; his interest is in killing David and appeasing his own lust for vengeance.

3. Rebellion will have temporary success because it identifies with carnal nature. Ahithophel is a man of some repute. When he spoke, people listened, whether he was counseling David or Absalom (2 Sam. 16:23³). Men are more than ready to follow a man who seems to have the ear of the king. That is why extra-biblical revelations are key to false religion's success. "God told me to do thus and so." It doesn't take long for men to hold the messenger and their message in high esteem and even hear him as if he had the

¹ Rom. 8:7-8; Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Luke 19:14; But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

² 2 Sam. 12:11; Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.

³ 2 Sam. 16:23; And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

power of God (e.g., Ahithophel, Acts 12:20-23; 1 John 5:9-12¹).

4. Rebellion will finally reveal its true self (17:1-2). “Crucify Him, let His blood be on our heads, and Pilate turned Him over to their wills.” Here Ahithophel’s counsel proves to be, not about the exaltation of Absalom, but about the appeasement of his own hatred. Rebellion, though it may appear to be a movement of the masses, is actually anarchy; it is men doing what is right in their own eyes. This is proven to be true when Absalom rejects the counsel of Ahithophel and listens rather to the counsel of Hushai. Rebellion does not engender loyalty. When all is said and done, it’s every man for himself.

5. Rebellion promises a false peace, preaching peace when there is no peace (17:3; Jer. 6:14²). False Christianity preaches peace by lying to men about God’s love and the result of Christ’s death. False, horrible universalism gives men a sense of peace, a sweet calm with no sense of danger, which is false and damning.

6. Finally, rebellion ends in death (17:23). Ahithophel’s death is self-inflicted. He commits suicide because he finds

¹ Acts 12:20-23; And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country. And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

¹ John 5:9-12; If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

² Jer. 6:14; They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.

his rebellion has made him a fool. Rebellion and unbelief's result may not be as immediate as in the case of Ahithophel, but all rebellion and all unbelief are but a slow form of suicide (Prov. 8:36¹).

Rolfe Barnard used to say, "Stack your guns in the corner and bow to the king." Rebellion is a fool's game whose end is just and horrible. There is a king in Israel, there is a balm in Gilead, there is a physician there. Why are the daughter of my people not healed (Jer. 8:22²)? Rebellion! "Kiss the Son lest he be angry and you are consumed when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are they that put their trust in Him" (Ps. 2:12).

¹ **Prov. 8:36**; But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

² **Jer. 8:22**; Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

PLACES (1)

2 SAMUEL 15:23

23, And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness.

There are certain geographical locations that are, by mere mention, provokers of spiritual thought. Eden takes our mind to both *paradise* and *ruin*. Ararat makes us think of *wrath* and *mercy*. Moriah takes our mind to *sacrifice* and *substitution* of Abraham and Isaac (said to be altar east of Eden, David's threshing floor, and Calvary). Babel reminds of man-centered *blasphemous religion*, Shiloh causes us to ponder *Christ* and how God is to be worshipped. Tophet and Gehenna make us mindful of *hell* and eternal *burning*. Jordan causes us to remember *deliverance*. Egypt causes us to consider *rebellion*, *slavery* and *sinful religion*. Calvary causes us to rejoice in the remembrance of our *redemption* by the effectual sacrifice of Christ.

In this chapter of Scripture there are two such locales that have great spiritual significance because they portray specific aspects of what our Lord did for us in the great work He finished on this earth. One of those places is Kidron (Cedron) and the other is Mt. Olivet. Geographically they are adjacent, and they picture and prefigure the imputation of our sin to Christ and His groanings in the Garden of Gethsemane on Olivet. In this study, we will consider the brook Kidron.

As we watch David crossing this brook with those few that are loyal to him, we must also consider the repeated scene in John 18:1.

“When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples” (John 18:1).

David in his sorrow prefigures the moments preceding the sorrow of our Lord on Gethsemane. As Absalom was hot on David’s trail, so the rulers, priests, and guards were in pursuit of our Lord. David had been betrayed by his close companion Ahithophel and his son Absalom. Our Lord had been betrayed by Judas. David made this journey, crossing this Kidron, under the weight of the consequence of his sin. Our Lord crossed Cedron already bearing the weight of the great debt He had assumed and the sin He would be made to be and the consequence of drinking that cup dry. David crossed the brook as a king rejected by most of Israel. Christ crossed this brook as the King who came to “His own and His own received Him not” (John. 1:11), “a man of sorrows acquainted with grief;” as one who was “despised and rejected of men” (Isa. 53:3).¹

This is the meaning of the brook Kidron. Its name is derived from the word “kedar,” which means “black” or “dark,” even “gloom.” It was located between Jerusalem and Olivet, and it emptied into the Dead Sea. It was between nine and ten feet wide and was not a flowing stream, nor would it even qualify as a babbling brook. The truth is, it was a dry riverbed for nine months out of the year, and during Marschevan (the fall and winter rains), it flowed to its basin in the dead sea. Though it was a dry riverbed it was

¹ Isa. 53:3; Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

not an empty brook. It was full of the foulest and vilest refuse imaginable. All the blood and excrement of every sacrifice offered on the temple altars was dumped into this dry brook. Also, the sewage of the city found its way into this slough. It was a sewer, a dumping place for all that is foul and despised. Everything about it pictured sin. Kidron's history was rich with this truth. It was the unclean place "without the city" (Lev. 14:40, 45¹). It was also the place where godly kings cast the dust and ashes of idols they had destroyed (2 Kings 23:4, 6; 2 Chron. 15:16; 30:14²). This is the place where all that represents the filthy sin of humanity was dumped. For nine months out of the year, it rotted, corrupted, and bubbled up with the stench of putrefaction. Except to cast in more refuse, the place was intolerable. How precise it pictures our sad condition, our sin, our

¹ Lev. 14:40, Then the priest shall command that they take away the stones in which the plague is, and they shall cast them into an unclean place without the city.

45; And he shall break down the house, the stones of it, and the timber thereof, and all the mortar of the house; and he shall carry them forth out of the city into an unclean place.

² 2 Kings 23:4; And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel.

6; And he brought out the grove from the house of the LORD, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people.

2 Chron. 15:16; And also concerning Maachah the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove: and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped it, and burnt it at the brook Kidron.

30:14; And they arose and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast them into the brook Kidron.

cursed “rags” (Isa. 64:6¹) of self-righteousness that cost the life of innumerable innocent victims but never put away our sin. They were dumped and carried over to Kidron where, mixed with our idolatry, they formed the sewer of our deeds of the flesh upon which our home was made. Is it any wonder that when our Lord looked down from heaven that His first assessment of mankind was that they were altogether stinking (Gen. 6:5²)? A revolting, decomposing, rancid, sour stench of ptomaine and death. This is Kidron; this is the filth that David and David’s Lord crossed in sorrow. This is our sin and our death.

But as foul and as despicable this is and must have been, in the fall of the year the rain came and washed away the corruption, carrying the deluge to the sea of the dead. Nothing lived in the Dead Sea, and what a picture this is of God’s salvation by the effectual sacrifice of Christ—burying our sins in the bottom of the sea (Job 5:10; 28:26; Joel 2:23, Ezek. 36:25³).

How can this great thing be? Only by substitution! In the 110th Psalm we have an amazing picture, a prophecy of inestimable import. This psalm is about the glory, power,

¹ **Isa. 64:6**; But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

² **Gen. 6:5**; And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

³ **Job 5:10**; To set up on high those that be low; that those which mourn may be exalted to safety.

28:26; When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder:

Joel 2:23; Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.

Ezek. 36:25; Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

and sovereign rule of Christ because, in the end, it is the declaration of our Lord's substitution for His elect. It is about our sins and iniquities being made to meet on Him. Psalm 110:7 says, "He *shall* drink of the brook." There it is! What glory can we attribute to the voluntary act?

"He drank of the brook"—our sin, our death, our putrefaction.

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:9, 14).

"He drank of the brook."

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

He drank of the brook.

"Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation. Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me. For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine

iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me” (Psa. 40:6-12).

But that is not all the story. He drank of the brook and drank it dry. The teacher of righteousness—according to righteousness, by His blood—washed all our sins down the slough of Kidron into the sea of deadness. From this He arose victorious; He “lifted up” the head (Ps. 110:7¹). He ascended on high and led captivity captive (Ps. 68:18²). He saw the travail of His soul and was satisfied (Isa. 53:11³). The Word therefore gives us reason why He “lifted up” the head. His glory was due to His drinking from the brook (Isa. 53:12; Phil 2:9-11; John 17:1-3⁴).

“And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over

¹ Ps. 110:7; He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

² Ps. 68:18; Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.

³ Isa. 53:11; He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

⁴ Isa. 53:12; Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Phil 2:9-11; Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

John 17:1-3; These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness” (2 Samuel 15:23).

“When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples” (John 18:1).

This is Kidron; and as did our Lord, it is a place to which we should often resort.

PLACES (2)

2 SAMUEL 15:30-31

30, And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.

31, And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.

As we observed in the last study, certain places in Scripture carry a great value in spiritual understanding. The brook Kidron represented the substitutionary death of Christ, particularly that aspect where our Lord was made to be sin for us, and by that sacrifice made us to be the righteousness of God. From Ps. 110:7 we saw the fact of the success of that great act in that Christ raised up the head; He was forever honored and glorified for successfully propitiating God for the sins of the elect. In this study, we will consider another place in the chapter that carries great spiritual significance. The place is Olivet, or the Mount of Olives. David has crossed Kidron with those who are loyal to him and now ascends the Mount of Olives, weeping as he goes, his head covered and his feet bare. The weeping, the covered head, and the bare feet are symbolic of humiliation and inward suffering. Here David is both type and antitype of our Lord. In his suffering because of betrayal of his own people, he is typical. In that he is suffering because of his personal transgressions, he is an antitype of Christ.

This crossing of Kidron and going up Olivet is chronologically the same as the account of our Lord. These things immediately transpired after the Lord had instituted the Lord's table, teaching the disciples of the singular source of their salvation. After they sang a hymn, they crossed Kidron and went to the Mount of Olives where our Lord proceeded to Gethsemane with a heavy heart and a troubled soul to pray to His Father about the cup He was about to drink. It was on this upward trek that Judas betrayed him, just as David is given word of Ahithophel's betrayal between Kidron and Olivet. (31a; Matt. 26:30; John 18:1-2¹). In this betrayal we find both type and antitype. In type, both betrayals were done by one close to the king. In antitype David was unaware of Ahithophel's betrayal, whereas our Lord foresaw Judas' betrayal because He had ordained it and even given Judas leave to accomplish his dastardly deed.

David's action and attitude mirror the actions of our Lord on that wondrous night. The primary aspect of David's going up Olivet is to worship the Lord (v. 32²). The state of the heart of our Lord as He walked the earth was that He worshipped God. On Olivet, David worships God. On Olivet, in the Garden of Gethsemane, our Lord worshipped God.

There are several things that define what it is to worship God.

Most notable is the fact that the worship defined here and in Gethsemane is worship done in *great sorrow*.

¹ Matt. 26:30; And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

John 18:1-2; When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.

² v. 32; And it came to pass, that when David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped God, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat rent, and earth upon his head.

Generally, especially in this day, worship (so-called) is a venture in tomfoolery and hilarity. One man said of such foolishness in worship that he mourned “the death of Mr. Wet eyes.” The fact is that true worship involves great joy and great sorrow, great joy because of forgiveness, and great sorrow because there is no worship without acknowledgement of sin. David is troubled because he knows and acknowledges that all that now troubles him has its source in his own sin. The weight of his chastisement had done its business, and in pain and sorrow he seeks the Lord. Sentimentality is often fake and false, but true sentiment is real and acceptable.

The worship of God is often attended with tears of sorrow, our heads covered with the mantle of our own unworthiness, our tears flowing from the knowledge that all our sin is against God, and our feet bare for we know that we stand on Holy Ground. David’s worship is grounded in the *knowledge of his own sin*. Our Lord’s worship in Gethsemane was likewise about sin; not His own but the sin He was about to own. His soul was sorrowful, was troubled, even unto death. The cup that He was to bear was not death but the horrid thing that requires death. He was to be made sin, a thing entirely foreign to His character. He knew no sin. Because I am a sinner, I can know nothing of this aspect of our Lord’s sorrow. I mourn over my own sinfulness because I have sinned. He mourned over this cup because He had never known it. When confronted with what He was to become, His soul was exceeding sorrowful, and it brought Him to worship God. That night He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood.

David is not alone on his trek up to Olivet. He is accompanied by all his loyal followers who, like him, weep with him. His worship is *congregational*. Our Lord left his followers behind and went to the garden alone. There, alone, before God, He sweat blood, and that blood was only

seen by God; that blood was before God. David's worship is born of his own troubles. Our Lord's worship was about the sin of His people (Isa. 53:5¹). When under great distress the human body pulls blood from the outer extremities and sends it to the vital organs. Blood is drawn inward for survival. But our Lord's extreme distress sent His blood outward through the pores of His skin. His distress was intercessory and is because of sin. True worship is done in consideration of sin.

True worship also is *bowing to the will of God*. In verse 15:24², Zadok, a priest, brings the ark to David, but David sends him back (v. 15:25³). David's reason for sending the ark back is that he is bowing to God's will (15:25b-26⁴). As Job said, "though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15)). We see that same attitude in verse 31 in David's reaction to the news of Ahithophel's betrayal. He does not look to himself, to those who are with him or to the presence of the ark, nor does he begin to devise some plan to overthrow Ahithophel. He prays to God to take care of it. Why? Because he acknowledges his sin, and the basis of such an acknowledgement is that everything he has done had only proven failure. Now he applies to Him who cannot fail. These actions mirror the words of our Lord in

¹ Isa. 53:5; But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

² v. 15:24; And lo Zadok also, and all the Levites were with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God: and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city.

³ v. 15:25; And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation.

⁴ 15:25b-26; Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation: But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.

Gethsemane “nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.”
(Read Psalm 3)

Lastly, the first phrase of verse 30 is intriguing. David went up by ascent. This is a historical fact, but the words “went up” and “by ascent” seem redundant. They are not. They speak of Christ from condescension to glorification. From the moment He entered the realm of vile humanity, his every step was toward His ascension to glory. He set His face as a flint toward Jerusalem. Where did His final ascent take place?

“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called *Olivet*” (Acts 1:9-12).

In the first phrase of verse 30, consider Christ instead of David; “And [Christ] went up by the ascent of mount Olivet...”

DAVID'S ERROR

2 SAMUEL 16:1- 4

1, And when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred loaves of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine.

2, And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these? And Ziba said, The asses be for the king's household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink.

3, And the king said, And where is thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father.

4, Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee that I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king.

This passage is the report of David heeding Ziba's lie concerning Mephibosheth and stripping Mephibosheth of his inheritance. David will, in the 19th chapter, be made aware of Ziba's lie and will return to Mephibosheth all that was given him back in chapter 9. Ziba had been designated as Mephibosheth's servant and was to care for his entire heritage, but he has shown himself to be a traitor to his master. As for David, his actions are inexcusable but they seem to follow a pattern. In the last chapter, we did not cover a couple of things that

give us some indication as to why he so readily accepts this false report about Mephibosheth.

We saw how David had bowed to the will of the Lord concerning Ahithophel's treason and Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. 15:25-26¹). But what we didn't cover was two things that inspiration tied together in the last part of chapter 15. David still appears to have a will toward the providential care of God in his response to the news of Ahithophel's treason (2 Sam. 15:31²). What immediately follows is a revelation of the fact that when we would do good, evil is present with us. Though we don't know the time span between 2 Sam. 15:31 and 2 Sam. 15:32-37³, it is evident that David, though trusting in God, begins to employ his flesh in overthrowing the counsel of Ahithophel. He sets up a conspiracy against the conspirators. Religion would classify this as "putting feet to your prayers" but in truth it is but another reminder of the fact that, with our minds, we serve the law of God but with our flesh, the law of sin and

¹ 2 Sam. 15:25-26; And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation: But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.

² 2 Sam. 15:31; And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.

³ 2 Sam. 15:32-37; And it came to pass, that when David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped God, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat rent, and earth upon his head: Unto whom David said, If thou passest on with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto me: But if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king; as I have been thy father's servant hitherto, so will I now also be thy servant: then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. And hast thou not there with thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests? therefore it shall be, that what thing soever thou shalt hear out of the king's house, thou shalt tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. Behold, they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz Zadok's son, and Jonathan Abiathar's son; and by them ye shall send unto me every thing that ye can hear. So Hushai David's friend came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem.

death. What David did was wrong, but it teaches us that we are yet sinners in this body even though, because of the work of Christ, we have been given spiritual life. We will never rise above this while we remain in this body, and as sad as it is, it is a necessary reminder of our need for Christ. Though wrong spiritually, David's decision to use clandestine means was politically astute. This willing mindset made his response to the wiles of Ziba at least more understandable. Since he is already in the frame of mind to employ spies, he is ready to hear of yet another conspiracy and believe that it is real (Mark. 4:24¹). We are not to hear an accusation against a brother except in the face of "two or three witnesses" (1 Tim. 5:19). This is accomplished only by a practiced consideration that our brothers and sisters are forgiven all their sins by Christ and stand perfect in the eyes of God. With eyes on Christ, we will not be so ready to hear accusations against our brethren. But if we partake in such activities ourselves, our mind is more ready to receive an accusation against a brother. When Ziba came with this lie about Mephibosheth, David's beloved friend and welcome guest in his house, it was easy for David to respond in the way he did because David was keen to the idea of betrayal. David's reaction mirrored his own action because he got involved in the circumstance. Our Lord said something about this in John 7:24.

"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24).

We need to look at the actions of David while considering this verse. On the one hand it is obvious that he errs in even hearing this accusation, much less believing it.

¹ Mark. 4:24; Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

On the other hand, his judgment is impaired due to circumstance. This is not an excuse for what he does but reveals that he is not judging with righteous judgment. Circumstances have clouded his judgment and he does not consider how much Mephibosheth loves him and how grateful he has been. Immediacy rules the day. When our Lord made this statement, He was being judged as a lawbreaker for healing a child on the Sabbath. The accusers thought not of the child or that a gracious act had taken place before their eyes, but were so fixed on “upholding” the Sabbath that they did not consider the circumstance. There are exceptions to keeping the Sabbath day, e.g., ox in the ditch, etc. (John 7:23¹). These had judged according to appearance and had not judged rightly. Motive generally determines the value of the act, and clearly David’s motive is to protect himself and those with him, but he is wrong because he judges by appearance, the appearance of all that is going on in his life now. He is ripe for Ziba’s flattery and for Ziba’s lie.

First, David has entered enemy territory. His trek across Kidron and his ascent to Olivet are behind him and he is now in the country of the Benjamites headed for Bahurim, the tribe of his former nemesis, king Saul. He goes to where Ziba is taking care of Mephibosheth’s property. There is no reason to do this except that it might give Absalom pause to enter where the only heir to Saul’s throne lives. His presence there makes Ziba’s conspiracy a little easier to advance. This should stand as a warning. No matter how dire the circumstance, we should never take refuge in enemy territory, whether it is the residence of our former king, or

¹ John 7:23; If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?

in the temporary comfort of our flesh—nothing but trouble awaits.

Ziba is evidently unhappy in the service with which he has been assigned. He is a man of some importance, having 20 servants in his charge, but he and they have been put into the service of Mephibosheth, a cripple who has received gracious help from his former enemy. With David nearby, Ziba realizes an opportunity to put his plot in use. He has no fondness for David, but he will ingratiate himself and appear as the only one in the land of Saul that holds David in esteem; everybody else in the land despises David (vv. 5-8¹). Discontentment is fertile ground for the enemy. Ziba wants to own all that has been given to Mephibosheth. He is an enemy of grace.

First, Ziba comes with a present, a well-thought out present. What do you get for a king who is a fugitive in his own kingdom? What do you bring a fugitive who has many mouths to feed? You bring him a gift that will meet his pressing needs. This is exactly what Ziba has done (v. 1). These things appear as a gift, but to Ziba they are an investment in his future. David sees Ziba, but Divine providence will supply David's need even though now he seems to have forgotten that. Ziba is a raven employed to feed God's child (Isa. 46:10-11²). It is apparent from the

¹ vv. 5-8; And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came. And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man.

² Isa. 46:10-11; Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that

first words of verse 2 that David is a bit cautious about the gift but not cautious enough (Prov. 18:6¹). When David asks of Mephibosheth, Ziba paints him as a treacherous man with designs on David's throne. He has wormed his way into David's confidence and gains advantage. David buys his story, and this wicked man momentarily succeeds (Prov. 17:23²). David—because of circumstance, because of conscience, and because of his own conspiratorial behavior—grants Ziba possession of Mephibosheth's birthright.

Ziba finally plays the humble card (v. 4), but he does not join with David. He goes back to his newfound riches, and when David returns to Jerusalem, he finds Ziba in league with Absalom, and Mephibosheth still among his loyal subjects.

This report teaches us that we must be careful to avoid accusations against the brethren, and further, to watch our own tongue because our own actions may open doors for the enemy to find advantage. Christ has redeemed our brothers and sisters, and because of his perfect work, no charge can be laid against them; to hear a charge or to make a charge is to try to dig up what Christ has buried. It is to bring our opinion into the fact of the finished work. May God, in His grace, keep our eyes on Christ and Him alone so that all accusations will be filtered through that view.

executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.

¹ **Prov. 18:5-6;** It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment. A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.

² **Prov. 17:23;** A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.

IN GOD

2 SAMUEL 16:5-14

5, And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came.

6, And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left.

7, And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial:

8, The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man.

9, Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.

10, And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?

11, And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him.

12, It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day.

13, And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast

dust.

14, And the king, and all the people that were with him, came weary, and refreshed themselves there.

This is a great story, a true lesson in the concept of trusting God. Like all that fills the pages of this Book, there is an obvious undercurrent of the sovereign providence of the omnipotent God. The words of David in allowing Shimei to curse him and throw stones at him have troubled many because of the apparent association of God with sin (vv. 10-11). Men in general, and sometimes theologians (so-called), have difficulty with the idea that God has anything to do with sin. This comes from the notion that there are two opposing forces in the world, often referred to in terms of good and evil, or Satan and God, or sin and God. Any reasonable person knows this is true.

