

GOD'S RESTRAINING HAND
1 Samuel 25

Intro: Psalm 37:24 says, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord...." I believe it was George Muller of Bristol, England who used to add, **"And the stops are, too."** The Lord guides us into the things that we should do, but He also keeps us from doing the things which we should not do. And it is just as important for us to look for the stops as it is to mark the steps.

We can call this, GOD'S RESTRAINING HAND.

There is an example in the book of Genesis, chapter 20, of God using His hand to restrain a man from sin. The man was Abimelech, the king of Gerar, who took Sarah from Abraham because Abraham had said that she was his sister. God appeared to him in a dream by night and told him that he had taken another man's wife. Abimelech was amazed because even Sarah had said that she was Abraham's sister (which was a half-truth--they had the same father, but not the same mother). Abimelech was told to give her back to Abraham after the Lord said this to him (to Abimelech):

I also withheld thee from sinning against me:
therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.

It is probably the case that this kind of a thing happens to all of us more that we realize, i.e., God holding us back to keep us from sin.

We certainly see a different side to David in this chapter. It teaches us that none of us knows the potential for sin which is in our hearts. Such a story as this should make all of us realize how much we need to depend upon the Lord to keep us from making mistakes which we would otherwise make.

But let us get to the chapter:

I. THE BACKGROUND (1 Sam. 25:1-13).

Samuel had died. It is doubtful if David were able to go to the funeral. Instead it seems that he moved farther south than he had been before--"down to the wilderness of Paran" (v. 1b). He probably felt less secure than ever with Samuel off of the scene.

However, there was a man named Nabal, a rich man, who had sheep in Carmel that he was shearing. David and his men had protected Nabal's men while they were caring for their sheep so that they did not lose any animals, supposedly to thieves, or to wild animals (of which there were many in that area in those days). And so David asked for some food for his men in

return for what he had done for them. We are told in verse Nabal was a tough, hard man ("churlish"), and that he was evil. He was a bad man even though he had a beautiful, wise, and godly wife named Abigail.

When David's men went to Nabal with David's request, without any hesitation Nabal turned them down. We read this in verses 10, 11.

This is where we see a different David. He was furious. He told 400 of his men to get ready to fight, and his thoughts are expressed in the next section of the story, in verses 21, 22. David intended to kill all of Nabal's men. He used language that was not becoming to him as a man of God. He spoke scornfully of Nabal and his men. Some say that he was calling them dogs when he spoke of them as "any that pisseth against the wall."

This language is shocking to us, and we would prefer to pass over it especially when reading this chapter in public. But it does not give the full significance of what was going on merely to change that expression to make it read any man. The Spirit of God evidently wanted us to learn that when we get angry we are liable to use language that is utterly unbecoming to a child of God.

How many times have you gotten so mad that you felt like taking the Lord's name in vain? Or maybe you did. This is here for our learning, and it shows why Solomon told his son to keep his heart with all diligence (Prov. 4:23). David probably had a just cause against Nabal, but certainly not to murder, nor to speak like what we would say was the language of the street.

At this time we see:

II. THE INTERVENTION OF ABIGAIL (1 Sam. 25:14-31).

Nabal's men went to tell Abigail what had happened. They told her that David and his men had been good to them, and had protected them, and that they had tried to tell Nabal, but he would not listen to them. They knew that their lives were in danger, and they feared the very worst from David and his men. This is all told in verses 14-17.

Abigail immediately prepared a lot of food, loaded it on donkeys, and left to take the food to David without telling Nabal, her husband, what she was doing.

When she met David, he and his men were on their way to do what David had determined they would do. Abigail dismounted,

fell on her face before David, and began to plead with him.

She did several interesting things.

First, she took the blame on herself for what her husband had done. And we can be sure that this was not the first time that Abigail had been put in that position. See v. 24.

Second, she admitted that her husband was a "man of Belial" (v. 25), which was the equivalent of saying that he was not a child of God. So she must have known the truth of salvation. She admitted that he was foolish, living up to his name.

But the third thing that she did is the most interesting.

She told David that the Lord was involved in her coming to him before he got to Nabal. She saw that the Lord was at work in restraining David from doing what he was about to do. And very graciously she asked David's forgiveness, and reminded him that the Lord would take care of him. She knew that he one day would be king, and she knew also that the Lord had been fighting his battles for him. But she wanted him to get to the throne without having a lot of regrets upon his conscience because he did not leave his circumstances in the Lord's hand. She said, in effect, that he did not need Nabal to take care of him when he had the Lord!

Read verses 28-31.

This brings us to:

III. DAVID'S RESPONSE (1 Sam. 25:32-35).

We can see the grace of God in action. Perhaps David was impressed with her beauty as well as with her wisdom, but he did something that was not normal for a man to do. He accepted her plea, saw that the Lord had sent her and had stopped him, and told her that if she had not come there would not have been one of Nabal's men alive by the next morning. We still can see in David's words that his anger was at a high pitch. But to the Lord's praise, He stopped, turned around, and went back to the two hundred men who had stayed by the stuff.

What happened?

IV. THE VENGEANCE OF GOD (1 Sam. 25:36-38).

The Lord does not always act as speedily as He did this time because in ten days Nabal was dead! And it is just as

significant to see that "the Lord smote Nabal, that he died," as it is to read that the Lord kept David from laying a hand on Nabal and killing his men.

V. THE EVENTS WHICH FOLLOWED (1 Sam. 25:39-44).

David praised the Lord in verse 39a.

He proposed to Abigail, and she accepted. See vv. 39b-42.

He also married Ahinoam of Jezreel. See v. 43.

Finally, we are simply told that Saul had taken his daughter who was married to David, and had given her to a man by the name of Phalti. This is in v. 44.

Concl: What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this period in David's life?

There are several.

One is that we should carefully avoid the sin of anger. It really changed David into another man. It laid hold of his life and made a potential murderer out of him. Such a possibility is with all of us. Things can so suddenly arise to take us by surprise, and if we forget the Lord, and forget to trust Him, we can do things that we will regret the rest of our lives.

Along with this is the fact that God is greater than any man. In fact, He is greater than all men combined! Therefore, what we need to do when things like this happen, is to commit ourselves and our needs into the hands of our great and wise God. You see, all of this was a part of the training that the Lord was giving to David to prepare him for the work that was ahead. Nabal could have said yes just as easily as he said no. But it was a part of the providence of God for him to say no so that David would see how the Lord would provide for him and his men.

We need to listen to people who try to get us to see when we are about to do something that will grieve the Lord, and also be a grief to us. In David's case He used Abigail, and it is to the glory of God that David listened to her. An angry man isn't usually willing to listen to anyone. But God was at work, teaching David to trust Him, not to take matters into his own hands.

The Lord was also teaching David that the Word of God is true. David did not have all of the Bible like we do. In fact, he had a very small part of it. But he did have the

books of the Law, and in the last of those books, Deuteronomy, chapter 32, verse 35, are four words in our English translation which are quoted twice in the NT. They read like this: "To me belongeth vengeance." Cf. Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30. In our personal conflicts, when we try to get even (which is what David was trying to do), we are doing what God says is His work, and we are failing to do what He wants us to do: wait for Him, and trust in Him.

God does not always restrain us. He did not restrain David when David proposed to Abigail and took her as his wife when he already had a wife. Some questions that we have about the Lord's dealings with His people will have to wait for their answers. But let us be careful to find out what is in our Bibles so that we can be restrained by the Word of God when we are inclined to do what we may think is expedient when God has declared in His Word that it is sin. David in his relationship with women was laying a foundation that made it seem of little consequence when he committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of one of his most faithful men.

May the Lord keep us from sin. And may we walk in obedience to His Word so that we will not grieve Him.

THE LORD'S ANOINTED
1 Samuel 26

Intro: This is a chapter in which we see history being repeated. In chapter 24 we are told of the first time that David had an opportunity to kill Saul, but he refused. Here in chapter 26 he had the opportunity again, and again he refused. And each time he refused to kill Saul on the basis that Saul was "the Lord's anointed." He used that term four times in this chapter. See vv. 9, 11, 16, 23.

What did he mean, "the Lord's anointed"?

David was referring to what Samuel did to Saul back in the ninth and tenth chapters of 1 Samuel. The people had asked for a king, and, although the Lord was not ready for them to have a king, He granted their request.

Saul providentially had come to Samuel seeking guidance as to where he could find his father's donkeys. The day before Saul got to Samuel, the Lord told Samuel the words which are found in 1 Sam. 9:16, 17.

The record of the anointing is given in 1 Sam. 10:1.

The anointing meant that Saul was the Lord's choice to become Israel's first king. This was a divine appointment. Saul did not volunteer. The people did not elect him. He was God's choice, and this was confirmed when the prophet Samuel anointed him with oil.

However, when Saul disobeyed the Lord by not destroying all of the Amalekites in chapter 15, he was told that the Lord had taken the kingdom away from him and given it to a neighbor of his, who turned out to be David, the son of Jesse. And in 1 Sam. 16:13 we are told that Samuel anointed David to be Saul's successor.

