

SAMUEL, DAVID'S FORERUNNER

1 Samuel 1:20

Intro: David's name appears for the first time in the Bible in Ruth 4:22--the last verse of the book of Ruth. We are simply told there that David was the great grandson of Boaz, the grandson of Obed, and the son of Jesse. Since the book of Ruth had to do with "the days when the judges ruled" in Israel (Ruth 1:1), and before the time of the kings, the reference to David at the end of Ruth is to prepare us for the story of David. The chief importance of Samuel's life is to prepare us for the appearance of David. The same can be said of King Saul. It was the effect of his life upon David that gives him a place of importance in the Word of God. The influence of Samuel upon David was good; the influence of Saul upon David was also good, but Saul intended for it to be bad. Saul held the same place in the life of David that Joseph's brothers held in his life. What Saul did, he intended for evil, but God meant it for good. Cf. Gen. 50:20.

This is not to say that the Lord did not have any other purpose for Samuel, nor for Saul--because He did! But it would seem that high on the list of divine priorities for both of these men was their relationship with David.

The story of David begins in 1 Sam. 16 when Samuel went to the house of Jesse to anoint Saul's successor, Jesse's youngest son, David. David's name appears first in 1 Samuel in chapter 16, verse 13. (Read.)

After we are introduced to David, he becomes more and more important in sacred history. That is the case through the remainder of 1 Samuel, all through 2 Samuel, and one and a half chapters into 1 Kings. Therefore, it would seem that the first 15 chapters of 1 Samuel are actually introductory, leading to the life of David.

The first thing that we are told about the birth of Samuel in 1 Samuel is that:

I. SAMUEL'S BIRTH WAS MIRACULOUS.

SOME FEEL THAT ELKANAH WAS A LEVITE WHO LIVED IN EPHRAIM. AS A LEVITE SAMUEL COULD SERVE IN THE LORD'S HOUSE.

The book begins by telling us about a certain member of the tribe of Ephraim, Elkanah, who had two wives. One was Hannah; the other was Peninah. Peninah had children; Hannah had no children. Elkanah loved Hannah more than Peninah, but, as we learn in 1 Sam. 1:5, "the Lord had shut up her womb. This is evidence that the Lord gives us our children. If He withholds children He has His own reasons which are not always the same. But it must have always impressed Samuel

that his birth was miraculous, that he was given to his parents as an answer to prayer. The birth of several important people in Scripture was actually a miracle. I am thinking of Isaac, of Joseph, of John the Baptist, and of our Lord. And all of them had a very significant place in the plan and purpose of God.

This became a severe trial to Hannah, and it was aggravated by the way Peninah treated her, especially at that time in the year when Elkanah went up to Shiloh to worship the Lord. Hannah shed many a tear, and missed many meals, because it seemed that for some reason the Lord was not blessing her.

Finally, one year, when Hannah was in an especially severe state of bitterness, meaning that her heart was greatly troubled, she made a vow with the Lord—and Elkanah did not annul it (see Num. 30). It was that, if the Lord would give her a son, she would give him to the Lord "all the days of his life." And she added, "And there shall no razor come upon his head" (1 Sam. 1:11b). Eli, the priest, saw her lips moving and thought she was drunk. Hannah assured him that she had prayed because of her grief in not being a mother. It also appears that she loved the Lord so much that her greatest grief was that she did not have a firstborn son to give to the Lord.

Hannah accepted Eli's words in verse 17 as an answer from the Lord that she would have a son. She went back home. The Lord remembered her, and she gave birth to a son, calling him "Samuel," which lit. means, heard of God. For God to hear a prayer is the same as saying that God will answer prayer. The people of God seem to have always known this, but it was stated by the Apostle John in 1 John 5:14, 15.

Thus, the birth of Samuel was a miraculous work of God. A miracle is defined in the dictionary as something that is supernatural in origin, or as an act of God. The birth of Samuel cannot be explained in any other way. God worked, but He worked in answer to prayer.

It would not have been quite the same if the Lord had given her a daughter. She asked for "a man child," and a man child is what she got.

Let us note in the second place:

II. THE WAYS OF THE LORD.

We must not think of this as something that originated with Hannah, with her prayers. Instead, we must recognize that it was the will of God for Samuel to be born, that the Lord kept

Hannah from conceiving until she had gone through great trials through which she was gradually drawn closer and closer to the Lord. We must thank the Lord that Hannah did not give up praying. As the burden got greater, her prayers become more intense. She manifested the same kind of faith which Jacob had when he told the Lord, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (Gen. 32:26).

It has often been the case that the people of God have prayed long and hard, sometimes for years, for a particular burden that has been placed upon them. The greater the delay, the heavy the burden, but also it is usually accompanied by a refusal to give up. In such cases we can be sure that God is at work, and that He burdens us to pray for that which He intends to do.

Now let us look at:

III. THE FAITHFULNESS OF HANNAH.

Perhaps some of you ladies could do a better job of this part of chapter 1 than I can, or than any man could do. Think of what we have here. As soon as little Samuel was weaned (which probably was about the time he was three), Hannah took little Samuel to the house of God in Shiloh. There she gave Samuel to Eli to serve the Lord for the rest of his life. "And he worshipped the Lord there" (1 Sam. 1:28). Some older versions read, "And **they** worshipped the Lord there."

We wonder how she could do this. Samuel was really at a cute age. She had no other child, and, as far as she knew, no prospect that she would have another child. The situation in Shiloh was anything but good when we think of Eli's sons. And yet she did just what she said that she would do.

This, too, was of the Lord! God was at work not only in Hannah's heart, but also in the nation. This child, Samuel, was the first of a whole line of prophets going on down to John the Baptist. He was to become a godly servant of the Lord. God was preparing to pour out special blessing on His people through King David. First there would be greater problems with King Saul, but the birth of Samuel signalled that blessing was on that way!

What about Hannah? Let us look briefly at:

IV. HANNAH'S PRAYER (1 Sam. 2:1-11).

Hannah is mentioned in verse 1. And then her name appears in 1 Sam. 2:21. After that she is never mentioned in the Bible. The Lord gave her five more children, but Samuel never came

home to live. She came to see him every year, and each year brought him "a little coat" (1 Sam. 2:19). We do not know if, after he became a man, his mother died, but he never mentioned her, and we know nothing about what happened to her. It is very clear that God's purpose for her was primarily to be the mother of Samuel, who became faithful to the Lord just as his mother had been.

As others have said before, we cannot all be Samuels. That is not God's will. Some have to be the mothers of the Samuels. And we can be sure that when the rewards are given to Samuel, the Lord will call Hannah forward for her share in the rewards.

Let us be sure to notice the good things about Hannah, and the good things about Samuel, but let us also remember that behind them, leading them, blessing them, and using them, is the Lord God of Israel--Who is really the One Who deserves the glory and the praise.

Hannah certainly felt that way as we can see from her prayer.

I am not going to take the time for a verse by verse exposition of this prayer, but I do want you to note several things about it before I close.

- A. Her joy in the Lord--after all of those years of trial. See v. 1.
- B. Her vindication of the Lord. See vv. 2, 3.
- C. Her recognition of the sovereignty of the Lord. See vv. 4-9.

From the Lord's dealings with her she had seen that He was not only sovereign in her life, but in the lives of all people--the wicked, as well as the saints.

Was she thinking of Samuel as she prayed the words in verse 8? She evidently believed that there would be a monarchy because she mentioned "princes" here.

- D. Her understanding of the ultimate triumph over the Lord. See v. 10.

Here she mentioned the Lord's "king." There was no king at the time, and she could not have known about David. But she knew that he was coming, possibly she was looking even to the Messiah, the King of kings. Whatever her meaning, she was overwhelmed with what

the Lord had done with her and for her child, Samuel, and her heart had nothing in it but praise and thanksgiving for the Lord.

Concl: Hannah's prayer did not contain a single request. It was as though the Lord had already done more for her than she had ever expected. She knew that her son would not be the King. He was not in the right tribe. But her son would be associated with the king. She may have been thinking in terms of the Messiah, but second only to the Messiah, her son would be the forerunner of the great King David. And she was amazed that God had given her a son for such a place of honor.

We can learn from this that we never lose by giving to the Lord. We also see that our trials in prayer may be preparing us for blessings that we never expected to see. Israel was coming out of a time when everyone did that which was right in their own eyes because there was no king in Israel. God was getting ready to give them a man after His own heart. Cf. 1 Sam. 13:14. This is what the Apostle Paul called David in Acts 13:22.

That Samuel would have such an honor as to anoint such a man was unknown to Hannah, but she knew that royal honors were ahead. At one of the darkest periods in Israel's history the Lord had put a bright light in the heart of Hannah after leading her through many dark days.

Let us learn these lessons well, and trust God in our times of trial. He knows what He is doing, and blessing is ahead.

"SPEAK, LORD, FOR THY SERVANT HEARETH"

1 Samuel 3

Intro: The Lord willing, as I explained last Sunday, I want to consider the lives of Samuel and Saul as a preparation for a more thorough examination of the life of David.

David was, according to Samuel's words to Saul in 1 Sam. 13:14, "A man after his own heart," i.e., God's heart. This is the way the Apostle Paul described David in his message recorded in Acts 13:22:

And when he (God) had removed him (Saul),
he raised up unto them David to be their king;
to whom also he (God) gave testimony, and said,
I have found David the son of Jesse,
a man after mine own heart,
which shall fulfil all my will.

The words which seem to be Paul's inspired interpretation of Samuel's words as to what it means to be a man after God's heart, show what God was seeking in a king. He must be one who would do the will of God, a man of obedience, and therefore, a man of holiness.

When we take that expression back to Samuel's youth, we can see the purpose of God's work in Samuel's heart.

This particular time in Israel's history was not a good time spiritually. The nation was just emerging from the period of the judges. Samuel was not only the first of the prophets, but he was also the last of the judges. The period of the judges is described for us in the last verse of the book of Judges. Listen to Judges 21:25:

In those days there was no king in Israel:
every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

If people were doing that which was right in their own eyes, then they were not doing what was right in God's eyes. If a man is a man after God's heart, then he will do what is right in God's eyes, and at the same time it will be right in his own eyes. In other words, he does not do God's will because he is forced to do it because of some external influence; he does what is right in God's eyes because that is what he wants to do. It comes from his heart. And when a man does the will of God from the heart, it produces a holy man who lives a holy life. Holiness before God and obedience to God are never separated. Where you find one, you find the other--if it comes from the heart.

So God was working in Samuel's life to bridge the wide, wide

gap between what the people were under the judges as compared with what He wanted them to be. And so He was working with the leadership! Rarely is it true that the people of God are holy if their leaders are not holy. So a work was being done in Samuel's young life to start bridging that gap.

The work seems to have started in Hannah's life. Through her barrenness the Lord drew her to Himself, and taught her deeply in His ways. Then God gave her Samuel who was under her godly influence for three years before he was taken to Shiloh to live in the house of God.

We would be inclined to think that would have been a wonderful place for her child to grow to maturity. But that was not the case.

Right after Hannah's inspired prayer in 1 Samuel 2, we have the statement made in verse 11 which tells us what Samuel was doing. (Read.)

That would be fine except for what we read in 1 Sam. 2:12. (Read.) Add to that 1 Sam. 2:17. And then read 1 Sam. 2:22. (Read.) Even Eli was involved in the deplorable condition. We see that from the prophet's words in 1 Sam. 2:29, 30. (Read.) It became increasingly apparent that things had to change, and change drastically. The corrupt priesthood was corrupting the people more and more. There was no man after God's heart present.

However, let us look at some other verses. First, let me re-read 2:11. And then read verse 18. And then the last part of verse 21. And then verse 26.

As unbelievable as it might seem, in the midst of all of the corruption, Samuel was making great progress. And yet 1 Sam. 3:7 tells us that Samuel did not yet know the Lord.

Let me digress for just a moment to point out something that should be of real concern to all of us, but especially to those of you who still have children in your homes. Samuel was an ideal child. He was busy serving the Lord even at a very early age. He did what was pleasing to the Lord, and he did that which won a place for him in the hearts of the people. But he did not know the Lord.

Such behavior was very encouraging to Elkanah and to Hannah as they came to see Samuel each year. It was evidence that God was at work. However, the work of the Lord had not yet been consummated in Samuel's heart--and that is what we need to be looking for. It seems that this is what took place in chapter 3.

Pray, and continue to pray, that the Lord will reveal Himself to your children. When that happens, salvation is the result.

Why were things going so well with Samuel while at the same time they were so bad in the priesthood?

Let me suggest two reasons:

- 1) Because he had a praying mother, and possibly also a praying father. Although Hannah gave Samuel to the Lord, I am sure that she prayed continuously for him. Mothers, fathers, don't quit praying. The Lord is the Father of His children, and He knows a father and a mother's heart.
- 2) Because the Lord was getting ready for David. Samuel was one of those who was honored to be an instrument in the hand of the Lord preparing for the one who was coming, the man after God's heart.

The prophecy of the man of God (1 Sam. 2:27-36) makes it clear that Eli knew that the Lord was displeased with him, and why the Lord was displeased with him, and that judgment was on the way.

Now, looking at chapter 3, we see that God spoke directly from heaven in a day when such manifestations were rare. And so let us label this as:

I. A RARE CALL (1 Sam. 3:1-10).

The Lord was calling Samuel who probably was no more than a teenager at this time, possibly even a little younger-- according to the word that is used in verse 1 for a "child."

Samuel thought that Eli was calling him. Three times he went to Eli. The first two times Eli said that he had not called Samuel, but the third time Eli realized that the Lord was calling him. And so he told Samuel that, when it happened again, he should say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

Samuel did just what Eli told him to do, and then it was that, for the first time in his life, the Lord spoke to Samuel.

What a message that was! "SPEAK, LORD, FOR THY SERVANT HEARETH." Samuel's name meant heard of God. God had heard Samuel's mother; now He wanted Hannah's son to hear Him!

This was to be a kind of theme for Samuel's life. The Lord was preparing His servant. His servant needed to listen to the Lord, and hearing means doing when we understand it properly. This qualified Samuel as a prophet. A prophet is

one who receives a message from the Lord, and gives it to the people. Perhaps Eli had not taken seriously the message of the man of God in chapter 2, and so the Lord was now using a child, or young man, to convey the same message to Samuel.