The problem is that men, for want of spiritual understanding, put these forces on equal footing. They may give lip service to the way it all will end, but their actions and beliefs betray them. They hang salvation on their imagined free will and account that blessings come because they are able to join forces with God to defeat Satan or to overcome sin. This makes sin and all that opposes God to have equal power and standing, with man being the deciding factor on how things turn out. Thus, sometimes God is victorious and sometimes He is thwarted and defeated. Such men look at the act of Shimei and the words of David and are unable to reconcile that this sinful, rebellious act of Shimei was bidden or caused by God. The reason is quite simple: They don't know God, and thus refuse to acknowledge Him as God.

The notion that "God is in all things" gives rise to the inordinate affections that permeate the world in this day and has filled the minds of philosophers through the ages. It

produces a seeming reverence for all things animate and gives all things animate (and even vegetable) a kind of deity or spiritual significance, but it comes at the cost of diminishing God to be just one of many things in a world where all things are deemed spiritual. To diminish God on any level is to deny Him altogether. All things are in God (Rom. 11:32¹). Shimei greatly sinned. In crass, open rebellion he disobeyed the command of God (Ex. 22:28; Eccl. 10:20²), and to this he was appointed. Not only that, Shimei's words were lies. David did not kill Saul. He lamented Saul's death (2 Sam. 1:12³). Shimei chose to believe that David was the culprit, and he was appointed to think that way.

Note also that Shimei felt he was able to understand God's dealings with David. Natural men look at others in dire circumstances and conclude that God is judging them (v. 8). Religion makes hay of this error and uses it to control men. The fact is that the chastisements that David endures are from the hand of love to bring David to an expected end (Jer. 29:11⁴). There is no doubt that David suffered pangs of conscience, bouts where he applied to the flesh, and was almost constantly in remembrance that the course his life had taken was the product of his own doing. But in this glowing moment he acknowledges that he knows that all of this has been according to divine appointment. "The Lord

¹ Rom. 11:32; For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

² Ex. 22:28; Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.

Eccl. 10:20; Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.

³ 2 Sam. 1:12; And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword.

⁴ Jer. 29:11; For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

has said to him, Curse David.” David sees God in every circumstance.

Abishai’s response is much like Peter’s when Judas betrayed Christ. They, like we, live upon the surface most of the time and react rather than consider that God is sovereign over all things. There has not been a nanosecond in the history of the universe when the Almighty has vacated His throne. We are prone to curse second causes, and when we do, we are actually setting circumstance on equal footing with God. Time, tide, and circumstance are merely revelations of God’s sovereign providence. Would to God that we all might live in this sweet place, but our flesh will have none of it. We look at Shimei and feel that the only proper thing to do is remove his head (compare vv. 9-10 to John 18:10-11¹ and Luke 9:51-54² with 1 Peter 2:23³). Judas sinned horribly against our Lord, being appointed as a measure in the Father’s cup that Christ must drink. Shimei’s cursing is sin and is appointed for David’s good and for the glory of God.

This episode is a revelation of the fact that God is sovereign over sin and uses the foulest of men and their foul motives to accomplish His appointed end. Our reaction to these circumstances reveals the thoughts of our hearts and

¹ **John 18:10-11**; Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

² **Luke 9:51-54**; And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

³ **1 Peter 2:23**; Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.

that, too, is by appointment (Luke 2:34-35¹). David's thoughts toward God are revealed in his response toward the sin of Shimei.

Does this make sin acceptable in God's eyes? Of course not! It merely teaches us the truth that sin does not fall outside the purview of God's sovereign will and providence. The vile and wicked plots of us all nailed Christ to the cross. We are all guilty of hatred toward Christ and of hateful desires to rip Him from His throne, and in our rebellion, according to the dictates of our own depravity, we are like marionettes, having our strings pulled to make us dance to the appointed place and time where God will be fully and rightly glorified (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28²).

I am not big on religious, denominational confessions, but the Westminster Confession got it right on this subject, stating, "God's providence extendeth itself to all sins of angels and men, and that not by mere permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing, in a manifold disposition unto His own holy ends; yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God."

The perfection and holiness of God is no more tainted by directing the activities of evil men than the sunbeam is tainted as it falls on and illuminates a dunghill. Shimei's

¹ Luke 2:34-35; And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

² Acts 2:23; Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.

4:27-28; For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

hateful heart belongs to him alone, but it is God's sovereign work that Shimei's hatred should, like a guided missile, find its mark on David and land precisely on target.

May God give us eyes to see His sovereign hand in all things; and hope in God, for He worketh all things "for good to them that love Him and are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

AHITHOPHEL AND HUSHAI

2 SAMUEL 17:1-14

1, Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night:

2, And I will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only:

3, And I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seekest is as if all returned: so all the people shall be in peace.

4, And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel.

5, Then said Absalom, Call now Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he saith.

6, And when Hushai was come to Absalom, Absalom spake unto him, saying, Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner: shall we do after his saying? if not; speak thou.

7, And Hushai said unto Absalom, The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time.

8, For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men, that they be mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field: and thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people.

9, Behold, he is hid now in some pit, or in some other place: and it will come to pass, when some of them be overthrown at the first, that whosoever heareth it will say, There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom.

10, And he also that is valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth

that thy father is a mighty man, and they which be with him are valiant men.

11, Therefore I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude; and that thou go to battle in thine own person.

12, So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground: and of him and of all the men that are with him there shall not be left so much as one.

13, Moreover, if he be gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there be not one small stone found there.

14, And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom.

I have waited to look at Hushai until now because it is here that his part in the providential work of God is clearly displayed. We are first introduced to Hushai in chapter 15, vv. 31-37;

“And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. And it came to pass, that when David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped God, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat rent, and earth upon his head: Unto whom David said, If thou passest on with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto me: But if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king; as I have been thy father's servant hitherto, so will I now also be thy servant: then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. And hast thou not there with

thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests? therefore it shall be, that what thing soever thou shalt hear out of the king's house, thou shalt tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. Behold, they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz Zadok's son, and Jonathan Abiathar's son; and by them ye shall send unto me every thing that ye can hear. So Hushai David's friend came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem.

Hushai came to David in his darkest hour as he wept and worshipped God on Olivet. He came to join with David as he fled Absalom. Little is said of Hushai before or after this episode. He is mentioned in 1 Kings as the father of Baanah, and he is mentioned in I Chronicles 27:33;

“And Ahithophel was the king's counsellor: and Hushai the Archite was the king's companion.”

That mention affords an important description as well as a revealing distinction. He is called David's companion but is spoken of in this manner in contrast to the relationship of Ahithophel toward David. This may be called a small distinction, but the small distinction proves a great gulf when the wheels of providence begin to turn events against Ahithophel and Absalom. Hushai is David's friend. Ahithophel was David's counselor.

Though David befriended Ahithophel, he had no filial attachment to David. His interest was ultimately in his own agenda, exalting his own self-importance, which was proven when he was unable to accept the fact that he was no longer the image he had of himself; his pain was so great at the loss of position that he destroyed what he could not tolerate. The millstone of providence had ground his delusion to powder, and there was nothing for him but to completely disappear. As we saw in 2 Sam. 15:34-37, Hushai had been drafted into the service of David as a spy covertly in the

service of Absalom with instructions to listen to what was going on and report back to David by the sons of two priests.

Hushai follows David's instruction to the tee, and though Absalom is immediately suspicious (16:17¹), Hushai is able to convince Absalom of his allegiance. What follows is amazing. Absalom hears the counsel of Ahithophel and goes for it. There is a unanimous vote, and everybody who is anybody is on board (v. 4).

Then out of the blue, or so it would seem, Absalom calls for Hushai, to hear the counsel of someone other than Ahithophel. As I read the words of Absalom I thought of the thief on the cross. He, along with the other criminal member of Barabbas' gang, was hanging on the other side of Christ. Both thieves had mocked Christ, "casting the same in their teeth," and then suddenly one thief begins to defend Christ and to cast his lot with the Lord, even pleading to be remembered when Christ came to His kingdom. There, as here, no explanation as to "why" is given. It came out of the blue, from heaven itself (Prov. 19:21; 21:1²). Absalom's synapses fire in a completely different direction because his brain is manipulated by the hand of Sovereign will. Not only does Absalom call for Hushai, but he also rejects the counsel of Ahithophel, his trusted co-conspirator, and follows Hushai's idea. The last sentence of verse 14 says it all! It is God who has tied these two opposite characters, Ahithophel and Hushai, to both David and Absalom. They both influence Absalom and are instruments in the hand of God for his demise.

¹ 16:17; And Absalom said to Hushai, Is this thy kindness to thy friend? why wentest thou not with thy friend?

² Prov. 19:21; There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.

21:1; The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

As I pondered this incident involving Hushai, Ahithophel, and Absalom, a question began to form in my mind. Why is Absalom so influenced by them? Of course, the prevailing answer is that God is on His throne. However, He is the God of means, using and manipulating His creatures to bring all things to their appointed end. The means He uses here is the psyche of humanity. What drives all humanity are three things: the desire to gain, the fear of loss, and the hatred of guilt. Whether it has to do with material things, reputation, or position, it is a desire to gain, a fear of loss, and a hatred of guilt that moves men to act as they do.

Ahithophel's suicide was born of a thwarted plan for gain and a realized loss of his reputation and position, and the noose was relief of guilt. This psychology of humanity has been studied by business and advertising for years, and they have come up with formulas for different demographics, but all their efforts are geared to these three things. The big business of religion employs this knowledge to fill their churches and to make merchandise of men's souls (Rev. 18:12-13¹). I call it the religion of "whips and biscuits"—the religion of the promise of rewards and of threats of punishment work to assuage guilt. Desire of gain, fear of loss, and hatred of guilt is the toolbox of religion, and these things control behavior whereby men are convinced that they act righteously.

How utterly different the true gospel is! Sinners saved by grace do nothing with thought of gain, fear of loss, or hatred of guilt. Without them lifting a finger they are

¹ Rev. 18:12-13; The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.

counted as righteous before God. Without moving a muscle, they have been given all things. Without any act of contrition, they have been relieved of all guilt. The gospel demands nothing of them. They do nothing to gain anything. They do nothing out of fear of loss. They do nothing to assuage guilt because they are not guilty. Before the holy bar of God's justice, there is no charge against them—and never will be. They do not do what they do to be righteous. They do what they do because they are righteous. False Christianity cannot grasp this; it is foolishness to them. They can only do what they can understand. The spirit of man understands the spirit of man (1 Cor. 2:11¹). So, we find Ahithophel and Hushai approaching a rebel—not unlike a lost man—with the only tools that will convince a lost man and can move a lost man to alter his behavior. Though Hushai is a man employed by David, his task is to destroy the plans of Ahithophel. He uses that which will reach Absalom, as does Ahithophel. In this they picture how false religion is successful in binding up the hearts and lives of men.

Hushai begins with playing on the vanity of Absalom. Absalom is not the king, but he is absolutely okay with being addressed as such (16:16²). Men want to believe they are special and are glad when religion tells them that they have the power to make Christ's work to be a success or failure. They are told that their will is sovereign in salvation, and to the lost, ignorant man, whose desire is to be exalted, the false gospel is right up his alley. Men love the idea that

¹ 1 Cor. 2:11; For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

² 16:16; And it came to pass, when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, was come unto Absalom, that Hushai said unto Absalom, God save the king, God save the king.

they are in control, and false preachers are more than willing to boost their egos.

Ahithophel plays to Absalom's desire of gain. His desire is to gain independence from David. Ahithophel gives him a way to make David hate him, or at least to make the people believe that David would hate him. By this, Absalom is able to separate himself from David in a manner that those who hate David will align with him. David doesn't hate Absalom, but what Absalom does is surely a reason for David to hate him. Absalom gains the people by rebelling against David the anointed king. Men hate Christ as the Lord overall, and they will seek to diminish Him that men might be gained. If a man can convince others that they can thwart the anointed, they will join hands in hate for God and love of self.

Ahithophel also plays on the mind of Absalom by saying that David's followers are weak, few in number, and would be easily defeated—would even flee if pursued. Religion loves the numbers game. Numbers are, to them, proof that they are a New Testament church. But their logic fails when they use the epistles to preach such bunk, because the churches that existed at the times of the New Testament writings do not exist today. According to their theory of growing numbers being evidence of the New Testament church, those churches to whom Paul wrote could not have been New Testament churches. Where two or three are gathered in His name, Christ is said to be in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20¹).

Hushai's counsel plays to Absalom's fear of loss. His words are designed to make Absalom doubt his plan as well as his power to execute it. Religion operates on the conscience, and the conscience tells men what to do and

¹ Matt. 18:20; For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

then creates doubt as to if it is enough. The threat of loss and the threat of wrath and judgment keep men in line. Absalom fears losing, and Hushai's words play to that fear. The religion of man is "whips and biscuits." The gospel is about what has been done, not about desire for gain, fear of loss, or assuaging guilt.

FRIENDS OF THE KING

2 SAMUEL 17:15-29

15, Then said Hushai unto Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, Thus and thus did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel; and thus and thus have I counselled.

16, Now therefore send quickly, and tell David, saying, Lodge not this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily pass over; lest the king be swallowed up, and all the people that are with him.

17, Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed by Enrogel; for they might not be seen to come into the city: and a wench went and told them; and they went and told king David.

18, Nevertheless a lad saw them, and told Absalom: but they went both of them away quickly, and came to a man's house in Bahurim, which had a well in his court; whither they went down.

19, And the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground corn thereon; and the thing was not known.

20, And when Absalom's servants came to the woman to the house, they said, Where is Ahimaaz and Jonathan? And the woman said unto them, They be gone over the brook of water. And when they had sought and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem.

21, And it came to pass, after they were departed, that they came up out of the well, and went and told king David, and said unto David, Arise, and pass quickly over the water: for thus hath Ahithophel counselled against you.

22, Then David arose, and all the people that were with him, and they passed over Jordan: by the morning

light there lacked not one of them that was not gone over Jordan.

23, And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

24, Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom passed over Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him.

25, And Absalom made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab: which Amasa was a man's son, whose name was Ithra an Israelite, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruah Joab's mother.

26, So Israel and Absalom pitched in the land of Gilead.

27, And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lodebar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim,

28, Brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse,

29, And honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that were with him, to eat: for they said, The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness.

This is the record of the outcome of Absalom following the counsel of Hushai rather than that of Ahithophel. Hushai's counsel was designed to give David more time to put some distance between himself and Absalom. Hushai's counsel required Absalom to take the time to form a larger army to overwhelm David and the people that were with him. Once the decision was made, Hushai informed the two spies and sent them to David to tell him to hasten and flee (v. 16). The two spies were

discovered by a lad, who quickly informed Absalom, who in turn sent men out to capture the spies. They failed in their efforts because a woman hid them in a well and covered it with corn and lied to those who were pursuing the spies. The pursuers returned to Absalom empty-handed, and the spies made it to David in time.

A couple of things are very interesting in this episode.

First, the woman who hid the spies lied. In effect, she lied to protect David. She was like Rahab who also lied to protect spies. James used Rahab as an example of how faith is justified by works. Here, the work was to lie for God. I know this insults the moral sensibilities of some. But in these instances, lies were a good thing. Some might say that this breaks the ninth commandment that addresses “bearing false witness against your neighbor.” But that commandment has to do with false accusations against your neighbor, which the Lord made clear by giving the commandment to “not hear an accusation against your brother except in the face of two or three witnesses” (eyewitnesses).

I am not saying it is alright to go about lying, but if such a dilemma finds you as did this woman, lying is necessary. It is not as though lying is strange to any of us. Paul said let God be true and all men be liars (Rom. 3:4¹). In the Psalms we find humanity described as a liar and a lie. The record is plain. Rahab and the woman in our text did what was necessary, at the time, to honor the king and to honor the Lord. If moral judgments apply, these two did the moral and right thing. It is also important to remember that behind all this is the overriding principle of God’s sovereign providence. The Lord employs His creation as He deems fit

¹ Rom. 3:4; God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

to bring all things to their appointed end for the good of His people and for His glory.

Another thing that is interesting is the report that the spies give to David. Though they are aware that Ahithophel's counsel had been rejected, it is Ahithophel's counsel that they report to David (v. 21). Why they do this is not known, but the fact is that Ahithophel's word carried considerable weight in Israel and this, perhaps, is why the spies tell David of his counsel (16:23¹). Whatever their reason, their word is followed, and David makes his way, with his people, to Mahanaim.

By the time David arrives in Mahanaim, quite some distance from Jerusalem, Absalom has gathered his army (all Israel, v. 11) and is ready to do battle (v. 24). Still under the delusion of his own greatness and entitlement to the throne, Absalom has no idea that his vanity will soon be caught in the branches of a tree, and he will be an immobile target for the darts of those he seeks to destroy. Solomon is destined for the throne of David, and no army from heaven, earth, or hell can alter that purpose one iota.

When David arrives in Mahanaim, the place where Jacob was met by angels after he and Laban made their Mizpah and where Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Lord and was renamed Israel, he is met with a warm welcome. He is met by the son of a former enemy, the man who was housing Mephibosheth before David fetched him and took him to the palace, and an old man who is from a village near Gilead. That village is abutted by a lake, where the village's many fullers operate their businesses. A fuller is a bleacher of fabric. He makes his customer's clothing white as snow. As I thought of these three men, I was struck with

¹ 16:23; And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

those who came out to honor David. Who they are speaks to those whom Christ has saved and how He did it. We were all sons and daughters of those who hated and ill-used the King. We all were fetched by grace and grace alone from the dunghill to set among princes (1 Sam. 2:8¹). And our Lord made his people white as snow (Isa. 1:18; Mal. 3:1-3²).

They come with bedding and provisions for David and his people. What they bring is significant. Remember, they have crossed Jordan and are on not on the Canaan side but rather are where the two-and-a-half tribes had chosen to stay. These three friends bring them a taste of home, the land of milk and honey (Isa. 7:16, 22³).

One more thing is important to note in verse 22. Of all those that David brings with him, none are lost. This mirrors the report of David's victory in 1 Samuel 30 over the Amalekites when he recovers all that they had taken captive

¹ 1 Sam. 2:8; He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them.

² Isa. 1:18; Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Mal. 3:1-3; Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

³ Isa. 7:16, For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.

22; And it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk that they shall give he shall eat butter: for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land.

(1 Sam. 30:18-19¹). In that case and this, the king lost nothing. In this David is a type of another anointed King, the King of kings. He came to this earth to save His people, to pay their sin debt, and He accomplished their salvation by the sacrifice of Himself. Everyone for whom He died was redeemed and is eternally safe in the bosom of the Father. Those for whom He died will never be lost. He recovered all, and when they cross Jordan, there will no one be lacking (Matt. 1:21; John 17:12; John 6:37-39; Eph. 1:20-23; 2 Tim. 1:9²).

¹ **1 Sam. 30:18-19;** David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives. And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any thing that they had taken to them: David recovered all.

² **Matt. 1:21;** And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

John 17:12; While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

John 6:37-39; All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

Eph. 1:20-23; Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

2 Tim. 1:9, Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

ABSALOM'S END

2 SAMUEL 18:1-17

1, And David numbered the people that were with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them.

2, And David sent forth a third part of the people under the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also.

3, But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us: but now thou art worth ten thousand of us: therefore now it is better that thou succour us out of the city.

4, And the king said unto them, What seemeth you best I will do. And the king stood by the gate side, and all the people came out by hundreds and by thousands.

5, And the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom.

6, So the people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim;

7, Where the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David, and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men.

8, For the battle was there scattered over the face of all the country: and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.

9, And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under

the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away.

10, And a certain man saw it, and told Joab, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an oak.

11, And Joab said unto the man that told him, And, behold, thou sawest him, and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground? and I would have given thee ten shekels of silver, and a girdle.

12, And the man said unto Joab, Though I should receive a thousand shekels of silver in mine hand, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son: for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none touch the young man Absalom.

13, Otherwise I should have wrought falsehood against mine own life: for there is no matter hid from the king, and thou thyself wouldest have set thyself against me.

14, Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak.

15, And ten young men that bare Joab's armour compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him.

16, And Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel: for Joab held back the people.

17, And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him: and all Israel fled every one to his tent.

When David catches himself envying the wicked in Psalm 73, the Lord brings him to the sanctuary and shows him their end. When David is made to understand the end of the wicked, though for a

time they may prosper and may seem to live a life without trouble, he sees that God causes them to stand on slippery places, and their end will be utter destruction. Absalom has had his victories. While his father was in the slough of despond, he saw opportunity to exercise his seditious heart and to begin his insurrection against the throne of David. David was stricken with conviction and was under chastisement for his deeds. Absalom used the king's inaction to overthrow the kingdom. The Word of the Lord declares in Job 20:5, "The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment." In this chapter, we have that prophetic promise realized. This is the report of the end of Absalom. For a time, he was a bright light in Israel, but he has proved but a shooting star.

In the first five verses of this chapter, David exhibits the results of the loving chastisement with which our Lord exercises all his children. Chastisement always brings the child home to the feet of the Savior. We see this in two of the Psalms (42:11; and 43:5¹) which David pens during this time. The first result is that David is brought to trust the Lord and to have confidence that the Lord will do battle for him. This is seen in the fact that he puts his army in battle mode by dividing them out for central and flank positions. Further, his desire to lead the charge evidences the old warrior is back to form. Hushai's counsel has given him the needed time, and now, with eyes on the Lord, he is ready to be the king. Though it seems that all Israel has joined with Absalom, it is evident that there are yet many who still have strong allegiance with David. Their love for him is revealed

¹ Ps. 42:11; Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Ps. 43:5; Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

when they beseech him to stay behind while they go to battle for him. They consider one David to be of greater value than 10,000 of them. This is reminiscent of the word of the bride of Christ when she says of her beloved that he is the “chiefest among 10,000” (Song 5:10). The church goes into the world, assaulting the very gates of hell, risking life and limb because they love their King and consider His value so great that by comparison, they have no value at all.

Secondly, the effect of chastisement is humility. David’s pleas for the life of his son not only speak of his love for his son but also speak to the state of his heart. He knows well that Absalom has sinned grievously, but he looks at Absalom in light of his own sin. Chastisement tenderizes the heart and makes the believer sensitive to the trials of others (2 Cor. 1:3-6¹). Mark well that the believer who has no compassion for others is in need of a trial, because a trial will put him in the same place as those who are sinners like him. If you do not see your innate weakness and frailty, you will be intolerant of it in others. David can show compassion for Absalom because the Lord had shown compassion despite his own brokenness. Also, it cannot be disregarded that David pictures the Lord Jesus Christ in his compassion for His lost and wayward children. He commended “his love for toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of Christ.