Saul knew about this, and so did Jonathan, the son of Saul. But the Lord did not immediately remove Saul from the throne of Israel. And, as we have seen, as time went on Saul became bitter in his hatred of David, and sought to kill him. And David had to live like a fugitive. And yet this is the second time that he had an opportunity to kill Saul, and twice he refused, saying that he could not do it because Saul was "the Lord's anointed." And on this point David acted against the advice of his men, on the first occasion, and against the advice of Abishai, his nephew, on the second occasion.

Let us examine the two ways of determining the will of God.

Let us look first at:

I. DAVID'S MEN AND CIRCUMSTANCES.

It is apparent that David's men determined the will of God primarily on the basis of circumstances.

There was no question but that Saul deserved to die.

There was no question but that everybody in Israel, including his own family, would have been better off if he were out of the way. It is terrible to say something like this, but nevertheless it was true.

It seemed also that David would have been acting within the will of God because they all knew that he had been anointed to succeed Saul. Even Jonathan, Saul's son, knew this, and was in full accord with the will of God.

And it seemed providential that the Lord on these two occasions had provided David with the opportunity to kill his enemy. See the words of David's men in 1 Sam. 24:4, and then Abishai's words in 1 Sam. 26:8. Abishai, especially, could have felt that the Lord gave David a second chance to kill Saul because he did not take advantage of it the first time.

But now let us look at David's guidance. He, too, looked at circumstances, but in a different way from his men and from Abishai.

II. DAVID'S GUIDANCE.

David saw the circumstances in a different light. He did not believe that just because you could do something, you should do it! He did not see the opportunity to kill Saul as proof that the Lord wanted him to kill Saul.

Instead, David could see that the Lord had left Saul on the throne of Israel, and he did not believe that it was his responsibility to remove him. And he manifested a strong belief in the sovereignty of God by his words which are found in 1 Sam. 26:10. He knew that the Lord could remove Saul whenever he chose to do so, and in whatever manner might be pleasing to Himself, but to kill Saul was not something that he felt in his heart that he could do.

Obviously David's understanding of the greatness of God was one thing that held him back, but another had to do with the ways of God in the past, and the will of God expressed in his Word.

One of the most prominent truths in the Word of God is that we are to be submissive to God-given authority. Everybody is to be submissive to God. Children are to obey their parents. Wives are to be submissive to their husbands. Husbands are to be submissive to Christ. Citizens are to be submissive to their governmental leaders. In the church the people of God are to be submissive to their leaders, and the leaders (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers, elders, deacons)--the leaders are to be submissive to God.

And the Lord has revealed this very clearly in his Word. He is the Lord, and all of us are to live in submission to Him in the various relationships we have to each other. People today are always talking about their rights--their right to do this and that and the other thing. But the Word of God makes it clear that the most important lesson any of has to learn is the lesson of submission--submission to God first, and then to each other.

Two verses which David must have known, and which he may have actually written, are these, found in Psa. 105:14, 15:

He suffered no man to do them wrong;
yea, he reproved kings for their sakes;
Saying, Touch not mine anointed,
and do my prophets no harm.

Israel was His anointed nation. The prophets were his anointed messengers--and remember that Saul was not only the king, but also he had prophesied. No one, the people of God or anyone else, has the right to rebel against the leadership which the Lord has placed over them. In these days when we are so careful to preserve our rights we need to give special attention to those things which we do NOT have the right to do.

Now let us think for just a moment about:

III. THE PEOPLE OF GOD TODAY.

Now don't think of the exceptions, but think of the guidance given to us in the Word of God. Let me take four areas of our lives:

- 1) The home.
- 2) The church.
- 3) The work place.
- 4) The government.

A. The home (Eph. 5:17-6:4).

Husbands, wives, and children are all under divinely appointed authority.

B. The church (Heb. 13:7, 17).

Church leaders and the people of the church are all under divinely appointed authority. The leaders, to the Lord and to His Word, and the people to their leaders.

C. The work place (Col. 3:22-4:1).

Employers need to pay particular attention to Col. 4:1; employees to Col. 3:24, and that which leads up to it in verses 22 and 23.

D. The government (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17).

Concl: In all of these areas there can be problems, but the important thing for all of us is to know the will of God, and then to do it--by the grace of God. Our leaders may be far from what they should be, but they hold their place by a divine anointing. If they are unfaithful, the Lord will deal with them. If we are unfaithful, the Lord will deal with us. Professing Christians today are bringing reproach upon the Name of Christ by blocking abortion clinics, by refusing to pay taxes, and by other manifestations of rebellion against authority. David was willing to leave his reputation, his ministry, his very life, in the Lord's hands. And he found, as we will, when we trust the Lord, that He will take care of us when pleasing Him is the main thing that we are concerned about.

Saul was fighting against the Lord, and he lost. David was trusting the Lord, and he won. May the Lord give us the grace to follow David, not Saul.

And let us remember that this word "anointed" is from the same Hebrew verb that we get the title, Messiah. He is the one Anointed One that is always faithful, and we dare not be in rebellion against Him.

DARKER DAYS IN ISRAEL

1 Samuel 27, 28

Intro: There is a special way in which these two chapters go together. In the first we see David departing from Israel to live among the Philistines; in the second we see Saul going to inquire of the woman with the familiar spirit, usually referred to as the witch of Endor.

In each of these we see the unbelief, the sin, of the two leading men of Israel: Saul, the king; and David, who was to be his successor. Sin is always bad wherever it is found, but it is especially harmful when it is found in the hearts of leaders. That is true of leaders of nations, leaders in business, leaders of a church, or leaders of a family. The record is certainly not given for us to imitate, but as a warning of the dangers that face all of us.

Let us look, first, at David in 1 Samuel 27.

I. DAVID (1 Sam. 27).

David had been living a very humiliating, discouraging, and trying life. The Psalms he wrote during this time tell us how greatly tested he was. He had prayed for the Lord to turn things around, and yet, if anything, his situation grew steadily worse. As this chapter begins we see the extent of his discouragement in verse 1, and what he did about it in verse 2. His words seem to indicate that he had all but given up hope that he would ever be the king of Israel.

His two sins were impatience and unbelief.

He did what we are inclined to do. He had set a time limit upon the Lord, and so had convinced himself that, if the Lord had not done something by this time, He was not going to work. Samuel was dead. We learned that in chapter 25. And now David did not have the support of the very man who had anointed him to be the king.

It may not have been that David was ambitious to be king; he just wanted some peace in his life. But it did not seem to him that he would have any as long as Saul was alive. Little did he know when he began to think like this that the end was near for Saul.

Whatever may have been the situation, he left Israel and went down to live among the Philistines, Israel's bitter enemy at that time. It would seem that he was transferring his confidence from the Lord to men, and that to men who were unbelievers. He took charge of his own life, and turned away

from the Lord. It would have seemed earlier that there was no possibility that David would do such a thing. But the history of the people of God from the beginning gives us many examples of the Lord's people doing things which you would never expect that they would do.

One thing that we need to notice in David's decision is that things worked out in an amazing way. King Achish accepted him, gave him the city of Ziklag in which to dwell, and David lived there, as verse 8 tells us, "a full year and four months."

We are often inclined to say that, if things work out, then what we are doing must be the will of God. Well, they worked out for David. He was safer. He was victorious in the battles in which he was engaged. If circumstances are an proof of being in the will of God, David had the proof.

But we find an interesting thing that developed during this time.

David had to support himself and his men by their conquests, and so he went against the Amalekites and nations allied with them. This would have helped both Israel as well as the Philistines, but the problem was that the Philistines could have begun to feel that, if David did this to other people, he could very easily do the same thing to the Philistines themselves.

And so, what did David do? He lied about his activities. And to make sure that his lie was not discovered, he killed all of the people he conquered so that no one could report on him. He told them that he was going against the people who lived in the southern part of Judah. This would have pleased Achish since this would make him feel that David had really turned against his own people.

It is really sad to see all of this. In so many ways David is an example to us of a real man of God. Even the Lord spoke of him as being a man after God's heart. But it seems that, regardless of how good a man might be, there are always weaknesses and failures that disappoint us. Our trials may be long, and the prospect seem hopeless. But we learn from David that at the very time we feel like giving up, the Lord was preparing to work.

We learned from Heb. 6:12 that we are to be "followers of them who through **faith** and **patience** inherit the promises." These are the two places where David failed. He quit trusting the Lord, and he decided not to wait for the Lord any longer. The anointing was a special promise from God to

David, a promise that the Lord would not forget. But David grew weary and impatient, overwhelmed by the circumstances which were all around him, and which, if they changed, only got worse. And so this is in the record of Scripture as one place where David failed the Lord.

Did this change the purpose of God for David? Did the Lord tell David that because he went down to Gath that he could not be king after all? No! The purposes of God do not change, but there were blessings that David missed because he did not wait on the Lord.

None of us was born with much patience, if any at all. Look at the behavior of a little child, even an infant, if he or she does not get what he wants when he wants it. If our children get upset in the nursery during church, they don't agree to wait until church is over before they want their parents. Unfortunately (or maybe fortunately) the only way we learn patience is through testing. And it seems that everyone fails before they succeed in waiting for the Lord's time.