II. THE MESSAGE RECEIVED FROM GOD (1 Sam. 3:11-14).

When we think of what the Lord was doing to prepare for the coming of David, what lessons do we see here?

The Lord was teaching Samuel that sin continued will ultimately bring judgment. The Lord may patiently wait for a long time, but finally He deals with it.

Eli's sin was that he tolerated sin in his sons, and did not even try to restrain them. His words of rebuke to them, when given, were not taken seriously.

This revelation from God (because that is what it was) was a lesson in holiness.

III. THE MESSAGE DELIVERED TO ELI (1 Sam. 3:15-18).

Samuel told Eli everything. The amazing thing is Eli's response. Those who persist in sin get to the place where it is impossible for them to repent.

IV. THE CONTINUING WORK OF GOD WITH SAMUEL (1 Sam. 3:19-21).

An old man that had grievously sinned against God was being removed; a young man was sovereignly brought on the scene. He was totally unlike the times into which he was born because God was preparing an instrument for great blessing for His people--which in itself was probably an answer to the prayers of people like Hannah--maybe also Elkanah.

Concl: Note those words well: "SPEAK, LORD, FOR THY SERVANT HEARETH."

The need is just the same. God is no longer speaking like He did to Samuel, but He is speaking--through His Word. It seems that some of His speaking to Samuel was through the Word that had already been given and written. God speaks that His people may hear, and learn, and then bring their lives into harmony with His Word. This is how Samuel was being prepared in holiness. This is why he proved to be such a blessing to the Lord's people in a day in which there was little blessing. And the Lord was doing this in preparation for the coming of the King who would be a man after His heart. May the Lord give us ears to hear, and hearts to do His will in these evil day in which we live.

"THE GLORY IS DEPARTED"

1 Samuel 4

Intro: The last three verses of chapter 3 give us a very encouraging description of what was happening to Samuel. "The Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground." This probably means that Samuel made prophetic utterances which came to pass so, as verse 20 of chapter 3 indicates, everybody in Israel knew that he was a prophet of God. Verse 21 indicates that the Lord continued to reveal Himself and His Word to Samuel. Nothing could be more indicative of God's desire to bless the people of Israel than this. The appearance of a prophet was always a good sign in Israel, an evidence that God had not forsaken His people.

But it was not a good time in Israel.

I. THE BATTLES WITH THE PHILISTINES (1 Sam. 4:1-11).

This became evident when the Israelites went to war against the Philistines. (Now we are in chapter 4.) Verse 2 tells us that Israel lost 4,000 men in the conflict. This was not the way it was supposed to be. The Lord had promised them in Deut. 28:7,

The Lord shall cause thine enemies
that rise up against thee to be smitten
before thy face:
they shall come out against thee one way,
and flee before thee seven ways.

And so the people were expecting victory, not defeat.

However, they probably were like we are: They were prone to look at the promises without paying attention to the conditions. The first verse of Deut. 28 said this:

And it shall come to pass, If thou shalt hearken
diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God,
to observe and to do all his commandments
which I command thee this day,
that the Lord thy God will set thee on high
above all the nations of the earth.

It makes no difference whether we are speaking about OT times or NT times, the Lord does not bless disobedience!

Or it may have been that the people were so superficial in their understanding of what obedience is that they thought that things were right in the nation when they were not! So they immediately sought to do something that would make things right. They turned their attention to the ark of the covenant.

A lesson for us to remember here is that a one right does not atone for the wrongs we, or others, may be guilty of. It is also instructive for us that the people did not look into their hearts to find the source of their trouble, but they looked to external things. They felt that, if the ark of the covenant were with them when they went into battle, they would be victorious.

This gives us a second lesson. It is this: When people get away from the Lord, they are inclined to turn to ceremonies and religious articles as a guarantee of blessing. There are many churches today which have spent thousands of dollars, some have spent millions, to bring in the most ornate and attractive images and furniture and symbols to show that their place of worship is truly a house of God. But in such cases, the Word of God is not proclaimed. The people are very religious when they come to the services, but when they leave church they immediately become occupied with other things. They have little or no thought at all about pleasing God.

Such was the case in Israel. They felt that bringing the ark of the covenant to them would be bringing the Lord to them. And it is interesting that the Philistines felt the same way. They knew all about the God of Israel, what He had done to the Egyptians, etc., and were fearful for themselves. Nevertheless, they encouraged themselves, and went into battle for the second time.

What was the outcome of the second battle?

For Israel it was worse than the first battle. This time they lost 30,000 men, the ark of God was captured, and the two priests, Hophni and Phinehas were slain!

The church today does not have anything like the ark of the covenant which Israel had. That indeed was the place where God had chosen to dwell among His people. That is where the Lord said that He would dwell among His people. See Ex. 25:22. And that is what happened when the Tabernacle was completed, and all of the furniture had been put in place. See Ex. 40:34, 35. But those were the days when, for the most part, the people were doing what the Lord had told Moses they should do.

The people had to face the terrible fact that, although the ark of the covenant was with them, God was not!

Digression: Now keep in mind that we are thinking of all of these things in connection with Samuel because of the influence that Samuel would have upon the future King

of Israel. Samuel was a man who was learning to walk with God. He was seeing the blessing of God in his life and in his ministry. But the priesthood was bad. God was displeased with His people. He had withdrawn His presence and His blessing. Like so often in Israel, there was sin in the hearts of the priests, and sin in the hearts of the people. God would not give His people victory just because they brought a box with long handles on it which previously had been their meeting-place with God. No amount of outward reformation can cover up sin in the heart. We can wonder how much Samuel had to do with David learning what he said in his confessional prayer, Psalm 51, when he said,

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts:
and in the hidden part thou shalt make me
to know wisdom (Psa. 51:6).

A good appearance does not cleanse the heart in the sight of the Lord. They looked like they were very devoted to the Lord, but their hearts were full of sin.

This led to another tragic thing.

II. THE DEATH OF ELI (1 Sam. 4:12-18).

I don't want to be too hard on Eli, but it seems to me that he was a most pathetic character. He seems to have had a heart for the Lord in some ways, but he was weak, terribly weak! He was weak as a father, failing to restrain his sons. And you can be sure that the chief example he set before Samuel was that of what a man of God should not be.

However, we can't but feel sorry for him when he heard about the death of his sons. But when he was also told that the ark of God had been taken, he fell backwards off of his seat, broke his neck, and died! Undoubtedly Eli had come to feel about the ark of the covenant like the people did. Perhaps they learned it from him. The ark would bring blessing. The ark would give them victory. But it took a threefold tragedy like this to get through to Eli--but it was all too late for him! BUT IT WAS NOT TOO LATE FOR ANOTHER MAN WHO WAS THERE, OBSERVING WHAT WAS GOING ON. THAT MAN WAS SAMUEL.

One part remains.

III. THE BIRTH OF PHINEHAS' SON (1 Sam. 4:19-22).

Phinehas' wife was expecting a baby. But the baby was not due yet. However, when she heard about the ark, about her father-in-law, and about her husband, she went into labor. The baby was premature.

A little boy was born (which was always an indication of

blessing from the Lord). But Phinehas' wife was to die. So the joy of the birth of a son was canceled by another death in the priestly family. But before the mother died, she named her child. She called him, Ichabod. She knew that the glory of God had departed from Israel. This meant that God had departed from them. The tragedies that had come upon the nation could not be interpreted in any other way.

Ichabod means lit., No glory! If God is not the glory of His people, there is not glory. If God does not give blessing and victory, there is no blessing and victory. The glory of Israel was to be seen in one Person, and that Person was God. No one can take the place that the Lord occupies in the hearts and lives of His people. When His people turn from Him, there is no other who can take His place.

Concl: Samuel is only mentioned in the first verse of this chapter, but we can be sure that he was taking it all in. Everybody in Israel knew about the defeat. It brought grief to thousands of homes. They also learned about the death of the priests, and then about the death of Phinehas' wife, and the name that she gave to her prematurely born child before she died. She knew what all of these things meant. God was not with His people.

How many times do you think that this same kind of a situation has been duplicated in the lives of the people of God, OT and NT? How many of our churches really should have the name, Ichabod, on their church signs? On the one hand today we have churches that have gone all-out for ritual and ceremonies and images and furniture. The Bible may be read as a part of the ritual, but the Bible is not really accepted as the Word of God. On the other hand, we have churches that are seeking to stir up a lot of false fire by exciting programs, contemporary music, popular speakers, but lives remain for the most part unchanged. Holiness is not what the people are interested in. They want to have a good time. They want to be entertained. And then, if there is another hand, there are those who believe the Bible, who want to hear the Word of God taught when they go to church, but whose lives are not right with the Lord.

I ask the question tonight: Are we living in a day when, as you look at the professing church, when you look at all of us, you have to say, if you are really honest, "NO GLORY"? We need blessing! And I can say for most of you that we want blessing! Then let us turn our thoughts upon ourselves in the light of the Word, and in the presence of our Savior, asking Him to search us, and to cleanse us, and to restore to His church the glory that should be upon us if we are to glorify God and to be fruitful servants in these evil days.

A STONE CALLED, EBENEZER

1 Samuel 7

Intro: The book of Psalms makes it very clear that David was a man who prayed much. It is apparent, too, that Samuel was a man in whose life there was much prayer. We remember Samuel's great statement, which we will come to in our consideration of his life, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you" (1 Sam. 12:23). When we put these two facts together about David's prayerfulness, and Samuel's prayerfulness, it would be a major oversight not to see a connection between the two. Probably it was from Samuel, more than any other person, that David learned not only to pray, but learned the importance of prayer. Most of us may feel convicted in our consciences when we do not pray, but how many of us are there who look upon it as sin?

And yet we have to realize that Samuel, too, had to learn the importance of prayer. Perhaps his first lessons in prayer were learned when his mother, and possibly his father, told him the story of the incidents which led up to his birth. Samuel means (do you remember?), Heard of God. So it might be expected that such a child would grow up to be a man of prayer.

We all know about prayer. Many of us said our first prayers at the knees of our parents. We were taught to thank the Lord for our food. We heard our parents pray. We heard our pastors pray. We heard our SS teachers prayer. But it usually takes some time, and probably some troubles, before we really learn to pray ourselves. And perhaps most of us would confess that we do not know as much about prayer as we wish we knew.

For a person like Samuel, learning to pray was not the result of any one circumstance in his life, but an accumulation of God's dealings with him. In his position of leadership in Israel, he was continually faced with situations that made him realize how dependent he was upon the Lord.

Such was the case in 1 Samuel 7 which I would like to consider with you tonight.

Things had not improved very much spiritually in Israel. We learned last Sunday night that there was a time when Israel felt that the ark of the covenant of God had some power to give them victory over their enemies, the Philistines. But the Philistines defeated them, and carried the ark of the covenant away with them. It was in this battle that Hophni and Phinehas were killed, and Eli died also when he heard

what had happened.

And yet when we come to chapter 7 we see that the ark of the covenant had been back home for twenty years, but no one had paid much attention to it. However, the Spirit of God began to work, and verse 2 tells us that "all of the house of Israel **"lamented after the Lord."**

Matthew Henry said that he felt that this must have been the result of Samuel's preaching. The statement is significant because it did not indicate that the people were tired of their sin (although it must have been that which had a part in their return to the Lord). They "lamented after the Lord," i.e., they were grieving because they had grieved the Lord with their sin. Sometimes we are sorry about our sin because we do not like the effects of it. It is quite another thing, and a much higher thing, to be sorry about our sin because of how it has affected the Lord and spoiled our fellowship with Him.

So they wanted to return to the Lord. How would they do it?

There are those who feel that this is the only event in the OT which compares with what happened in the book of Acts when there was such a mighty movement of the Spirit of God. This started with Samuel's ministry, but it became a powerful movement among the people. If we were to study revivals in Scripture, this passage would have to be on the list.

It must have been very encouraging to Samuel. He was seeing the fruit of his labors--his preaching and his prayers. Let us look, then, at:

I. THE COUNSEL OF SAMUEL (1 Sam. 7:3-5).

Samuel discovered what was going on. It is very possible that the people came to him looking for help. And so he told them what they must do.

A. Two things they were to do (v. 3).

The main thing that they needed to be concerned about was returning to the Lord. And it had to be done with all their hearts. This ought to be foremost in their thinking. It is not until we set the Lord before us, and are intent on pleasing Him, that we can make any progress toward the restoration of our fellowship with Him.

The first thing that they were to do was:

1. Put away their strange gods.

We are not idolaters in the same sense that the children of Israel were, but we have things in our lives that take the place that the Lord should have.

For example, what is it that gives you the greatest pleasure in your life? What is it that occupies your mind first of all when you get up in the morning? What about your reading of the Word and prayer? Is it easier for you to read the newspaper, or to read some book, even a Christian book, than it is to read your Bible? When you face a problem in your life, what is your usual response? Do you immediately take matters in your own hand, or do you seek the wisdom and help and blessing of the Lord? How anxious are you to acquire a lot of things? Do you know that the Bible calls covetousness idolatry? The gods of the twentieth century are different from the gods of the eleventh century B. C., but both are equally gods!

All of us need to think from time to time about what it is that we actually worship. Is it the Lord, or have other things crowded Him out of first place in our lives?

2. They were to prepare their hearts unto the Lord, and serve only Him.

Do you remember what Ezra 7:10 has to say about Ezra? Listen, and I will read it for you:

For Ezra had prepared his heart
to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it,
and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

Solomon wrote,

The preparations of the heart in man,
and the answer of the tongue,
is from the Lord (Prov. 16:1).

If your heart is going to change, it has to be prepared, and for this you must enlist the help and blessing of Almighty God.

Preparing our hearts means getting back to the Word, and then living according to the Word.

In the case of the Israelites, this would restore the blessing of the Lord upon the nation. That would mean deliverance from the Philistines.

Now this is followed by a promise from Samuel:

- B. Samuel promised to pray for them (v. 5).

This was not just a formality; this, to Samuel, was just as important as anything that the Israelites would do. They

needed to pray for themselves, but they also needed a godly man like Samuel to pray for them. They may not have realized this like Samuel did, but it was true nevertheless.