But Absalom has touched the Lord’s anointed and has sought to do him harm. He has gathered his forces to cast

¹ 2 Cor. 1:3-6; Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

David's "bands asunder" (Ps. 2:3¹). But He who is in heaven shall laugh and have Absalom and his fellow insurgents in derision. He will set His King on the holy hill of Zion (See Ps. 2; Acts 4). The cams and gears of sovereign providence, moved by the engine of purpose, are about to grind Absalom and his grandiose plans to powder. He will not be king. He will be a corpse in the bottom of a pit, buried under a pile of rocks. "Pride goes before destruction; and a haughty spirit before the fall" (Prov. 16:18).

The battle ensues with direct orders from David to do no harm to Absalom. We know that the order is not followed. The battle is a rout. Twenty-thousand Israelites are killed this day at the hands of David's army (vv. 6-7). Verse 8 is very interesting. The "wood" destroys (eats) more than the number of those slain by the sword. Much is offered by the commentators about this phrase, but it is all speculation. The Lord inspired the writer to leave the reader shut up to the sovereign. It is mysterious language.

The imagination can go to interesting places, especially to anyone who, as a child, spent some time in the woods at night. Writers of horror tales and such have made trees to talk and walk and destroy intruders. Primarily, what is known is that if no army's sword fell on these men, the sword of justice—the hand of the Almighty—finished the job out of the sight of men. If the words are meant to instill fear in the heart of the infidel, they are successful. But what if the word "more" has to do with station rather than number. What if this is about cutting off the head of the snake? We know for sure that the woods devour one man that day and that one man is the head of the snake, the impudent would-be king—Absalom.

¹ Ps. 2:3, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

Just as David is worth more than 10,000 to his people, what is the value of Absalom to the rebellion? The answer is “more,” more than the 20,000 lost in battle. On this day the woods devour the rebellion. This day in the woods, a great oak reaches down its boughs and snatches Absalom by the famous hair of his head off his mule, suspends him between heaven and earth (him being unfit for either), and draws the sedition to an immediate halt. To personify the mighty oak in such a manner might seem to go a bit too far, but Scripture sometimes speaks in such a way (Ps. 98:8; Isa. 55:12; Matt. 3:9; Luke 19:40¹). It is a literary tool employed to suggest something amazing such as “the wood devoured more.” That oak devours all the rebels on this day.

Alone and even deserted by his mule, Absalom hangs by his pride, “hoisted on his own petard,” and between the time he is discovered and the time it takes to tell Joab, I’m sure he has some time to think. Had he repented, begged for mercy, or confessed his sins, I am sure it would have been recorded for our instruction. The silence is glaring, and the reason is sure: The Lord had appointed the time and method of his demise, and his hour has come. Though the man who sees him hanging is obedient to David by refusing to slay Absalom, Joab proves a disobedient tool in the hands of sovereign purpose. Joab and his armor bearers finish the job. The sound of the trumpet blares that the false king was dead; long live the king!

¹ Ps. 98:8; Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together.

Isa. 55:12; For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Matt. 3:9; And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

Luke 19:40; And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

The old adage “man proposes, and God disposes” applies here in spades. This is seen in the brief commentary set forth in vv. 17-18. Absalom had three sons that had preceded him in death. Not having a future lineage, Absalom had erected a memorial to himself in the king’s dale. A pile of stones was what he designed to have men remember his greatness. The Lord said, “whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased” (Matt. 23:12). He that piled stone upon stone to be remembered now lay dead beneath a pile of stones to erase any memory of him. It is the order of things for rebels against God. Ask Nebuchadnezzar. Ask Haman. Ask Herod. “Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth” (Isa. 45:9).

IS ABSALOM SAFE?

2 SAMUEL 18:33

21, Then said Joab to Cushi, Go tell the king what thou hast seen. And Cushi bowed himself unto Joab, and ran.

22, Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok yet again to Joab, But howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cushi. And Joab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready?

23, But howsoever, said he, let me run. And he said unto him, Run. Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cushi.

24, And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone.

25, And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near.

26, And the watchman saw another man running: and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold another man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings.

27, And the watchman said, Me thinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king said, He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings.

28, And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed be the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king.

29, And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the

king's servant, and me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was.

30, And the king said unto him, Turn aside, and stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still.

31, And, behold, Cushite came; and Cushite said, Tidings, my lord the king: for the LORD hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee.

32, And the king said unto Cushite, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cushite answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is.

33, And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son

I chose the title for this study because, regardless of the surrounding circumstances or of the victory of David's army over Absalom's insurrectional forces, the singular interest of David is the welfare of his son. The woeful words of David, filled with pathos and grief, have been the fodder of many a commentator, often painting David in a less-than-generous light. David's words in verse 33 are admittedly thought-provoking. I think the normal reaction to them is, "Why is he so upset?" After all, Absalom was out for David's head. He was a sworn enemy of the anointed king and presumed to overturn the will of God by taking the throne that God had promised to Solomon. God's arrow was drawn taut in His bow and His target was Absalom.

Is David against the providence of God? Is David an oversensitive wimp? Most of those who are familiar with the story are, to some degree at the least, confused by David's response. This common reaction is due to two things. First, when we read the story, having benefit of all of Absalom's thoughts and designs openly displayed, we interject our own

notion of what we think our righteous reaction would be. It's the old, "If I'd have been there, I'd have reacted in such and such a way." Secondly, having the full report, every sense of justice seems to have been exercised in the destruction of Absalom. This seems to be a just end for this rebel, and we are in agreement with God, who had set His anger and wrath against Absalom. Hindsight is 20/20. To believe that Absalom got what was due him is reasonable and correct. But David's soulful reaction does not indicate that he was in conflict with the will of God in the providential disposal of this seditious rebel. We are not Absalom's father. We have not just heard of the demise of the fruit of our loins. David's reaction is about the love of a father for his son. His interest is singular.

Throughout this entire ordeal, David has not changed. He has grieved for his son while all around him was a cry for vengeance against his son. The rebel must die, but the rebel has a father and the rebel's father loves him. In rare cases parents disown their children. But the case of a mother deserting her child is so rare that it is used as an example of the fact that God's faithfulness is the only faithfulness that exceeds the love of a parent (Isa. 49:13-16¹). Considering the natural estate of the elect—born and bred in insurrection, hating our Father from birth—it is important to remember that even in the days of our rebellion, we were never forsaken of our heavenly Father (Ezek. 6:9²; Illustrated by—Hos. 11:8-9; Heb. 2:4-18¹).

¹ Isa. 49:13-16; Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted. But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.

² Ezek. 6:9; And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their

From the moment of Absalom's plot against David, his father's desire was his recovery, and that failure, through no fault of David, brings about David's words in verse 33. What father or mother among us would react differently?

Now, I want us to consider the singular interest of David in light of the declaration of the gospel. For a moment, let us set aside the rebellion and mindset of Absalom and view him only considering the love his father has for him, David's singular interest. In that scenario we can envision the love and singular interest of God for His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Scripture is clear that God's interest is in His Son. The Scripture is replete with references of the Father's targeted interest (Matt. 3:17; John 3:35; 5:23; 17:2; 1 Cor. 16:22²). Just as David is interested

whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols: and they shall lothe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations.

¹ **Hos. 11: 8-9;** How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.

Heb. 2: 14-18; Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

² **Matt. 3:17;** And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

John 3:35; The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

in the death of his son, so likewise God has made it so, by His gospel, that those who worship His Son do so with primary emphasis on His death. No one can be condemned for whom Christ has died. The satisfaction of law and justice was accomplished by the propitiatory death of Jesus Christ. The ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Table are rehearsals of His death. The mercy-seat was covered symbolically with death, sprinkled with the blood of the substitutionary sacrifice. When the gospel is preached, God's requirement for the preacher is the accurate report concerning the death of His Son. His death alone has pleased God (Isa. 53:10; Heb. 10:6, 12, 17¹).

Concerning the accurate depiction of the death of God's son, in our passage there are two messengers. One is *sent* (v. 21): "How shall they preach except they be sent" (Rom. 10:15). The other takes upon *himself* to bring the message (v.22). The sent one delivers the truth. The one who takes it upon himself is not able, for fear of censure, to deliver the truth. Both know the facts—the truth of the estate of the son—but only one is warranted to deliver the message. In this story, one is named Ahimaaz. He was one of the

5:23; . . . all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

17:2; As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

1 Cor. 16:22; If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.

¹ Isa. 53:10; Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

Heb. 10:6, In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

12, But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

17, And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

runners who brought the news to David that the counsel of Ahithophel had been rejected. He is evidently known for his speedy prowess. He is fleet of foot and so well-known that when he approaches, he is recognized by his running gait (v. 27). He is a go-getter. He is enthusiastic. He is jazzed to bring the news about Absalom (v. 19). But he is not chosen to deliver the message.

Why Joab refuses him is not clearly revealed. Several things might enter into Joab's decision, but chief among them is Joab's knowledge that the tidings might cost the head of the one who brings them, and he does not wish to be responsible for the possible death of one who is well known in Israel. Also, there is no indication that Ahimaaz was an eyewitness to the death of Absalom. Whatever the reason, Ahimaaz is not sent. His name may give an indication to his desire to run. His name means "my brother is anger" or "wrath." He might think that the king has been angry with Absalom, and Ahimaaz will gladly take part in that anger. But he is not sent!

Instead of Ahimaaz the "brother of wrath," Joab sends a man named Cush, a descendent of Cush, an Ethiopian, commonly referred to in the English language as a "blackamoor" (more on this below). Some Jewish historians have conjectured that Cush was the man who told Joab that Absalom was hanging in an oak by the hair of his head but was unwilling to kill him for any price because he knew that David had commanded that his son be not harmed. It appears from the words of Joab in verse 21 that Cush is an eyewitness of the death of Absalom. He has the message (the "tidings"), and he is sent. Something else that teaches us about Cush is the way he comports himself upon receiving his commission compared to that of Ahimaaz when he is finally allowed to run. Cush bows himself to Joab and runs. Ahimaaz just lights out. Cush, the man who has the message, the warrant, and is sent, appears as a

servant, while Ahimaaz, a man without a message and without warrant, does nothing that designates him as a servant.

Cushi is typical of those whom God sends out with the gospel. They are servants, men of no renown, whose name literally means “their blackness.” They do not fit the bill of the famed orator but are most assuredly assigned their task because they lack the skill to do it. They are trophies of grace, and their person exhibits the truth of grace; they could not merit this position. In fact, those who are sent to preach the gospel usually finish last in a two-man race.

But they have the message. They know of the death of the Son and of the results of that death. Ahimaaz arrives first, full of zeal, wrath his next of kin, but when it comes to the message, he cannot deliver. However, because he is esteemed a good man, it is likewise expected that he will have good tidings (v. 27). It is generally expected of those who have fame and exude enthusiasm that they will have something good to say. And they usually deliver. Ahimaaz says “All is well.” “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” What Ahimaaz actually says is, “Peace.”

The mark of a false preacher is that he speaks peace when there is no peace (Jer. 6:14¹). Thousands have lost their lives, the king’s son is dead, and Ahimaaz declares that everything is copasetic. He has a message, but it is false. He is fast, talented, and well known, but he is first with the lie. He was not sent, and therefore cannot deliver the truth. Why? Because he doesn’t know what the singular interest is of the one to whom the message is intended. His message was to relay a *declaration*. When he is asked the real question, he realizes that the answer will cost him everything, so he excuses himself by claiming that there was

¹ Jer. 6:14; They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.

so much going that he really didn't know what was happening. He knows, but his interest is in the promotion of self and not in satisfying the requirement of the king. How many, when told the truth about the Son, claim confusion, and rather than put their jobs on the line, cry "peace when there is no peace?" Ahimaaz refuses to tell the truth—to deliver the message—and the king says, "step aside, stand over yonder...you have nothing for me."

Finally, Cushai shows up, pulling up the rear. He doesn't win the race and is not a popular figure, but he knows what the singular issue is and knows what the interest of the king is (v. 32). Cushai's answer, though heartbreaking to David, comes from the heart of one whose desire is to honor the king and to give him glory (v. 32). David asks, "what about my son?" Cushai's message is about his son. This is the mark of those who are sent, those who have the truth; though they come in last and exhibit no qualities that would draw men to them, they know that they have a singular task—they speak concerning the only interest of the King. For we are not as many as those who corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we of Christ.

DAVID, THE KING

2 SAMUEL 18:33-19:15

2 Samuel 18

33, And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!

2 Samuel 19

1, And it was told Joab, Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom.

2, And the victory that day was turned into mourning unto all the people: for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son.

3, And the people gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle.

4, But the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!

5, And Joab came into the house to the king, and said, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines;

6, In that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends. For thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants: for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well.

7, Now therefore arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the LORD, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one

with thee this night: and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now.

8, Then the king arose, and sat in the gate. And they told unto all the people, saying, Behold, the king doth sit in the gate. And all the people came before the king: for Israel had fled every man to his tent.

9, And all the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and he delivered us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he is fled out of the land for Absalom.

10, And Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?

11, And king David sent to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, saying, Speak unto the elders of Judah, saying, Why are ye the last to bring the king back to his house? seeing the speech of all Israel is come to the king, even to his house.

12, Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh: wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king?

13, And say ye to Amasa, Art thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually in the room of Joab.

14, And he bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man; so that they sent this word unto the king, Return thou, and all thy servants.

15, So the king returned, and came to Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan.

This chapter addresses so many things that it was difficult to divide it into sections that could be dealt with in one study. It appears that we will be in this

chapter for a while, a chapter that begins with a rebuke of the king and ends with the beginnings of a divided kingdom. In this chapter, several previous characters are revisited, especially at the point where David is returned to the throne.

The first 15 verses of chapter 19 relate to David's reaction to Absalom's death and the results of Joab's rebuke of the king. Last time, we looked at David's overt grief considering a Father's single-minded love for his son. In these verses, we will look at David's grief in light of David's royal estate. He is, as king, also regarded by his subjects as the father of the nation. Whereas his reaction as the father of Absalom is reasonable, his reaction as king is questionable. Also, there is more to David's grief than that of a father. His grief is that of a man who knows that what has taken place must be borne in the sense of his own responsibility. David grieves because his actions with Bathsheba and Uriah, and his consequent chastisement, have been responsible for the rebellion of his house and the death of his son (2 Sam. 12:9-12¹). There is no doubt that David, the great warrior, is also possessed of the artist's temperament. He is a sensitive man prone to melancholy, and privately that is acceptable, but David is also a public man, a man of great importance to the people, and his public persona must consider that what he does and how he

¹ 2 Sam. 12:9-12; Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

reacts has direct influence on the people. This truth necessitates a regard for how we react to things.

Our actions must be measured, to some degree, by the effect it might have on those who know us only in the public arena. Some might consider this to be hypocrisy, but in fact it is consideration of those around us concerning how they perceive the gospel we claim to believe. We are part of something that is greater than any of us, and the dilemma of every believer is to bring as little attention to himself as possible, especially as it relates to the perception others have of what he believes. Paul dealt with this in his first epistle to the Corinthian Church (1 Cor 7:20-22, 29-31¹). In these instances, Paul is admonishing the believer to exercise temperance in every aspect of his life. If he is servant, he is yet free in Christ, however his freedom does not translate to license because he is the servant of Christ. Because a thing might be free for us to do does not mean that it is the right thing to do (1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23²). If we are prone to melancholy and tears, we are—for the gospel's sake—to temper that if necessary. If we are prone to rejoice overmuch, we are called to temper that, for the gospel's

¹ 1 Cor 7:20-22; Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.

29-31; But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

² 1 Cor. 6:12; All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

10:23; All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

sake, if necessary (Eccl. 3:1-8¹). There is not only a time for these things as to divine purpose; there is also a time as to appropriateness. David's overt grief, considering his office as king, seemingly having no regard for the effect it was having of his kingdom, was inappropriate.

To some degree, Joab's rebuke of David may seem over-the-top, but this is the nature of the man, and one could not accuse Joab of temperance even though he does exercise some in the next chapter, albeit for political expedience. He is a man of fiery passions, and he often acts in haste in the anger of the moment. There is no doubt: The fact that the victorious are returning home with their heads bowed in shame because of the king's open grief makes Joab livid (vv. 1-4). He did so with Abner and with Absalom. It is clear that David is displeased with Joab because later in the chapter he seeks to replace Joab with one of Absalom's captains. It also seems odd for a servant to rebuke the king so freely, and the king to endure it. In similar cases in history, such brash familiarity has cost many their heads. Why does David allow Joab to speak to him in this manner (vv. 5-7)?

First, Joab's words are warranted. David needs to be shaken out of his funk "as a firebrand plucked out of the burning" (Amos 4:11). His actions are hurting the people for whom he is responsible. David does not put Joab "out of business" or stop his words because Joab is right.

¹ Eccl. 3:1-8; To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Second, there might be, in David, an unwillingness to rebuke Joab because Joab has been an integral element in David's conspiracy to kill Uriah. Shakespeare said, "Conscience makes cowards of us all." Polybius said, "There is no witness so dreadful, no accuser so terrible as the conscience that dwells in the heart of every man."

Third—and most important—the one whom God has anointed must be the king to his people, and divine providence, making use of Joab, brings that which is purposed to its appointed end. In verse 8, the king takes his rightful place, and the people—who had gone to their homes in shame and confusion because of the king's overt mourning over Absalom—now return to openly express their love for David.

Where the king is in his rightful place, the people rejoice to be near him. Is it any wonder that turnover in churches is so rampant and that they must invent all kinds of ways to fill their pews? Their rock is not like our Rock. Their king is in mourning, grieved over the fact that his creatures will not let him save them. They go to their houses in shame because their king is a defeated man, overruled by the whims of his creatures. But it is not so in the true church, the meeting of the elect. Their King is enthroned at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Their King is in the midst of His people, and they come to Him rejoicing (Zeph. 3:14-20¹).

¹ Zeph. 3:14-20; Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden. Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that

The following verses (vv. 8-15) deal with the tribe of Judah's lack of interest in bringing David back to Jerusalem. Israel has aligned with the king, and according to the words of David, has sought to bring him back to Jerusalem, while Judah has shown indifference as if it were not a matter of importance. David's words make it clear that this is not acceptable, especially since he is of the tribe of Judah, "bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh" (vv. 11-12). Also, when David sets up Amasa to replace Joab, it reveals David's displeasure with the treatment he receives from Joab (also politically astute). In verses 14-15 David wins the heart of Judah and they go to the Jordan to bring the king home. This sets the stage for the divided kingdom.

was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD.

AT MERCY'S DOOR (1)

2 SAMUEL 19:15-30

15, So the king returned, and came to Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan.

16, And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which was of Bahurim, hasted and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David.

17, And there were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over Jordan before the king.

18, And there went over a ferry boat to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was come over Jordan;

19, And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart.

20, For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king.

21, But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD'S anointed?

22, And David said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? for do not I know that I am this day king over Israel?

23, Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the king sware unto him.

24, And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace.

25, And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said unto him, Wherefore wentest not thou with me, Mephibosheth?

26, And he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant is lame.

27, And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king is as an angel of God: do therefore what is good in thine eyes.

28, For all of my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king?

29, And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land.

30, And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house.

In this passage, David, restored to his throne and on his way to Jerusalem to inhabit it, is confronted with two situations that will reveal his heart toward one man who openly cursed him (a capital crime) and another who was wrongly accused of sin against him. These two men and their circumstances bring them to the door of mercy in hopes of forgiveness and reconciliation. Each in his own way reveals the heart of a penitent sinner suing the king for kindness, and they mirror or picture, in one way or another, every true sinner awakened to his condition by the Spirit of God through the gospel. Awakened sinners do not come as the Pharisee boasting of his worthiness but as the publican

seeking the blood to be put on the mercy seat for him (Luke 18:9-13¹).

The backdrop for these two men's approach is that the king has won the day. All Israel has met together to usher the king back to his rightful place. There is no doubt that the victory is David's and that he is the king, and it is upon this basis that these two men approach him. They, in effect, put their lives in his hands, to do with them what he would. Neither of these men have claim on the king. Neither of them approach with a thought of entitlement. There is no sense of *quid pro quo*. They come with neither promise of reimbursement nor plan of atonement. They come as all sinners do before God: as beggars at the door of the sovereign. But they also come with expectation, or real hope.

Would they have approached Absalom thusly, knowing that he was capable of murder without batting an eye? Would they have approached Saul thusly, knowing he had been a cruel and self-centered king bent on destroying the Lord's anointed? Would they have approached Ishbosheth thusly, knowing that he had mocked the will of God in insurrection against David? No, they will approach the sovereign who has shown great mercy to those who have abused him. They approach the sovereign who twice had opportunity to destroy Saul but showed mercy to his enemy. They come, in their heart of hearts, acknowledging that this could be (and rightfully would be) the end of them but believing that David is king and is (by former example) the

¹ **Luke 18:9-13**; And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

rewarder of them that diligently sought him (Heb. 11:6¹). As sovereign, David's expression of mercy is his own, to dispense or withhold as he pleases. But power is most beautifully displayed not in the execution of justice but in mercy and tender kindness. No sinner ever came to Christ believing that he would be turned away, yet all sinners at the same time acknowledge that the right to bestow mercy belonged only to the Lord. The good news is that there is no record of mercy being withheld from any needy sinner who sought it.

The awakened sinner comes to Christ knowing that there is a veritable list of the "who's who" in sin and rebellion who have been frankly and freely forgiven. Though a saved sinner often ponders why the Lord should show mercy to such a one as him, he comes in his heart saying, "Thou hast saved others, why not me?" To die seeking the Lord's mercy is to die as no sinner ever died. We were enemies—born so—and we revealed that enmity with our every breath, thought, and action.

From birth we were enlisted in the army of Satan gladly, voluntarily, and blindly "walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). What we did not know was that Satan had been defeated, his head bruised, his throne crushed, and his kingdom routed. The gospel made us aware of this great victory and put us face to face with the Sovereign, the victorious King of kings. The head of the snake had been cut off and our world lay in ruins. What we saw was a wonder: There, before our eyes, were this King's former enemies, men and women just like us, surrounding Him and joyously acknowledging His royal sovereignty. He had

¹ Heb. 11:6; . . . without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

shown mercy to them and to many others who have hated Him. Can I do else but fall at His feet? Perchance He will be merciful to me too. LORD, sovereign victorious LORD, if thou wilt, thou canst make me whole. Thy word declares that you have saved the chief of sinners. The list of those to whom you have shown mercy is like a roster of the vilest miscreants that have ever lived. I feel in my soul that I am worse than all of them—O LORD, have mercy on me.