Again, let me refer to the book of Hebrews, chapter 10, verses 35 to 39. (Read.)

And remember what James wrote in chapter 1, verse 2 through 4. (Read.)

The Lord has given us some wonderful promises, but He is concerned that in claiming the promises, we benefit from a time of waiting. You see, the Lord was not only concerned about what was going on around David; He was concerned about what was going on in David.

I want to point out one more thing about what David did.

You remember, of course, that David had two opportunities to kill Saul, but he refused to do it each time. We are going to see in the chapters ahead that David's alliance with King Achish put him in a position where he, David, would go to war against Israel at the very time that Saul would be killed! Note the first two verses of chapter 28. David would have had a part in Saul's death if the Lord had not providentially intervened, as we shall see.

One thing we have to remember is not only what we might consider to be the immediate benefits of moving ahead of the Lord, but the long-term tragedies that can follow our initial disobedience.

But now let us look at Saul; this is a pathetic story indeed.

II. SAUL (1 Sam. 28).

Interestingly this episode in the life of Saul also had to do with guidance. In David's case we saw that he provided his own guidance; in Saul's case he sought it in the wrong place.

For some reason when Saul saw the armies of the Philistines arrayed against him, he was afraid--perhaps more afraid than he had ever been. Perhaps he had begun to feel that the end was near for him. He could not go to Samuel for guidance because Samuel was dead. He had gone to the Lord for guidance, but no answer had come. And so he decided to do what no Israelite was ever to do: He decided to consult a witch.

Note what the Scriptures say about what Saul did. Cf. Lev. 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deut. 18:9-14.

Saul had banished witches from the land, and yet in his own time of need, instead of getting his heart right so that he could seek the Lord, he did what God had forbidden, and that which he himself had sought to eliminate from the land.

What happened?

Saul asked to be able to speak to Samuel. And Samuel appeared to him. Does this prove that there is something to necromancy--the claim of some that we can consult with the dead? Absolutely not! Was this really Samuel? I would say that it was. How can we explain it then? This was a special work that God did to confound the witch, but also to confound Saul by letting him know that he had only twenty-four hours to live.

We are all amazed at such a story--or we should be! Here is the leader of the Lord's people seeking guidance from an instrument of the Devil.

Now you probably would not go to a fortune-teller--at least I would hope that you would never do such a thing. But what do you do when you need guidance from the Lord, and yet your prayers have not been answered? Do you resort to human means? Do you go to some counsellor to get him or her to tell you what to do? Or do you keep going to the Lord, seeking to get your own heart right so that God will answer your prayer. It is interesting to me that Saul was not concerned about the bitter hatred he had in his heart toward David. He was not concerned that he had been the occasion for David's sin in the preceding chapter. He was afraid for his own life, and, as it turned out, he had a big reason for being afraid. And, as it turned out, not only was King Saul

going to die, but so were three of his sons, his armorbearer, and many of his men.

However, even though Saul died in shame, I wonder if there is not a word of grace in what Samuel said to him. I am referring to verses 18 and 19 of this 28th chapter. (Read.) If Saul were going to be where Samuel was, and where even Jonathan would be, did this not mean that he was saved? Samuel could have been speaking of the grave, of death. But I am inclined to think that he meant with the Lord, a change which, under the circumstances would not have been particularly happy for Saul.

Cf. 1 John 2:28.

Does this mean that Saul was saved? I am inclined to think so. But the story of his life is tragic because he was a man who never really learned to trust the Lord and to walk by faith. This surely is an example of sin unto death. How careful we need to be that we are really trusting the Lord, and walking with Him, not ahead of him.

Concl: In conclusion please turn to two verses we had a week ago Sunday in our Sunday School lesson. Cf. 1 Chron. 10:13, 14.

These two chapters give us two reasons why it is sometimes difficult, even impossible, for us to know the will of God. The first is that we are not willing to wait for the Lord. The second is that there are things in our lives which are displeasing to the Lord which we are not willing to make right.

We all will have many occasions to know God's will this week. May the Lord give us the grace to wait upon Him, and to examine our own hearts to make sure that we are not living in disobedience to Him.

A CLOSED DOOR
1 Samuel 29

Intro: At the beginning of chapter 27 we see how impatience and unbelief caused David to make a bad decision. I doubt if he felt that the Lord could not take care of Saul, and open the way for him. But it was a case of, for whatever reason the Lord might have, He would not! And so he took matters into his own hands, and moved down into Gath. David's words in 1 Sam. 27:1 show that he was not trusting the Lord. And he did this even though he had the promise of God confirmed not only by Samuel who had anointed him, but by his good friend Jonathan, by Abigail who kept him from killing her husband Nabal, and even by Saul himself who knew that David was anointed to be king. It is amazing how we can sin against the light which we have when time drags on, and we do not see the hand of the Lord moving in our behalf.

F. B. Meyer remarks in his book on David that "no Psalms are credited to this period" (p. 139). Many of David's Psalms suggest that he was in trouble, but they usually ended with some expression of David's trust in the Lord, and his expectation that the Lord would help him. But that was not David's attitude at this time. In fact, he acted more like Saul than like himself.

Probably there are not very many of us who have not gone through the same difficult period in our lives. We commit a problem to the Lord. The problem does not change; in fact, it might become even more aggravating. And time begins to take its toll on us, and we find it difficult to pray about the problem and just as difficult to wait any longer for the Lord to do something for us. So instead of waiting we do something for ourselves--and it is usually the wrong thing.

However, the wonderful thing about the Lord is that He does not become unfaithful to us just because we are unfaithful to Him. Years after David had died, the Apostle Paul wrote some words to Timothy which were just as true in David's day as they were in Paul's day. The words to which I refer are found in 2 Tim. 2:13,

If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful:
he cannot deny himself.

The Lord will never be unfaithful to us regardless of how many times we get discouraged and quit trusting Him. In fact, being God, "he cannot deny himself." This expression means that He cannot back down on His promises. He cannot back down on His purposes. He will not change His mind. We may change and lose interest in the will of God, but the Lord does not change. He always deals with us in grace. Do you remember that when Jerry Bridges was here he referred to Sam

Storms who apparently is responsible for the statement that "grace is no longer grace if God is compelled to withdraw it in the presence of human demerit." He also mentioned this in his book, Transforming Grace (p. 53). When we come to this period in David's life we are viewing a period in which he could have had many points taken away from Him. But God does not deal with us that way. And so we should not be surprised to see God's grace continuing on in the life of David. This was not to be the last time, either, that David would displease the Lord.

This ought to be encouraging to all of us. Perhaps tonight you are a little put out with the Lord because of some problem you have been praying about for a long time. Maybe you have done something which you know is displeasing to God. You may have taken some steps in your life which cannot be retraced. You may have seen your mistake, and so you are farther ahead than David was at this point. The true revelation of God's grace does not make us feel like taking liberties with God. Instead, it helps us when we do, and always afterwards it serves as a warning to us about doing the same thing again.

David had gone to live with Israel's enemies. He was acting more like an unbeliever than a believer. He had to lie about his activities. However, many things worked out for him. He even had been appointed the person bodyguard of Achish, the king of Gath. In fact, we need to remember that this was the second time that David had gone to Achish. The first was in 1 Sam. 21 after David had gotten Goliath's sword from Ahimelech the priest. But David was like we all are in such times of spiritual declension: He did not realize what some of the consequences of his rebellion against the Lord might be.

Achish had told David at the beginning of chapter 28 that he and his men would go out to battle with him. David seems to have agreed to this, and it indicates that, at least for the moment, he had forgotten his conviction regarding Saul. He had twice refused to kill Saul because Saul was the Lord's anointed. But now he was in a position where he would be on the enemy's side in the battle when Saul would be killed. It is interesting and alarming to see what rebellion against the Lord does to us. David did not know that Saul and Jonathan would be killed, but he surely must have known that the Philistines would go against Israel and Saul. Achish did not know this either. Saul knew it because Samuel had told him. And, as we shall see, the prediction of Samuel was correct.

As chapter 29 begins, Achish stood by what he had told David earlier, and we find David and his men joining with the

Philistines to go against Israel and King Saul.

I. THE INSTRUMENTS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE (1 Sam. 29:1-7).

Solomon wrote those words in Prov. 21:1 which says,
 The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord,
 as the rivers of water:
 he turneth it whithersoever he will.

It is interesting to note that the Lord did not work directly in the heart of King Achish. He worked in the hearts of the princes of the Philistines, that is, the princes of the other Philistine powers. And the Lord worked to make Achish do something he did not want to do, and then to make David do something that he did not want to do. And in spite of all that Achish said to his fellow-Philistines, they were insistent that David and his men go back. They were afraid that he would work against them when they got into the battle to gain favor with the Israelites.