The notice:

II. THE OBEDIENCE OF THE PEOPLE (1 Sam. 7:6).

What a day this was in Israel! The people called sin, sin, and wanted to get right with the Lord, forsaking their sin.

Cf. Prov. 28:13.

But then notice a strange thing:

III. THE MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE PHILISTINES (1 Sam. 7:7).

The Philistines evidently took this great gathering of the Israelites, not for what it was, but as a gathering for war. And so they prepared to attack Israel before the Jewish people could get themselves ready for war.

There will always be obstacles in the way, opposing our return to the Lord. It may not come like it did to the Israelites, but the Devil does not stand idly by while we get our fellowship with the Lord in order.

What did the Israelites do?

IV. ISRAEL'S CALL FOR SAMUEL'S PRAYER (1 Sam. 7:8, 9).

Cf. James 5:17, "Confess your faults..."

Note Samuel's sacrifice, and then what happened when he prayed.

V. THE LORD'S ANSWER (1 Sam. 7:10, 11).

What does "discomfited" mean? It means that the Lord put them into such turmoil that they were unable to fight. He put such fear in their hearts that it was impossible for them to wage war. And so they were routed by the Israelites. It was all in answer to prayer, and to the Lord belonged all of the glory.

Now the last point that I want to make is this:

VI. THE MEMORIAL (1 Sam. 7:12).

Samuel took a stone, and named it, Eben (stone) -ezer (help). And our translators have given us the meaning, "Hitherto

hath the Lord helped us." The stone represented the Lord; and the name as a whole said that He was their helper--a theme which we find many, many times, in David's Psalms. E.g., Psa. 27:1 ff.

Concl: The Lord is our helper in two ways: (1) He is the One Who, when we get out of fellowship with Him, brings us back; (2) He is the One Who overcomes all of the obstacles which stand in the way.

And the stone tells us that what He was for Israel then, He will always be for all of His people.

A NATION THAT ASKED AMISS

1 Samuel 8

Intro: It is not until we get to 1 Samuel 25 that we read about the death of Samuel. But it is apparent here in chapter 8 that the people of Israel were afraid that Samuel would soon be gone, and so they asked the elders to ask Samuel for a king.

It seemed that wisdom was on their side because Samuel's sons were not godly men like he was. They were covetous men, and people could get them to make decisions in their favor if they paid them enough money. This was a complete departure from the way that Samuel had judged the people. And so the people requested a king.

We know that it was in the plan of God that eventually Israel would have a king. You may remember that Abimelech, one of Gideon's son, had reigned as king over the men of Shechem for about three years, but that was a dark period in Israel's history. And it ended when Abimelech was killed by a piece of a millstone which a woman dropped on his head.

Between that time and Samuel's day, the people of Israel had been led by the judges, but the people felt that it was time for a change.

I. THE RIGHT REQUEST.

As I have mentioned, we know that it was God's plan that Israel would eventually have a king. To confirm this we have such passages as Gen. 49:10; Num. 24:17-19; Deut. 17:14-20. We know from these passages that he would come from the tribe of Judah. We also know that there were definite qualifications that he was supposed to have.

But there were certain things that made this request wrong.

II. THE WRONG REQUEST.

There were at least three things that made it wrong.

A. It ignored what had been revealed to them.

It might have been that the people expected that Samuel and the elders would do the right thing about their request, but, in view of the attitude of the people, that seems doubtful. They simply wanted a king.

B. It was not the right time.

There is no indication whatever that the people were concerned about the will of God. They did not ask Samuel to determine the plan of God. They just wanted a king. They were not willing to wait; it had to be done immediately.

This is a mistake that the Lord's people often make. We are impatient. We may be asking for something that the Lord intends to give us eventually, but we want it NOW! And so that turns a right request into a wrong request. The will of God includes waiting for the right time as well as seeking the right thing. If there is one thing that stands out in God's dealings with His people in the OT and the NT it is that God's will involves waiting God's time. This lesson would be impressed upon Samuel's mind also with greater force in the days ahead. We can understand the concern that the people had, but their mistake was bound up in their impatience.

C. It was not the right reason.

See verse 5 of 1 Samuel 8. They wanted to be like other nations. Other nations had kings; and so they wanted a king of their own.

This had been the God-given concern that Moses, Joshua, and the judges of Israel had for Israel. Their problem was that they might become like the nations around them. This had happened to a great degree, even to the point that they had worshiped the gods of the heathen. So this was another step in the wrong direction.

They did not say that Samuel's sons were ungodly and so they wanted a godly king. They did not indicate at all that they were interested in what kind of a king they would have, nor what tribe he would come from. They just wanted a king, and they wanted no delay in it.

III. SAMUEL'S REACTION.

A. First, he was displeased. See verse 6.

It seems that he was displeased about the request itself, even without the motive the people had. He knew that it was a sinful request. That is indicated by the word "displeased." We can see from this that Samuel judged things right or wrong by whether or not they were good or evil in the sight of God. This, he knew, was evil!

B. Second, he prayed. This also is in verse 6.

We do not know what he prayed; just that he prayed. The word

seems to indicate that he was seeking a judgment from God. He felt that this was wrong, and yet he wanted the Lord to lead him.

It is good when we do not trust our judgment, but take every problem to the Lord.

IV. THE LORD'S ANSWER (1 Sam. 8:7-9).

Samuel was distressed by their request, but not the Lord. The Lord knew that this was characteristic of their relationship with Him from the time that they left Egypt. And it meant one thing: not the rejection of Samuel, but the rejection of the Lord.

This is interesting.

It means that when we run ahead of God, to seek even what He wants us to have but before His time, we are rejecting the rule of God in our lives. And this is very, very serious.

The Lord wanted His people to look upon their leaders as men, or women, through whom He was leading His people. The leaders of the Lord's people never have had the right to go in their own way. If a man is a true spiritual leader, he will act only as an instrument of God. Therefore, he will resist when the people want to do the right thing, or he will persevere even when the people may not be with him.

Seeing what the Lord said about His people should make us wonder what He would say about each one of us, and the way we have lived, since we first came to know Him as our Savior.

V. THE MANNER OF THE KING (1 Sam. 8:10-18).

The Lord told Samuel to do for them what they wanted, but he also told him to tell them what life would be like under the king of their choosing.

- A. He would take their sons.
- B. He would take their daughters.
- C. He would take their land.
- D. He would take their a tenth of their seed and their vineyards.
- E. He would take their servants.
- F. He would take a tenth of their sheep.

G. He would make the people his servants.

And yet, what was the worst of all, they would eventually cry out to the Lord for help, but he would not hear them!

The people had failed to pray before making their request, but it would be the results of their request that would finally bring them to their knees before God. But it would be too late.

These are not things which Samuel anticipated; these are the things which the Lord said would happen to them.

You would think that any one of these would have made the people back away from their request, but disobedient people have hardened hearts. Hardened hearts make us behave in a most unreasonable way.

And so we have:

VI. THE RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE (1 Sam. 8:19, 20).

Their minds were made up, and they would not change.

How tragic it is when we think we know more about what is best than the Lord does!

The chapter ends with:

VII. SAMUEL'S SECOND PRAYER AND THE LORD'S ANSWER (1 Sam. 8:21, 22).

This may have been more than Samuel's second prayer, but it is the second one in this chapter. And this helps us to understand what he prayed about in his first prayer.

These two verses tell us three things:

- A. Samuel listened to the people.
- B. Samuel repeated it all in the ears of the Lord.
- C. Samuel got his answer from the Lord.

Again, Samuel is an example to us.

And let us know that it would have been a real test of faith for Samuel to obey the Lord when he knew that the people were doing something that was evil in the Lord's sight. But he did! He immediately began to prepare to do what the people wanted him to do. And this led to the anointing of Saul as

the first king of Israel.

Concl: In Psa. 106:15 we read what the Lord did for and to the children of Israel during their wanderings in the wilderness when they rebelled against Him. You probably remember these words found in Psa. 106:15:

And he gave them their request;
but sent leanness into their soul.

Their souls got weaker and sicker than they had been before.

May we all learn the lesson well. We never win when we try to take matters into our own hands, regardless of how right it might seem at the time. Samuel was learning a very important lesson, and we will see in David's life, that this was a lesson that David learned as well. Undoubtedly Samuel helped him.

Let us thank the Lord for the people who have helped us to go slowly, and to wait upon the Lord instead of running ahead of Him.

THE PROPHET WHO WOULD NOT GIVE UP
1 Samuel 12

Intro: Before we look at 1 Samuel 12, I would like for you to turn with me to 1 Samuel 8, the chapter we considered two Sunday nights ago. This is the chapter where we have the record of Israel asking for a king, not because it was God's will for them to have a king, but because they wanted to be like other nations. You see this in verse 5.

Samuel was very unhappy with their request, but took the matter to the Lord, apparently to find out what he should do. The Lord's answer is found in verses 7 through 9.

The part of the Lord's answer that I want you to notice is in verse 8. It is a summary of the spiritual life of Israel from the exodus to that time when the Lord was speaking to Samuel. (Read.)

Not all scholars agree exactly on the chronology of the OT, but the article bearing this name in the International Bible Encyclopaedia seems to be quite reliable. At least it will give us some years to consider. It gives the date of the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt at 1445 B.C. And they date this part of Samuel's life at about 1071 B.C. Subtracting the latter from the former, we have a span of 377 years.

I have often told you that Abraham lived about 2,000 years B.C., that Moses lived about 1,500 years B.C., and that David lived about 1,000 years B.C. So, speaking in general terms, we can say that the period from the exodus to Israel's request for a king was somewhere between 400 and 500 years B.C. That is a long time! The Lord's report on the record of the nation for that extended period of time was that it was all a time of disobedience and idolatry. He told Samuel that the people were treating him like they had treated the Lord all of those years.

Now let us ask ourselves a question. If you or I were dealing with a church with a record like that, what hope would you hold out for that church? Would you like to attend a church like that? Would you men like to be an elder or a deacon in a church like that? Do you think that they would have a hard time, or an easy time getting a pastor? What do you think would be the prospect that a church like that could be turned around?

That is the kind of a situation that Samuel faced. You talk about a man who was given a tough assignment by the Lord, Samuel was that man.

Samuel tried to tell them that they were sinning against the Lord in making such a request, but they would not listen to him. And so the Lord told Samuel to go ahead, grant their request, but he was to tell them what life would be like under a king. And this he did.

Now turn to 1 Samuel 12.

It does not seem that the people realized how they had sinned against the Lord until several years later when Samuel told them that he would not be with them much longer. Samuel reviewed their history for them, showing them how the nation had been rebellious against the Lord from the beginning. But he ended his comments by pointing out to them once more what they had heard many times before, that, if they would fear the Lord, and serve Him, and obey Him, and not rebel against the Lord, then they would continue to have the Lord's blessing. But if not, then the hand of the Lord would be against them.

Then, to demonstrate that they had displeased the Lord by asking for a king, the Lord sent a thunder and rain storm which was so frightening that the people cried out their confession, asking Samuel to pray for them. See 1 Sam. 12:19.

How would you have responded to that request? I am sure that there must have been the thought in Samuel's mind that what these people always have been, they always will be! Maybe he didn't think that way. We can only speculate as to his innermost feelings. However, we do know what he said, and I believe that he meant every word that he said. Let us examine his words. It is because of his words that I have given this message the subject, THE PROPHET WHO WOULD NOT GIVE UP. Surely we can only attribute Samuel's words to the grace of God in his own life because he did not express what you would normally find, by nature, in the heart of any prophet.

Let me insert here that David, in later years, must have learned about all of this, and learned from it for the blessing of his own ministry to Israel.

Samuel's first words were:

I. WORDS OF COMFORT AND EXHORTATION (1 Sam. 12:20, 21).

What a delight it must be to the Lord when His people come confessing their sins! Samuel was not afraid to tell the people that they had sinned, but neither was he hesitant to tell them not to be afraid of the Lord.

God's forgiveness is a wonderful thing. Did they deserve to be forgiven? No! They had insisted on having their own way; they actually should have been forced to take the consequences of their sins. The Law offered no mercy for intentional sin, but here was one of many examples of mercy under the Law--because they were living under the Mosaic Law. They were sharing in new covenant blessings because it was in connection with the new covenant that the Lord said, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 10:17).

We also have 1 John 1:9.

So they were not to fear, but neither were they to continue on in sin. How could they avoid that?

It was not just by knowing the Word, but by obeying the Word! And they were to do it wholeheartedly! Cf. Psa. 119:11. We get into sin when we ignore the Word; we get back out of sin when we obey the Word.

Now these Israelites knew this, but they needed to be told it over and over and over again. Most of our troubles would be solved if we just got back to what we already know. When we get away from the Lord, we need to go back to the place where we left Him. Then we can get on the right road again.

But this is not all that Samuel said. He reminded them of:

II. A WONDERFUL PROMISE FROM GOD (1 Sam. 12:22).

When we get away from the Lord, we need to pay attention to the commandments of Scripture, but we also need to think about the promises of Scripture. An insecure people needed to have security, and there is no greater security than in what Samuel said to them. Read verse 22. And remember that this applies to us just as much as it did to the people of Israel. Cf. Phil. 1:6. Also Jude 24, 25.

The Lord does not give up on those who are truly His people. In this verse we have the sovereignty of God. We have the grace of God. We have the greatest security that it is possible for us to have. "The Lord will not forsake His people." Believe that, and rest in that, and, if you have lost a sense of the Lord's peace in your heart, this will bring it back again.

We could stop at this point and would have all we need, but there are more good things to come. How can we describe what Samuel said in verse 23? Here we find Samuel speaking for himself. Let's call it:

III. TWO PROMISES FROM SAMUEL (1 Sam. 12:23).

It is as though Samuel had said, "I have told you what the Lord has said that He would not do; now I want to tell you what I will do."

A. "I am going to keep praying for you."

B. "I am going to keep teaching you."

There are different kinds of sins--sins of the people, and sins of their leaders. And one of the greatest of sins that leaders can commit is the sin of not praying for the Lord's people. Sometimes it is hard to pray for certain people. You pray and pray, but see no results from your praying. We do not always know if people are saved, but as long as they are under our oversight, we need to pray for them.