As there are some basic distinctions between the reason for Shimei's and Mephibosheth's approaches and David's responses to them, we will just look at Shimei's approach in this study. The way he approaches the king for mercy is a picture of how to approach Christ. One man said that the first thing a sinner must do if he is to approach Christ for mercy is to own the character that he has been assigned. In other words, it is to take the place that he has been allotted. The Syrophenician woman, when called a "dog," assumed that role (Mark. 7:25-28¹).

The history of Shimei is clear. There is no doubt of his crime and that it is worthy of death. Yet, the first thing we see is that he "hasted" to come to the king (v. 16). Men who must have mercy will not linger in hopes of some sign or try to build up something that might have them merit it. They come, and none will be able to hold them back—"the kingdom suffereth violence and the violent take it by force" (Matt. 11:12). Shimei is not invited, cajoled, or persuaded by some religious character; he "hasted" because his need was great, and there would be nothing that could hold him back. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him" (Job 13:15).

¹ Mark. 7:25-28; The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.

In verse 17 we see that he does not come alone. No clear explanation is given as to why he comes with 1000 Benjamites (men of his tribe). Probably this is an overt display and a declaration that the king's former enemies are now in full support of his return to the throne.

But I think there is also a metaphorical application to this scenario. Every sinner who comes to Christ comes singularly for help, but he does not come alone. Along with him is the company of just men made perfect, every saint who has gone on before—every friend, brother, and sister who has prayed for his deliverance and has said in his heart, “Put what he owes on Christ’s account.” The Lord said that there is “joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:10).

In verse 18 we see the posture of the penitent. He takes up his headquarters in the dust. His bowing is a form of worship, and it signifies that he is willing to take whatever will come his way because he is not approaching an equal but is approaching a sovereign. All worship is first and foremost the confession of sin and is likewise an acknowledgement of the sovereignty of the one being worshipped. True worship is about Christ’s worthiness and my unworthiness. True worship is the confession of sin (vv. 19b-20a). True worship is attributing honor and glory to the King (v. 20b). Regardless of the outcome, the important matter is that Christ be honored (Psa. 115:1-2¹).

In the first phrase of v. 19 we see Shimei’s request, and it is a wonderful request because it declares what it will take to spiritually save a sinner. I cannot be saved if sin is imputed to me. It was imputed to me in my relationship with Adam, but for me to be saved, there must be found a

¹ Psa. 115:1-2; Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?

way by which no sin can be charged to me. Enter the gospel. My sin was imputed to Christ—it was made to meet on Him—and He was charged with my sin to propitiate God for me (2 Cor. 5:21¹). When He finished that work, it was totally finished, completely accomplished, and the word of God declares that to be so (Rom. 4:8; 8:33-34²). Whether Shimei knows it or not, or whether he understands it or not, Shimei is theologically asking for mercy by substitution.

Secondly, Shimei is not only asking for forgiveness, he is asking the king to forget his sin—“neither do thou remember.” This is an absolute necessity. Forgiveness is of great value, but if at some later date my sin is remembered and called up against me, forgiveness will prove only temporary and of no eternal value. This will prove Shimei’s undoing. Though David forgives Shimei and forgets his sin as much as he is able, in this case justice has not been satisfied. At a later date, under the reign of Solomon, Shimei’s crime will indeed be remembered, and he will be slain for it. For me to be eternally saved, my sin must not be imputed to me; my sin must be forgiven, and my sin must be forgotten so that it can never be brought up against me. Justice must be satisfied as pictured by the righteous indignation of Abishai in verse 21. Christ accomplished eternal salvation for me by satisfying justice, and on that basis, I am forgiven, and God will remember my sins no more (Heb. 10:14-17³). David assures Shimei that he will

¹ 2 Cor. 5:21; For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

² Rom. 4:8; Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

8:33-34; Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

³ Heb. 10:14-17; For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those

not die (at his hand), in some part because it will mar the glory of this day (v. 22). But David cannot justify Shimei. On this day we see David picture Christ and Shimei picture the sinner approaching Christ for mercy. But a picture is only an image of the substance, and one man cannot justify another or redeem another—that is exclusively the prerogative and the arena of God in Christ. But bless His Name, He has done it and it is done (Ps. 49:5-9; 2 Tim. 1:9¹).

days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

¹ Ps. 49:5-9; I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark saying upon the harp. Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about? They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:) That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption.

2 Tim. 1:9; [God] hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

AT MERCY'S DOOR (2)

2 SAMUEL 19:24-30

24, And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace.

25, And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said unto him, Wherefore wentest not thou with me, Mephibosheth?

26, And he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant is lame.

27, And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king is as an angel of God: do therefore what is good in thine eyes.

28, For all of my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king?

29, And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land.

30, And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house.

In the last study, we looked at the sinner approaching the overreign for mercy as pictured by Shimei confessing his sin to David and falling on David's mercy as his only hope. Here, we will look a Mephibosheth, a lame and impotent man who had first-hand experience of the grace of the king. He had been fetched from Lodebar, from the jaws

of death, being a direct descendant of king Saul, and had been set at king David's table. He had been dressed in garments worthy of his imputed station. He had been assigned a caretaker, Ziba, to till his garden and care for his sheep, and the profits of the business ventures of Ziba were divided 50/50 between Mephibosheth and Ziba. He received all he had by the grace of the king and according to the work of another. There could hardly be a better representation of pure grace than that which this lame man received.

In this episode we see both weakness and strength in the Old Testament type. We see David as both type and antitype of the sovereign. But Mephibosheth is as good a type as can be found of a recipient of grace camping at mercy's door. His posture and his words indicate true humility and are a true example of the believer's basis for seeking mercy. The believer—even though he has been given all things and has assurance of his standing—because he is a sinner, because his life is a life of tribulation and trial, because circumstances are always beyond his ability to govern, finds himself often applying to His Sovereign Savior for mercy and help. New mercies arrive every morning because God is great in His faithfulness (Lam. 3:22-23¹). But mercy implies and suggests a truth about every believer. Grace is about receiving what we could never deserve, but mercy suggests that the believer is not getting what he does deserve or that, as a sinner, he deserves wrath but God shows him tender kindness instead. Only a believer can truly understand this concept. Though he knows his standing before God is forever settled by the work of Christ, he yet feels and experiences the darkness of his own depravity. He

¹ Lam. 3:22-23; It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

often, and for himself, feels his need for confession of his own sin. He needs to acknowledge that he deserves nothing but wrath while believing that God has been just to justify him and to cleanse him of all unrighteousness because of the propitiation made by Christ. To the world this is nonsense, but to the believer it is life as he knows it. The believer, in his heart, knows that he is continually in need of mercy. Perhaps, though spiritual, we remain in the body of this death as a constant reminder to avoid presumption and to never look to ourselves for assurance.

So, we find Mephibosheth coming to the king for mercy. His circumstance provides both type and antitype for seeking mercy. He had been slandered by Ziba, and all that he had had been taken from him. As to antitype, the king had heard and believed the accusation against Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 16:3¹). This has never and will never happen with Christ and any member of His kingdom. He will hear no accusation, and in fact has fixed it that no accusation could ever stand (Rom. 8:33-34²). As to type, this is often the case of every child of God. They are slandered and scandalized for what they believe. They are lied about and suffer the hatred of any and all that believe that the meekness of the believer equates to vulnerability. Because the believer is not prone to answer accusation but to rather go to his Lord in prayer, casting his care upon the Lord, those who hate him feel a kind of freedom to let the accusations fly. Mephibosheth's lameness makes him an easy target for Ziba. He was bound to Jerusalem, and his king was in a fix fleeing from Absalom. Mephibosheth wanted to

¹ 2 Sam. 16:3; And the king said, And where is thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father.

² Rom. 8:33-34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

join the king but was at the mercy of Ziba, who did not intend to show it. When he told Ziba his desire, the animal that he had requested was taken instead by Ziba and brought by Ziba to the king with numerous gifts, with slander in his heart and a lie upon his lips. What could prevent Ziba? The lame Mephibosheth could do nothing but watch as his designated servant went out to lie to his lord. Paul said that the believer is considered the off-scouring of the universe (1 Cor. 4:13¹).

What is necessary for us to see is the description and attitude of the believer as he approaches the king. The very first thing we see is a Holy Spirit designation that comes as a reminder. Mephibosheth, though graced by the king, was born the son of the king's enemy. This is intrinsic to every believer approaching the King for mercy. He knows that he was born in sin, that Adam is his father, and that he is a member of a sinful race. He cannot approach with a sense of entitlement because he is the son of the enemy, and what he has received by grace could never be warranted by anything he has done. Mephibosheth's description is graphic: He had not dressed his feet—this would seem insignificant were it not for the fact that this was an open confession of his inability and impotence. He didn't get a pedicure or wear silver slippers or cover his lameness with a robe of colors; he came as he truly was—as one who had nothing to offer. The Jews took great care of their beards. They shaved their moustache and, by law, attended to their beard. Mephibosheth comes with moustache and unkempt beard. This is a symbol of great grief and is likewise proof of the fact that his interest is not in his own recognition. He does not wash his clothes—indeed had not washed them all the while the king was in exile. Jewish historians add that he did

¹ 1 Cor. 4:13, Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

not take his clothes to the fuller to bleach them so that he would be robed in cleanliness. When sinners come to Christ, they do not try to present themselves as righteous in themselves.

Verses 24-27 is the record of Mephibosheth's account of Ziba's abuse and slander against him. What is important to note here is that Mephibosheth does not offer this information, nor can it be implied that he comes to state his case. He answers the king's first question as to why he had not come with the king when pursued by Absalom. What follows his answer shows that Mephibosheth's interest is neither in himself, in Ziba, nor in his betrayal. Everything he does reveals that he was in grief during the time that his king was in exile.

He comes as a sinner who has been greatly graced by the king, and though his circumstances are dire he lays no blame at the feet of the king. Concerning what Ziba had done to him, Mephibosheth simply seeks to honor and glorify the king (v. 27b). Then Mephibosheth reveals the understanding of every recipient of grace: No matter what has been done to him—no matter the slander and the loss of all worldly goods—he has received better than he deserved (v. 28). He was worthy of death by his association and identification with his earthly father (in Adam all died, Rom. 5:12, 19¹). In effect, he was dead by imputation, and if he received good at the king's hand it was totally

¹ Rom. 5:12; Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

19; For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

unmerited (Col. 3:1; Eph. 2:5¹); there is no reason for him to complain (Job 1:20-22; 2:9-10²).

The king's response is to return to his original command when he initially showed grace to Mephibosheth, and he does not mention the sin of Ziba (v. 29). We have seen that David has not been prone to issue any sort of punishment on this day of joy and triumph, and that may be the reason why he responds in this manner. But this also may be a test for Mephibosheth to confess what his real interest is. David's son Solomon will do the same sort of thing when two women claim maternity for the same child. Solomon will say, "cut the baby in half," knowing the true mother will willingly lose her child to save its life. That incident is often accounted as the reason why Solomon was called the wisest man. Perhaps David is thinking along the same lines, to reveal the true heart of Mephibosheth.

Mephibosheth's response to this "test" is the same as the true mother's response (v. 30). "He can have it all." In this we see the heart of the believing sinner approaching Christ. All that matters, whether or not the believer loses all, is that the king be on His throne and His name be honored (Mark. 8:35; Ps. 115:1³).

¹ Col. 3:1; If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Eph. 2:5; Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

² Job 1:20-22; Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

2:9-10; Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

³ Mark. 8:35; For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

A VERY GREAT MAN

2 SAMUEL 19:31-40

31, And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim, and went over Jordan with the king, to conduct him over Jordan.

32, Now Barzillai was a very aged man, even fourscore years old: and he had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he was a very great man.

33, And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem.

34, And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem?

35, I am this day fourscore years old: and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?

36, Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king: and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward?

37, Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother. But behold thy servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good unto thee.

38, And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee: and whatsoever thou shalt require of

Ps. 115:1; Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.

me, that will I do for thee.

39, And all the people went over Jordan. And when the king was come over, the king kissed Barzillai, and blessed him; and he returned unto his own place.

40, Then the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him: and all the people of Judah conducted the king, and also half the people of Israel.

The Holy Spirit, while inspiring the writer to record the account of Barzillai, inserts this description of him in verse 32: “for he was a very great man.” This is not often an accolade endued by the Holy Spirit, and when a thing is rare it begs our consideration. Barzillai was a very great man. The words “very great” are a qualitative term and it is a given that this phraseology is comparative. If all man were great, then none would be great. As far as humanity goes—and knowing the natural estate of man—for such a word to be used in reference to a man must mean something. What made Barzillai a great man? We know that the only truly, purely great man—the only real example of humanity as it should be—was our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord’s greatness as a human being was that He was selfless. He came “to minister, not to be ministered unto” and “give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28). He spent His earthly existence in helping those in need. As a human being, He chose that which was good and that which would honor God, and He eschewed evil. He spent His earthly life in the service of others.

The gospel according to Mark sets forth our Lord as the servant of God. The highest and noblest aspiration of someone who desires to emulate Christ, is to be a servant. Someone who desires to emulate Christ can aspire to no higher or nobler a career than that of a servant. That the Spirit of God gives Barzillai this accolade can only mean that he is first and foremost a servant, because this is where

the greatness of a man exists (Matt. 20:27; 23:11¹). His actions and his perspective prove that to be so.

At considerable risk to his own life, he ministered to David. If Absalom had prevailed, Barzillai would have been as good as a dead man. Disregarding the possibility of ruin, he seeks to be of service to David. He is loyal, and he considers not himself. He bears the marks of a servant in that he considers what he has done to be of no worthiness (v. 36). Further, when he pleads with David to let him return to his home in peace, he does so with thoughts of another, one who might be able to enjoy the benefits of proximity with the king (v. 37).

His perspective, though that of an aged man, more aptly represents that of a servant. He feels that he has nothing to offer, that what he has left could not possibly be of use; he discounts himself (Luke 17:10²). He seeks no recognition for his service because it had not been done for himself or in consideration of himself (Matt. 6:1-4³). He serves David because he loves David. He is a “very great man.” For his service he receives a kiss and a blessing from the king. For a servant, this is the greatest reward: the love, affection, and acceptance of the king.

¹ **Matt. 20:27**; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.

23:11; But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

² **Luke 17:10**; So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

³ **Matt. 6:1-4**; Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

The words of Barzillai as he speaks of his failing senses and asks David to take Chimham in his place, subtly teach some important lessons.

First, they teach us about death, and because they teach about death, they teach of spiritual death. Barzillai, in speaking of his infirmities, shows us what will take place in the end (v. 35). A person in Barzillai's state represents the one to whom the gospel is preached, and each of his infirmities represent the inability of the natural man to receive the gospel. To be spiritually dead means one cannot discern between good and evil, so good news is the same as bad news. To be spiritually dead means that the natural man cannot eat, and so he cannot dine on the "feast of fat things and wine on the lees well refined" (Isa. 25:6). He cannot taste, so he is unable to "taste that the Lord is gracious" (1 Pet. 2:3). He cannot drink, so he is unable to partake of "the water of life" (Rev. 22:1). He cannot hear, so the sounding of the gospel is glaring silence to him. This is the estate of all who are born into this world. To be only naturally alive is to be spiritually dead and is pictured in the case of Barzillai, who soon will have no ability to associate with life or the living.

Second, Barzillai's recommendation of Chimham to take his place teaches us a practical lesson in life relating to old folks and young folks. Sometimes, as we grow older, we become less tolerant of youth. Bitterness at our own inability to do what we once did may enter the picture, but generally I think it is because we forget. Barzillai, though 86 years old, has not forgotten what he enjoyed as a young person, and though he is now unable to enjoy those things of youth, he remembers the joy of them. He wants someone to enjoy them—someone who can enjoy them—so he asks David to take Chimham instead of him because Chimham can discern between good and evil; he can taste and eat and drink and enjoy the sound of singing. When young people

act like young people, just smile and remember that you once enjoyed what old folks could not do any longer.

The king promises Barzillai that he will take care of Chimham (v. 38). David pictures Christ, and we know that our Lord always keeps His promises. What He has promised he will perform (Rom. 4:20-21; Phil 1:6¹). As for Chimham, nothing more is said of him in the historical books, though it is evident that David, when his days were about to draw to an end, charged Solomon to care for the sons of Barzillai (1 Kings 2:7²).

But God does not leave the destiny of Chimham a mystery. The Scriptures are wonderful. There is one more time that the name “Chimham” is mentioned in the word of God. It occurs 400 years later in the book of Jeremiah. The Jews are in captivity to the Chaldeans. Nebuchadnezzar has appointed Gedaliah as governor of Judea, and Gedaliah had been murdered. A man named Ishmael commits the murder and many Jews fear that they will suffer the wrath of the Chaldeans. They flee from what they believed is the wrath to come. Jeremiah 41:17 reads, “And they departed, and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham, which is by Bethlehem, to go to enter into Egypt.”

They flee to the habitation of Chimham! Even after 400 years the promise stood! Chimham has been given habitation in Bethlehem, the city of David. How David has honored Barzillai, his servant, “a very great man.” David’s kind dealings with Barzillai are but a picture of the sure salvation that is ours through the King of kings. We are

¹ Rom. 4:20-21; He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

Phil 1:6; Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

² 1 Kings 2:7; But shew kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table: for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother.

heirs according to promise (Luke 1:68-72; Titus 1:2; Heb. 10:23; Isa. 55:3¹).

¹ **Luke 1:68-72;** Blessed be the LORD God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;

Titus 1:2; In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.

Heb. 10:23; Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised).

Isa. 55:3; Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

JEALOUSY

2 SAMUEL 19:40-20:2

40, Then the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him: and all the people of Judah conducted the king, and also half the people of Israel.

41, And, behold, all the men of Israel came to the king, and said unto the king, Why have our brethren the men of Judah stolen thee away, and have brought the king, and his household, and all David's men with him, over Jordan?

42, And all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, Because the king is near of kin to us: wherefore then be ye angry for this matter? have we eaten at all of the king's cost? or hath he given us any gift?

43, And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more right in David than ye: why then did ye despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king? And the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.

1, And there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel.

2, So every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri: but the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem.

This is the record of the bickering between the men of Judah and the men of Israel over who had greater rights to usher king David back to the throne in

Jerusalem (vv. 40-43). The king's neutrality on the argument seems to be a factor in leading the Israelites to assume that David was taking the side of Judah, and this results in Sheba raising up an army of insurrection against David and his authority as king. We see immediately that David is typical of the child of God in that his life is one filled with trial and tribulation. But beyond that truth is the fact of providence. God has promised David that the sword would not depart from his house because of his violence against Uriah and his unwillingness to punish Absalom for his murderous attitude toward the natural heirs to David's throne.

The remainder of David's reign will be simply one fight after another, and that by divine appointment. In this, David is a type and antitype of the Lord. Both David and the Lord (though Christ is the Prince of Peace) lived their lives employing the sword. David's was a sword of iron; our Lord's was the sword of truth. Both swords slay the enemy, and both deliver the people. Our Lord said, "I came not to bring peace but a sword." Though His words could possibly refer to the consequence of His coming rather than intent, the end result is the same. Somebody is gonna get cut. With David, the enemies of Israel met their end. With Christ, the enemies of true Israel—the church—were cut asunder. With words his enemies were slain, and so it was and is with His disciples. It is "not by might nor by power but by His Spirit" that the enemy is slain (Zech. 4:6). The gates of Hell shall not prevail against the Rock that is the preached gospel (Matt. 16:18; John 6:63; Heb. 4:12-13¹). We can see the

¹ **Matt. 16:18;** And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

John 6:63; It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

dual aspect of this truth in Acts 2:36-37; 4:10-12, 16-17; and 2 Cor. 2:14-16¹.

When we consider the argument put forth by Judah and Israel and the words of Sheba in his open rebellion, we see an underlying factor in all rebellion. We know that all rebellion is against authority. But the underlying principle that drives the heart of rebellion is jealousy. Jealousy is born of the notion of entitlement. Jealousy differs from envy. Envy has disdain at its source—a belief that what a person has should not belong to them, because they don't deserve what they have. Jealousy comes from entitlement, saying, "They should not have what I deem to be rightfully mine," even though there is no right to it. The argument between Judah and Israel seems petty, but it is telling. Each claimed a right to David, each had valid arguments, and yet each

Heb. 4:12-13; For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

¹ **Acts 2:36-37;** Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

4:10-12; Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. **16-17;**

2 Cor. 2:14-16; Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

cared not for the glory of the king, but rather for the entitlement they felt to share in His glory.

The Pharisees and the legalist Jews were jealous of the influence that Christ had upon their hearers. They had long burdened their hearers with words that controlled men by guilt and fear. They felt that they spoke for God, and when this upstart Nazarene came along, whose words were more authoritative than the scribes and the Pharisees, they grew jealous because they felt entitled to the attention of the masses. They sought to trap Him on any number of theological questions but were shut down time after time until “they durst not ask Him any more questions” (Matt. 22:46). To get back what they perceived that He had taken from them, the only thing left to do was to kill Him. Those whom He had taught and delivered from the bondage of legalist control said of Him, “He must increase, and I must decrease” (John 3:30). The Pharisees said, “We will not have this man reign over us” (Luke 19:14), and both reactions were from the same words spoken by Christ. To one, the words were a “savor of life” but to the other the words of Christ were a “savor of death” (2 Cor. 2:16). Why? Because one had a *need*, and the other had *rights*.

This reveals the heart of the lie of freewill. It is all about entitlement, which breeds jealousy, which breeds rebellion. Israel feels that Judah is taking credit for what is rightly theirs by works, and Judah feels that Israel is trying to take credit for what is rightly theirs by birth. Both claims are bogus. Man only deserves what he has earned, and “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). Israel had joined with Absalom and Judah had been reluctant to welcome back the king, yet they both feel that they have claim on the glory of his return.

When the gospel of grace is preached and men are put in their place, completely shut up to the grace, pleasure, and the will of God as to their destiny, they press their rights—

their claim of entitlement—to equality on the right to salvation (i.e., same chance). They claim that God is unrighteous to save one and not another, and in the matter of salvation they are jealous of those whom Christ has freely saved. When they find that election is by grace, they disdain those whom Christ has saved by speaking of them in spurious terms—“What makes you so special? Your little cult.” What is their problem? They believe they are entitled because of what they have done. They chose Christ, they decided for Jesus, they exercised their free will and "got saved" because they, by their good actions, were entitled to it (e.g., Cain and Abel). They rebel against the gospel and those who believe it because they are stripped of the glory of their salvation. They say in their hearts, “I can accept or reject God.” They attribute sovereignty to the acceptor.