Note what the Philistine princes called David and his men. They said, "What do **these Hebrews** here?" (1 Sam. 29:3). The origin of that expression, Hebrews, is not really known, but it is used the first time in Scripture to describe Abraham in Gen. 14:13. While the term itself may have come from Eber, one of Abraham's ancestors, yet it seems that it may have originated with the Gentiles and used of Abraham's descendants to show their scorn for him, and the fact that he was an outsider.

We have it again in Gen. 39:14 when Potiphar's wife charged David with making advances toward her, and she said to one of the servants in her house, "See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us." Joseph was an outsider. He did not belong.

It is interesting to see that even though a child of God might be among unbelievers, he is always considered to be an outsider. We are strangers and pilgrims in the earth, and even when we might try to obliterate the line that separates us from the world, the people of the world recognize that it is there. They know who we are.

But there is another thing here worth noting.

It is interesting, isn't it, that David could be so faithful to Achish while he was so unfaithful to the Lord? However, the Lord was at work to spare his wayward servant from doing what he would afterward regret to his dying day. See what Abigail had said to David regarding his plan to kill Nabal. Cf. 1 Sam. 25:30, 31. One of the most tragic things about

being out of fellowship with the Lord is that we create memories for ourselves that we will carry with us for the rest of our lives.

It is plain to see that the Lord was closing the door to Achish and to David.

Some feel that David was beginning to realize what he had done, and that he followed Achish with a heavy heart. I doubt if that were the case. And I say that because of what we read in verse 8 where we see:

II. DAVID'S OBJECTION (1 Sam. 29:8).

Unbelief can make us blind to the consequences of our actions. And David strongly objected to the charges that the Philistine princes had brought against him. They may have heard reports of the growing opposition against Saul. But David here was fighting against the very thing that the Lord was doing to protect him.

III. THE FINAL WORD OF ACHISH (1 Sam. 29:9-11).

David and his men were told to go back early the next morning. The Lord had closed the door.

Concl: It is interesting that the Lord often gives us guidance, and forces us to do what we do not want to do. We speak of God's grace as being irresistible, and that is exactly what it is in so many instances. It may have been that way with some of you even where salvation was concerned. Some of you will remember the message we have on tape by Dr. Sutcliffe in which he said, speaking about salvation, that he did not want the Lord, he was not looking for the Lord. But the Lord wanted him and the Lord was looking for him. And do you know what the end of the story was? The Lord got him!

Let us not be guilty of fighting against the Lord. When it seems that nothing is happening, WAIT! The Lord is mighty enough to do whatever He wants to do whenever He wants to do it regardless of who the people are who seem to stand in His way. David had taught the importance of waiting, but when the burden got greater than he could bear, he failed to practice what he had preached.

How we should praise the Lord for His faithfulness! We see it all through the Word of God. And we can see it all through our lives. He has never failed us before; let us continue to trust Him and to wait for Him regardless of what the problem might be that we are facing tonight. Blessing comes from waiting, and trusting. Cf. Heb. 6:11, 12.

TRIED BY FIRE

1 Samuel 30

Intro: We are dealing with the period in David's life in which, because of his discouragement, he acted, as one writer said, "in prayerlessness and self-will" (Taylor, William H., David, King of Israel, p. 177). It was then that he went down to live among Israel's enemies in Gath. This was not what the Lord wanted him to do, but the problem was actually in David's heart. So the Lord had the task not only of changing David's geographical location, but what was most important, of changing David's heart.

Discouragement is a common problem among the Lord's people, and it is wonderful that such a time in David's life has been recorded for us by the Holy Spirit so we can see:

- 1) How we complicate things for ourselves when we take matters into our own hands.
- 2) How gracious and merciful God is in spite of our sin. This was certainly an instance when, as David was to write in Psalm 103:10,
He hath not dealt with us after our sins;
nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
- 3) How he works in our hearts to turn our hearts back to Himself.

If we are not careful, times of discouragement can be times when great mistakes are made, times when we will do things which we will regret later on.

We have already seen much evidence of:

I. THE GRACE AND MERCY OF GOD TOWARD DAVID.

- A. In sending the kind of men who came to him while he was at Ziklag.

We had the account of this a few weeks ago in our SS lesson. See 1 Chron. 12. There were many of them, and they were outstanding men from a military standpoint.

- B. In causing the Philistines to send David back to Ziklag instead of going on to fight Saul and the Israelites.

We have this in 1 Samuel 29. It is very clear that, although we were seeing what the Philistines princes did, it was the hand of God that moved them to reject David and his men.

The third thing that I will mention may not sound like a gracious act of Divine Providence, but it was.

C. The burning of Ziklag.

This is the account that we have in the chapter before us this evening. From a human standpoint it was a great tragedy. Their homes were destroyed by fire. Their possessions had been taken. Their wives and children had been carried away. But a special evidence of the mercy of God to David and his men is seen in the fact that not a single wife was killed, not a single son, not a single daughter! And this has to be the hand of God when we remember what David had done to the Amalekites a short time before. See 1 Sam. 27:8, 9. The usual thing for the Amalekites to have done was to treat David and his men like they had treated the Amalekites. And perhaps it was something of a mystery to the Amalekites themselves that they did not kill the families of David's men. We know, however, that the hand of God had been extended toward them, and that the Lord had said, in effect, "You can go this far, but not a step farther." Here is superabundant mercy.

But now we must turn our attention to:

II. THE PURPOSE OF GOD.

Many years after David was gone the prophet Jeremiah in his book of Lamentations wrote these words in Lam. 3:31-33:

For the Lord will not cast off for ever:
But though he cause grief,
yet will he have compassion
according to the multitude of his mercies.
For he doth not afflict willingly
nor grieve the children of men.

(Explain.)

We have a similar statement in the book of Hebrews, chapter 12, verses 5-11. Please turn to this passage, and let me read it for you.

Many lives were being affected. In fact, after their initial grief, David's men were talking about killing him. David, the man who felt that Saul would eventually kill him, was now faced with an even greater and more immediate consequence of the decision he had made long before to move down among the Philistines.

But it was at this point that the purpose of God was fulfilled. We read at the end of verse 6, "...but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God."

In the depth of this trial, this fiery trial in more than one way, David did what he apparently had not done for a long

time. He turned to the Lord. "He encouraged himself in the Lord his God."

The Spirit of God has closed the door on what went on between David and "the Lord his God" at this time. We know what he did afterwards. But what did he do to encourage himself in the Lord? Be sure to notice that the cure for discouragement is encouragement. But he did not encourage himself in what he could do, nor in what his men might do. He encouraged himself in the Lord.

This is the same verb that we saw in 1 Sam. 23:16 when Jonathan "strengthened his hand in God." A discouraged person is a weak person, if not weak physically, at least weak in courage, weak in moral and spiritual strength. So it would seem that whatever Jonathan did with David in 1 Sam. 23, David did for himself here in 1 Sam. 30.

This word was used by David himself in the last verse (14) of Psalm 27 where he wrote,

Wait on the Lord: be of good courage,
and he **shall strengthen** thine heart:
wait, I say, on the Lord.

David was strengthened by remember Who the Lord is. He was strengthened when he was reminded of the purpose of God for his own life. And he was strengthened, he was encouraged when he remembered the promises of God.

How long this took, we do not know--probably not very long. But this was the time when David came back to the Lord. This was when the Lord did a work in his soul.

And so what did David do?

III. DAVID'S RESPONSE.

Now we see the David we are used to seeing.

- A. He called for Abiathar the priest, and enquired of the Lord. See vv. 7, 8a.

Abiathar's answer was most encouraging. He not only told him to go after their wives and children, but that they would "without fail recover all."

- B. David obeyed. See vv. 8b-10.

And as David went to do what the Lord had told him to do, the Lord provided all of the guidance they needed through a weak Egyptian servant who had been deserted by his master three

days before because he had gotten sick. It was not only an act of providence that they found him, but that he had not died in the meantime.

David and his men found the Amalekites celebrating their victory. David attacked, and after a battle which lasted for twenty-four hours, they killed all but 400 Amalekites who escaped, and recovered all of their families and everything that the Amalekites had taken from them.

Concl: How gracious the Lord was! This had to be one of the greatest victories ever experienced by the children of Israel in their whole history. It had to be a miraculous victory for since none of the women and children were killed. They must have been in the center of the battle.

However, David and his men had so much that they took in the battle that they were able to share their victory with many others in Judah. The account of this is given in the last six verses of the chapter.

What are some of the lessons that we should learn from this chapter? There are several.

First, it is clear that it is a bad thing, a sinful thing, for us to take matters into our own hands like David did. We need to fight discouragement every time it tries to take over in our lives.

Second, we can see that the Lord always has purposes in what He does to us. He doesn't waste His time, nor ours.

Third, the life of David teaches us much about the grace of God. Even when we don't deserve help, the Lord gives it. And before we decide to seek Him, He has already been seeking us. Therefore, we should never question whether or not we ought to turn to the Lord.

Finally, let me say that David's experience here teaches us that when we seek to know what we should do, the Lord shows us. He may not speak audibly to us, but He guides us by His Word and by the work of the Spirit in our hearts and by the way He orders our circumstances.