It is clear from what Samuel said here that he had been praying for them, but he was assuring them that he would not stop praying for them!

Neither would he stop teaching them.

Do you see the combination here of the work of God and the work of God's servants? Our part is important because it shows what God is doing through us.

This was one verse that convinced me years ago that I ought to be praying for every person under my ministry. It is not always easy. In fact, often it is a struggle. But it is clear that it must be done. Failure to do it is sin, sin against the Lord.

What an example the Apostle Paul is to us in this! We can be sure that he had his discouragements, too, but we also know that he persevered in prayer.

Teaching -- "the good and the right way." It is good because it is pleasing to God and brings blessing to His people. It is right because it is in conformity with the Word of God. Samuel promised to teach them more about the Word of God so they could live lives that were pleasing to God. In doing so they would be assured of happiness and fruitfulness in their service.

Finally we come to:

IV. SAMUEL'S FINAL ADMONITIONS (1 Sam. 12:24, 25).

In verse 20 Samuel told them not to fear; here he told them

to fear. What is the difference? It is the same verb in the original Hebrew.

The first is used as we would when we talk of being afraid. We are not to be afraid of God when we come to Him seeking forgiveness. But we are always to fear the Lord in the sense that we honor Him as God, that we seek to do His will, and in the sense that we are afraid of the consequences of disobedience. Fearing the Lord is the expression in the OT that is used most frequently for obeying Him, trusting Him, seeking to glorify Him in every part of our lives.

What blessings can be ours if we do the will of God! But we also need to remember that we can never prosper when we are failing to do that which is pleasing to Him.

Concl: Samuel was obviously a prophet who would not give up. Moses was the same kind of a leader. David became a leader like this. This is the way we need to be about each other.

This is a message for the people of God, not for those who only pretend to be the Lord's people. So again, we need to make sure, and then we need to follow Samuel's instructions given to Israel a little over 3,000 years ago! We all need these verses for ourselves. And then, in whatever position we might hold as church leaders, as SS teachers, as parents, or as friends, let us never give up on those who know the Lord. The Lord does not give up on His people. We should not give up on ourselves, nor on each other. We are trophies of God's grace destined for glory!

THE WEAKNESS OF SAUL
1 Samuel 13, 15

Intro: When the people of Israel asked for a king, their request was very displeasing to the Lord. It displeased Him because it was premature. The Lord intended for them to have a king, but not yet. Their time was not His time. It displeased Him because they wanted a king so they could be like other nations. It displeased Him because, in rejecting the leadership that the Lord had placed over them, they were actually rejecting the Lord. It is true that Samuel was old, and his sons were not the kind of men that Samuel was, but they would have the Lord even when Samuel died. The people had become so man-centered in their outlook that they had lost sight of the Lord, His eternal character, and the sufficiency of His wisdom and power and blessing.

Cf. 1 Sam. 8:1-7.

But even at that time we see evidence of the goodness of the Lord. And we know from this that God's blessing does not always mean that He is pleased. It can mean that the Lord is pleased, but not necessarily. It may mean that God is good and faithful even when we are rebellious against Him. Many times the Lord's people make a mistake by thinking that when things work out, the Lord is pleased.

If you and I had been in the Lord's place, what kind of a king would we have given to Israel? Probably one who would have obviously have been a loser from the very first.

What kind of a king did the Lord give them?

Cf. 1 Sam. 9:2. He was "a choice young man." In fact, he was Israel's best. When the Hebrews said that a man was good, they were saying the best that could be said about anyone. There was no person in Israel who was better than he was. In addition to everything else, he was tall and handsome. Cf. 1 Sam. 10:23, 24. But he was also responsible. When he went after his father's donkeys, he was concerned lest his father start to worry about him if he were gone too long.

Saul was humble. Cf. 1 Sam. 9:21; 10:22. In addition, God gave him another heart. Cf. 1 Sam. 10:9. The Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied. This was a sign that the Lord was with him. Cf. 1 Sam. 10:9, 10. The Lord even gave him a band of men whose hearts He had touched. Cf. 1 Sam. 10:26. Saul was wise. Cf. 1 Sam. 11:12, 13.

In addition to all of this, the Lord gave the people a great

promise. But the promise had a warning attached to it. Cf. 1 Sam. 12:13-15.

When we put all of these details together, we can ask ourselves the question, What more could the Lord have done? Instead of giving Israel the worst, He gave Israel the best. And instead of withholding His blessing, the Lord poured out His blessings upon Saul in the people in a most amazing way! This was the kind of a king the people wanted, and this is what they got. It must have been encouraging even to Samuel to see the goodness of the Lord with people who were in rebellion against the Lord.

Samuel certainly knew that the heart of man is the most important thing about him when it comes to the Lord, but this was the first of two special lessons he would observe about this. The other was when the time came to choose a successor for Saul, and God had chosen David. We will see this next Sunday night, the Lord willing, in 1 Samuel 16.

But tonight I want us to look at two chapters just briefly where we see, in spite of all that the Lord did for Saul, that he was not qualified to be the king over Israel.

The first of these chapters is 1 Sam. 13.

I. SAUL -- DOING WHAT HE SHOULD NOT HAVE DONE (1 Sam. 13:8-14).

The background for this chapter seems to be what Samuel told Saul in 1 Sam. 10:8. This was at a time when the nation was being threatened by the Philistines. It seemed like every moment was crucial if the Israelites were to have the blessing of God, and be victorious. Samuel had promised to come, but he did not come. At last Saul, in his impatience, did what he had no right to do: He offered sacrifices to the Lord!

This was a most serious thing. Saul had been appointed as king, but not as a priest, or a high priest. He seems to have had a prophetic office, but not a priestly office. He was intruding into the priest's office. It was the very same sin which King Uzziah would commit later, and for which he was punished with leprosy.

Time is always important. But regardless of how great the emergency might be, it is never so important that we can transgress the Word of God and the will of God. Waiting sometimes seems foolish, but it is the wisest thing to do when the alternative is disobedience to the Lord. And so the judgment of God fell upon Saul. His family would not

continue as kings of Israel. God would find a man for Israel which would be "a man after his own heart," i.e., after God's heart. This would be a man who would obey God, not disobey Him regardless of what the reason might be.

Impatience will get us into much trouble. That is when we are inclined to take matters into our own hands, and do things our way. Remember what James said about patience in Jas. 1:2-4. Impatience shows a lack of faith, and what we need is faith. Saul was not trusting the Lord even when it seems that He was seeking the help and blessing of the Lord. He was not seeking the Lord's blessing in the way which the Lord could bless.

With that I am going to leave chapter 13, and ask you to turn with me to chapter 15.

II. SAUL -- NOT DOING WHAT HE SHOULD HAVE DONE (1 Sam. 15).

The problem this time was with the Amalekites, the people who were the first to attack Israel after they had come out of Egypt. Throughout Israel's history to this point, Amalek had been a major enemy.

For the background, cf. Ex. 17:8-17.

Therefore, we have specific instructions from the Lord as to what was to be done with the Amalekites. Cf. 1 Sam. 15:2, 3.

Saul went to battle with the Amalekites, and he was victorious. But notice what we are told in verse 9 of chapter 15. (Read.)

Again, this seemed wise, but it was not what the Lord had told Saul to do. The Lord's will had been to destroy everyone and everything.

When Saul was confronted with what had been done, notice what he said in verse 13. The next two verses are important, too. And then notice what he said later in verses 20, 21.

In spite of Saul's explanation, look at what the Word says in verse 9. (Read verses 7 and 8 with verse 9.)

After this we have Samuel's classic statement that should be written upon every one of our hearts. It sounds commendable that the people would offer some of the animals and some of the other treasures in sacrifice to the Lord, but is that what the Lord primarily wants? Which is the most important, service or obedience? Samuel left no doubt as to what was primarily pleasing to the Lord. Obedience, obedience from

the heart, must always come first, anything else is rebellion against the Lord. It is iniquity and idolatry. In failing to do what the Lord had told him to do, Saul again displayed his weakness.

It is only when we get down to verse 24 that we see the real reason for Saul's disobedience. It was that he was afraid of the people.

Saul feared his people more than he did his God. He did what they wanted to do instead of what God had told him to do. The fear of man has always been one of the greatest snares for the servants of the Lord. The people had been in rebellion against the Lord in asking for a king. Saul must have known this. However, instead of being on his guard with the people, he showed his weakness by choosing to do what the people wanted instead of doing the will of God.

Concl: What lessons can we learn from the life of Saul?

I think I have told you on other occasions about a statement that I once heard Dawson Trotman of the Navigators say. He said this: "I never met a man who didn't teach me something." When we want to learn things that will help us in our walk with the Lord, we usually look for men and women like Abraham, or Joseph, or Moses, or Ruth, or Hannah, or David--people of this caliber. But why do we have the accounts of Cain, and Korah, and Balaam, and Saul, and Rehoboam, and Jeroboam, and Judas Iscariot, and Ananias and Sapphira, and Demas, and Diotrephes? Do you know about these people?

We have both sides given to us in Scripture, and, I might add, in real life, because we need to learn what we should not do as well as what we should do.

What can we learn from the life of Saul?

First, we see in his case evidence of the goodness and grace of God. You can't blame God for what Saul did. In addition to all of the blessings I have mentioned, God gave Samuel to Saul to be his guide and helper. The Lord is never responsible for our failures. In fact, when we look at His blessings upon us, we will never find in any of them an excuse for our failures.

Second, we need to remember to wait for God's time. We can seek the right thing at the wrong time, or in the wrong way. It is so important that we be concerned about the will of God.

Third, we cannot study the life of Saul without seeing that we can displease the Lord in two ways: (1) by doing what we have not right to do; (2) by not doing what we are told to do. There are sins of commission, and there are sins of omission. We sin by going beyond the Word of God, and we sin when we fall short of the Word of God.

Fourth, we learn from the life of Saul not to let anything take the place of the Word of God. Sometimes we have ideas that appear to be really good. At other times we may try to hide behind the rebellion of men. But, cost what it may, we must obey God rather than men, regardless of who they may be.

We can learn something from everybody. That is true in Scripture, and that is true in daily life. But always look at people in the light of what we have in the Word of God. It is only as we know the will of God that we will be in a position to learn the right way when we observe the lives of other people.

Do I dare ask all of us a question as I close? It is this: What are people learning from you and from me? Would we be satisfied if people live like we do? Would they be walking with the Lord, or would they be making their own way, ignoring the Word of God?

May the Lord give us eyes to see, ears to hear, and then hearts to obey His blessed and holy will. We are never right when we go against God; we are never wrong when we do His will. We need to be strong in the Lord. In our own strength we will always fail. Remember what Paul told Timothy in 1 Tim. 4:12. Let us not only seek to follow a good example, but may we set a good example for others to follow.

GOD, THE HEART INSPECTOR
1 Samuel 16

Intro: We come in this chapter to David. He is first mentioned in the last verses of the book of Ruth. See Ruth 4:17, 22. Jesse was his father, Obed was his grandfather, and Boaz, who married Ruth, was his great grandfather.

Saul had disobeyed the Lord on two occasions. First, he did not wait for Samuel to come to offer a sacrifice to the Lord. Second, he did not kill all of the Amalekites when that was what the Lord told him to do. Consequently he was rejected from being king although he continued to reign.

Samuel had told Saul that God was seeking "a man after His own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14). In the context of that statement a man after God's own heart would be a man who knew how to obey God. The Scriptures in both the OT and the NT make it very clear that obedience always has the highest priority with God. And yet that always seems to be the place where the Lord's people have the greatest difficulty.

In 1 Samuel 17 we see how it was that Samuel went to the home of Jesse. And so let us consider, first of all,

I. THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT (1 Sam. 16:1-13).

Note the details.

- A. The Lord's command to Samuel (1 Sam. 16:1).
- B. Samuel's fear, and God's answer (1 Sam. 16:2-5).
- C. The selection of David (1 Sam. 16:6-13).

Each of Jesse's sons was rejected, beginning with the oldest. There were seven of them. Finally, when they all had been rejected, Samuel asked if Jesse had any other children. He was informed that he did have one more son who was not even there, but out keeping the sheep. When David came in, the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him: for this is he" (v. 12).

The key verse in this section of 1 Samuel 16 is verse 7. And, even though Samuel was an old man at this time, it is clear that he was still learning about the ways of the Lord.

So let us think about:

II. THE LESSON SAMUEL LEARNED (1 Sam. 16:7).

This is not the first time, nor is it the last time, that we learn in the Scriptures that God's ways are different from man's ways.

Approximately 300 years after David time Isaiah was directed by the Holy Spirit to give the people of Judah a statement about the ways of the Lord. You will find it in Isa. 55:8, 9. (Read.)

There are two things that Isaiah said about the thoughts and ways of the Lord:

- 1) The Lord's ways are different.
- 2) The Lord's ways are better. And they are not just a little better, but they are infinitely better. The measurements given here are the greatest that we have.

If you will look at Isa. 55:7 you will see that this principle is related even to the Gospel. (Read.)

So we should not be amazed when people object to the Gospel. It is characterized by God's ways, not man's.

And what is said about the ways of the Lord is a truth that we as the people of God have to remember all through our lives here on earth. There is hardly a day that goes by but what we are reminded that the Lord does things differently from the way we would do them, or not do them!

And yet at the same time God's ways are perfect. Psa. 18:30 tells us that. And we should know that since God is God. He makes no mistakes; we make mistakes all of the time. We do things, and then often have to undo them, or redo them. God never has that problem.

It is interesting to me that even in his old age Samuel was still learning this. When he saw Eliab, he was sure that he was looking at Israel's next king. But the Lord said, in effect, "No." And this is what led to that seventh verse.

All seven sons passed before Samuel, yet the Lord rejected them all. Finally, when David came in, the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him: for this is he."

Now there does not seem to have been a great deal of difference between Jesse's sons outwardly. They probably all were handsome young men, but so was David. There was a physical attraction from the standpoint of their vigor, their health. They must have been an outstanding group of young men.

But the Lord was not concerned about their outward

appearance. That is where Samuel was looking. That was as far as Samuel could see in such a short time. But God was looking at their hearts.

Is this not a truth that should make us more careful than we are about the spiritual condition of our hearts? God can see what none of us can see about each other. He knows whether we have good hearts or bad hearts. He knows whether we have clean hearts or defiled hearts.