Once this bitterness comes to their mind, the next thing is to become as Sheba. "We have no part with this king, nor with his inheritance" (2 Sam. 20:1). When men find out that Christ is Lord and does what He will with His own, and does not consult with those He saves, they despise Him. Their clarion call is, "That's not my God" or "My God is not like that." Who or what, then, is their God? He or she is the invention of their mind and is a god that honors their sense of entitlement. Christ's salvation is His inheritance, and they want no part of an inheritance that they did not earn, and they despise the notion that what they have done counts for nothing.

But we say, “Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to the cross I cling.”

PLANS OF MEN

2 SAMUEL 20:1-13

1, And there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel.

2, So every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri: but the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem.

3, And David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women his concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in ward, and fed them, but went not in unto them. So they were shut up unto the day of their death, living in widowhood.

4, Then said the king to Amasa, Assemble me the men of Judah within three days, and be thou here present.

5, So Amasa went to assemble the men of Judah: but he tarried longer than the set time which he had appointed him.

6, And David said to Abishai, Now shall Sheba the son of Bichri do us more harm than did Absalom: take thou thy lord's servants, and pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities, and escape us.

7, And there went out after him Joab's men, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men: and they went out of Jerusalem, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.

8, When they were at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa went before them. And Joab's garment that he had put on was girded unto him, and upon it a girdle with a sword fastened upon his loins in the sheath

thereof; and as he went forth it fell out.

9, And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him.

10, But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again; and he died. So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri.

11, And one of Joab's men stood by him, and said, He that favoureth Joab, and he that is for David, let him go after Joab.

12, And Amasa wallowed in blood in the midst of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a cloth upon him, when he saw that every one that came by him stood still.

13, When he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.

This entire chapter is a rehearsal and a reminder to David of the fact that the declaration from God that assured David that the sword would not depart from his house is providentially being carried out. David's plans are as the plans of men. They are ultimately and invariably subject to and fall under the guiding hand of divine providence. For David, every day is filled with reminders of that truth.

That sword that defines David's life begins this chapter with the rebellious insurrection of Sheba. We touched on this last time as we looked at the heart of all rebellion as jealousy born of a sense of entitlement. The description of Sheba gives us more insight into rebellion, and all the while Sheba is but an instrument of providence. He is a piece of equipment used by God to manipulate people and events to

remind David of who is running this show. It is a marvel to consider the unexplainable mystery of how God can suffer men to think for themselves, make their horrible plans, and yet accomplish by the numbers His precise and immutable will. David will wield the sword as it is preordained, but his actions will rout most of the enemies and usher Solomon into a fairly peaceful kingdom.

We find this manipulated minion named Sheba situated in the same place as the Israelites and Judah when they had their snit. He happens to be there because happenstance and chance, while outside the control of men, are absolutely controlled by God. “The lot is cast into the lap, but the disposal thereof belongs to God” (Prov. 16:33).

Sheba is described as a man of Belial. This is analogous with a servant of Satan but is more commonly used to describe the character of a man. Some of the terms used to define a man of Belial are: worthless, Godless, unprofitable, base, wicked, evil, and ruinous. More than that the term describes a particular religious and rebellious characteristic (Deut. 13:13¹). He is an idolater. Idolatry is not the absence of God but the replacement of the true God, or a mixture of the false and the true. Rebellion being against authority is ultimately against the seat of all authority. Sheba’s rebellion is against David the anointed king, and it pictures true rebellion against God and His Christ (Matt. 28:18; John 17:2²).

Sheba is a Benjamite. This means that he is probably a member of the defeated rebellion of Absalom. Being a

¹ **Deut. 13:13**; Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known.

² **Matt. 28:18**; Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

John 17:2; As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

Benjamite (house of Saul), he is part of the collective anger of Israel against Judah. He blows a trumpet—a call to arms—taking advantage of the anger of Israel. His words play on that anger, and with them he discounts any possible allegiance with David. Before, Israel had ten parts with David, and now they have none. Sheba’s referral to David as a son of Jesse is his way of saying that the man whom God has anointed is nothing more than a common man. Israel hearkens to his call and bands together to come against the sword that resides in the house of David.

David’s sequestering of the ten concubines into what the Jews called “living widowhood,”—meaning that they were widows while their husband lived—serves to remind David of what Absalom had done. This in turn is a constant reminder for all his days that the sword shall not depart from his house (2 Sam. 12:10¹).

The remainder of the passage deals with the destruction of David’s plans. Because of David’s anger for Absalom’s death at the hand of Joab, he had appointed Amasa as the captain of his host. Amasa had been a high-ranking member of Absalom’s army and, though this might have been intended to assuage former enemies and certainly seemed to be politically astute, Joab is still around and is not about to give up his post. David’s appointment of Amasa was, at best, little more than a slam against Joab, and an ineffective one at that. Joab has David’s number because he had been a co-conspirator in the death of Uriah, and David cannot overtly turn against him. Joab knows this and so, although administratively replaced, he is still the captain of the host. No upstart political appointee—no “get-even” effort of the angry king—is going to change his estate.

¹ 2 Sam. 12:10; Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

David gives Amasa three days to assemble an army to go against Sheba, but Amasa does not or is not able to meet the required schedule. This is probably because of his former allegiance to Absalom, and so the men of Judah are not so ready to join with him. When he does not do as he was commanded, David enlists Abishai to take the job of pursuing Sheba. Joab has been waiting in the wings for this opportunity and quickly joins forces with Abishai in pursuit of Sheba. When Amasa joins (as general) with them at a great stone in Gibeon, Joab sets out to kill Amasa. He puts a sword on his thigh in a scabbard too big for the sword so that he can make the sword fall out at his convenience. Feigning obeisance, he causes the sword to drop on the ground, hidden by his robe. When he takes Amasa's right hand and leans forward to kiss him, he takes up the sword and guts Amasa. Problem solved (vv. 9-10). In a flash, Joab is back where he was before, heading up the army in service of the king. He leaves Amasa wallowing in his own blood, and when folks stopped to see the gore, a man removes him to a field and covers him up so that those following Joab will not be distracted.

In this episode, David is antitype of Christ. David's plans do not come to fruition. His appointed general is but a disemboweled carcass tossed out of sight. His vengeance against Joab has proved futile. He has failed as men must, but he is yet cared for, watched over, and remains a man after God's own heart. Time, tide, and circumstance may thwart our every move, no matter how careful our plans. But our God rules all. Our Savior is Lord of all and our plans are subject to His plans, and He shall not fail. We may murmur and complain and curse second causes, we will fail and falter, but that only serves to draw our eyes away from self to look to Him who always does His pleasure, and part of that pleasure is that He is pleased to give His little ones the

kingdom. We rejoice to know that He who saved us also keeps us because we don't do very well with our own plans.

THWARTED

2 SAMUEL 20:14-25

14, And he went through all the tribes of Israel unto Abel, and to Bethmaachah, and all the Berites: and they were gathered together, and went also after him.

15, And they came and besieged him in Abel of Bethmaachah, and they cast up a bank against the city, and it stood in the trench: and all the people that were with Joab battered the wall, to throw it down.

16, Then cried a wise woman out of the city, Hear, hear; say, I pray you, unto Joab, Come near hither, that I may speak with thee.

17, And when he was come near unto her, the woman said, Art thou Joab? And he answered, I am he. Then she said unto him, Hear the words of thine handmaid. And he answered, I do hear.

18, Then she spake, saying, They were wont to speak in old time, saying, They shall surely ask counsel at Abel: and so they ended the matter.

19, I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel: thou seekest to destroy a city and a mother in Israel: why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the LORD?

20, And Joab answered and said, Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy.

21, The matter is not so: but a man of mount Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, hath lifted up his hand against the king, even against David: deliver him only, and I will depart from the city. And the woman said unto Joab, Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall.

22, Then the woman went unto all the people in her wisdom. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and cast it out to Joab. And he blew a trumpet,

and they retired from the city, every man to his tent.
And Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king.

23, Now Joab was over all the host of Israel: and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and over the Pelethites:

24, And Adoram was over the tribute: and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder:

25, And Sheva was scribe: and Zadok and Abiathar were the priests:

This passage is an account of human plans being thwarted. Sheba's plans of rebellion against the anointed king are shut down when his head is removed from his body and unceremoniously cast over the wall at the feet of Joab. David's plans are thwarted. He had sought to remove Joab from his job, but his replacement lay disemboweled and covered up. He was turned into a carcass at the hand of Joab, and as this chapter ends Joab returns to Jerusalem as the General of the Army. Men plan and will and choose and they purpose, but they lack power to perform. To perform what one purposes, one must be able to control every aspect of the plan, from people to weather (Job 40:9-14¹). Men are simply not equipped. Power belongs to the Lord, and we know that His plan is to have both Sheba and David fail in their endeavors because that is precisely what takes place. To know what God has intended, we have but to see what has taken place.

Sheba's end is dealt with in verses 14-21. His end is providentially brought about when the Lord employs a

¹ Job 40:9-14; Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty. Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold every one that is proud, and abase him. Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together; and bind their faces in secret. Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee.

woman simply known as a wise and peaceful woman (vv. 16, 19). She exercises her skills in interceding for her city and wins the day. There is much to learn from this woman and her actions in the face of disaster. Sheba has taken the city of Abel and fortified it. He has recruited, or rather forcibly drafted, the men of the city to enhance the number of soldiers in his army. When Joab and his men arrive, they begin to batter the gates of the city, and according to this woman, he would have destroyed the city and its inhabitants because he is willing to sacrifice them all to get at Sheba (vv. 14-15).

The city that is besieged is Abel. According to the words of the wise woman, the city has come to have a proverbial status as a place inhabited by wise men. Solomon spoke of a poor wise man delivering a city by his wisdom (Eccl. 9:14¹), and here we see a wise woman doing the same. She is a wise woman from a city of wise folks. It is said of this city that lawyers and even kings sought counsel here before they passed their ordinances. Abel belongs to the tribe of Naphtali, and according to prophecy this tribe is renown for its vitality in the matter of goodly words (Gen. 49:21²). Good words are analogous with good news (the gospel). Christ is the wisdom and the power of God (Proverbs 8:22-31; 1 Cor. 1:23-24, 30³). Immediately after

¹ Eccl. 9:14, There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it.

² Gen. 49:21; Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words.

³ Proverbs 8:22-31; The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the

our Lord was tempted in the wilderness and just before He began to preach the kingdom, He came to Nephthalim to fulfill the words of the prophet Isaiah describing the presence of Christ in the world (Matt. 4:13-16¹). It is from this place that this woman comes to intercede for her city.

In verse 19 we see her plea. She comes as one who is peaceable and faithful in Israel. This is a reminder to Joab that to destroy this city would be an assault on one of the tribes of Israel. Also, with this description of herself in this manner and as an inhabitant of this city, she is saying that the city is not with Sheba in his rebellion but remains a people who are faithful to the God of Israel. To destroy such would not be about Sheba and Joab but rather about God and His people, whom He has avowed to protect and avenge. Also, these words tell Joab that Sheba is as much an enemy of Abel as he is an enemy of Joab. To destroy a mother in Israel is to disrespect the seed (Messiah) and, therefore, to discount the promise of God. She puts a lot on the plate for Joab to consider.

In the Targum and among other writers, her words are translated as an accusation against Joab as one who has

foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.

1 Cor. 1:23-24; But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

30; But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

¹ Matt. 4:13-16; And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

transgressed the law of God: “She spake, saying, I remember now what is written in the book of the law, to ask a city first, saying, (will ye make peace?) so shouldest thou have asked of Abel, will ye make peace, or receive terms of peace?” If this is the case, she is referring to Deuteronomy 20:10-15¹. She is as much as saying, “You would do this against a heathen city but have not asked of peace for a city of Israel?” Certainly, in either interpretation, there is an indication that Joab has not followed the Lord’s command and has not given this city the opportunity to say where it stands in the matter of Sheba.

In this, Joab does not picture the preacher of the gospel in the warfare against the gates of Hell. The gospel war is like no other. The first salvo fired against the enemy is a proclamation of peace. This is a remarkable battle strategy. The message of the gospel is “Peace by Jesus Christ; He is Lord of all.” Old Baxter said, “bow or burn.” Those who make an answer of peace—that is to say, who agree with the terms of peace, who throw down their arms and stack their guns in the corner—become servants of this army. The message of the gospel is at first “be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20²). The wise woman from the city of goodly words knows that Joab has not obeyed the Word of God. Joab’s

¹ Deuteronomy 20:10-15, When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: And when the LORD thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the LORD thy God hath given thee. Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations.

² 2 Cor. 5:20; Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

motives are discovered. He is not interested in the glory of God but rather in reestablishing himself to his former glory. But Joab is also a politically astute fellow (vv. 20-21). The wise woman says, “You will have his head” (v. 22). The head of the snake is cut off and Sheba’s plans are decapitated and thwarted, not by might or by power but by wise, goodly words. The battle is won and the city is delivered from ruin, not with swords but with syllables.

Joab blows the trumpet of retreat and returns to Jerusalem unto the king. He does not merely return to Jerusalem—he comes to the king. In open, obvious display—perhaps with Sheba’s head on a pike—he comes to the king. One can only speculate as to what David thinks when the man he has replaced comes marching down Main Street in triumph. He knows this for sure: His plans are thwarted and he can have nothing to say. The first phrase of verse 23 says it all, “Now Joab was over all the host of Israel.” Though David is king and has all the attendant power of that office, his power is not intrinsic, it is derived. Better for us to apply to Him in whom all power is intrinsic (Read Isa. 40).

GIBEONITES

2 SAMUEL 21:1

1, Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.

This first verse of chapter 21 reintroduces us to the Gibeonites. It is about retributive justice, exercised against Israel for Saul's slaughter of the Gibeonites.

God has sent famine to Israel for three years. After David inquires of the Lord, the reason is given. I thought we ought to revisit the covenant made with the Gibeonites in Joshua 9. These men represent the awakened sinner, desperate for deliverance.

Gibeon—men of his city—and men from the surrounding cities Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath-Jearim (Amorites), have heard of how Joshua and the people of God had sacked Ai and Jericho. They hatch a plan by which they hope they will be spared the wrath of Joshua and His God. They rightly fear meeting with the same end as every enemy that Joshua encountered (Josh. 9:3; Heb. 10:31¹).

The word says that they work “wilily” (Josh. 9:4²). That word means “with guile” but the root is “subtlety” and can mean “with prudence and wisdom.” They make as if they are ambassadors of a far country. They load their beasts of

¹ Josh. 9:3; And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai, . .

Heb. 10:31; It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

² Josh. 9:4; They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up.

burden with old raggedy sacks of stuff, old and torn and repaired wine sacks, and put on old worn-out shoes, covered with patches of differing colors and fabrics on their feet, and torn and worn clothes on their backs. They put in their food bags old, dry, moldy bread. They come to Joshua as weary travelers who have long been on a sojourn. When they arrive, they tell Joshua that they have come from a far country and ask Joshua to make a league with them (Josh. 9:6¹). Though they do not know it, they are asking Joshua to do what God had prohibited (Deut. 7:1-2²). Men will do what they deem necessary to save their lives.

Also, the way they come demonstrates that they understand the concept of mercy. We have but to consider their poor and decrepit demeanor to understand that when they say, “make ye a league with us,” it is not a demand but a plea (Matt. 8:1-2³). They do not come bearing gifts to exchange or weapons to join in the battle; they come with no garments, no provender, and only a hope that Joshua will show mercy. If garments are symbolic of righteousness, the only righteousness they have is filthy rags (Isa. 64:6⁴). “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling” (1

¹ **Josh. 9:6**; And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us.

² **Deut. 7:1-2**; When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them:

³ **Matt. 8:1-2**; When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

⁴ **Isa. 64:6**; But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Kings. 20:31¹). It is clear that these Gibeonites understand that if a league is formed and peace is made, and even though they try all they can to make it happen, it will be solely on Joshua's terms. Are they not also a picture of the gentiles—of us—who, “in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:11-12)?

Joshua's reply to the beggars is, “If you do live among us, how (or on what basis) shall we establish a league or covenant of peace with you” (Josh. 9:7).” Their reply is very important. They are indeed wise and clever, so much so that writers have called them “serpents” because of their subtlety. Though it was a serpent that deceived Eve, the believer is also admonished to be as “wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Matt. 10:16). In that scenario, these wily beggars certainly fit that description. The manner of their answer sets forth, in no uncertain terms, that they have cast their lives and their future estate entirely upon the good will of Joshua. They do not say “we will be your slaves” as if they will exchange servitude for salvation. They say—and specifically to Joshua—“we are your slaves” (Josh. 9:8), as if to say, “Yours to do with, as you will. We are your slaves and you are our master. Do not the dogs get crumbs from the master's table” (Matt. 15:27)? When asked who they are, their reply is the same (Josh. 9:9). They do *not* say, “We are deciding to follow you” or “We will let you save us.”

¹ 1 Kings. 20:31; And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life.

Such a thing would cost them their heads. They fall down at mercy's door and wait for the Master to speak.

The language is that of ascribing power and glory to the God of Israel (Josh. 9:9-10¹). "We have come because of the name of the LORD (Jehovah-Savior) your God. We have heard of His fame, and we come to you as slaves to their master" (John 6:45²). Likewise, as glory is attributed to God, the sinner openly declares his own unworthiness. "Look at us: we have nothing to give, and our bread is old and moldy. We have heard of a bread that, when a man eats it, he will never hunger again. Our wine skins are torn and we have no wine. Our joy has leaked out of us, but we have heard of the 'feast of fat things and wine on the lees, well refined' (Isa. 25:6). Our garments are old, but we have heard of the garments of salvation, a robe of righteousness, 'not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing' (Eph. 5:27), that will never grow old. Our shoes are in tatters, but we have heard of men's feet being 'shod with the gospel of peace' (Eph. 6:15). We come from a far country, so far that we cannot go back, and have no desire to. We come because we have heard of 'a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God'" (Heb. 11:10).

Then Joshua makes peace with them. His compassion is overwhelmed by their condition and need, as only a heart full of mercy would do (Matt. 15:28³). He makes peace

¹ **Josh. 9:9-10**; And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the LORD thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt, And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that were beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, which was at Ashtaroth.

² **John 6:45**; It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

³ **Matt. 15:28**; Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

(Ezek. 16:8; Col. 1:20-22¹). In this, Joshua does what God had prohibited, and yet he shows mercy. God has made, along with His prohibition, a way of peace (Deut. 20:10-11²). The sinner has nothing to offer; he is a liar, and everything about him is worthy of death. In suing for mercy, he fears only for his soul. The death sentence is already upon him (Deut. 7:1-2, John 3:18-19³), yet every sinner in Scripture who begged mercy at the Savior's feet found mercy.

In Joshua 9:16⁴, after three days—which symbolizes the burial and resurrection of Christ and our justification by it—

¹ Ezek. 16:8; Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the LORD God, and thou becamest mine.

Col. 1:20-22; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouceable in his sight.

² Deut. 20:10-11; When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee.

³ Deut. 7:1-2; When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them.

John 3:18-19; He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

⁴ Joshua 9:16; And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they were their neighbours, and that they dwelt among them.

the truth about us (e.g. Gibeonites) comes out. Though we are justified, we are yet, in ourselves, sinners. “In our flesh dwells no good thing” (Rom. 7:18).

The choice of words is always important. What charge might have been laid against Gibeon and those with them? The word does not say that after three days, their lies are discovered, or that their wily trick on Joshua has been disclosed, or that they are proven to be wicked men. Instead, we have a most generous and meaningful description of those with whom Joshua made peace. It is discovered that they are neighbors and that they dwell among them. It is not discovered that they are enemies. Even a staunch legalist cannot find a hint of vengeance or retribution in this description. Is not the law fulfilled in loving your neighbor as yourself? Can the word “neighbor” ever rightly carry anything other than a pleasant thought? It is not discovered that they were despised infidels, but rather they are described in a most benign, unthreatening manner. They are “neighbors.” All those present know what they have done, but what they have done does not play into who they are now. They are a people with whom a covenant has been made and to whom peace has been spoken and whose lives are spared by covenant oath (Heb. 6:17-20¹). But have they done wrong? Indeed! Yet, “let him that is without sin cast the first stone” (John 8:7). Every believer is a sinner saved by grace alone.

Note the specificity of these words in Joshua 9:21. They will be servants of “the congregation,” according to the

¹ Heb. 6:17-20; to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

words of the princes. To curse Gibeon with servitude is, in reality, nothing more than treating him according to what he claimed himself to be (Josh. 9:8-9¹). When confronted with what they have done, they immediately confess and willingly take the place that is afforded them (Josh. 9:22-25²). Joshua curses them to servitude (Josh. 9:23a). A curse is a blessing if it makes you a servant of the Lord (Deut. 23:5³). The overriding providence in the care and protection of God's people is a theme taught throughout the word of God (Gen. 50:19-20⁴). Is this not also the fulfillment of prophecy (Gen. 9:25-26⁵)?

There is a subtle, but profound, distinction between the idea of a curse pronounced by the princes and the curse as pronounced by Joshua. The princes declared that Gibeon and those with him would be servants of the congregation.

¹ **Josh. 9:8-9**; And they said unto Joshua, We are thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, Who are ye? and from whence come ye? And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the LORD thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt.

² **Josh. 9:22-25**; And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We are very far from you; when ye dwell among us? Now therefore ye are cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God. And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the LORD thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing. And now, behold, we are in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do.

³ **Deut. 23:5**; Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee.

⁴ **Gen. 50:19-20**; And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

⁵ **Gen. 9:25-26**; And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant

Note closely the words of Joshua 9:23. They will be hewers of wood and drawers of water “for the house of my God.” Then look at verse 25, “Now, . . . we are in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do.” Joshua makes them hewers of wood and drawers of water (for the house of his God), for the congregation and “for the altar of the LORD (Jehovah),” even to this day (forever).

Who attends the altar of the LORD? Saved sinners made priests by the sacrifice of Christ attend the altar of the LORD—Unto Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood and has made us kings and priests unto our God (Rev. 1:5-6; Isa. 66:18-21; 1 Peter 2:5, 9¹). To the world, servitude is a disgrace, but to saved sinners, servitude to the congregation in the house of God and at the altar of the Lord is not a disgrace but rather pure grace, and is far above what the sinner could ever deserve, think, imagine, or ask.