David came out of this fiery trial a different man, a stronger man, an encouraged man. And there is no doubt but that God's goodness to him at that time caused him to write in many Psalms those encouraging words in which he exhorted us to wait and the Lord, and to believe that He would guide us and help us regardless of what the circumstances might be.

A NATION HUMILIATED

1 Samuel 31

Intro: We come tonight to the last chapter of 1 Samuel.

This book began with the birth of Samuel and ends with the death of Saul. It began in hope; it ends in tragedy. It began with God honoring a godly woman; it ends with the terrible death of Israel's first king.

And so, while our main interest in going through the book has been to focus upon David, he is not even mentioned in chapter 31. (In the parallel passage in 1 Chron. 10 David is mentioned, but only to say that the Lord was, by the death of Saul, turning the kingdom over to David.) I am quite sure that David was grateful to the Lord to the end of his days that he was not involved in that terrible battle which cost the lives of Saul, Jonathan, and two of Jonathan's brothers. He would have been if the Lord had not moved upon the hearts of the princes of the Philistines to send him away.

This had to be one of the worst times in the history of Israel. What made it so tragic, so humiliating?

I. A TRAGIC DEFEAT.

What made it so tragic? Several things.

- A. The army of Israel was driven far to the north in their own territory.
- B. Many soldiers in Israel's army died.
- C. Three of Saul's sons died with him, among them David's dear friend, Jonathan.
- D. Saul was wounded, and then committed suicide, his armor bearer doing the same thing.
- E. The people of Israel fled from their homes only to have them occupied by the Philistines.
- F. Saul's body was stripped of his armor, his head was cut off. His body was hung on the wall of the town in Israel named Beth-shan, or Bethshean. (The same was done to the bodies of his sons.) His head was hung in the temple of Dagon (according to 1 Chron. 10:10), and his armor was hung up in the temple of Ashtaroth.

Everything that the Philistines could possibly have done to humiliate and to disgrace Saul and Israel,

was done.

And what made it even more pitiable was that it was all so unnecessary.

Let me review with you for just a moment the manner in which Saul had become king.

II. THE ANOINTING OF SAUL.

This takes us back to chapters 9 through 12 in 1 Samuel.

The people had asked for a king so they could be like other nations. This grieved the Lord, and it grieved Samuel. But the people would have it no other way. And so the Lord gave them Saul who is described in 1 Sam. 9:2. He was tall, dark, and handsome. He was not Israel's worst man, but among the best. In fact, no one was better than he. We see evidence of his humility in those days when he said what he did in 1 Sam. 9:21. Read also 1 Sam. 10:21-23.

And then notice also what the Lord said about Saul in 1 Sam. 9:16, 17. This is truly amazing grace!

Then see 1 Sam. 10:9, 10. God gave him a new heart, and placed him among the prophets.

Everything good that could have been done for a man, was done for Saul. No one had a greater opportunity for success than Saul did.

But let us even go back before Saul's time, to the promises that God had given to the nation Israel through Moses.

III. THE NATION'S PROMISES FROM GOD.

Please turn to Deut. 7. I want to read to you verses 12 through to the end of the chapter (v. 26).

Such promises as these were given to the people of Israel at other times. There was only one reason that these promises would not be carried out--and this one reason is stated over and over again throughout the OT. It has been given to Saul. The one condition for blessing in the land and victory over their enemies was that they be obedient to Word of the Lord. That was all that God required. The blessings would be poured out upon them if they would only please God.

This is where Israel failed, and this is where Saul failed. The people of the Lord failed to learn this simple lesson. And so they experienced this disastrous defeat at the hands

of the Philistines, who were not satisfied just to defeat them, but wanted to humiliate them. And this they did. And speaking from a human point of view it is only because of the grace of God that Israel survived this shameful defeat.

Now let me call your attention to:

IV. A RAY OF HOPE (1 Sam. 31:11-13).

I am sure you have noticed when reading the prophets of Israel and Judah that usually the most distressing prediction of judgment is usually followed by some promise of hope. That is the way the book of 1 Samuel ends. It may have begun with hope and ended in tragedy, but there is also hope here. And it has to do with "the valiant men" of Jabesh-gilead.

Do you know what the Hebrew word for translated "valiant" means?

It comes from a verb which means to bind together, or to braid. This was done for strength, as in braiding a rope.

There is some wisdom in the book of Ecclesiastes which I want to remind you of tonight. It is found in Ecc. 4:9-12. Please turn to that passage with me, and let me read it to you. (Read.)

Solomon was speaking here of the advantage that two have, or that three have. When we think of the men of Jabesh-gilead (like Portland, Oregon) we are not thinking of two or three, but most of the men of the city. The nation was defeated, the country was in disgrace, but there were men in Jabesh-gilead whose hearts God had touched! And they were determined to salvage whatever they honor they could for their fallen king and his sons who had died with him.

If you want to talk about taking risks, that is what these men did. Beth-shan was undoubtedly one of the cities that the Philistines had captured, but these men of Jabesh-gilead took their lives in their own hands, as we would say, and not only went after Saul's body, and the bodies of his sons, but they got them, brought them back, gave them a decent burial, and fasted and mourned for them for seven days.

Concl: What lessons can we learn from this rather discouraging chapter, and its companion chapter: 1 Chron. 10?

There undoubtedly are many lessons we could take from a chapter like this, but let me mention two, and they both have to do with the sovereignty of God.

Let me go from the end of the chapter back toward the beginning.

First, we can see from this chapter that regardless of how dark things may get for the people of God, personally or corporately, we can always have hope. The work of the Lord will never be totally extinguished. The light of truth may burn with a low flame at times, but God always has his people who have not bowed the knee to Baal, people who against the greatest difficulties, still trust in God, and are willing to venture out for him. This is not for man's glory, but for the glory of the Lord Who has made us His own.

This was true in David's day, and it is true in our day.

Second, this chapter points out the importance of daily obedience to the Lord.

Let me read to you again those words at the end of 1 Chron. 10 which I have read to you previously: verses 13,14.
(Read.)

We all have trouble here. It seems like we always have some way of sidestepping the Word of God to try to justify doing something besides what the Lord wants us to do. Obedience to the Lord never guarantees that our lives will be without trouble, but it does guarantee that our lives will never be without blessing. A child of God can go through deep waters, but, if he is walking with the Lord, there can still be peace and joy and, most important of all, glory that we can bring to God.

And we as a church need to be like the men of Jabesh-gilead, "valiant," bound together and strengthened by our relationship with each other, so that in these wicked days in which we live, we can bear testimony to the fact that there is a God in heaven, sovereign over all, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is our God and the One Who is sufficient for our needs.

DAVID'S GRIEF
2 Samuel 1

Intro: There is a principle in Scripture which is illustrated in the chapter before us tonight. It is found several places in the Word of God. For example, this is what David's son, Solomon, wrote in Prov. 24:17, 18:

Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth,
and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth:
Lest the Lord see it, and it displease him,
and he turn away his wrath from him.

We find a similar statement in Job's final defence of himself in Job 31:29, 30 when he mentioned that the following would have been sin deserving the troubles that he had experienced:

If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me,
or lifted up myself when evil found him:
Neither have I suffered my mouth to sin
by wishing a curse to his soul.

Even the prophet Obadiah rebuked the nation Edom in his brief, one-chapter prophecy, by telling them in verse 12:

But thou shouldest not have looked on the day
of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger;
neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over
the children of Judah in the day of the destruction;
neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly
in the day of distress.

What happens in the heart of any man when his enemy falls, is a major test of his character. If it brings him pleasure, it displeases God. If he grieves, and grieves sincerely, the blessing of the Lord is certain to follow.

There was probably no greater test that David had faced in his life than what his reaction would be when he received word that Saul was dead. We have Psalms to show that David had prayed for his own protection during those years that Saul had pursued him. It had meant great humiliation for David, and his life had been thrown completely into turmoil as a result of what Saul had done to him. The death of Saul was certain to open the door to the throne for David, the place God intended for him to have. And yet the news did not cause David nor his men to rejoice when they heard that Saul was dead.

Let us look at the account and try to learn some of the lessons that are here in 2 Sam. 1.

The chapter has two parts:

I. DAVID AND THE AMALEKITE (2 Sam. 1:1-16).

II. DAVID'S SONG OF LAMENTATION (2 Sam. 1:17-27).

Let us examine this critical time in David's life.

I. DAVID AND THE AMALEKITE (2 Sam. 1:1-16).

There had been many days that had passed very slowly during David's flight from Saul. His own soul had been so severely tried and discouraged that he finally went down to live in Gath. But suddenly things began to move so rapidly that he had trouble keeping up with them. He had gone off to war with the Philistines, only to be sent back because the Philistine princes did not trust him. When he got home, he found that Ziklag had been burned, and his family and the families of all of his men, along with all of their possessions, had been carried away by the Amalekites. After carefully seeking the will of God, David and his men went after the Amalekites, and were able to recover everything!