Cf. Heb. 4:11-13.

Look also at 2 Chron. 16:9.

Cf. Prov. 15:3. And then verse 11 in the same chapter.

See Psa. 11:4. There is nothing outward that escapes the eyes of the Lord, nor is there anything in the heart of any human being that is hidden from the Lord. The Lord even sees things in our hearts that we have never seen. We may try to hide things from each other, but there are no secrets that we can keep from the Lord.

Judas Iscariot had all of the other apostles fooled, but the Lord knew from the beginning what he would do.

Cf. Jer. 17:9, 10.

It is apparent that David's heart was different from the hearts of his brothers. How this came to be, we cannot say for sure, but we know that it had to be a work of the Spirit of God within him. He evidently had learned submission to the Lord, and obedience to the will of the Lord, more so than with any of his brothers. He was a man after God's heart because his heart was perfect toward the Lord.

Concl: What are we to learn from all of this?

Well, the lessons are so many that we cannot mention them all, but there are some that we cannot afford to overlook.

- 1) We should see that the Lord is concerned about what we are inwardly. It is good to be clean and neat in our outward appearance, but we must not neglect the heart. Solomon said, "Keep thy heart...." (Prov. 4:23).
- 2) It is the heart which qualifies us, or disqualifies us, for service. It is more important than any gifts that we might have, or any training, or any experience, or any opportunities.
- 3) We do not always see the blessings that we would like to see, but if there is one thing that leads to fruitfulness

- it is a heart that is right with God.
- 4) A heart that is right with God is a heart that will respond correctly to the needs of the Lord's people. The Lord was looking for a man who had a heart for him. That was the man to whom He, the Lord, would commit the care of His people.
 - 5) What do we do if our hearts are not right before God? Cf. David's words in Psa. 51. Psalm 51 is not just for murderers and adulterers. It is there for all of us, that we might see how terrible any sin is to the Lord, and that only He can cleanse us, and get us back on the right track.
 - 6) Remember that our hearts are defiled by disobedience; we are preserved from defilement when we walk in daily obedience to the Word of God.

What a lesson for Samuel to learn, and how important for David to know this, too!

Let us not miss such an important lesson.

DAVID AND GOLIATH
1 Samuel 17

Intro: The story of David and Goliath has to be one of the most famous of all Bible stories. Many people who do not know much of anything about the Bible know about David and Goliath.

When the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, he just mentioned David's name without saying how David's faith had been exercised. But he went on to give several statements which could have referred to this contest between David and Goliath. See Heb. 11:33, 34: "Who through faith subdued kingdoms...obtained promises...escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." As long as time lasts people will be excited by David's victory over Goliath.

Now let me remind you that this is history. It really happened. The human possibility that such a thing could take place was so remote that it sounds ridiculous. Here was a man, a giant over 9 feet tall (9 ft., 2 in. is one calculation) going against a much younger man, and a much shorter man, who had never been in war before, and whose occupation was that of a shepherd. Goliath was heavily armed, and he carried a sword whose handle was from 2" to 2.5" inches in diameter. It is little wonder that David's oldest brother ridiculed David's comments, and that even Saul was hesitant about letting David take up such a challenge. But David's faith shows that when the Lord is brought into the picture, human comparisons are meaningless!

Let us notice, first of all,

I. GOLIATH'S CHALLENGE (1 Sam. 17:8, 9).

It was truly a time of great national danger. The very life of the nation was involved.

The second thing we see is:

II. DAVID'S PROVIDENTIAL VISIT (1 Sam. 17:12-31).

David's three oldest brothers were in the army of Israel. Jesse, their father, got concerned about their welfare, and so he sent David to take food to them. It was while he was with his brothers that he heard Goliath repeating his challenge. It had to be the Lord's doing that David was there. In the entire army of Israel there was not one man who was willing to accept Goliath's challenge--until David

came! David's response is given in verse 26. Notice that he was not speaking on his own behalf, but on behalf of "the living God." The people of Israel were the God's people; Goliath was defying them; therefore, he was defying "the living God." God had to be very real and very powerfully a part of David's life for him to speak as he did.

The people repeated the offer that the king had made, but that meant nothing to David. He was concerned about the divine honor.

His brother Eliab's comment was a form of persecution. See verse 28. He accused him of neglecting his responsibilities with his sheep, and of having an arrogant heart. Men like David are never understood by those who are lacking in faith.

See David's response in verse 29. He did not try to give "evil for evil" to his brother. He had tried to show that the "cause" for his concern was that God had been defied!

The next scene in the unfolding of this story had to do with:

III. DAVID AND SAUL (1 Sam. 17:32-39).

When Saul heard how David was talking, he sent for David. David immediately offered to accept the challenge.

When Saul saw David, he felt that allowing David to go against Goliath would only mean certain death for David. Saul was an experienced and fearless warrior, and had been a soldier all of his life. David was just a young shepherd boy.

What had encouraged David to be so bold? See vv. 34-37.

Saul was impressed with what David said, and said to him, "Go, and the Lord be with thee" (v. 37b).

But how would he go? See vv. 38-40. Saul armed David with his own armor, and that was like Goliath's armor. But David knew that he could not go to war in Saul's armor. He had to go in the way the Lord had prepared him.

And so he went out to face Goliath.

IV. DAVID AND GOLIATH (1 Sam. 17:40-51).

David had his shepherd's staff (a far cry from Goliath's sword). He took his sling and five smooth stones which he took out of a brook. And then he went to face the giant.

Notice Goliath's ridicule. He felt just like Eliab did, and like Saul felt to begin with. And he cursed David by his gods. Cf. vv. 42-44.

What was David's response?

Cf. vv. 45-47. These words are certainly among the most important in the chapter.

In v. 45 he told why he had come, and in Whose Name he had come.

In v. 46 we see his faith. We also have here the first reason that David came for coming against him. It was not to show off. It was not to make a name for Himself. It was not primarily for the army of Israel, nor for the people of Israel (as dear as they were to David). He had come to fight Goliath **"that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel."** This was David's primary reason for fighting against Goliath!

Years later after Solomon, David's son, had prayed at the dedication of the Temple which he had just finished, he turned to his people and exhorted them in the words found in 1 Kings 8:55-61. (Read.)

WHERE DO YOU THINK THAT SOLOMON LEARNED THAT THIS SHOULD BE THE REASON WHY GOD SHOULD STAND WITH HIS PEOPLE AND ANSWERS THE PRAYER THAT HE HAD PRAYED? He must have learned it from his father! And all of this, in turn, had come out of Egypt in Moses' day, and during the years that led up to young David's willingness to stand for the Lord. One generation teaches the next generation, and so on.

What was David's second reason? See v. 47.

Somehow David knew that this story would go down as one of the best known events in all of history. But he wanted his generation to know that the Lord is not limited to men with their swords and their spears. When the Lord is in charge, you can never tell who He will use, nor can you tell what instrument the Lord might employ!

We are so accustomed to thinking that certain things have to be done in the same ways, but the Lord is not limited to an army, nor to a trained soldier. He took a shepherd boy with five stones (he only needed one) to bring down one of the greatest soldiers in the history of warfare!

Every generation seems to be peculiarly attached to its methods. It has reached epidemic proportions in our day.

But God is not limited to our methods. He is not even limited to the ways He has used in days gone by. There is no limit to what He can do, nor how He will see fit to do it. And David, in his youth, wanted His people, and even the Philistines, to see that God's ways are different and far better than anything that we could come up with.

Now we are ready for:

V. THE FIGHT (1 Sam. 17:48-54).

David was eager to prove the faithfulness of His God, and the power of His God. So he ran to meet Goliath. With one stone he knocked to the earth, then he took Goliath's sword, killed him, and cut off his head.

The result: The Philistines were routed by the armies of Israel and Judah, and the possessions of the Philistines were taken as spoil.

Concl: I have been pointing out lessons from this great chapter as we have gone through it, but let me emphasize some of the major lessons as I close.

Below are just a few of the lessons.

As far as Goliath is concerned, let all people learn that regardless of their size, their experience, and their past victories, no man can succeed when he takes a stand against God.

We need to consider our weakness and the overwhelming strength of our Enemy so we will realize how much we need the Lord. If the Lord does not help us, we have no one else to whom we can turn.

It is important for us to learn from all of our trials (as David did) so that we will be ready to face the greatest battles and be victorious.

This story obviously teaches us that the Lord will stand with us, that it pleases Him when we trust in Him, when we boast in Him, and when our hearts are set upon His glory.

The people of God and the work of God are invincible. We may lose a battle here and there, but victory is ours.

Now let me ask a question.

I began this message by reminding you of how well-known this story is. Now this is my question: HOW MANY PEOPLE DO YOU

THINK HAVE LEARNED FROM THIS STORY WHAT THE LORD INTENDED FOR THEM TO LEARN? Is it not true that to most people it is just a story, interesting and challenging, but they have not seen the great spiritual lessons that are here.

It is not by chance that it is in our Bibles. Nor is it by chance that it is so well-known. Let us make sure that we understand what the story was intended to mean to the children of Israel in that day, and then let us point out the lessons to others as the Lord gives us the opportunity to point out the message of the story of DAVID AND GOLIATH!

In every generation there is a great need for the Lord's people to get well-acquainted with the Lord, to trust Him, and then to prove His faithfulness in the testings of life as they come our way. I feel confident in saying that although David was just a young man at the time, none who were his seniors had such faith in God as he did. And it was through David's faith that the Lord exposed Israel to some of the most important things that they needed to learn.

DAVID AND SAUL

1 Samuel 18

Intro: This chapter might well be called, The Rise of David.

David's victory over Goliath had brought him to the attention of Saul, and Saul made David his commander-in-chief over all of his armed forces even though David had no other experience in warfare. David had shown himself to be a young man with great faith in God, and consequently he displayed great courage when facing the enemies of Israel.

A special friendship had also developed between David one of the king's sons, Jonathan. And they remained friends up until the time of Jonathan's death in a battle with the Philistines. It was at that time that Saul was also killed.

As we watch the events unfolding in this chapter where Saul became a bitter enemy of David, there is one statement that appears three times in the chapter with reference to David. It was not a comment upon his ability, nor upon his successes, but upon his behavior. We find the statement first in verse 5 of the chapter. Our text says that "he behaved himself wisely." One reliable commentator on the Hebrew says that it means that "he acted wisely and prosperously" (K & D, p. 187). This means that he was faithful, that he did his work the way that it should be done, and therefore he experienced the blessing of the Lord upon his work. Both his personal life and his work were above reproach in the eyes of the Lord. It ought to remind us of Joseph throughout his life--with his father, with Potiphar, with the jailor, and finally with Pharaoh.

We have a clue to what was involved in this because the same word is used in Joshua 1:8 where it is translated, "good success."

It is also used in Deut. 29:9:

Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them,
that ye may prosper in all that ye do.

This is what Moses told the children of Israel they must do if they were to have the blessing of the Lord upon their lives.

The word combines wisdom and the success which would follow as a blessing from the Lord.

So it should not surprise us to read what is said in verses 12, 14, and 28.

David never sought to undercut Saul. He always did what Saul wanted him to do. Twice in this chapter he declared himself

unfit to be the king's son-in-law: (1) with the first daughter (see v. 18); (2) with Michal (v. 23).

Things went well for David until when he came back from killing Goliath, the Philistine. It was the song of the women of Israel that turned Saul from a friend of David into an enemy, an enemy that got worse and worse as time went on. See v. 29. Saul hated David, and yet he feared David at the same time. His hatred was caused by his jealousy, by his envy. And also because Saul could see that the Lord's blessing was on David, but not on himself as it had been in his earlier days. So instead of getting his own life in order, Saul sought to kill David by hurling a javelin at him. When that failed, he sought to make Michal a snare to him by asking him to kill a hundred Philistines in order to have Michal. David not only killed a hundred; he killed two hundred. This made Saul more fearful of David, and made his hatred even stronger.

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this chapter?

Let me point out a few of the more prominent ones. Let us look at Jonathan, then at David, then at the women of Israel, and finally at Saul himself.

I. JONATHAN, SAUL'S SON (1 Sam. 18:1-4).

The relationship between Jonathan and David is one of the greatest examples of true friendship that we have any place in the Scriptures. And the amazing side of the friendship was Jonathan. He was the king's son; David was only a shepherd's son. And yet Jonathan who knew that David was to be Israel's next king gladly relinquished his own claim to that position for David's sake, and because he knew that it was the will of God. (We will come to this later.)

But let us see what the Lord was doing here--because this had to be the Lord's doing. David, who was yet to see his worst days with Saul, needed a friend. Needed someone who would be an encouragement and help to him in the days to come. And the Lord gave David that friend right out of the king's family.

Solomon wrote some things about friendship that he may have learned from David. One of them was this:

A friend loveth at all times,
and a brother is born for adversity (Prov. 17:17).

The Lord knew the hard days that were ahead for David, and so He gave David a special friend.

Another verse is Prov. 18:24:

A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly:
and there is a friend
that sticketh closer than a brother.

We have no reason to believe that any of David's brothers stood by him like Jonathan did.

Without question, this is one of the most wonderful things that the Lord can do for any of us--to give us at least one good friend! It might be someone older, or younger, or the same age. With those of us who are married, it can be a wife or a husband. It might be a friendship that will not continue on throughout life because of death (as was the case with Jonathan and David), but it seems that one of the ways of God is to give His people a friend to stand with them just when a friend is needed most.

Moses had Joshua. Paul had Timothy. Sometimes that Lord's servants have had to go through their troubles alone, without human help--like Joseph, and Jeremiah, and Daniel, and John the Baptist, and the Apostle John in his old age. But often God gives a friend. And that is what he did for David.

II. THE WOMEN OF ISRAEL (1 Sam. 18:6, 7).

Everything was going fine between Saul and David until the women started singing. I don't know who those women were except that they were Israeli women. Maybe many of them were wives of Israeli soldiers, and were expressing their gratitude to David for stepping in and sparing the lives of their husbands. Or they could have been just the women of Israel in general, grateful for David's heroic efforts for the nation, sparing them from possible death, but certainly from enslavement.