¹ **Rev. 1:5-6;** And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Isa. 66:18-21; For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the LORD.

1 Peter 2:5; Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

9; But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Finally, hewers of wood and drawers of water were jobs reserved for the lowliest of the people. If you are condemned to death, and all that awaits you is sure destruction and never-ending torment in the bowels of Hell, servitude in God's house at His altar is an incomparable promotion.

JUSTICE

2 SAMUEL 21:1-7

1, Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.

2, And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them; (now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.)

3, Wherefore David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD?

4, And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel. And he said, What ye shall say, that will I do for you.

5, And they answered the king, The man that consumed us, and that devised against us that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel,

6, Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, whom the LORD did choose. And the king said, I will give them.

7, But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the LORD'S oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul.

This chapter begins with a famine in the land of Israel that had lasted for three years. The Lord used famine in many ways in the Scripture. He used famine to move His people to Egypt that He might deliver them by the blood of the Lamb. He used famine to send His prophet to the widow in Sarepta (Zarephath) to ultimately reveal His electing grace. Here He sends famine for retribution because of the wicked slaughter that Saul made against the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites have been faithful servants in Israel from the time of Joshua, with whom they had made a covenant for their perpetual protection. Saul had disregarded that covenant and had brought the hand of judgment against Israel in the form of famine that eventuated in David seeking the Lord for relief and for answers as to the reason for the famine. The Gibeonites were made hewers of wood and carriers of water, and they attended the altar and the house of the Lord. In these seven verses we see questions answered, justice exacted, and mercy shown.

In verse 1, David gets the answer he is seeking concerning the reason for the famine. Famine is not always a punishment for some particular sin, but it is always reasonable and wise to inquire of the Lord when life's circumstances take a drastic change. Believers are not Stoics who are to simply bear up under woes with a "stiff upper lip." The first thing that ought to enter the mind of the believer when trial comes his way is that he needs to speak to the Lord. Sadly, we often seek to fix things ourselves, and find ourselves looking at second causes when the answer is but a word away. Every trial comes from above and has as its primary design to bring the tried saint to the feet of Christ (James 1:2-5¹). "Every joy and every trial cometh from

¹ James 1:2-5; My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But

above, traced upon our dial by the son of love” (*Like a River Glorious*). This famine, though brought about through no fault of David, has brought David to his knees and to the throne of grace. The reason for this trial is retributive justice. Saul in his bloody slaughter had overtly rebelled against the covenant that Joshua (i.e., the deliverer) made with those who sought him for mercy. Saul, the “false” king that God had chosen to teach the people that they didn’t get to choose who would rule over them, had not regarded or respected the covenant.

Every false notion and every erroneous religious practice ultimately finds its source in the fact that men disregard that God is the God of covenant. Men despise election, predestination, particular redemption, and the eternal security of the saints because they despise the Covenant of Grace. Men reject total depravity because they disallow the Covenant of Grace. The price for such wicked works is famine of the soul. Saul proved himself to be like every religious unbeliever. He thought that his will—his choice, his decision—was the final arbiter in the matter. He cared not for the poor sinners that Joshua had delivered, but rather cared for his own supposed power and will. His sins would be visited on his children because justice must and will prevail.

Verses 2-3 are the record of David approaching the Gibeonites to find what they require so that the famine might be lifted. The first phrase of verse 2 belongs with verse 3. The last part of verse 2 is parenthetical and is an explanation of the wicked deeds of Saul. This parenthetical expression explains who the Gibeonites are (Amorites) and their standing (they are a people with whom a covenant was

let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

made). The last phrase of this expression reveals the wickedness of Saul. He slew this people under the guise of religious zeal and feigned love for the children of Israel. This word “zeal” (v. 2) is here interpreted as jealousy, and in this case, it means to incite to jealousy. His excuse for the slaughter of these Gibeonites was that they had no right to occupy space among the people of God; the land belonged to Israel, not the Amorites. We know that this was the meaning of this zeal because the Lord said He sent famine as a result of it. Religion without Christ is cruel and deadly, and it justifies its actions in the name of righteousness and in the name of God.

Reading the first phrase of verse 2 with verse 3 shows David approaching the Gibeonites to seek their will in this matter so that “atonement” might be made. This atonement is not the New Testament doctrine of reconciliation because there is no rift between David and these people. The atonement addressed here has to do with justice, not reconciliation. This atonement has to do with payment for sin, and there is but one payment for sin that makes atonement: death, a life for a life (Lev. 17:11¹). The Gibeonites do not seek remuneration; silver and gold are insufficient payment (Ps. 49:6-8²). They will settle for nothing less than satisfaction (v. 4). So it is with true justice. God will not act outside of justice, and justice requires death for satisfaction or propitiation (Rom. 3:24-26³).

¹ Lev. 17:11; For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

² Ps. 49:6-8; They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:)

³ Rom. 3:24-26; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the

David knows that atonement must be made, or the famine will not be lifted. How beautifully this pictures our redemption. The famine of sin is upon us and there is no end of it in sight. Though we did not actually sin, we are guilty by association of our former federal head, Adam (Rom. 5:12¹). Nothing but death will answer the claim that justice has upon us, and thanks be unto God, He has provided the necessary death to free us from the penalty that justice requires. It cannot be done with gold and silver—death must answer death (Ezek. 18:4; 1 Peter 1:18-19²).

Verses 5-6 reveal this atonement. Seven descendants of Saul shall be put to death to atone for Saul's slaughter. Seven is the number of perfection, and the atonement required must be a perfect atonement. Jewish writers declared that only seven Gibeonites were slaughtered, thus seven deaths would be equitable. There is no way of knowing for sure, but seven men killed does not seem a reasonable number to call a slaughter. The reason for the

remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

¹ **Rom. 5:12**; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

25, Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

² **Ezek. 18:4**; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

1 Peter 1:18-19; Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

number seven is more clearly understood by the following words of the Gibeonites: These were to be hanged “unto the Lord.” He requires perfection. “Seven” would symbolically meet that requirement, and He is the one to whom atonement is made (“Vengeance and recompence” belongeth to the Lord, Deut. 32:35). Also, the manner of their death (hanging) reveals that they were cursed by association with the house and progeny of Saul (Deut. 21:23¹). Likewise, it reveals the only remedy for that curse (Gal. 3:13²). David says, “I will give them,” because He knows God and knows that death alone will satisfy Him and lift the famine.

In verse 7 we see David spare Mephibosheth. Why? Because of a covenant! The covenant of mercy is ratified by the just death of the testator. Both mercy and justice are essential facets of the Covenant of Grace. I have life; God is appeased because of the worthy and accomplishing death of Christ (Rev. 5:9-10³).

¹ **Deut. 21:23**; His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

² **Gal. 3:13**; Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.

³ **Rev. 5:9-10**; And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

LAW AND JUSTICE

2 SAMUEL 21:8-14

8, But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite:

9, And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the hill before the LORD: and they fell all seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, in the beginning of barley harvest.

10, And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night.

11, And it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done.

12, And David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabeshgilead, which had stolen them from the street of Bethshan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa:

13, And he brought up from thence the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son; and they gathered the bones of them that were hanged.

14, And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son buried they in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish his father: and they performed all that the king commanded. And after that God was intreated for the land.

This entire matter of David dealing with the Gibeonites contains several things that are very intriguing. The first notable thing is the dynamic between the king and the Gibeonites. After David has inquired of the Lord about the reason for the famine and is informed that the famine came because of what Saul had done to the Gibeonites, David immediately calls the Gibeonites to find their desires in the matter. He is the king and might have simply punished the descendants himself as a token or symbolic gesture. Rather, David shows great humility and exercises remarkable condescension. He, the king, the one possessed of absolute authority, holds council with those who are significantly lower in stature than himself.

In this meeting we have opposite ends of the spectrum. The king of Israel seeks to know the heart of those who are not even Israelites but rather are perpetual servants. Had those who esteem the separation necessitated between royalty and helotry been present, this would have made the evening news, and not in a good light. This would have been a spectacle! Oh, but how this pictures the King of kings, who is meek and lowly in heart, sitting down and eating with the worst of humanity, even asking of them what they desire, as in the case of blind Bartimaeus when our King asked, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" (Mark 10:51).

Also, David acquits himself as a fair man. We know from previous chapters that David has a sentimental attachment to the family of Saul and could treat the request of the Gibeonites as spurious and as "crying over spilt milk." But he shows his fairness by opting for justice in the matter. Justice superseded his sentimental attachments. In this we also see David's honor and loyalty to his promise and to the oath of God in sparing Mephibosheth.

It should be noted that the Gibeonites acquit themselves well in this matter. It is not known how much time has transpired from the slaughter to the day when David seeks them out. What is interesting and very commendable is that the Gibeonites have held their peace for this span of time and have sought no retribution for the wickedness of Saul. They are not blood-thirsty or vindictive when they ask for the seven men to be hanged. They wait for the Lord with a mind and heart set on justice. They say, "We will hang them," showing their willingness to take responsibility for the execution of their request. Another thing that is very important to know is that, though *men* may have difficulty with this incident, the *Lord* reveals that He is solidly behind it. We know that He owns it because it is recorded that when the men are hanged, "After that God was entreated for the land." He lifts the famine when justice is satisfied.

Who are these seven men delivered to the Gibeonites? Two were sons of Saul by a concubine, Armoni and Mephibosheth. This Mephibosheth was not the son of Jonathan but of Saul. Why he has the same name is not known, but his claim to fame is that he is mentioned once in Scripture just before he was strung up. Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, is commonly referred to as Merib-baal. The other five men are the sons of Michal, who had been promised to David in marriage but was given to Adriel by Saul. The justice that ensues appeases God for the afflicted Gibeonites and settles those wrongs against the Lord's anointed.

Something else that is notable is that the hanging of these men and what follows runs contrary to God's Law

(Deut. 24:16; Deut. 21:22-23¹). These two passages declare that it is forbidden that children should die for the sins of their fathers and it is forbidden that a man hanged should be left on the tree (or gallows) after sunset. Some might ask if God has broken His own Law. That is a silly question. God did not give the Law for Himself; it was “added because of transgression” (Gal. 3:19). The Law has no claim on Him because it has neither right to warrant or any ground on which to accuse Him. He made the Law for men—for sinful men—to legally accuse them and assign blame to them. God is above the Law. He does and has done as He has pleased and will not give account of His matters. The Law, in this instance, does not apply, except in the general sense of a specific application of justice.

The time of their hanging is significant (v. 9). The beginning of the harvest is in April and the time of the first rains is in October-November (Hebrew *Marcheshvan*). This is the length of time that these men are left hanging (seven months approximately). They are hanged, designating that they are cursed. They are hanged in their hometown, designating that this is retribution for the sins of Saul, and they are hanged at harvest time, because their hanging is tied to the famine in the land (poor or no harvest for three years). This is seen in verse ten. Though the necessity of beating back the buzzards ends when there is no flesh left dangling on the end of the rope, Rizpah put up a tent during this span of seven months. The true meaning of recording this is to show that she stays on the scene until

¹ Deut. 24:16; The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

Deut. 21:22-23; And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

the famine is lifted. This reveals what the famine was and its remedy. The Lord had shut up heaven for three years, and the remedy came when “water dropped on them from out of heaven.” When the famine is lifted, she returns home. No one observing this incident could ever question that it is about justice. They hanged until the remedy for the famine appeared. This relief from famine at the time of the fall rains is reminiscent of the time of our Lord’s birth. He was born during Marcheshvan and is the remedy for the famine of the soul.

After David is told of Rizpah’s mourning, when the Lord sends rain to end the famine, he gathers the bones of Saul and Jonathan and the bones of these seven sons of Saul and buries them with a proper burial. The honorable internment of these bones teaches us some important truths.

First, it teaches us that what David and the Gibeonites did was not a vengeful act. This was about justice. This was about honoring God’s justice, not the sentiments of men.

Second, there is a lesson for us about our sins. Once justice has been honored—once God has been satisfied, once our sins have been forgiven and put away—the thing to do is bury them. God has buried them with His Son and has left them in the grave when His Son rose from the dead. We are to symbolically bury them by reckoning the old man to be dead.

Religion loves “testimony meetings.” These are forays into just how sinful men have been. It is a sporting face-off, contested in the pews of the vaunted halls of supposed religious humility. It is a contest to show who needs more of God’s grace to save them, by regurgitating vile acts to show just how bad they were when God saved them. It is “bragamony” under the guise of humility. It is false. Has God forgiven our sins? Has Christ put our sins away? Then we are to bury the dead things and not bring them up and dust them off for carnal religious brownie points. The

famine is ended, justice has been satisfied, the bones of the felons are buried out of sight, and that is the end of it. We are not to dig them up (Ezek. 16:63¹).

¹ Ezek. 16:63; That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the LORD God.

LIFE AFTER DELIVERANCE

2 SAMUEL 21:15-21

15, Moreover the Philistines had yet war again with Israel; and David went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the Philistines: and David waxed faint.

16, And Ishbibenob, which was of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear weighed three hundred shekels of brass in weight, he being girded with a new sword, thought to have slain David.

17, But Abishai the son of Zeruah succoured him, and smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David sware unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel.

18, And it came to pass after this, that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob: then Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Saph, which was of the sons of the giant.

19, And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaareoregim, a Bethlehemite, slew the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

20, And there was yet a battle in Gath, where was a man of great stature, that had on every hand six fingers, and on every foot six toes, four and twenty in number; and he also was born to the giant.

21, And when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea the brother of David slew him.

In the last phrase of verse 14 we are told that the Lord has been “entreated for the land.” The seven sons of Saul had been offered to the Lord to meet the just

requirements for Saul's slaughter of the Gibeonites. The land, for three years scorched with famine, now is filled with the sound of the abundance of rain. It is a time to rejoice. God has been appeased and the dearth is over. Some commentators discount the entire story of the famine and the deliverance, stating that too many things are against the teaching of Scripture and the Law, and that this episode is not mentioned in any other historical account. However, such strange accounts are found throughout Scripture and must be viewed in light of the gospel. Men miss the point and meaning of Scripture when they seek to record the events of history as the meaning and intent of the subject.

What we have in the historical account is famine as a result of sin, justice being satisfied, and deliverance taking place. If any of the Old Testament is approached without Christ and His work in mind, the Scriptures will be wrested to the destruction of men (2 Pet. 3:16¹). The last verses of this chapter are the truth about what happens after the elect are delivered (saved), whether it addresses our initial deliverance (knowledge that Christ has saved) or the manifold deliverances that the believer experiences throughout his earthly sojourn.

This is seen in the next word we read; the first word of verse 15 is "moreover." This is a connective word, and it means that what precedes and what follows are inextricably connected. The word can mean "also" or "beside this," but in almost every case it suggests inclusiveness. It might well read, "Along with the appeasement of the Lord, there were wars with the Philistines." This little connective word assures us that these two things are not exclusive of each other, that the wars that ensue are not an anomaly; rather,

¹ 2 Pet. 3:16; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

they symbolically teach us that peace with God and war with the enemies of God and His people are much akin to Siamese twins. In the midst of tribulation, which defines the sojourn of the child of God, there are seasons of refreshing. Also, this is indicative of the fact that salvation of the soul from the famine of sin—a famine brought on us by our earthly father and federal head—does not remove us from the trials that attend this life. The Lord has been appeased for the sin of our father Adam and for our sin, and it has taken place in the midst of our enemies and is not a curtailment of the activities of the enemy. What has changed for the believer is that he knows that his Lord rules (for him) amid his enemies (Ps. 110:1-3¹). Even though the battles continue there is reason to rejoice: Your sins have been forgiven, the right of sin to rule over you has been removed, and regardless of the extent or severity of the trial, “greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world” (Zeph. 3:13-15; Rom. 6:14²). This word “moreover” also teaches us that the battle we have is primarily with our own flesh, and so we are reminded to reckon the old man to be dead.

In the verses that follow, David, now advanced in age, grows faint in the battles. These battles are with giants, one

¹ **Ps. 110:1-3**; The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD 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; thou hast the dew of thy youth.

² **Zeph. 3:13-15**; The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid. Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more.

Rom. 6:14; For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

having twelve fingers and twelve toes. The significance of that fact is not known, save that such historical characters in mythology and in real life have been given societal status. Symbolically, since the hands and feet represent men's work and walk respectively, having a greater number of fingers and toes may speak of the esteem that men place on personal righteousness and merit. Such might be held as digitally dominant in personal holiness.

In these last verses, three giants are slain. Their weapons are mighty and weighty, and they stand out among normal people because their prowess is visible. Their strength seems to assure them victory, and as mighty men in the flesh they disdain any sign of weakness.

The first one mentioned sees David grow faint in the battle and thinks that he has slain the king (vv. 15-16). It is ever the mistake of men who assume they are mighty and powerful to view the faint as weak and dead. False Christianity is built on the shoulders of the mighty, the great in number, the giants among men. Their pathology is to discount the "day of small things" when the Lord expressly admonishes his people not to despise such. Is it any wonder that false Christianity speaks of Christ in pitiful terms when inwardly they look at Him and the cross and logically surmise that one so brutally abused must have the help of human beings to bring His works to fruition? Paul said, "When I'm weak, I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10). The mark of the child of God is that he knows he is faint and frail and that it is the Lord that is his strength. After David's men convince him to fight no more because they know that, though he is faint, he is yet the heart of Israel, his men go on to slay the giants.

In all this there are some simple lessons to be learned, and every child of God will be schooled in this classroom as long as they live on this earth. After every deliverance, the enemy gathers his forces to attack the soul of the delivered.

People who remain as they are naturally born may have battles with conscience, but they never have spiritual battles. It is not until a person is born again and given spiritual life that the war between flesh and spirit ensues. The substitutionary sacrifice that got you out of trouble with God gets you in big trouble—continuous trouble—with self and the flesh. Every believer has victories in this life through faith. They have been delivered, are being delivered, and shall yet be delivered (2 Cor. 1:10¹), but along with those saving experiences there are tribulations that must come (Mark 10:28-30²). The sword never departs from David's house, but at the appointed time he will, in death, leave it behind.

Trials and tribulations are by design and are fitted to the individual believer. We see this in the life of David. His first recorded fight was with a giant, and he ends his career fighting with giants. The wise man said that there is nothing "new under the sun" (Eccl. 1:9). Our struggles in the beginning will be our struggles in the end. It would seem logical that once a foe is defeated that there would be no more problems with him, but that is not the case. If we can be honest with ourselves, the giants that came against us in the beginning we yet war with to this day. Truly, the only one we can talk to about it is our Lord, because our giants and our brother's giant are not the same. Though certain troubles are common to man, spiritual trials are by design for the individual believer. It would seem logical that having

¹ 2 Cor. 1:10; Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.

² Mark 10:28-30; Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

faced the enemy for so long a time, we would have figured out his wiles, but such is not the case. Growing stronger with age and time is the pipe dream of progressive sanctification. The fact is that we may, when filled with youthful vigor and courage in the beginning, slay our Goliaths in the strength of the Lord, but in the end there will be four giants to take his place and we will faint.

Thank God that we faint into the arms of Him to whom the victory belongs. Our strength removed and our courage waning, we faint and fall upon covenant mercies and sure promises, realizing that fainting is but God weaning us from confidence in ourselves. Fainting is a diminishing of the power of flesh. It is not effort. It is ceasing effort. It is crying "uncle." It is knowing that we, in ourselves, cannot win. Paul said in 2 Cor. 10:3-5, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Fainting is reckoning the old man to be dead and that the struggle that wars in our bosom is won, not by the flesh, but in thanksgiving that Christ has obeyed, and His obedience alone is our victory. No matter how lofty our attainments and no matter how low our estate, all that matters is that Christ has obeyed. This is where the fainting warrior has come, as we will see in the song of the faint in Chapter 22.

THE FAINTING WARRIOR'S SONG

2 SAMUEL 22:1-7

1, And David spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul:

2, And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;

3, The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence.

4, I will call on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

5, When the waves of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid;

6, The sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me;

7, In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears.

Read Also Psalm 18:1-6

1, To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, the servant of the LORD, who spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: And he said, I will love thee, O LORD, my strength.

2, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

3, I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

4, The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.

5, The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.

6, In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.

As we saw in our last study, the saint can rest assured that upon delivery, when the Lord has delivered the believer, the enemy begins his assault. We also looked at this in light of David's advanced age and his fainting in the midst of the battle. All these things point to the truth that the believer is not equipped, in himself, to withstand the onslaught of the battle, and that his fainting will be into the arms of the Lord.

These words of David are practically identical to Psalm 18 and the first verse of our text is the title line of Psalm 18. Verse 1 sets up this entire song, and three words tell us exactly what occasioned such words of praise and thanksgiving: "In the day." These words came in the day of deliverance from his enemies and from the hand of Saul.

Two things stand out about this.

First, it is clear from David's words that the glory for this deliverance belongs to the Lord, as it always does.

Second, since these words are spoken while David is fainting, it is sure that no credit for deliverance can be given to himself.

It is in the day that the Lord delivered him. This is always the case when providence orders all events to bring us to the feet of the Master, where with thankful hearts we sing His praises. What we need to remember is that we are at our most vulnerable when we have been handed a victory. Though in our hearts we know that it is the Lord that has fought and won the battle for us, we nevertheless still retain

a depraved nature, which lives for the moment that we can feed our pride. The Bible is replete with warnings to be careful when we have had a modicum of perceived success. The believer is made for adversity. He finds ease and comfort from the world a distraction at best, at worst, debilitation. “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). “For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself” (Gal. 6:3).

This is the fainting warrior’s song. The Psalm begins with “I will love thee O LORD, my strength.” The title “LORD” in capital letters assures us that this praise offered to the Lord is the praise of every saint for the salvation of the soul. In our text David begins with the glory of who God is.

Verses 2-3 state:

“*The LORD is my rock, my fortress, my deliverer*” (v. 2). “From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy” (Ps 61:2-3). “A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land (Isa. 32:2). The Fathers “all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ (1 Cor. 10:4).

“*In Him will I trust*” (v. 3). “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him” (Job 13:15). “Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength (Isa. 26:4). “I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me” (Heb. 2:13). “Blessed be the LORD God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of

salvation for us in the house of his servant David” (Luke 1:68-69).

The Lord is “my high tower” (v. 2). “The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Prov. 18:10). “He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure” (Isa. 33:16).