But then after he got back to Ziklag, probably wondering what the Lord had for him next, word came about the death of Saul and Jonathan. The man who brought the news to David turned out to be an Amalekite, friendly toward David. In his report he told how he had found Saul wounded, but alive. He said that Saul told him to kill him, and, saying that it would not have been possible for Saul to recover, the Amalekite said that he killed him, took his crown and the royal bracelet that Saul wore on his arm, and brought them to David.

This story does not agree with the account that we had in the last chapter of 1 Samuel. There we were told that Saul was wounded by the Philistines, that he had tried to get his armor bearer to kill him, but, when his armor bearer refused, he fell on his sword and died.

It seems that most commentators are over the opinion that the account in 1 Sam. 31 is the true account, and that this Amalekite had come along later, gotten the king's crown and bracelet, and fabricated the story in order to have David's favor upon him.

However, from the very moment David heard this news it was evident that David was deeply grieved, not jubilant.

Now think about this for a moment. Suddenly and most unexpectedly David's circumstances were changed! His enemy was dead! David would not know how quickly things would open up for him in view of the terrible condition of Israel. But things certainly could not be like they were. David had prayed and hoped for help, but he obviously did not want it to come as it did. And so he and his men mourned all day

long before turning their attention to the Amalekite.

Finally, David called the messenger who had brought the news to him, and asked him one thing: "How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?" Twice David had the opportunity to kill Saul, but the one thing that held him back was that Saul was the Lord's anointed one. Saul may have done wickedly, but it was not David's prerogative to kill Saul, and certainly the Amalekite had no right to do it. If the Amalekite were lying, as he probably was, his death was a judgment for such a lie. He condemned himself by his own lips. It is clear in the Proverbs also that our tongues can get us into trouble even though we might be trying to do something that we might feel justified in doing.

This execution was certainly evidence that the grief which David had expressed was not a false grief, but sorrow that came from the depths of his heart.

What did David do after this? He wrote a song.

II. DAVID'S SONG OF LAMENTATION (2 Sam. 2:17-27).

It seems from one textual reading of verse 18 that he called it, The Song of the Bow.

You will notice in reading through it that God is not mentioned. Therefore it was not a psalm to be placed in the book of the Psalms to be used in the worship and service of the people. There was no mention of the wrath of God, nor did David utter a prayer for the Lord to intervene with their enemies. He seemed content to leave the future and the explanation of the past in the Lord's hands. His purpose was to express his own grief, and to say the things that would be profitable for the people of Israel in the coming days.

Therefore this song was kept in the Book of Jasher, which, as far as we know, was a book in which certain writings were kept that had national significance in Israel. David did want the people to teach this song to the children, not just to remember what David's attitude was, but that the people of the nation Israel would remember the best of Saul, and realize that they were never to take the law into their own hands. David did what is usually hard for us to do when such things happen: he looked for the good things that could be said about Saul. But underneath it all was the fact that the death of Saul was a humiliation that had fallen upon the whole nation. We can liken it to situations in the church today which are disgraceful, and yet are to be lamented because they throw a cloud over the testimony of the whole

church.

To David, the death of Saul was no cause for celebration, but a time a humiliation. Verse 20 makes it clear that the news should not be made known. And in verse 21 he indicated that the scene of Saul and Jonathan's death should be under the judgment of God because of the tragic thing that had taken place there. David continued to refer to them as "the mighty." This is a word which is hardly ever used in a bad sense. It not only means strong, but victorious--and we can see this in verse 22. David may have slain his tens of thousands, but even the women of Israel praised Saul for slaying his thousands! There was much about Saul and Jonathan that David found to be sincerely worthy of praise. As I have said, he was looking for the good things.

This is a lesson for pastors conducting a service for someone who may not have been a Christian, nor especially noted for good things.

In verse 23 David was speaking of Saul and Jonathan in their relationship with each other, as father and son. Not even here was everything perfect, but David could see that it was evidence of good that they went to war together, and that they had died together. He called them "lovely and pleasant in their lives." This means that they were the kind of men you enjoyed being with.

In Saul's case David must have been looking at his earlier life, and perhaps the earlier relationship that the father and son had with each other. They loved each other, and they enjoyed being with each other. It was this kind of a relationship that the people of Israel should follow.

He called upon the women of Israel who had caused such jealousy to arise in Saul's heart toward David, to remember the good things that Saul had done for them. Their lives were better because of Saul.

Up to verse 25 David had been thinking of Saul, or Saul and Jonathan together. But in verse 25 and 26 he paid tribute to Jonathan who was his own very special friend. David was "distressed" over Jonathan. This means that his heart was completely given over to grief. Here again, as in verse 23 David used the word, "pleasant." He loved being with Jonathan. And the love that Jonathan had for David surpassed the love that women show for each other.

As the song concluded David expressed his great lamentation again. "The weapons of war" is a reference to Saul and Jonathan. God had used them for the protection of His

people, but now they are gone! It was indeed a sad, sad day for Israel, a day in which there were many lessons to be learned.

Concl: Let me mention three lessons in closing.

First, the story of Saul shows how well we can start, and how badly we can finish our lives and ministries here on earth. May the Lord enable us to finish even better than we started.

Second, the death of Jonathan and his two brothers should show those of us who are fathers and grandfathers how our disobedience to God can affect the lives of those who are the dearest to us--a compelling reason for us to walk with the Lord each day.

Third, let us remember the grief that our sin can cause others. Here were David and his men mourning over a self-willed, disobedient leader. Many had lost their lives and their homes. The nation was in disarray. The judgment of God had fallen in a most tragic way.

Let us learn from Saul how easily we can get out of the will of God, and how dire the consequences can be for ourselves, and for those we love and serve.

DAVID'S QUESTIONS, GOD'S ANSWERS
2 Samuel 2-4

Intro: In 1 Samuel 15 we read about the final step in God's rejection of Saul as king of Israel. Saul had disobeyed the Lord regarding the Amalekites, and it was Samuel who told Saul that the Lord was taking the kingdom away from him and would give it to a neighbor of his who was better than he was.

In 1 Samuel 16 Samuel was sent to the house of Jesse where he was to anoint the next king of Israel. After seeing seven of his sons, none of whom was the Lord's choice, David, the most unlikely of all, was brought in, and Saul poured the anointing oil upon him. And so David was to be the next king of Israel.

For about 7 or 8 years David waited, most of the time as a fugitive from Saul who was intent on killing him. Twice David had the opportunity to kill Saul, but he refused to do it because Saul was the Lord's anointed.

However, in the last chapter of 2 Samuel we read of the death of Saul and Jonathan. They died in a battle with the Philistines. And so the way was open for David to assume the place for which he had been anointed.

Through all of those years David had been growing in the Lord, learning more and more about the ways of the Lord. And so it should not be surprising to us to see that David did not rush back into his native land, expecting that the people would gladly receive him as their king. Instead we read five very important words. They are found in 2 Sam. 2:1, "David enquired of the Lord."

This is not the first time that we find this expression in connection with David. Note the following:

- 1) 1 Sam. 22:10, where Doeg told Saul that Ahimelech the priest enquired of the Lord for David. See also vv. 13 and 15.
- 2) 1 Sam. 23:2 and 4 where David was seeking guidance regarding giving help to the people of Keilah against the Philistines.

Later in that same chapter, after David had saved Keilah, he heard that Saul was coming, and again asked the Lord for guidance (although the word enquire was not used. Saul was coming to destroy Keilah because David had helped them. David wanted to know if the men of Keilah would turn him over to Saul to spare their city. The Lord said they would, and so David and his men left the city. But he sought the Lord before he left.

In passing we should note that in 1 Sam. 28:6, when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, and so in verse 7 we read that he went to enquire (the same word) of the witch of Endor.

- 3) 1 Sam. 30:8 David again enquired of the Lord as to whether or not he should pursue the men who had burned Ziklag and had taken their families.

On the two occasions when David had the opportunity to kill Saul, he did not need to enquire of the Lord because he knew the will of God, and refused to kill the king.

What does it mean to enquire of the Lord?

It meant that David was seeking guidance from the Lord. It means that David did not know what to do in those circumstances, and so he sought the will of God. In each case he knew what he wanted to do, and what it appeared that he should do, but he refused to take any action before he had a clear understanding of the will of God. He did not depend upon past experience, but sought the will of God in each instance.

Bound up in that one, short expression, there is one of the greatest of all lessons that we need to learn. In most cases we do what appears to be the best to us instead of enquiring of the Lord. It is hard for us to learn absolute dependence upon the Lord from the very first. But there is nothing more important for us to learn. It would save us a lot of worry. It would keep us from complicating our own lives. It would give the Lord the place that He needs to have and wants to have in our lives. And we would see more accomplished for His glory. There is probably no expression that is more descriptive of David's whole life. He was a man who enquired of the Lord. It is the same as saying that he was a man who did not trust in himself. Or to say that he was a man of prayer, a man who trusted the Lord to guide him and to protect him.

This would be a great title for a biography of David: The man who enquired of God. Or this would have been a true epitaph to put on David's grave.

However, according to Rom. 15:4 it is here to help us. It is here as an example for us to follow. We can enquire of the Lord in the same way that David did, and we need to just as much as he did. Let us ask the Lord to make us as faithful in enquiring of Him as David was.