But what they did was not wise. And it was not wise because they got their eyes off of the Lord and on the human instrument which the Lord had used to give them deliverance. David did not say that he was delivering Israel. He had told Saul that the Lord had delivered him from the lion and the bear, and He would deliver him from Goliath. And when David faced Goliath he told him that he was coming against him "in the name of the Lord God of the armies of Israel, whom thou has defied" (1 Sam. 17:45). And then he said, "this day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand...that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel" (1 Sam. 17:46).

Men are guilty of doing this just as much as women are, but in this case it was the women. When we exalt men rather than God, we are heading for trouble. The women were creating a situation in which, if the Lord had not protected David, he

would have been killed because of what their song did to the heart of Saul. Let us be grateful for each other, and any way the Lord may see fit to use us, BUT LET US ALWAYS BE CAREFUL TO GIVE THE GLORY, ALL OF IT, TO THE LORD!

However good their intentions may be, the result is stated in verse 9--the beginning of terrible days for David. (Read.) To eye a person is to watch them closely, and, in Saul's case, to look for anything suspicious, and to wait for a chance to get rid of him.

Now let us look at David.

III. DAVID.

It is hard to confine ourselves to a certain passage in this chapter when we talk about David because the whole chapter gives us some wonderful lessons which we can learn from him.

Somewhere, somehow, the Spirit of God had put in David's heart a deep desire to trust the Lord, and to please the Lord. That was all that really mattered to David. He was earning the title, a man after God's heart! And so, like Joseph, regardless of the obstacles that stood in the way, he sought to please God.

So we can say that he acted on what he knew of the Word of God, and sought to do what he was asked to do as quickly and thoroughly and cheerfully as it was possible for him to do it.

But we also learn from David's life at this point that great victories can be followed very quickly with great trials. David was learning that just because you seek to please the Lord does not mean that things will go easy for you. In fact, it was trusting the Lord that enabled him to win the victory over Goliath, but that led to his troubles with Saul.

So let us be prepared for opposition, strong opposition, when and if we desire above everything else to do the will of God, and to do our work in a way that will please and glorify the Lord. Abraham had trouble. Joseph had trouble. Moses had trouble. And the One Who faced the greatest trouble of all was our Lord Jesus Christ. He always pleased the Lord, and yet He was despised and rejected of men. Paul would not have suffered through his life like he did if he had not sought so strongly to please the Lord.

But when trouble comes, what are we to do? What does David teach us at this point in his life?

David kept on doing his work as faithfully as before. He remembered his lowly beginning, and felt himself unworthy to be where he was, with the prospect of going even higher in becoming Saul's son-in-law. David can be best described by the word, faithful. And that is what the Lord requires of us, and what He gives us the grace to be: faithful! He did not quit. He believed he was where the Lord wanted him to be, and he kept on doing his job even though it must have been very, very hard. David is a good man for all of us to follow in our lives.

Finally,

IV. SAUL.

We see in Saul a man who was reaping the results of his previous acts of disobedience. It never seems to have occurred to him that he might seek to have the Lord's blessing restored in his life. He didn't have the Lord's blessing. The Lord was not with him as He was with David. He saw the evidence of God's blessing upon David, but it only made him hate David more and more. He tried to kill him. He hoped that the Philistines would kill him when David went out to kill a hundred of them. He was jealous and envious, and his envy made a potential murderer out of him.

Have you noticed in Rom. 1:29 where the Spirit of God gives us a list of sins, that "murder" follows "full of envy"? And we find the same thing in Gal. 5:21 where Paul was listing the works of the flesh and the verse begins, "Envyings, murders..." And remember that it was envy that led to the first murder when Cain killed his own brother, Abel.

What is envy?

It is a word (φθόνος) which is always used in Scripture in a bad sense. We apply it to Saul, not because the word is used in this chapter of Saul, but because Saul demonstrated the characteristics of envy toward David. He was jealous of David's success. This is envy. He hated him because of his excellence. This is envy. He would do anything to bring David down from the place he held in the hearts of the people. This is envy. He showed no desire to live like David was living, but he did not want David to have the blessing that he was experiencing. This is envy.

Concl: What a tragedy is the life of Saul! And what a difference there was between Saul and David! And yet there have been people like Saul and people like David from the very beginning. By nature we can be like Saul, or by the grace of God we can be like David. Which will it be?

Both have their peculiar trials. Saul brought his troubles upon himself, and eventually paid for it all with his life. David suffered, but suffered as a child of God. His suffering produced greater holiness in his life. His sufferings also produced many of his greatest psalms. And by those psalms we have been helped in our times of need. We have seen that although things often got very dark in David's life, yet the Lord was always with Him, helping him, guiding him, using him, and blessing him in most unbelievable ways.

DAVID AND SAUL. They appear together in Scripture, but the two men could hardly be farther apart in their characters and in the lives that they lived. David was a man who trusted in God. Saul was a man who never learned the joy of living a life of faith.

We will learn more about both men in the days ahead, but let us make sure that we are following David as he followed the Lord. He proved again and again that, regardless of the trial or testing, there was a God in Israel Who was always sufficient for His people if they would only trust Him.

By nature we can be like Saul, or by the grace of God we can be like David. Which will it be?

DAVID IN FLIGHT

1 Samuel 19

Intro: Three times in this chapter it is stated that David "fled." Cf. vv. 10, 12, 18. The verb in verse 12 (נָסָה) is different from the verb in verses 10 and 18 (פָּלַח), but their meaning is essentially the same. It suggests that David "fled" suddenly, in great haste, and that he was motivated by fear for his life. And each time David "fled," he was fleeing from Saul. And each time he "fled," a different means of deliverance was given to David.

This had to be both a humiliating time in David's life as well as a confusing time. It was humiliating for him to be pursued like the worst of criminals when he had never been anything but absolutely loyal to his king. It was confusing because it must have made him wonder about both the will of God, and the faithfulness of God. If he were to be king, why was the Lord subjecting him to such treatment? And when this was repeated over and over, the thought surely passed through his mind that one time Saul might be successful, and he would die!

What David did not know was that this was going to continue for the next seven or eight years (as it has been estimated by some).

The chapter actually gives us four times in which David was able to escape from Saul. The first time Jonathan helped him. The second time he escaped by himself. The third time Michal, his wife, was his helper. The last time is when he went to Samuel for protection. Let us look at each of these circumstances in chapter 19.

I. DAVID AND JONATHAN (1 Kings 19:1-7).

At the end of chapter 18 we saw how David had killed two hundred Philistines to gain the hand of Michal in marriage. Saul could see that the Lord was with David, but this made him both fear David and hate David more than ever. At the same time David was becoming increasingly popular with the people.

As chapter 19 begins we see that Saul made no secret of his desire to kill David, and he enlisted the help of all of his family, and all of his servants. Apparently the whole thing was kept from David until Jonathan told him what his father intended to do. He knew that David was in a very dangerous situation, and that he would need to exercise the greatest care. He also knew that David could not stay there if his father continued to feel as he did. But, as a last resort,

he decided to intercede for David with his father. And then he promised that he would tell David what his father had said. This was another proof of the great love that Jonathan had for David. And it would seem that Jonathan was the only friend that David had in Saul's family or among his servants (with the exception of Michal, David's wife).

It seems that when Jonathan appealed to Saul, the most powerful argument that he used is that stated in verse 5. (Read.) David had risked his own life for Saul and for Israel, but it was not David who had been victorious, but the Lord using David! David had done not wrong, Jonathan argued, but his father would be committing a great sin to kill David "without a cause."

Saul not only listened to Jonathan, but swore with an oath that David would not be killed. In view of what followed during the following years we can see how little an oath from Saul was worth. And yet such an oath was permanently binding in the sight of the Lord! That would come out later in the case of Saul's treatment of the Gibeonites.

The result of Jonathan's efforts was that it seemed that danger for David was over, and he was restored to his position, and to the favor of Saul. That was the end of that crisis.

II. DAVID BY HIMSELF (1 Sam. 19:8-10).

The next crisis arose when David was again victorious in was with the Philistines. He not only was instrumental in the death of many of the Philistines, but he routed those who were not killed!

This revived all of the hatred that was in Saul's heart toward David. And there is an important lesson here. It is that problems which are not settled with the Lord are not really settled! And it only took another victory to show that nothing had been settled in Saul's heart.

David had come back and was playing on his instrument to please Saul when Saul took the javelin that was in his hand and threw it at David. This evil spirit from the Lord was an indication that the Lord had departed from Saul, and so the evil spirit was at liberty to trouble Saul's heart. It does not mean that the Lord sent the evil spirit, but simply that the Lord did not stop the evil spirit. All kinds of bad things can go wrong in our hearts and lives if the blessing of the Lord is withdrawn from us.

But, again, David was able to escape. There is no question

but that this was just as much the hand of the Lord as when Jonathan went to Saul on behalf of David.

The second crisis was over, but it led to a third.

III. DAVID AND MICHAL (1 Sam. 19:11-17).

Saul sent messengers to David's house to kill him the next morning. Michal knew about it and told David that if he stayed there that night he would be killed the next morning. So she helped him leave through a window, and he was able to escape. Once again he "fled."

In order to conceal what had happened, she put an image in David's bed which would make it look like he was there. When the messengers came, she told them that her husband was sick. Saul told them to bring him in his bed. But when they came to get David, they discovered what Michal had done and that David was gone! Saul was furious with his daughter, that she would deceive him, and he asked her why she would do such a thing. Michal lied and told him that David would have killed her if she had not let him get away.

The fact that David got away does not justify the deception, but shows that the Lord sometimes works through circumstances that are not altogether right.

But for the third time in this chapter David's life was spared.

Where did David go?

IV. DAVID AND SAMUEL (1 Sam. 19:18-24).

David "fled" and went to Samuel, the man who had anointed him and prophesied that he, David, would one day be the king of Israel. It seems that at this time David's faith was being severely tried, and he went to the man of God for his encouragement.

But Saul was not to be outdone, and so he sent messengers to bring David back. However, as those messengers arrived, they were met by prophets who were prophesying. The Spirit of God came upon the messengers, and they began to prophesy. A second group of messengers came from Saul, and the same thing happened. Then Saul send a third group, and they prophesied, too. Finally Saul came. And the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied! He took of his garments, either royal or armor, and lay down all day and all night, thus, as chapter 20 tells us, giving David time to flee again. And so his life was spared.

We can speculate a great deal, and probably without a great deal of prophet, as to why things happened at this time the way they did. Why would the Spirit of the Lord come upon one who was as wicked as Saul? And why would Saul be able to prophecy?

The fact that we are not told what any of them said prophetically is an indication that their prophesying was not the main thing. The main thing was that God was defending his chosen instrument! Matthew Henry's comment on this chapter was, "Providence is never at a loss" (II, 383). Behind all of the human activity was the hand of a faithful God, protecting David these four times, in four different ways, so that David would learn, and we would learn, not to look at the ways the Lord had done things in the past, but to look at the Lord who had done all of those things.

Concl: What can we learn from these events in addition to the fact that God will be faithful even when we are outnumbered, even when our hearts are filled with fear, and even when it all seems to run contrary to what we have believed was His plan for us?

We need to look primarily at David.

David was learning what it means to be afraid.

He had not been afraid of the lion, or of the bear, or even of Goliath. But he was afraid of Saul, possibly because he knew that Saul was the Lord's anointed and he could not lift a hand to hurt him. But his fear may have gone deeper than that. David has much to say about fear in his Psalms. We can be bold as a lion at times, but fearful as a helpless bird at another time. Perhaps it was in these days that David was learning the truth that he expressed in Psalm 27, "The Lord is my light and my salvation...."

So David's troubles drove him to the Lord. Jonathan could help. And he might be able to dodge a javelin. And his wife would help him, too. But ultimately all would fail if the Lord did not help him.

David was also learning more and more about the untrustworthiness of man. Matthew Henry felt that it was because of these and similar circumstances that David wrote in Psa. 116, "I said in my haste (or alarm), All men are liars." Cf. v. 11. Saul's oath meant nothing, and there probably were times when he wondered even about Samuel's prophecy and the anointing he had given to David. But he could console himself with the truth, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psa. 116:15). It is

interesting to see how David in the OT and the Apostle Paul in the NT actually lived with death facing them for a great part of their lives, and yet through those times they learned to trust the Lord more, and to love Him more, and to feel more urgently the need to serve the Lord while they could.

So David was discovering the weakness and sinfulness of his own heart. He was learning about the sinfulness of the hearts of others. He was learning to pray. He was learning to trust the Lord. And he was learning that the Lord is always faithful, never at a loss as to what to do, always sufficient for every time of need. Sometimes he works through us, sometimes through others, and sometimes by Himself.

If it is true that Psalm 27 was written about this time (and we cannot know for sure), the Psalm brings out the way the Lord was dealing with David, and the things that came supremely important to him as a result of those days when he had to flee for his life to get away from Saul and from death.

May the Lord teach us through David's experiences that we may trust Him more than we do.

JONATHAN'S ARROWS

1 Samuel 20

Intro: There are three parts to this chapter:

- 1) The agreement between Jonathan and David (vv. 1-23).
- 2) Jonathan and Saul (vv. 24-34).
- 3) David's departure (vv. 35-42).

I. THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN JONATHAN AND DAVID (1 Sam. 20:1-23).

On the one hand we see a discouraged and apprehensive David. He felt sure by this time that Saul was determined to kill him, and that he would not tell Jonathan of his intentions because of the friendship that existed between the two.

On the other hand we see a confident and trusting Jonathan. He believed that David would one day be king, and this was the reason that he sought a covenant from David that he and his family would be safe under his rule.

It was a reasonable time for David to be away because of the yearly sacrifice observed by David's family, and also the new moon observance which Saul would be careful to observe.

It is interesting to observe that although Saul was not in fellowship with the Lord, and that the Spirit of the Lord had departed from him, he kept up his observance of the sacred days. People who are away from the Lord get some consolation from outward observances even when their hearts are not a part of it all.

The agreement was that David was to leave to be with his family, and then come back on the third day to the place where they had gone together. There Jonathan would shoot his arrows to indicate to David what he had learned about the purpose of Saul, his father.

David went away, and Jonathan returned to the king's house.