David is delivered. “Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me.” (Psalm 18:40). What else is there to do? “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil 4:6).

The “*Sorrows, cords, and travail*” of Psalm 18:5-6 all picture Christ. “Then saith [Christ] unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. (Matt. 26:38). “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me” (Ps. 22:14-17). “The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children” (Hos. 13:13).

Psalm 18:6 speaks of our Lord’s travails, “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb. 5:7-8). “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli,

lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me” (Matt. 27:46)?

INCOMPREHENSIBLE

2 SAMUEL 22:8-20

8, Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven moved and shook, because he was wroth.

9, There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.

10, He bowed the heavens also, and came down; and darkness was under his feet.

11, And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: and he was seen upon the wings of the wind.

12, And he made darkness pavilions round about him, dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies.

13, Through the brightness before him were coals of fire kindled.

14, The LORD thundered from heaven, and the most High uttered his voice.

15, And he sent out arrows, and scattered them; lightning, and discomfited them.

16, And the channels of the sea appeared, the foundations of the world were discovered, at the rebuking of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils.

17, He sent from above, he took me; he drew me out of many waters;

18, He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them that hated me: for they were too strong for me.

19, They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay.

20, He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

Several times in the Word, when God describes Himself, He repeats the truth that there is no other God beside Him and that nothing can be likened to Him. He is the invisible God—no man has seen His face (Ex. 33:20¹)—and when men endeavor to describe Him or assign certain traits to Him, the language employed by the Spirit is such that finite man might grasp a morsel of the sublime magnitude of His being. Man, in truth, has no capability of perceiving God. Man is left with metaphor to wrap his feeble mind around Him who is incomprehensible. The artist and the poet are lauded among men because they seem somehow to tap into the unexplainable, and with words or brush paint a picture that touches the heart.

Certain aspects of the knowledge of God make for an easier description than others. Those things usually fall into the category of what Christ means to the individual. In the first seven verses of 2 Samuel 22, we see David speaking of God in terms of safety and finished deliverance or salvation. Words like “rock,” “fortress,” “refuge,” and “high tower” are easily understood, as they picture a sense of safety and protection. Words like “shield” and “buckler” suggest armor against the assault of the enemy. Titles like “deliverer” and “savior” speak of a work finished. These things are readily understood.

But throughout Scripture when men are inspired to describe God in the action of salvation, the language leans toward the phenomenal. Hyperbolic terms and wondrous imagery are put forth to describe the indescribable. The words of verses 8-20 are an inspired description of God’s actions in the deliverance of David from his enemies and are therefore a picture of the salvation of the elect. On that great day of salvation when Christ gave up His life, God

¹ Ex. 33:20; Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

only gives us a partial view of what took place (Prov. 25:2¹). He allowed us to see how men felt about His beloved Son. He allowed us to see the final moments of Christ as He finished the salvation of the elect. But for three hours He cut out the lights, and we are left to only imagine what went on in those hours when He poured out His wrath and vengeance for the sins of the elect imputed to Christ.

We have hints of revelation, such as the words of our Lord when He said, “I am consumed with the blow of thy hand” (Ps. 39:10), or the record of it in concise language when the Lord describes drinking the cup of God’s wrath dry (John 18:11²), or the singularity of the act such as, “he tread the winepress alone” (Isa. 63:3). However, when men do seek to describe God in action, they apply to the power demonstrated in nature, to things that strike fear in the hearts of men: thunder, lightning, smoke, fire, and darkness are employed to do two things.

First, they are fearful phenomena used in our own language to metaphorically describe things that supersede what is normal. Anger is often described as fire. Lightning is used to describe destruction, quickness, or speed. Thunder is often used as an ominous harbinger of bad things to come. These things are for us so that we might use our minds to get some grasp, albeit tenuous, on what God did when He delivered us from sin and from the hands of our enemy.

Second, such language is employed as an obvious confession that the accomplishment of our salvation was such a magnificent endeavor that there is no possibility of any human performing it. This kind of language proclaims “salvation is of the LORD” (John 2:9). Such imagery is not

¹ Prov. 25:2; It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.

² John 18:11; Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

strange to Scripture (Deut. 4:24; Hab. 3:3-7, Heb. 12:18-21; Rev. 1:13-16; 19:11-16¹). These metaphors demand thought and meditation and require spiritual understanding, which God gives freely to His children (1 Cor 2:14-15; 1 John 2:20²).

¹ Deut. 4:24; For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.

Hab. 3:3-7; God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power. Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

Heb. 12:18-21; For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

Rev. 1:13-16; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

19:11-16; And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

² 1 Cor 2:14-15; But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because

We might look at this wonderful description and ask this question: “What did it take to save our souls?” Salvation is by grace and mercy toward us, but also it is deliverance from, and the destruction of, our enemies. Our enemies are sin, self, and Satan. Each of these rule and reign over us in power and self-deception. They are our nature, entrenched in the strong dungeon of dark delusion and depravity. We have no power over them (v. 18). Thank God, they are no match for Him when he moves in wrath (v. 8).

In verse 9 is the description of the action of our salvation. “Smoke came out of his nostrils”—surely an astounding sight. Smoke in this case refers to destruction and is a metaphor for self-righteousness, the true enemy of our soul (Isa. 65:5¹). This smoke coming out of His nose is akin to what he threatened to the church at Laodicea in the book of Revelation 3:16. He said to them, because of their self-righteous and self-sufficient attitude, “I will spew you out of my mouth.” The fire out of His mouth is the Word, the gospel. That gospel destroys any hope of human merit and self-righteousness. This is known as the “offense of the gospel.”

Verse 10 speaks to His condescension in His incarnation into this world consumed with darkness.

Verse 11 speaks of His swiftness. “A short work will [I] make upon the earth” (Rom. 9:28). The wind is symbolic of His Spirit.

Verse 12 addresses the fact that, apart from revelation, He and His work is shrouded in darkness.

they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

1 John 2:20; But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

¹ Isa. 65:5; . . . Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

Verses 13-14 reflect the power of the gospel, the light, the fire, and the resounding of Christ and Him crucified.

Verse 15 reveals that the gospel is directed, aimed, and has an intended target. Neither arrows nor lightening are shot willy-nilly. They are guided missiles and designated fire.

Verse 16 is a guarantee of the success of the gospel. This is an allusion to the parting of the Red Sea, which not only delivered the people of God but destroyed the enemy as they sank to the bottom like a stone.

Verses 17-19 declare that God is the author and finisher of our salvation. We didn't crawl up from our sinful ooze; He came down and took us—He drew out—and He delivered us from the enemy for whom we were no match. "Those who prevented me in my calamity, God was my stay" (support, Ps. 18:18).

Verse 20 speaks of the elect's happy estate (Ps. 31:8; 118:5; John 14:2-3; Eph. 2:5-7¹). The word "large" refers to a place where *largesse* is exhibited, a place of freedom and complete provision, gifts, and kindness.

Verse 20 also supplies the reason the Lord delivered us: "because He delighted in me" (Rom. 5:6-9; Eph. 2:4-5²).

¹ Ps. 31:8; And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room.

118:5; Let Israel now say, that his mercy endureth for ever. Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy endureth for ever.

John 14:2-3; In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

Eph. 2:5-7; Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

² Rom. 5:6-9; For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet

Glorious thing...this salvation!

peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

Eph. 2:4-5; But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS

2 SAMUEL 22:21-27

21, The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

22, For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God.

23, For all his judgments were before me: and as for his statutes, I did not depart from them.

24, I was also upright before him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity.

25, Therefore the LORD hath recompensed me according to my righteousness; according to my cleanness in his eye sight.

26, With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, and with the upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright.

27, With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself unsavoury.

These words of David, and others like them (e.g., Ps. 26:1-2¹) are a clear declaration of righteousness, and they are often a source of some discomfort to believers because it seems that David is boasting of personal righteousness. We know that this is inspired language and is written “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ and that believing, ye might have life through His name” (John 20:31). But believers all have the same

¹ Ps. 26:1-2; Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide. Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.

mindset of Isaiah when he declared, “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6).

Also, throughout Scripture the subject of righteousness, good works, or upright behavior is rarely declared in the first person. Spiritual traits such as love or humility are referred to in the second or third person or in the collective “we,” not declaring personal righteousness but rather that righteousness common to all the elect—the imputed righteousness of Christ. It is not in the believer to speak of himself as righteous because he knows that within himself, that is to say, in his flesh, “dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. 7:18) and that before God, as man is in himself, “there is none righteous, no not one” (Rom. 3:10; see Ps. 53:3¹). Herein is the distinction that must be made concerning these words of David.

Was he declaring a personal righteousness before God or was he declaring right actions in a historical sense? David’s words must be viewed in light of his attitude and treatment toward Saul. Context, as always, determines the meaning of a text. David has just glorified God and praised His name for the great deliverance God has wrought. He has been delivered from his enemies “and out of the hand of Saul” (v. 1). David is simply declaring that he acted appropriately toward Saul and that God has rewarded his actions.

Remember: Under the Old Covenant, blessings were conditional. They were tied to obedience. David had not killed his enemy Saul, though twice he had opportunity to do so. He had fled from Saul, yet had it come to a battle, the anointed would have surely won the day. He had acted uprightly. He is not declaring righteousness before God but rather righteousness in his dealings with Saul. Believers may

¹ Ps. 53:3; Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

claim rightly that they have dealt with men in an equitable manner and yet know in their heart that those proper dealings have nothing to do with their standing before God (Acts 20:33¹). David knows that all his salvation—every deliverance—took place because God delighted in (loved, chose, anointed) him (vv. 20, 51²).

One may deal honestly and show integrity among men and declare it without ever attributing any of his own actions as accounting as righteousness before God. David, toward Saul, had been merciful, upright, and pure, and his hands were clean (free of blood concerning Saul) and God had recompensed him accordingly with deliverance in the realm in which this righteousness is exhibited. This form of righteousness has nothing to do with the salvation of his soul but is rather as a result of true righteousness, which is imputed to every one of the elect (Jer. 23:6; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21³). What David has done does not make him righteous. He did what he did because he is righteous before God in the person of his Savior.

Knowing that this entire Psalm is about the glory of the Savior, and that these words as well as the words of all the law and the prophets testify of Christ, just as all the Psalms are Messianic, so these words are the words of Christ, the

¹ Acts 20:33; I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

² vv. 20; He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

51; He is the tower of salvation for his king: and sheweth mercy to his anointed, unto David, and to his seed for evermore.

³ Jer. 23:6; In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

1 Cor. 1:30; But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

2 Cor. 5:21; For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

gospel shrouded in mystery, revealed by the Spirit for the believer's understanding (1 Cor. 2:6-12¹).

These words are to be considered as the words of Christ Himself, and when viewed as such we see that this is not a change of subject but a continuation of the last study and the glorious, powerful poetry of David describing Christ in the action of his salvation. Here, after David's glorious depiction of the Savior, our Lord breaks forth in speech, as it were, declaring His qualifications as our Savior, the captain of our salvation. Who but Christ can proclaim such righteousness before God and be right and true in doing so? David speaks of righteousness among men; Christ speaks of righteousness before God.

He alone can lay out such evidence—such true evidence—of His suitability as Savior (Heb. 5:9-10²).

¹ 1 Cor. 2:6-12; Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

² Heb. 5:9-10; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

HELP FOR THE MIGHTY

2 SAMUEL 22:28-51

28, And the afflicted people thou wilt save: but thine eyes are upon the haughty, that thou mayest bring them down.

29, For thou art my lamp, O LORD: and the LORD will lighten my darkness.

30, For by thee I have run through a troop: by my God have I leaped over a wall.

31, As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all them that trust in him.

32, For who is God, save the LORD? and who is a rock, save our God?

33, God is my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect.

34, He maketh my feet like hinds' feet: and setteth me upon my high places.

35, He teacheth my hands to war; so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.

36, Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy gentleness hath made me great.

37, Thou hast enlarged my steps under me; so that my feet did not slip.

38, I have pursued mine enemies, and destroyed them; and turned not again until I had consumed them.

39, And I have consumed them, and wounded them, that they could not arise: yea, they are fallen under my feet.

40, For thou hast girded me with strength to battle: them that rose up against me hast thou subdued under me.

41, Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me.

42, They looked, but there was none to save; even unto the LORD, but he answered them not.

43, Then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth, I did stamp them as the mire of the street, and did spread them abroad.

44, Thou also hast delivered me from the strivings of my people, thou hast kept me to be head of the heathen: a people which I knew not shall serve me.

45, Strangers shall submit themselves unto me: as soon as they hear, they shall be obedient unto me.

46, Strangers shall fade away, and they shall be afraid out of their close places.

47, The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation.

48, It is God that avengeth me, and that bringeth down the people under me,

49, And that bringeth me forth from mine enemies: thou also hast lifted me up on high above them that rose up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man.

50, Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name.

51, He is the tower of salvation for his king: and sheweth mercy to his anointed, unto David, and to his seed for evermore.

As we studied verses 21-27 last, these words are the words of David as he seeks to honor and glorify the Lord for His gracious deliverances. But we also looked at these words as the words of our Lord, Himself describing His character and His qualifications as our Savior and Great High Priest. What follows in the remainder of this chapter is the account of our Savior in the accomplishment of the salvation of His people. He speaks as the man Christ Jesus, the anointed King who, as a man, did as all of God's children must do: surrendered His will to His

God. As a man, He represented what it is to be the best of men, that true example of humanity. True humanity is in submission to the will of God. When our Lord said in Gethsemane, “Not my will, but Thine be done” (Luke 22:42), He was not saying that His will was not aligned with God’s will, but as our representative—as true humanity—the only place for the human will is in subjection to God (Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 5:7-9¹).

Likewise, as the true human being and the perfect representative, our Savior must rely on God for help and deliverance. As a perfect human, He must be perfectly delivered. Though He was fully God, our Savior never relied on His own deity to perform that which was His to do as representative man (Acts 2:22; 10:38²). Humanity—even perfect humanity—does not rise above the necessity of help from God. It is useless to say coulda’ or woulda’ because, as God, our Savior possessed power to do all things. He applied to God because otherwise He would not be the perfect representative. Therefore, we have words as in Psalm

¹ **Phil. 2:9-11;** Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Heb. 5:7-9; Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

² **Acts 2:22;** Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.

10:38; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

89:19¹ to assure us of that fact. As perfect humanity, He even laid aside His omniscience (Matt. 24:36²). That's power! In these verses before us, our Savior speaks in that capacity, as a man relying entirely on the God of all mercy and grace.

In verse 28 the stage is set for all that follows. This is the definitive declaration of the two-faceted salvation that God has wrought. The salvation of the afflicted people—afflicted with sin, self, Satan, and their own impotence; God will save, and in that gracious process He will bring down the haughty (1 Sam. 2:1-10³).

¹ Psalm 89:19; Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.

² Matt. 24:36; But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

³ 1 Sam. 2:1-10; And it came to pass after this, that David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron. So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail Nabal's wife the Carmelite. And his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron. And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, That the men of Jabeshgilead were they that buried Saul. And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabeshgilead, and said unto them, Blessed be ye of the LORD, that ye have shewed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him. And now the LORD shew kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing. Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them. But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim; And made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel. Ishbosheth Saul's son was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David.

Verse 29 is a declaration that Christ is the Messiah and that His kingdom will prosper (Ps. 132:17; Acts 2:28¹). The three hours of darkness that our Lord endured on the cross was followed by the glorious light of His resurrection.

Rather than expound upon these remaining verses, we look at them as they set forth the two abiding principles of salvation: the deliverance of the saints, and the destruction of the enemy.

Verses 30, 38-41: His victory over His enemies (v. 40, Gen. 49:8²) and His exaltation for having finished the work.

Verses 31-33: the help laid on Him.

Verses 42-43: the helpless estate of the enemy (Isa. 1:15³)

Verses 44-46: The salvation of the elect from every nation tongue and people (Ps. 2:8-9; 110:1-3; John 17:2-3⁴).

¹ Ps. 132:17; There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.

Acts 2:28; Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

² Gen. 49:8; Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee.

³ Isa. 1:15; And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

⁴ Ps. 2:8-9; Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

110:1-3; A Psalm of David. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD 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: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

John 17:2-3; As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

LAST WORDS

2 SAMUEL 23:1-7

1, Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said,

2, The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.

3, The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.

4, And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.

5, Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.

6, But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands:

7, But the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place.

These are said to be the last words of David. He actually said some other words after this, causing some folks to squabble about the consistency of Scripture. In 1 King 2:9-10¹ we have the last words

¹ 1 King 2:9-10; Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood. So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.

of David, and this is the source of much of the so-called controversy. One thing seems to escape those who wrestle with such things: The Scriptures are inspired by God and breathed by His Spirit, and the designation that the words of our text are the last words of David carry a specific significance.

The “last” words of David recorded in 1 Kings are not designated as such by the Spirit, yet they are consistent with the lot of David’s life. God had told him that he would live and die a man of war; the sword would not depart from his house. In his final words he drew that sword again and put it in the heart of Shimei, who had long before cursed David and, until the day of his death, lived under David’s sanction against any harm coming to Him. Now in his hour of death, he fulfills what God had promised. With his last breath he wields the warrior’s cutlass and draws blood.

But the passage in our study is placed in importance as David’s last words because it is clear that David is speaking as a prophet, himself at the moment speaking by the Spirit (v. 2; Heb. 1:1-2; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Acts 2:29-31¹).

In verse 1, the Spirit-designated “last words” of David begin with him identifying himself. Each of these defining

¹ Heb. 1:1-2; God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.

2 Pet. 1:20-21; Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Acts 2:29-31; Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

terms clearly reveals David and all of the elect, but they likewise picture the heavenly David, our Lord Jesus Christ.

He first relates his lowly birth: He is the son of Jesse. Our Lord, though His Father was God, was often referred to as the son of Joseph (the elect are sons of Adam, the man made of dirt). David, as it were, is as a root that sprang from dry ground (Isa. 53:2¹). He was born to a lowly house and was considered the least of that house (1 Sam. 17:55, 58²).

Second, he describes himself in the light of God's sovereign grace, "a man who was raised up on high." He is the shepherd boy who God raised up to be King. Every one of the elect is raised from the "slough of despond" to "sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6). This also refers to the exaltation of Christ because He accomplished the work of redemption that God gave Him to do (Rom. 14:9; Phil. 2:9-11³).

Third, He refers to himself as "anointed of the God of Jacob." The word "anointed" applies to both David and all the elect (2 Cor. 1:21⁴). Here, God is declared to be the God of Jacob. This designation is used many more times

¹ Isa. 53:2; For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

² 1 Sam. 17:55, And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell.

58; And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.

³ Rom. 14:9; For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

Phil. 2:9-11; Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

⁴ 2 Cor. 1:21; For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

than “the God of Israel” and is, to the sinner saved by grace, a blessed description. So is the term “king” (Rev. 5:10¹).

Fourth, David refers to himself as “the sweet psalmist of Israel,” and this is the designation of his official character as one who wrote of the glory of Christ under God’s inspiration. There is no doubt this relates to Christ (the Word) who is both Psalmist and Psalm.

David says, “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue” (v. 2). This addresses inspiration, which is itself a mystery. I have read many efforts to explain inspiration and have taken a few stabs at it myself, and there is simply no explaining it. The basic premise is about as much as the finite mind can absorb. God breathed His words in the minds of some men and they wrote down what He told them. Thus, the Spirit spoke by them. Along with verse 2 and the first two phrases of verse 3 there is a sweet little bit of inspiration. It is an Old Testament revelation of the Trinity, the triune Godhead. The Spirit is the Holy Spirit, the God of Israel is the Father, and the Rock of Israel is the Son (1 John 5:7²). The message of the triune Godhead—the message breathed into the hearts of the prophets, the singular message which assures us that the Spirit speaks by men—is The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. God speaks in the language of His Son, and all the prophets spoke of Him, and all God-called preachers are determined to speak of no one else.

It is Christ that rules over men (v. 3)! He is Lord over all, Lord of the living and the dead; He, the Lord God

¹ Rev. 5:10; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

² 1 John 5:7; For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

omnipotent reigneth (Rev. 19:6¹). He rules over men—all men—and employs them as He sees fit. He is just, referred to by Ananias as the “Just One” (Acts 22:13²). He is the just sacrifice that answered the Law’s just demands. He is the Just One who justifies and is just to forgive. He rules in the fear of “for the worship, love and glory” of God. Verse 4 is a description of Christ as revealed in the gospel; as the tender grass (Isa. 53:2³) after the rain (Joel 2:23; Deut. 32:2⁴).

Verse 5 is one of the sweetest in all of Scripture and may give us some sense of why the Spirit designated these as the last words of David. These are, perhaps, the best words of any sinner as he approaches the end of his days and considers the God of all glory and the grace that he has received. The first phrase will, in some form, be the testimony of every believer. Though he has spent hours in prayer and many times has spoken to his family of Christ, many friend and kin remain in unbelief. Though the believer knows that all he can do is speak and pray, and he knows that salvation is of the Lord and that the Lord will always do right, he longs for their salvation while he is still on this earth. In glory he will sing the praises of God, even

¹ Rev. 19:6; And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the LORD God omnipotent reigneth.

² Acts 22:13; [Ananias] unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

³ Isa. 53:2; For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

⁴ Joel 2:23; Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.

Deut. 32:2; My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.

if his family is thrust into perdition (Rev. 19:1-6¹). But while he is bound to earth, as he approaches the ends of his days, familial ties and ties of love bear heavy on the heart: “although my house be not so with the Lord.” As true as this is, the believer’s faith is not shaken, because he knows what God has done for him by sovereign grace. The believer knows that he is a beneficiary of the full benefits of the Covenant of Grace—that covenant of promise ratified in blood and executed by the sovereign Mediator. That covenant covers every possible aspect of the sinner’s salvation. It is “ordered in all things and sure.” There is no possibility of failure; everyone included in this covenant is forever redeemed, saved, justified, sanctified, and stands righteous before God. This is all the believer wants and needs, even though his loved ones have no interest in it (v. 5d, e).

Verses 6-7 are a reiteration of the fact that the salvation of the elect is, at the same time, the destruction of the enemy. Alleluia, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!

¹ Rev. 19:1-6; And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the LORD God omnipotent reigneth.

FOR HIS GLORY

2 SAMUEL 23:8-23

8, These be the names of the mighty men whom David had: The Tachmonite that sat in the seat, chief among the captains; the same was Adino the Eznite: he lift up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time.

9, And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines that were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away:

10, He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword: and the LORD wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil.

11, And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentiles: and the people fled from the Philistines.