However, getting back to our text, let us remember that David

knew what the Lord's will was for his life. He knew that he was to be the next king of Israel. But he did not know when that would be, nor did he know how he would get there. He did not know that he had waited only half as long as he was going to have to wait before he would be the king over all of Israel. These matters were still in doubt. And so he brought his questions to the Lord, seeking the Lord's answers.

Let us look at his questions, and let us look at the Lord's answers.

I. DAVID'S QUESTIONS, AND GOD'S ANSWERS (2 Sam. 2:1).

The questions are simple, and the answers are brief.

A. Question #1: "Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?"

B. Answer #1: "Go up."

That probably would have been enough for us, and we would have been gone. But that was not enough for David, and so he asked a second question.

C. Question #2: "Whither shall I go up?"

D. Answer #2: "Unto Hebron."

It would be wonderful if we were always given guidance the way David was given guidance here, but remember that David did not always have guidance so quickly or so clearly given. We only read of a few examples like this over a period of 7 or 8 years. There are times when God answers us right away. It all depends on the circumstances, and the will of God.

Secondly, we see:

II. THE OBEDIENCE OF DAVID AND HIS MEN (2 Sam. 2:2-4a).

They went up with their families, and dwelt in Hebron. And, apparently on their own, prompted, of course, by the Lord, the men of Judah came and anointed David as king over Judah. It came about that simply, and that quickly.

You see, when the Lord is ready to work, He works so quickly that it can take your breath away. The thing that would have been impossible for David, was possible with the Lord.

Things had moved at a snail's pace for 7 or 8 years, but suddenly the Lord moved like lightning!

HOWEVER, after this they were going to slow down again because verse 11 of this chapter tells us that it was going to be another seven and one-half years before there was any further development toward making David the king of the whole nation! God was still teaching David to be patient.

Remember that Israel had been invaded by the Philistines who were still living in some of their cities. They had no king, no government. Everything was in disarray. And while the Lord could have changed all of that immediately, yet the Lord usually works through people and through means of His own choosing.

Were those next seven and a half years peaceful, happy years? They could hardly be described that way. There were some good days, but there were some very bad days.

III. DAVID'S YEARS IN HEBRON (2 Sam. 2:4b-4:12).

ALL A PART
OF GOD'S
ANSWERS

It is not my intention to go into these chapters in detail, but just to point out that David's trials were not over even when the first step toward the kingdom had been complete.

The first things that he did was to bless the men of Jabesh-gilead because of the way they had honored Saul and his sons by burying their bodies after they had been killed in the war with the Philistines.

Then he had to face the rebellion headed up by Abner, Saul's five-star general, who made Ishbosheth, Saul's son, king over Israel.

Terrible things followed. Twenty-four men, twelve from Israel and twelve from Judah, died in hand-to-hand combat with each other. A terrible battle followed in which the forces of Abner were beaten, but Abner was forced to kill Asahel, David's nephew, because Asahel was intent on pursuing him.

A long civil war followed in which David grew stronger and stronger, but the toll was heavy in lives that were lost.

Finally trouble developed between Abner and Ishbosheth, and so Abner turned against Ishbosheth and agreed to bring Israel under David as king. In the events which followed, Joab, Asahel's brother and David's commander-in-chief, killed Abner. And chapter 4 tells us how Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was murdered in his own bed, and his murderers cut his head off and brought it to David, thinking that David would be happy with them, and reward them. Instead, David ordered their execution.

So the days of David in Hebron were very dark days. It seems that trouble followed trouble.

However, the first three verses of chapter 5 give us an account concerning Israel that is very similar to the first four verses of chapter 2. In chapter 2 we see how quickly David was anointed king over Judah--after years of trouble and waiting. In the first verses of chapter 5 we see how quickly David was anointed king over Israel--after many more years of trouble and waiting.

Concl: What are the lessons for us?

Well, there are many--perhaps more than any of us has the wisdom to see. But let me mention three.

First, we see that trials are a major part of our training for life and service on this earth.

Second, we see that God always has a purpose in our trials. He does not willingly afflict us, but there are lessons that we learn through facing troubles that we can learn in no other way. We learn to pray. We learn to wait. We learn to trust the Lord. We learn not to trust ourselves, nor to put confidence in others. We learn to be courageous and diligent and faithful in serving the Lord.

Third and last, we learn that God is sovereign. It is one thing to know this doctrinally; it is another thing to know it in practical dependence upon the Lord. He is in charge. We are not, nor are our enemies, or our friends. God's will was for David to be king. Saul could stand in his way. Abner could stand in his way. The Philistines could stand in his way. But one by one the Lord swept them all aside, and He did exactly as He said that He would. David became king, not when he expected it, nor how he expected it, but all according to God's plan. As a result David was stronger and wiser and more trusting of the Lord.

May the Lord enable us to learn what He intends for us to learn by placing all of these details in His holy Word.

EARLY BLESSINGS
2 Samuel 5

Intro: The account given to us in 2 Sam. 5 is enlarged upon in two chapters of 1 Chronicles: 11 and 12. After years of waiting, prophecy was being fulfilled rapidly. It appears that David had anticipated this day for 14 or 15 years. It had been at least that long since he was anointed king by Samuel. David had not always been assured in his heart that he would be king. He had his ups and downs like anyone else. But the Lord remained faithful to His Word, and at last the day came, and he was anointed king over all of Israel. It did not happen all at once, but as 2 Sam. 3:1 records... (Read.) The words "long war" suggest conflict, struggle, difficulties. The report of David's gradual rise to power is stated in 1 Chron. 11:9 in these words:

So David waxed greater and greater:
for the Lord of hosts was with him.

In other words, the Spirit of God here indicated that the coronation of David was not the result of David's efforts, but because of the way the Lord worked for him. Those words, "For the Lord of hosts was with him," are the most important thing that can ever be said about any child of God. If the Lord is with us, we have no reason to worry about the success of whatever we may be doing.

This expression is found in the Lord's promise to Jacob when he was fleeing from Esau and going to Padam-aram where his uncle Laban lived. The promise is found in Gen. 28:15. It was given to Jacob in his dream where he saw the ladder reaching from earth to heaven, with the Lord standing above it and angels going up and down on the ladder.

And, behold, **I am with thee,**
and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest,
and will bring thee again into this land;
for I will not leave thee, until I have done
that which I have spoken to thee of.

But even with the Lord on our side, the work of the Lord is never easy. There are always obstacles that stand in the way. This means delay, frustration, disappointments, often losses, and yet the Lord has His own purposes through it all. The difficulties which David faced were all used in the plan of God to fashion him more and more into the useful instrument that the Lord wanted him to be. And, as in the case of David, there are failures in the midst of blessing--not the Lord's failures, but David's failures, and our failures.

But let us look at the EARLY BLESSINGS that David experienced

when the Lord's time came for him to become king over all of Israel.

The first had to do with:

I. THE MEN WHO CAME TO HIM IN HEBRON (2 Sam. 5:1-3).

What we are told here in three verses occupies two chapters in 1 Chronicles. As I mentioned before, they are chapters 11 and 12. Chapter 11 tells of the men who came to him; chapter 12 tells of the tribes who came to him. Verse 1 of 2 Sam. 5 merely says that "all the tribes of Israel" came to David, but we see in 1 Chron. 12 what a large group that was. We read in 1 Chron. 12:22,

For at that time day by day there came to David
to help him, until there was a great host,
like the host of God.

Another good thing that is stated in 1 Chron. 12:38 is this:

All these men of war, that could keep rank,
came with a perfect heart to Hebron,
to make David king over all Israel:
and all the rest also of Israel **were of one heart**
to make David king.

What more could David ask? The foundation was solid upon which to build his reign. This was first and foremost of all of David's EARLY BLESSINGS, and it was solid proof that the Lord was "with him."

But let us go on to a second blessing.

II. THE CONQUEST OF JERUSALEM (2 Sam. 5:6-10).

This could very well have been the ancient city of Salem where Melchisedec was king. But at this time it was inhabited by people known as the Jebusites. They were a people whose history went back to the Canaanite nations. There is no question but that they were a mighty people, but they were self-confident, and they taunted David with their words in which they said that even "the blind and the lame" would be able to keep David and his men out.

However, David and his men were victorious against this strong enemy, and the city came to be known as the city of David.

This also was one of David's early blessings.

The explanation that is usually given for the statement that they were "hated of David's soul" is that they were a people

known for their idolatry and blasphemy, and he despised them for their wickedness. While it was a great victory for David and his men, at the same time it was a judgment from the Lord upon very sinful people.

David was thinking along this line when he wrote the words which are found in Psa. 139:19-22. (Comment on the rest of the Psalm, and show the contrast that there is in these four verses.)

So it is apparent that David had not forgotten the Lord with all of the blessings that had been coming his way.

The third blessing:

III. THE KING'S HOUSE (2 Sam. 5:11, 12).

A king needs a palace, and this provision came unsolicited and unexpected. Not only was the material provided, but the workmen as well. David's men were shepherds and soldiers. And so Hiram sent "carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house."