II. JONATHAN AND SAUL (1 Sam. 20:24-34).

Saul noticed the first day that David was not there, but he said nothing to Jonathan. He thought that something had happened to keep David away.

But the second day Saul confronted Jonathan, wanting to know where David was.

Jonathan told his father that David had requested the

privilege of going to be with his family on that day. Jonathan had granted him that permission.

At this point Saul became very angry--angry with Jonathan! After rebuking Jonathan with strong words, Saul threw a javelin at Jonathan as he had before thrown a javelin at David. And so Jonathan fled from his father both angry and grieved and without eating at the feast.

He evidently waited until the morning of the third day because David would not have been at the appointed place until the next day.

III. DAVID'S DEPARTURE (1 Sam. 20:35-42).

According to their plan, Jonathan shot the arrows, telling the boy who was with him to go after them beyond where he was. And so David knew what the message was that Jonathan had come to give him.

The boy left with Jonathan's bow and arrows, and David and Jonathan met for the last time before David departed.

Verses 41 and 42 give us one of those very emotional scenes of Scripture. David fell on his face. The two men wept and kissed each other--David weeping the most. Then Jonathan sent David away.

With the exception of three verses in chapter 23 (vv. 16-18) this is the last we hear of Jonathan until his death in chapter 31, verse 2, when Jonathan was killed in the battle between Israel and the Philistines. Saul also died in the same battle.

IV. JONATHAN'S ARROWS.

Let us spend some time now thinking about those arrows which Jonathan shot that day to inform David that his life was endangered. The Lord was quite evidently in that arrangement between Jonathan and David, and we learn from this that there are often great lessons involved even in the inanimate instruments which the Lord sees fit to use.

Previously we had the stones which David took when he went against Goliath. In the next chapter we will see how Goliath's sword caused trouble for the priests in Israel. God used a bush to call Moses. Remember how Aaron's rod was used by God to settle a dispute in Israel over the high priesthood. A cord hanging out of a window was a sign that Rahab and her family should be spared. Our Lord took a little boy's lunch to feed 5,000 men plus women and children. A basket was used

to help Paul escape from his enemies. Bread and wine were used by our Lord to portray His own death on the Cross. The Bible is full of such instances, and we are thinking tonight about JONATHAN'S ARROWS. If they had been kept, what would they have meant to David and Jonathan?

First, they would always have spoken to David of the friendship that Jonathan had for him.

As we learn from this story, Jonathan actually risked his life to get the information that David wanted although Jonathan may not have realized what the result would be at that time. The three arrows meant friendship. It is doubtful if any friendship in all of Scripture ever surpassed that of the friendship between David and Jonathan. And it is most amazing on Jonathan's side because he was the son of the king of Israel.

Second, the arrows were the means by which the will of God was made known to David. Notice what Jonathan said in verse 22. He did not say that Saul was forcing David to go, but that the Lord was sending him away. Jonathan was surely a godly man in addition to being a true friend.

Third, the arrows were an indication of Jonathan's submission to the will of God. We can all imagine that shooting those arrows was about the hardest thing that Jonathan ever did. His tears bore testimony to his great sorrow, but he did what he knew was the will of God even though it was the opposite of what he had hoped for.

Fourth, the arrows were evidence of the continuing rebellion of Saul, i.e., his rebellion against the Lord.

I want to call your attention to those three verses in chapter 23 which I mentioned a moment ago--the last time that Jonathan is mentioned in 1 Samuel until the record of his death in the last chapter. Notice not only what Jonathan knew, but notice what Jonathan said that his father knew. He knew that David was destined by God to be the king of Israel--and he deliberately and continuously did everything he could to keep that from happening. Those arrows carried with them a message of Saul's rebellion against the Lord. Those arrows, like the javelins that he threw at David and Jonathan, were messages of a rebellious heart.

Fifth, those arrows marked the breaking up of the close relationship which David and Jonathan had enjoyed up to that time. It did not break up their friendship. It did not affect their love for each other. But they could no longer be together. They had to go their separate ways. And this

was very painful for both of them. But it had to be. David's last thoughts of Jonathan were of the shooting of those arrows by which David was sent away.

Why would the Lord do such a thing? This leads me to my sixth and last point about the arrows.

The shooting of Jonathan's arrows marked the time when the Lord was taking away from David the human fellowship and assistance that Jonathan had provided for him SO THAT DAVID WOULD LEARN FROM THAT POINT ON TO TRUST THE LORD MORE THAN HE EVER HAD BEFORE.

Probably many of David's Psalms would never have been written, could never have been written, if Jonathan and David had remained together. The Lord gives us people to help us in our times of trial, and then He often removes them. Think back over your own life and the people who have been a help to you in the past, people who are not with you any more. Maybe they are in heaven. Maybe they have moved away, or you have moved away, but you don't have them anymore. The Lord wants us to trust Him, to trust Him alone. He gives us special help from time to time, but He is the One Who never leaves us nor forsakes us.

Let me remind you of one thing that David wrote in Psalm 27, verse 10, to bring out this point:

When my father and my more forsake me,
then the Lord will take me up.

And remember, too, the words of Heb. 13:5, 6: "Let your conversation be without covetousness...."

Notice as you read the Psalms how many times David referred to the Lord as his strength and his help.

Jonathan really had the right idea. He did not try to take the Lord's place because we read in those special verses in 1 Sam. 23 that when Jonathan went to David in the wilderness of Ziph, He "strengthened his hand in God."

Friends, godly friends, are not bad for us. They are good. But we must remember that none can take the Lord's place in our lives.

Concl: May the Lord never let us forget the messages that were sent when Jonathan shot his arrows.

A PRIEST, A SHEPHERD, AND A KING
1 Samuel 21

Intro: The Bible is a book about God, but it is also a book about people--the Lord's people and those who are not the Lord's people; Jews and Gentiles; men, women, and children; good people and bad people. But they all move within the realm of the sovereignty of God, and we see how the Lord worked in all of their lives fulfilling His own purposes and bringing blessing to His people.

The book of 1 Samuel is primarily a book about David, but we see in this book how people influenced the life of David, and also how David affected their lives.

Here in chapter 21 we see David and three men who influenced his life:

- 1) Ahimelech, the priest.
- 2) Doeg, an Edomite, who was one of Saul's men.
- 3) Achish, the king of Gath.

From this point on in the book David was a fugitive and treated like a traitor although he had never done anything against Saul. But in spite of the injustice which was done to David, we can see the hand of the Lord in his life, preparing him for better things. Out of this time many of the Psalms were born. It was a time of severe testing for David, sometimes we see his failures, and that is the case in this chapter. But he would learn by his failures to trust the Lord, and then he was able to minister to others, as he has down to the present day, encouraging all believers to trust in the Lord whatever their circumstances might be.

First, let us turn to:

I. DAVID AND AHIMELECH, THE PRIEST (1 Sam. 21:1-9).

David consulted with some of the good and great men of Scripture. Samuel was one of them. Jonathan was another. Neither of these men were able to help him. It seems that David should have been commended for going to Ahimelech, the priest. In chapter 22, verse 10 we read that when Doeg was telling Saul about David and Ahimelech, he said that Ahimelech "enquired of the Lord for him," i.e., David, then gave him food and the sword of Goliath.

What Ahimelech knew about the trouble between Saul and David, we do not know. He was alarmed to see David by himself since this apparently was not customary for a man who held the position that David had.

But the first problem arises in this chapter when David lied to Ahimelech as to why he was alone. (Readverse 2.)

Verses 4 and 5 indicate that there were some men with David, but who they were we do not know.

Ahimelech would have felt himself under the authority of David because of David's relationship with the king, and so felt obligated to respond to David when he asked for five loaves of bread, or as many as Ahimelech could give him.

Lev. 24:5-9 tells us about the shewbread. It was to be for the high priest and his sons, but not for other people. However, Ahimelech agreed to give them the shewbread if they had at least kept themselves from women. David assured them that they had been without their wives for the three days of their journey from Saul.

Our Lord referred to this in Matt. 12:1-8.

It is hard to explain this in view of the fact that Uzziah got into such terrible trouble when he intruded into the priest's office, but this was not like offering a sacrifice. Our Lord seems to have indicated, by comparing this with what the disciples were doing on the Sabbath day that even in the case of the shewbread it was permissible to use the shewbread when there were special, legitimate needs.

But it would appear that David did not really know this. And Ahimelech may not have known it. And so again we see David in a position of doing that which he must have known to be wrong. In both instances we see evidence of the grace of God toward David's lie, and then the bread.

Perhaps it was things like this that David had in mind when he wrote later the words we find in Psa. 103:10-14. (Read.)

See also Psa. 130, esp. v. 3.

But that was not all that David requested from Ahimelech. He asked for either a sword or a spear--and again he told a lie. See verse 8.

This is a verse which has been taken out of context to encourage missions: "The king's business required haste." We need to be careful about the way that we use the Word of God.

Ahimelech revealed that Goliath's sword was there. He probably felt that if anyone had a right to that sword it was David. And so he gave it, and David took it.

If we remember what David had said to Goliath, and if David remembered it, those words stand in sharp contrast with David's request in this chapter. I am referring to the words found in 1 Sam. 17:47. (Read.) How often it is true that in times of

stress and trial we act contrary to the truths which we have known and acted upon before.

It would appear that David was taking the burden of his own welfare and safety upon himself instead of trusting in the Lord. To be sure he had a formidable enemy, but what he needed to do was to trust the Lord.

The fact that this was wrong for David to do can be seen in the tragedy which followed in chapter 22.

And this brings us to the second man:

II. DAVID AND DOEG (1 Sam. 21:7).

It is mentioned in an almost casual way, but, as we see in chapter 22, it marked the end of Ahimelech's life, the lives of eighty five priests, and an uncounted number of men, women, and children, as well as animals, in the city of Nob.

One of the tragic things about our sins is the way they affect the lives of others. It is something that is a burden to us as long as we live. David's experience here is not given to expose him, but that we might learn from his sins. Lies, forcing our way on others, seeking to provide for ourselves instead of trusting in the Lord--all of these can have a bad effect upon others. David by his demanding way was loading his conscience with burdens that never should have been there.

But we have one more man to talk about.

III. DAVID AND ACHISH (1 Sam. 21:10-15).

Again we see behavior on the part of David which was in contrast with the way we usually think of David.

Here we have two things to consider:

- 1) Why David would go to Gath at all.
- 2) Why he would stoop to acting as though he were insane.

We know that Goliath was from Gath. Matthew Henry suggests that Goliath may have been in competition with Achish, and a threat to his rule in Gath, and so Achish looked with favor upon David because he had killed Goliath. David may have known this, and felt that he would have greater safety with Achish than he would have had in Israel where Saul might have been able to reach him. We do not know. But this does seem to be a very reasonable suggestion.

However, we also have to remember that David had been anointed to be the next king of Israel. This was according to the promise of God. And it would seem that his going to Gath was another

instance when David failed by taking matters into his own hands instead of really trusting in the Lord. He did not count on the reaction of the servants of Achish and their remembrance of the song of the women of Israel which had been the beginning of David's troubles with Saul. See verse 11 in our text.

The result was that David was "sore afraid." He was terribly afraid! He feared for his life. He had acted on his own, and he suffered the consequences. He began to act like he was crazy. He ran his fingers up and down the gate, and let saliva from his mouth run down on his beard. It must have been a terrible sight to behold.

Whether or not Achish knew what was going on, we cannot tell. But he claimed to want to have nothing to do with him, and so David was able to escape, as we learn from the first verse of chapter 22.

The one wonderful thing about this experience in the life of David is that it was at this time he wrote Psalm 34, a Psalm which has to be one of the greatest that David ever wrote. And it means even more when we read it in connection with 1 Sam. 21.

We do not know how long it had been since David left Jonathan, but it could not have been very long. And yet, although we see sins of various kinds on the part of David, we also see that the Lord was in control, teaching his servant that it is never a mistake to call upon the Lord, and that the Lord is sufficient to care for us regardless of what our circumstances might be.

Read Psalm 34.

Concl: This morning we were thinking about "lazy hearers" of the Word of God--people who read the Word, who hear the Word, who know a great deal of truth, but who never, or hardly ever make any practical application of the Word to their lives.

We have all been guilty of being "lazy hearers," but it is important to make sure that we are not lazy hearers now. So what are we to do about this chapter? What practical lessons can we learn from this period in David's life?

Let me mention three things:

- 1) We should learn that it is wrong to lie. Even Christians can get careless about telling the truth. Lying is a way of life for the people of the world, but it cannot be for us.
- 2) We need to learn not to make demands upon others which would make them violate the Word of God.
- 3) We need to trust in the Lord, and not in people, especially people who do not know the Lord.

Psalm 34 tells us what David learned. May we learn those lessons also.

THE TRAGEDY AT NOB
1 Samuel 22

Intro: As chapter 22 begins we see that the humiliation of David continued. He had to leave Gath, and went to the cave of Adullam. We do not know exactly where that was, but it is thought that it was in the area between the Philistine plain and the Judaeian mountains. In that area there are underground pits, or vaults, very large, which would have provided great security for David and those who were with him. David knew that the Lord's promise to him was that he would become the king of Israel, but it is significant that he did not take any chances.

So, the first point in this chapter can be called:

I. FROM ADULLAM TO MOAB TO HARETH (1 Sam. 22:1-5).

Four important things happened at this time.

- A. David's family joined him (v. 1).
- B. About four hundred men joined him (v. 2).

This is probably not the people that David would have chosen, but they were the people that the Lord sent to him. Those "in distress" were people who were in trouble with Saul as David was, whether rightly or wrongly. Many were "in debt." Those who were "discontented" were people whose spirit was bitter. They would have been a help and encouragement to David, but he obviously would have had a ministry with them.

We perhaps can be reminded of what Paul told the Corinthians about the calling of God in 1 Cor. 1:26-31. These are the kind of people the Lord chooses to change, and then to use for His own glory.

- C. David provided for his parents with the king of Moab (vv. 3, 4).

David was a man of the Word, and he knew that the Law taught that he was to honor his parents. And so he provided for their safety for as long as he "was in the hold," i.e., a fortress, needing great protection and security himself. He did not want them to be in danger just because he was.

- D. Gad advised him to go back to Judah (v. 5).