12, But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the LORD wrought a great victory.

13, And three of the thirty chief went down, and came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adullam: and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim.

14, And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem.

15, And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!

16, And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of

Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD.

17, And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men.

18, And Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruah, was chief among three. And he lifted up his spear against three hundred, and slew them, and had the name among three.

19, Was he not most honourable of three? therefore he was their captain: howbeit he attained not unto the first three.

20, And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts, he slew two lionlike men of Moab: he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow:

21, And he slew an Egyptian, a goodly man: and the Egyptian had a spear in his hand; but he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear.

22, These things did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name among three mighty men.

23, He was more honourable than the thirty, but he attained not to the first three. And David set him over his guard.

This is the accounting of David's mighty men, all warriors who acquitted themselves well in battle and gained victory in every case. There are thirty-seven in all—six are designated by the Holy Spirit as greater than the other thirty-one because of their great accomplishments in war. These six are divided into two groups, one being the greater and one being the lesser, but both are given greater places of honor than the thirty-one remaining, who are mentioned by name without reference

to their exploits. The first three are found in verses 8-12 and the last three in verses 18-22. It appears that the matter of rank and honor are directly tied to the greatness of accomplishments, and it seems also that the distinguishing factor that separates these two trios is the account of what the first three did in reference to David in the Cave Adullam (vv. 13-17).

The exploits of these men earn them the title of “mighty”—and remember that it is the Holy Spirit that designates them as such. However, it must be remembered that the work of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ. In the New Testament, our Lord makes that clear (John 16:14¹). In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ with types and pictures all pointing to the substance—the Lord Jesus Christ. So, we can be assured that, though these men are truly mighty and their exploits are great, they picture the Almighty Savior. Isaiah refers to Him as the Mighty God (Isa. 9:6²). They typify the Lord in several ways. The primary way in which these mighty men picture the Mighty Lord is that in each of their victories, they acted *alone*. They won the battle by themselves. Like young David slaying Goliath with a single stone by himself, they picture the singular Mighty Man who won the victory, saving the Israel of God and at the same time destroying the enemy. Our salvation was not a corporate effort or an effort to make salvation possible. It was a feat that was a singular “fait accompli.” Scripture is replete with this fact—“when He had, by himself, purged our sins” (Heb. 1:3); “He tread the winepress alone” (Isa. 63:3); “When He through the Spirit

¹ John 16:14; He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

² Isa. 9:6; For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

offered himself” (Heb. 9:14); “Who gave himself for our sins” (Gal. 1:4); “Who gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). Our salvation was accomplished by the Mighty One.

Also, attributes of the victories of these mighty men point to specific aspects of the record of our salvation accomplished by Christ alone. In the case of Eleazar (vv. 9-10), he did not give up the battle—his hand clave to the sword, though he was physically weary—until the last enemy was finished. This pictures the work of salvation declared “finished” on the cross (John 19:30¹). Not only were none of the people involved in the battle (they had all fled), they did not return to take the spoils until it was finished. What a picture this is of the fact that when the battle took place the sheep were scattered, but afterward they all received benefit from what the Mighty One did.

In the case of Shammah (vv. 11-12), he is seen as defending the sustenance of the people, guarding the field against the plundering Philistines. This pictures the Mighty One defending the heritage of His people with whom He is joint heir. He is the living Word and He has preserved the written word, which is the food of the believer, the gospel of sustenance.

In the case of Benaiah (v. 20), he is seen in the defeat of lion-like men and of a lion. Satan is called a lion roaming to and fro in the earth “seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet: 5:8). Christ not only destroyed him and his works but likewise the men who are like him (1 John 3:8; 2 Cor. 11:13-15²).

¹ John 19:30; When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

² 1 John 3:8; He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

2 Cor. 11:13-15; For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if

Also, Benaiah is seen killing a “goodly” (strong and powerful) Egyptian man (v. 21). The act was that of a shepherd (whose tool of the trade is his staff) putting a slaver out of business. Christ is the Great Shepherd, his greatness exemplified in the salvation of the sheep. Egypt is a picture of bondage to the Law. And this is some sweet stuff. The shepherd took the spear from the Egyptian and slew him with His own weapon. How did Christ save his people? He destroyed the power and might of the Law by fulfilling the Law’s demands. He finished the Law by keeping the Law in His death. He impaled the Law on its own sword, just as Paul said to the Romans and the Galatians (Rom. 7:1-4; Gal. 2:19; Col. 2:13-14¹).

Finally, the report of the bravery, love, and honor exhibited by the first three (vv. 8-12), when they broke the lines of the Philistines to get David a drink of water from the well in his hometown, teaches us of the loyalty and honor that men can give to other men, and rightly so. However, David’s action of pouring the water on the ground—water obtained at risk of life and limb—reveals

his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

¹ **Rom. 7:1-4;** Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

Gal. 2:19; For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

Col. 2:13-14; And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.

that David knew that no man was worthy of such honor. The water poured on the ground was (spiritually) an offering to the Lord (v. 16). Because of the nature of the sacrifice these men made, David called this a blood offering to God (v. 17). Only one who offered such a blood offering to God, who appeased God by that offering, is worthy of such honor and glory. David pointed to Him who was to come, who would forever be praised and honored because of His offering.

Rev. 5:9-14

9, And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

10, And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

11, And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

12, Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

13, And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

14, And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

NUMBERING THE PEOPLE

2 SAMUEL 24:1-9

1, And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.

2, For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which was with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people.

3, And Joab said unto the king, Now the LORD thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it: but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing?

4, Notwithstanding the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the host. And Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel.

5, And they passed over Jordan, and pitched in Aroer, on the right side of the city that lieth in the midst of the river of Gad, and toward Jazer:

6, Then they came to Gilead, and to the land of Tahtimhodshi; and they came to Danjaan, and about to Zidon,

7, And came to the strong hold of Tyre, and to all the cities of the Hivites, and of the Canaanites: and they went out to the south of Judah, even to Beersheba.

8, So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days.

9, And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.

This final chapter in the book of 2 Samuel naturally divides itself into three sections, setting forth the experience of salvation in a kind of chronology of events. In verses 1-9, David's sin and disobedience is revealed. In verses 10-17, David's acknowledgement of his sin, his falling on God's mercy, and the resulting punishment are all revealed. In verses 18-25, David seeks the Lord and is obedient to the Lord in offering burnt offerings and peace offering for his sin and for the sin of the people. In this study, we will consider the sin of David in numbering the people in verses 1-9. This numbering is not a general census but is rather a numbering of men twenty years old and above that are considered ready to make war. It was a military census.

The first thing to note is that the anger of the Lord is kindled against Israel. The transgression, whatever it was, was a national transgression. The particular transgress is not revealed to us in the Word of God as was that of particular sins like those of Saul against the Gibeonites, which brought three years of famine. We are not entirely left to speculation as to what this national transgression was. Another account of this episode, reported somewhat differently, is found in 1 Chronicles 21, and it gives us some clue of what the transgression of the nation was (Read 1 Chron. 21). The chapter 21 version begins with the word "and" just as in our text but without mention of the anger of the Lord or with Satan standing up and provoking David to number Israel. The word "and" in this context relates to the previous chapter, which is a record of the victorious exploits of David and his mighty men. We have but to consider our own hearts after we find ourselves to have overcome some adversary or have made it through some trial. Generally, we do not fall on our knees in thanksgiving, but our hearts tend to engender pride. This is little more than a clue, but the

redeemed heart knows that, upon victory, we tend to take credit for ourselves, and that often equates religiously to taking a census of our own strength. We know that pride is an open door for the wiles of the devil, just as Peter was sifted as wheat by Satan, when he proclaimed that, though others might deny Christ, he never would (Matt. 26:33¹). The connection of 1 Chronicles 21:1² and 1 Chronicles 21:8³ is certainly worthy of attention and serves to warn us against pride in the face of glory that belongs only to God. It is sad but truly telling of the ghastly influence of the flesh and of the open door to Satan that, in the midst of manifold mercies, the seed of pride finds purchase in our hearts. One man said, “As weeds flourish under the sunshine and flowers, so when there is not watchfulness, the tendencies of our nature germinate under mercies.”

The difference in the account in 2 Samuel and that of 1 Chronicles has piqued the interest of those who would claim inconsistencies in the Scriptures. Here in 2 Samuel, “God moved David to number Israel,” and in 1 Chronicles, “Satan provoked David to number Israel.” This is only a problem to those who believe that God’s creatures operate independently of His sovereign will. God employs Satan, a creature created by God, in His grand scheme of the salvation of the elect. Satan operates within the strict parameters of God’s purpose in grace. The difference between our text and that of 1 Chronicles is that the means which God employed is designated in 1 Chronicles. God uses that created angel to do his bidding, suffers him to act

¹ Matt. 26:33; Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.

² 1 Chronicles 21:1; And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.

³ 1 Chronicles 21:8; And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.

according to his own vile nature, to bring to an end His grand purpose (Acts 4:28; Heb. 1:13-14; 2 Cor. 12:7¹). The end of Satan's provocation and of David being suffered to give in to the temptation ends with David offering sacrifices to God for his and the nation's sins. This is "mission accomplished" by God, suffering Satan and David to act according to their nature until God operates on David's spirit, according to His sovereign will and purpose.

David sins in numbering Israel and Judah. That fact is indisputable. But exactly what is entailed in that sin is the subject of much conjecture. Some draw from 1 Chron. 27:23-24² that David's sin is numbering those that were under the age of twenty. Others conclude from the same chapter that David's sin in numbering Israel comes from his unbelief in the promise of God that Israel would be an innumerable company, exceeding even the sands of the sea and "the stars of the heavens." Some think that David is being presumptuous to number Israel because he does not seek the permission of God to do so (Ps. 19:12-13³). Each of these various scenarios could reasonably be applied.

¹ Acts 4:28; . . .to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

Heb. 1:13-14; . . . to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

2 Cor. 12:7; And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

² 1 Chron. 27:23-24; But David took not the number of them from twenty years old and under: because the LORD had said he would increase Israel like to the stars of the heavens. Joab the son of Zeruiah began to number, but he finished not, because there fell wrath for it against Israel; neither was the number put in the account of the chronicles of king David.

³ Ps. 19:12-13; Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

But there is yet a greater theme that is being addressed here. We have seen that this chapter envelops a chronological picture of the experience of salvation; sin, confession, and acknowledgement of the justice of God in burnt and peace offerings (substitution). It is no stretch of the imagination to consider that the sin of numbering Israel has to do with the glorious substitutionary work accomplished by our blessed Savior.

To this point in time, Israel had only been numbered twice: once upon entering the wilderness in Numbers 1 and again in Numbers 26 when allotment of lands was made to the various tribes upon entering Canaan. There was however a strict requirement, a law that was attached to numbering Israel (Ex. 30:12-16¹). For a person to be numbered (counted) among Israel (as God's people), a ransom (or atonement money) for their souls must be paid (Num. 31:49-50²). David numbers Israel and there is no record of him requiring atonement or ransom for their souls. Now, we know that money is not the currency of

¹ Ex. 30:12-16; When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD. Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the LORD. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls. And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls.

² Num. 31:49-50; And they said unto Moses, Thy servants have taken the sum of the men of war which are under our charge, and there lacketh not one man of us. We have therefore brought an oblation for the LORD, what every man hath gotten, of jewels of gold, chains, and bracelets, rings, earrings, and tablets, to make an atonement for our souls before the LORD.

redemption (Psa. 49:6-8¹). The legal tender of redemption is blood—death. But this requirement of atonement money is a picture of particular redemption (as to the intent and the extent) rather than a definition of price. This is simply a statement that, where there is no atonement made, there is no numbering among the people of God. If a ransom has not been paid for you—if a propitiatory payment has not been made for you—you are not counted among the people of God. Conversely, if you are numbered among the people, it is because a ransom has been paid for your soul. All for whom Christ died are counted among the people. Those who are not counted are those for whom no propitiation has been made, those for whom Christ did not die (John 6:37-39, Rom. 8:34²).

David's sin? No atonement, no ransom for those he numbers. Those ransomed are those numbered.

¹ **Psa. 49:6-8**; They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:)

² **John 6:37-39**; All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

Rom. 8:34; Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

CONVICTION

2 SAMUEL 24:10, 17

10, And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.

17, And David spake unto the LORD when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house.

Surgeon said, "Sometimes the only reason we can put forth for doing anything is that it turned out alright." The fact is that if you want to know God's purpose in anything, just look at what happened. In this passage, we see David in great conviction of heart because he has numbered the people. We know that the sin itself was that no atonement money was paid for those that were numbered, which meant that those numbered were not actually counted among the people. However, David's confession does not list that particular element of the sin, so we can surmise that David is smitten because of his own pride and presumption, and later for the lives that his presumption cost.

There is a great deal of instruction for us in this passage, but as we consider it there are some things we need to remember.

First, though David is convicted and confesses his personal sin, that which is being addressed is a national sin,

of which David is guilty along with the people, but not to be singled out personally. David being suffered to sin in numbering Israel is part of the purposed punishment that God had ordained for Israel as a nation. Because God was angry with Israel, He suffered David to be tempted as part of His process in punishing Israel. Here we may not enter, but rather we must bow to the God who does “all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph. 1:11). We have the benefit of viewing the finished product and can see mighty providence working to bring things to their appointed end.

Second, this entire episode in the history of Israel takes place under the Old Covenant according to the Law of Moses handed down on tables of stone at Sinai. This means that blessing or cursing, punishment or reprieve, is conditioned upon the obedience or disobedience under the directives of that covenant.

Third, though conviction, confession, and repentance are present, punishment still must be exacted personally; that is to say, the offender (man or nation), under the Law, must receive personal punishment and recompense for his or their crime. Under this covenant, though mercy may be shown, personal punishment is not set aside. Under this covenant, justice must be satisfied against the offender.

In verse 10 we see David’s conviction, confession, and his penitent plea. David’s heart smites him after he has numbered the people. David, being “a man after [God’s] own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14), is brought to understand what he has done. He feels guilt and shame for his doings. Though David is counted among the elect and his sin will be put away on the cross, he is not at this time operating under the New Covenant. He is under that pedagogue (the Old Covenant), garrisoned and kept until Christ and faith comes. That being the case, his smitten heart has no remedy, unlike those who have received the benefits

revealed in the gospel (1 John 3:20-21¹). Under the Old Covenant, the heart refers to the conscience, which was the convicting agent under that covenant. Though the conscience is obvious in the Old Testament, it is not mentioned, because there was no remedy for it. That remedy is Christ crucified (Heb. 10:1-4²). Though David's conscience brings the fires of conviction, he is still under the Law (the realm in which the conscience operates) and no remedy for the sting of his conscience is available. There is only personal punishment to satisfy the law. This is evidenced by the fact that, though David's conviction and confession are real, 70,000 Israelites die to assuage the anger of God against Israel. The Old Covenant was a teacher—a pedagogue—and what it taught was that it had no remedy for sin, only personal justice for the offender.

In the second phrase of verse 10, we are made privy to David's confession: "And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done."

The first thing to note here is who David makes his confession to. The uppercase rendering of the title "LORD" reveals that David is suing for mercy at the hand of Jehovah, the Savior. He does not do a public "mea culpa." He knows that sin is against God and that Jehovah alone is He to whom confession must be made. Religion admires public confession because it allows those who hear the confession to feel better about themselves and play at deity for a bit by

¹ 1 John 3:20-21; For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

² Heb. 10:1-4; For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

showing public mercy toward the confessor. Confession is made to Christ (Jehovah Savior) because He alone is who sin is against (Ps. 51:3-4¹).

Second, confession is assuming a singular responsibility for sin. David does not say the devil made me do it, blame some set of mitigating circumstances, or point his finger at anyone or anything but himself. David confesses that *he* did it (he says “I” twice), and the blame and the shame are his and his alone. This is the mark of the child of God under conviction; he does not point to anything or anyone outside himself. He assumes blame for what he has done. Also, the child of God knows that he is not an island and has not sinned in a vacuum. His sin is as a contagious disease, the effects of which go well beyond the one who has sinned (v. 17a). Choices have consequences, and the consequences fall on all that are involved, even on all that are loved by the sinner. For the child of God—a member of the body of Christ—his sin is a pandemic, affecting the entire body. It is also clear that with the prayer of confession comes the prayer of supplication and intercession (17b). Paris Reidhead said, “prayer for others is real when it is intercessory.” This means that the supplicant is willing to take upon himself the consequences that those for whom he prays have suffered. “But these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me” (Philem. 1:18²).

Finally, confession of sin is acknowledgement of the true problem. David knows that he has done wrong, and he does not shirk the responsibility for his actions, but his words reveal that he knows that his actions were merely

¹ Ps. 51:3-4; For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest

² Philem. 1:18; If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account.

symptomatic of the truly grievous condition of humanity. “I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant.” Though he seeks mercy for what he has done, He knows that something is terribly wrong in the inner man, and his only hope is that this malicious malady be taken away. (Ps. 32:1-2; 51:6; Mark 7:18-23; Heb. 1:3; 9:12,26; 1 John 3:5; Rom. 4:6-8; 8:1-4¹).

¹ Ps. 32:1-2; Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

51:6; Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

Mark 7:18-23; . . . he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Heb. 1:3; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

9:12; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

26; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

1 John 3:5; And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

Rom. 4:6-8; Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

8:1-4; There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

JUSTICE AND SACRIFICE

2 SAMUEL 24:11-25

11, For when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying,

12, Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee.

13, So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me.

14, And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man.

15, So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men.

16, And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshingplace of Araunah the Jebusite.

17, And David spake unto the LORD when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house.

18, And Gad came that day to David, and said unto

him, Go up, rear an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite.

19, And David, according to the saying of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded.

20, And Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming on toward him: and Araunah went out, and bowed himself before the king on his face upon the ground.

21, And Araunah said, Wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, To buy the threshingfloor of thee, to build an altar unto the LORD, that the plague may be stayed from the people.

22, And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him: behold, here be oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and other instruments of the oxen for wood.

23, All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king. And Araunah said unto the king, The LORD thy God accept thee.

24, And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

25, And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.

In the last study we looked at David's conviction and repentance for what he had done. One thing to note about this repentance that rings true of genuine repentance is that David showed evidence of a contrite heart before he was caught and before the threat of punishment was presented to him. When Gad comes to him with the choice among three punishments, David

chooses to fall into the hand of the Lord because the Lord is great in mercy. I know of no other instance in Scripture where an offender is allowed to pick the punishment that he is to receive. Though the punishment is owed to Israel nationally, David's conviction of sin is due to his own transgression of numbering Israel. Though David is probably confessing his pride, the punishments the Lord offers David to choose from address his personal transgression. David is wise to fall on the mercy of God because he knows that the judge of all the earth will do right.

He also knows that God is just, and the punishment will fit the crime. This gives us some sense that David is offering up himself and is willing that he be charged with the transgression (v. 17). There is some indication that David knows that one of these punishments fits his crime "to a tee." In Exodus 30:12¹, the Lord gives the punishment for numbering Israel without atonement being made: It is the plague. In the original language, "plague" can include pestilence, with the distinction that pestilence will end in utter destruction. His falling on God's mercy is probably with an understanding, or at least some indication, as to the punishment fitting his particular crime.

It is apparent that God chose the punishment that deals with the sin of numbering Israel, and it is also evident that even in judgment God shows mercy (Hab. 3:2²). However, mercy is never shown at the expense of justice. Sin must be punished. Sin will be punished because God, though

¹ **Exodus 30:12**; When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them.

² **Hab. 3:2**; O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.

“keeping mercy for thousands,” will in no wise “clear the guilty” (Ex. 34:7). The sins of the elect do not escape punishment. Their sin was imputed to Christ, and He bore the punishment, even unto death. David’s sin and that of Israel cost the lives of 70,000 men. Under the Old Covenant, David must be personally punished because, under that covenant (by intent and purpose), no sin is remitted. But David is not only the elect as part of that natural nation, he is also elect according to eternal grace, and all his sin was put away on the cross because his substitute, the heavenly David, suffered all the punishment that was due his sin.

God stays the execution of justice when the angel is about stretch out his hand upon Jerusalem. God stops the angel by the threshing floor of Araunah (also translated “Ornan”). This location has a special significance in the word of God. Gad tells David to erect an altar unto Jehovah there (v. 18). This is not the first nor the last time an altar is found at this location. Jewish historians hold that this was the place at the east of Eden (cherubim and Shekinah glory) that Abel offered his acceptable sacrifice—the blood of the lamb. Years later Abraham offered up Isaac on Mt. Moriah (where God provided Himself a sacrifice) on the place that later became the threshing floor of Ornan.

The last altar erected on this threshing floor was the cross of Christ, and the floor is what we call Calvary. Scripture is the finest of things! Araunah (Ornan) means “I shall shout for joy.” It means “the joyful shout of Jah (Jehovah).” It means “a shining light.” Jebus was a former name of Jerusalem. The king buys the place of the sacrifice. It becomes his threshing floor. Calvary always belonged to the King of kings, who set His face “like a flint” toward Jerusalem (Isa. 50:7). It was His threshing floor, where He threshed the wheat with the winnowing fan in His hand,

separating the wheat from the chaff (Luke 3:17¹). There on that hill (the property of our Lord), He redeemed His elect. There, as far as the punishment of sin and the redemption of His people is concerned, time ended for salvation. In a moment, a nation was born, and from that moment he that was (made) righteous remained righteous, and he that was holy remained holy, and he that was unjust remained unjust, and he that was filthy remained filthy. This was the threshing floor of Ornan, the property of the King. The sacrifices that David offers are burnt offerings and peace offerings. Burnt offerings signify the finished work of Christ. Peace offerings signify the result of that finished work: peace made through the blood of His cross.

Finally, David refuses to receive the threshing floor as a gift from Ornan the Jebusite. He buys the floor and the things necessary for the sacrifice, saying, "Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing." This addresses true worship. The believer will not offer to the Lord that which costs him nothing. Worshipping God is giving to God that which is due His name: all glory, all honor, all thanksgiving, and all praise. This is why thanksgiving and praise is called a "sacrifice" (Heb. 13:15²). It costs us our "self." We cannot worship God and look to gain anything from it. It is about Him and His worthiness. And since all thanks, all recognition, all thanksgiving, all glory, and all honor are given to Him, we don't get any. We sacrifice all to Him. We glory in Him because He had been entreated for us by the blood-sacrifice of His dear Son (v. 25b).

¹ Luke 3:17; Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.

² Heb. 13:15; By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