And David followed his advice. Gad was a prophet and so would have been able to inquire of the Lord for David. Therefore, it would appear that this was guidance from God.

But, what is probably the most important of all, something which is not recorded here, is that here David composed at least two Psalms: 57 and 142.

We should remember that it was through music that David ministered to Saul in times when Saul was troubled by an evil spirit from the Lord. Now it was through music that David was finding encouragement for his own soul. He did not just write these Psalms, but remember that the music was included. And this ought to teach us that when we are down and discouraged, we should turn to the music of the church for our encouragement and help.

We now have a great heritage of hymns written over hundreds of years. David did not have this, and so he had to write his own. Let me take the time to read these two Psalms for you because it gives us some insight into the spiritual condition of David at that time. (Read Psa. 57 and Psa. 142.)

The scene changes after verse 6, and we are told about:

II. SAUL'S COMPLAINT TO HIS MEN (1 Sam. 6-10).

Saul found out where David was, and this caused him to pour out his complaint to his men.

Will you notice that Saul had nothing to say about the Lord? He was only concerned about himself, and feeling sorry for himself. He blamed Jonathan for all that had happened, thinking that David had made some fantastic promises to them if they would come over to his side.

The truth is that David did not attempt to get his men to join in a rebellion against Saul. That was not even in David's thoughts, and we will see more about that later. But Saul was imagining all kinds of things. This is what happens when people try to take care of themselves instead of trusting in the Lord.

It was at this point that Doeg spoke up to tell Saul what had happened in the city of Nob when David had come to Ahimelech to get spiritual help, food, and a sword. See vv. 9, 10. Saul could not learn anything that would incriminate either David or Jonathan, but Doeg gave him information against Ahimelech, the priest.

This brings us to the third part of the chapter:

III. SAUL'S WICKED ORDERS (1 Sam. 22:11-19).

Saul summoned Ahimelech and all of the other priests. He addressed him as a conspirator. He falsely accused David. Ahimelech told him what had happened, and truthfully declared that he knew nothing about the trouble between Saul and David. But he declared that David was the most faithful of all of the servants of Saul, and that no one was more honorable in all of the house of Saul than David was.

Nevertheless, Saul was so sure that a conspiracy was being organized against him, that he set aside Ahimelech's testimony, and told Ahimelech that he would have to die. And it evidently was implied that all of the other priests would die with him.

However, getting someone to kill the priests was another matter. Saul's servants feared the Lord too much to lay their hands on a single priest. And so at the risk of losing their own lives, they refused to do what Saul wanted them to do.

Then Saul turned to Doeg.

Doeg was not an Israelite. He was an Edomite, a descendant of Esau. And what the servants of Saul would not do, Doeg did! He "slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod" (v. 18).

And not only that but he went to the city of Nob and killed all of the men, women, children, and even the animals that were there.

WHAT A TRAGEDY!

Let me point out four things which many commentators have recognized in dealing with the death of these priests.

First, what about the righteousness of God in permitting such a thing?

Two things can be said.

In the first place, God was judging the house of Eli because of the sin of Eli's sons. Cf. 1 Sam. 2:27-32 and 3:11-14.

But we also know that, for the most part, perhaps with the exception of Ahimelech (and yet he was not wholly guiltless--remember what he did with the shewbread), the priesthood in Israel had fallen to a very low level spiritually.

Secondly, we have a terrible example before us of how wicked a man can become when he hardens his heart against the Lord.

Cf. "desperately wicked" in Jer. 17:9. What dreadful consequences can follow even small departures from the Lord.

Thirdly, we can see this as a judgment upon Israel because they had insisted that God give them a king before He was ready to do it.

And finally, as we shall see in the last four verses of the chapter, this event left David with much guilt and grief in his own heart because he had lied to Ahimelech to get the help that he needed instead of telling Ahimelech the truth. We never can tell how our sin may affect the lives of others. What a dreadful things this was for David to have upon his conscience.

We could call these last four verses, THE REMORSE OF DAVID, or we could call it, THE GRACE OF GOD. I am going to choose the latter.

IV. THE GRACE OF GOD (1 Sam. 22:20-23).

Amazingly one of Ahimelech's sons escaped. His name was Abiathar. And he ran to be with David. It was he who told David what had happened, and David immediately felt responsible, and confessed that he knew on the day that he was with Ahimelech that Doeg would tell Saul--which is what happened.

David did the only thing that he could do. He took Abiathar under his protection, and told him that he (Abiathar) would be safe with him (David.)

Concl: There was one other thing that David did which is not recorded in 1 Sam. 22. He comforted himself with music, and by writing another psalm. This time it was Psalm 52.

David could not undo what he had done, but he could stop to turn his eyes to the Lord, recognizing that Doeg had the Lord to deal with. Even here David did not feel that it was his place to take vengeance upon Doeg, but he took comfort in the fact that the Lord would deal with him and give him exactly what he deserved.

There are many lessons for us in this chapter. I will not go over them all. I hope that you have noted what they are as we have gone along, and that we, neither you nor I, will not be "dull of hearing." Let us learn from what is here, so that we can be safeguarded from the mistakes and sins which led to such a great tragedy during David's life.

SOME TESTINGS OF DAVID'S FAITH

1 Samuel 23, 24

Intro: Testing times are hard times, but for the child of God they are learning times. They are times when the Lord is teaching us valuable lessons which we need to learn. They are not times without a purpose, or purposes. God is at work making us more like He wants us to be. Usually it has to do with learning to trust the Lord more than we do. We get ourselves into trouble because we take matters into our own hands instead of waiting upon God.

David was to become the king of Israel. He had been only a shepherd boy until he went to live with King Saul. He knew little or nothing about being a king. There was no school in those days, nor do I know of any today, where a person could go to learn how to be a king. Therefore, David's training was in the hands of the Lord. And it would seem that David was becoming more and more aware of what God was doing in his heart, and ordering the circumstances of his life. David was being brought to a place where he recognized his utter dependency upon the Lord.

None of us will ever be a king. We don't expect it, and probably wouldn't want such a position if it were offered to us. But the Lord has His place for each one of us. He prepares us for what He wants us to do. The preparation never actually stops because none of will ever be all that we should be until we get to heaven. Some of us are looking back upon the greatest part of our lives; others of you are just beginning. Still others may have reached the midway point. But, wherever we are (and only the Lord knows that), we can be sure that the circumstances of our lives are all ordered to teach us what the Lord wants us to learn so that we can become more godly in our lives and more fruitful in our works.

Such was the case with David. The Lord told him that he would be king of Israel, but the Lord did not give him any time schedule. But the Lord did humiliate David. He tried his soul until we are going to see that he gave up thinking that he would ever be king. But God continued to work, and David continued to learn. He truly was in the school which God uses to fashion His servants into the people that He wants them to be. In a word, David was learning some very important lessons about the ways of the Lord. If you and I will always remember the verses that we have been learning in SS this summer, it will help us when we become confused over God's ways with us.

In 1 Samuel 23 and 24 we have a series of events in which we

get a good overview of some of the ways of the Lord. It looks like Saul had more to do with David's life than the Lord did. It may have appeared that way to David also. But the truth is that the Lord was in charge, and that Saul could not act at all outside of the will of God for David. And although Saul did not know it, he was the instrument that the Lord was using to prepare David to take his (Saul's) place. Let us look at what happened to David at this time.

I. DAVID AND THE CITY OF KEILAH (1 Sam. 23:1-13a).

If you were writing your own spiritual autobiography, would there be certain cities, or certain places on the earth, about which you would hold memories of the Lord's dealings with you? Keilah was a place that David would never forget. It was in Judah, southwest of Jerusalem, and about midway between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea. We only hear about it in connection with what David experienced there.

A. The deliverance of Keilah (vv. 1-5).

The Philistines had come up from the south, had attacked Keilah, and were robbing their threshingfloors. This was where the grain was brought after it was harvested, it was beaten out, and then stored or sold. It represented the year's work for the Jews, and was their livelihood for the coming year.

David heard about this, and he immediately felt that something must be done. However, instead of rushing ahead to do something about it, he did something which he might not have done earlier. HE "ENQUIRED OF THE LORD." That is, he asked the Lord what he should do. The Lord said, "Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah." So David had correctly determined what the will of God was.

However, his men did not agree. They felt that they could not win against the Philistines.

What did David do then? He certainly could not go against the Philistines without them. What should a leader do in such a case?

David went back to the Lord again, and the Lord gave him the same answer. How this answer came either time, we do not know, but David got his answer. And apparently the Lord worked also in the hearts of his men because they were satisfied that this was what the Lord wanted them to do. They did it, were victorious over the Philistines, and saved Keilah. David learned how important it is to pray, and to do as the Lord answers. He did not set a time limit on the

Lord. But the need was urgent, and the Lord's answer came, in this instance, right away.

As a king, David would need to know how to trust the Lord, and to seek His guidance in prayer. I hope we are learning this also, perhaps more than we ever have realized it before.

But we are not finished with Keilah. We also read of:

B. The ingratitude of Keilah (vv. 6-13a).

You would think that David would have been a hero in Keilah forever. But that was not the case.

After a brief reference to the coming of Abiathar to join David, we are told that Saul found out that David was there and made plans immediately to go after him, thinking that he would be unable to escape from a city like Keilah which had walls.

This is where David used Abiathar to find out what he should do. The question was: Would the people of Keilah deliver David over to Saul? The answer was in so many words, "Yes, they would." Probably their reason was that they wanted to avoid a war in their city. But, however that may have been, David and his men knew that they had to leave. And they did.

Here David was learning more about trusting the Lord instead of men. Men will look out for their own interests first. The Lord is the One Who cares for us. He never double-crosses us. He is always faithful, and therefore we need to trust Him instead of putting our confidence in men. In Psa. 118: 8, 9 we read:

It is better to trust in the Lord
than to put confidence in man.
It is better to trust in the Lord
than to put confidence in princes.

The next place of interest in David's life at this time was:

II. THE WILDERNESS OF ZIPH (1 Sam. 23:13b-25).

Ziph was southeast of Keilah, probably only 10-15 miles from the Dead Sea.

It turned out that the people of Ziph were fiercely loyal to Saul, so much so that they sent word to Saul that David was there, promising to deliver David into Saul's hands. But that was not to be. Instead, notice three things that are mentioned here in the sacred record. They are all evidences of what God was doing for David even though we have no

indication that David asked for any one of the three.

A. God's providential care of David (v. 14b).

None of us knows the full story of how many times God has acted in our behalf, sparing us from dangers of which we had no knowledge at the time.

B. The coming of Jonathan (v. 16).

There is no one David would rather have seen than David. But Jonathan, in spite of his great love for David, was just as helpless as David was. But there was one thing that he could do--and he did it! He "strengthened" David's "hand in God."

How I wish that conversation were recorded! What did they talk about? Obviously they spoke of Saul. But primarily they talked about the Lord--His purpose, His wisdom, His power, His love. And David was "strengthened" as a result of their time together. Let us follow Jonathan's example and be determined by the grace of God to leave people stronger spiritually than they were when we came to them.

See what Jonathan said in verse 17, and then what the two of them did in verse 18.

Verses 19-24a relate what the Ziphites said to Saul, and the way Saul responded to them. But their plan was to be overruled by the Lord.

In the latter part of verse 24 we read of:

C. David's departure to the wilderness of Maon (v. 24b).

We do not know why David and his men left Ziph; we only know that, when Saul got to Ziph, David and his men were gone! Word may have gotten to David about what Saul and the Ziphites were planning to do, or it may have been that they felt it wise to move on. The answer may be found in verse 25. Whatever the reason, it is clear that the Lord was taking care of David.

The third thing in this chapter has to do with:

III. SAUL AND THE PHILISTINES (1 Sam. 23:25-29).

The Lord often uses even ungodly nations to carry out His purposes. It was providential that the Philistines invaded the land of Israel at this time. God was pulling Saul away from David to give some relief to his servant from the dangers he and his men had been facing constantly.

Again, let us be thankful to God for the relief He gives us from the trials and testings of life. We can praise God for the way He answers prayer, but we can also praise God for His work in our behalf even when we do not pray.

Now let us move on to chapter 24. Here we find:

IV. DAVID IN THE WILDERNESS OF EN-GEDI (1 Sam. 24:1-22).

Here David was being taught that circumstances alone are not an indication of the will of God. This was probably the greatest testing of David's life up to this point in his flight from Saul. He had the opportunity to kill Saul. His men wanted him to do it. Humanly speaking, there was nothing to keep him from it--EXCEPT FOR THE WORKING OF THE LORD IN HIS OWN HEART!

(Relate, or read, the account.)

David went as far as he did in cutting off the skirt of Saul's robe because his men wanted him to do it. But even that bothered him even though he did not kill Saul. David respected Saul as the Lord's anointed one, and refused to take matters into his own hands. He believed that when the Lord was ready to remove Saul, Saul would go. But he did not feel that it was his right to make that decision. (We are going to see a similar situation next Sunday in the next chapter about a lesser man in the case of Nabal.)

When David told Saul what he had done, Saul was moved to tears because he knew that David had the chance to kill him, but didn't take it. This caused Saul to call off his pursuit of David, but David stayed for the present where he had the protection of "the holds." This means a stronghold, or a fortress of some kind.

This was a different kind of a testing of David's faith, a time when David was to learn that circumstances are probably the last thing to consider when seeking to determine what the will of the Lord is.

Concl; I hope that you will go back over these chapters to see how the Lord was pleased to deal with David, how the Lord

preserved him, how he was kept from doing what would have been a grief to himself as well as displeasing God. And then make the application to your own life. The most important thing for all of us to be concerned about is that we do what is pleasing to the Lord. If the Lord is pleased, then our hearts will be at peace. If we take matters into our own hands and simply lean on our own understanding, then we will have no peace, and the blessing of the Lord will be removed from our lives.

David was in a similar situation to that which our Lord would face later during His time here on earth. He had done nothing to deserve the kind of treatment that He received from men, but He got it anyway. And yet, throughout His whole life, His greatest concern was that He would do that which was the Father's will, that which was pleasing to God.

We all have our trials. The important thing for each one of us is to be trusting the Lord, and seeking from the Word, and as the Lord leads us in our own hearts, to do God's will. It is sometimes hard to do the will of God, but it always is the path to blessing.