What did this mean to David?

See verse 12. He took this as a confirmation that the Lord had made him king, and in humility he accepted it as a gift for his people, not just for himself.

It is always an indication of where a man is spiritually when his first thoughts are for the people of God, not for himself.

Now we are ready for the fourth blessing.

IV. DAVID'S WIVES AND CHILDREN (2 Sam. 5:13).

You may say, "It was sin on David's part to multiply wives," and you are right. One of the prohibitions that was put on the kings when the Mosaic Law was given was this: "Neither shall he [the king] multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away" (Deut. 17:17). It was wrong for David to have more than one wife. But he had many. And so he sinned many times in this area by violating the Law of God.

We can be sure that what is recorded here about David's family did not take place in a few day. And what I am about to say is not an excuse for sinning, but it is to show how gracious the Lord is.

One of the names that you read there is Solomon. And we

cannot think of Solomon without remembering that his mother was Bathsheba, and that brings to mind the dreadful circumstances in connection with David's marriage to Bathsheba. There was adultery, and there was murder. And David suffered because of those sins, but amazingly through that union the Lord gave David one of Israel's greatest kings, surely the wisest, and David's son who was to be in the line leading to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

So even though David's marriages were displeasing to God, and especially the circumstances that led to his marriage with Bathsheba, yet even though such a blessing was completely undeserved, yet God brought blessing out of sinful circumstances.

David knew afterwards, and we should know too, that if the blessings of the Lord were dependent upon our worthiness, we would get nothing from the Lord but judgment. It is no wonder that Jacob said as he came back home after 20 years away because of what he had done to Esau,

I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies,
and of all the truth,
which thou hast shewed unto thy servant;
for with my staff I passed over this Jordan;
and now I am become two bands (Gen. 32:10).

And so when you think of Jacob, or David, or anyone else, or yourself, think of grace.

The last blessing is like a cluster of blessings. And they came in:

V. DAVID'S TWO VICTORIES OVER THE PHILISTINES (2 Sam. 5:17-25).

It seems that as long as David was king over Hebron, the Philistines did not bother him. But they were very concerned when he became king over all of Israel. And so they attacked David, were defeated once, came back a second time, and were defeated the second time.

The two victories were great blessings from the Lord. If David had been defeated by the Philistines, it would have been a major setback to his kingdom. Instead, God gave him a double blessing which even gave greater authority to his reign.

But, as again and often is the case with the Lord, blessings come in bunches.

Last Sunday from 2 Sam. 2 we learned a little about David's

prayer life. We learned how carefully he sought the will of God and the blessing of God.

Here in chapter 5 David's circumstances are altogether different. In chapter 2 Saul had just been killed, and David was seeking to find out what the Lord wanted him to do. But here in chapter 5 David was a powerful king. He had great wealth. He had "arrived," so to speak. But the Lord brought him back to prayer. Regardless of how great a child of God may get, he can never get along without seeking the Lord in prayer. David is known in Scripture as a man who gave himself to prayer.

But there is another blessing here: a lesson in guidance. The Lord gave two victories over the same nation, the Philistines, but he gave it in two different ways. First, he was simply told, as he had been told before about Hebron, "Go up." David went up. The Lord delivered the Philistines into his hand.

Second, the Lord told David not to go up, but to wait--wait until he heard "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." Then he was to go up. David waited, heard the sound, went up, and the Lord went with him to smite the Philistines.

What was he learning?

He was learning that the Lord does not always lead the same way in similar circumstances. And this was to teach him that he should, therefore, not look to the method, but to keep his eyes upon the Lord and do as the Lord would lead in each situation.

Concl: I don't know when David wrote Psalm 40, but there is one verse in that Psalm which could have been written as David was experiencing these EARLY BLESSINGS. It is verse 5:

Many, O Lord my God, are they wonderful works
which thou has done, and thy thoughts which are usward:
they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee:
if I would declare and speak of them,
they are more than can be numbered.

What an encouragement David's life at this point should be for us to be on the lookout for the blessings of the Lord. And then we need to remember to give the praise to the One to Whom it is due.

GOD'S WILL AND WAY
2 Samuel 6

Intro: This chapter tells us about David moving the ark of the covenant from Baale, or Baalah, or Kirjath-jearim, a few miles west of Jerusalem, to Zion in Jerusalem. This was undoubtedly the will of God because it was Jerusalem was to be the capital of Israel, and the place where the Lord had chosen to place His name.

Spiritually things were in a great deal of turmoil when David took over the throne, and he wisely recognized that the restoration of the nation's fellowship with God had to be the first order of business. So, perhaps thinking that the Philistines might attempt to interfere with his plan, verse 1 of our chapter tells us that he assembled 30,000 men, chosen men, outstanding men, to accomplish this task. This shows how important it was to David. Carelessness about the ark seems to have gone back to the days when Eli was the priest.

So the first point in this chapter has to be:

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WILL OF GOD (2 Sam. 6:1-5).

This must have been a very happy, a very solemn, and yet a very noisy occasion. David had his people with him. See what is recorded about this in 1 Chron. 13:1-6. And he teaches us by what he did that, if we are to have the blessing of the Lord upon our lives, things have to be made right with the Lord first! Undoubtedly there were many other things that David could have done, things which needed to be done, but nothing was more important than this.

It is thought that David wrote Psalm 24 for this occasion. Please turn to that Psalm, and let me read it to you in the light of the events which we have here in 2 Sam. 6.

(Read Psa. 24.)

We can see from David's Psalm that dealing with the ark, the place where God's presence was manifested, was a most solemn thing. This was not like a great party. He had carefully asked about the qualifications of one who could approach the Lord. His question and the answer are given in verses 3 and 4, and the results of what they were doing was anticipated in verses 5 and 6.

And it seems from the latter part of the Psalm that David was likening the return of the ark to Jerusalem to the time when the Lord of glory would come in the end times. That is the reason it is usually pointed out with respect to Psalms 22,

23, and 24 that we have in them:

- 1) In Psalm 22, the Cross of the Messiah.
- 2) In Psalm 23, the present ministry of the Messiah.
- 3) In Psalm 24, the coming reign of the Messiah.

So for David it was an event with great significance, and obviously the Lord was leading him in what he did. Verse 3 of our text tells us that "a new cart" had been made for this special occasion.

However, in the midst of all of the joy and the anticipation of the Lord's blessing, we have:

II. THE DEATH OF UZZAH, THE SON OF ABINADAB (2 Sam. 6:6-9).

We read in 1 Sam. 7:1, 2 that the ark had been taken to the house of Abinadab twenty years before when the Philistines had wanted to get rid of it. So that is the reason that the sons of Abinadab had such a significant role in moving the ark to Jerusalem.

And they were very conscientious in what they were doing because when the oxen who were pulling the cart stumbled, Uzzah was afraid that the ark would be thrown out on the ground, put his hand on it to keep it in the cart. That was when the whole event was suddenly changed from one of joy to one of grief. And verse 7 tells us that God was angry with him, and that it was God who struck him dead. It grieved David, and it also made him afraid.

This appeared to David to mean that they were not going to be able to do what they had felt was the will of God. And so the project was canceled, and the ark was taken to the home of Obed-edom.

I believe that this teaches us that when things have been done contrary to the Lord's will for any time, it may not be easy to get back. And that is because we have become accustomed to doing things our way, rather than God's way. And we cannot overlook altogether the possibility that the Devil had a hand in this. He never wants us to get back into real fellowship with the Lord once he has gotten us away.

But it was then that another strange thing happened.

III. GOD'S BLESSING UPON THE HOUSE OF OBED-EDOM (2 Sam. 6:10, 11).

We do not know the specifics of God's blessing upon Obed-edom. Verse 11 simply tells us that "the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and all his household." 1 Chron. 13:14 says, "And the

Lord blessed the house of obed-edom, and all that he had."

His family was blessed. His livestock and crops were evidently blessed. Obed-edom had never seen the Lord's blessing as he did during the time that the ark of the covenant was in his home.

Remember that this was a very small piece of furniture--about 45 inches long, 27 inches wide, and 27 inches high. (Cf. Ex. 25:10.) It had a cover of pure gold, and there was a cherub on each end of the cover. But the significant thing about it was not its size, but its purpose. It was there that God saw fit to dwell among His people. There probably was not a great glory about it during those three months, but it was the place of God's presence nevertheless. And there was blessing.

This shows us that God is intent on giving us blessing. He will give us blessing when we do not deserve it, and He does it, as in this case, to awaken His people that the day of blessing is not over.

Well, word got to David about what had happened in Obed-edom's house, and this led him to try once more to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem.

And so we have:

IV. A SECOND ATTEMPT TO BRING THE ARK TO JERUSALEM (2 Sam. 6:12-16).

This time it was successful! But why? Why did David fail the first time and succeed the second time.

Because he had been studying his Bible! And I tell you what he found: Deut. 10:8. This is what it says:

At that time the Lord separated the tribe of Levi,
to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord,
to stand before the Lord, to minister unto him,
and to bless in his name, unto this day.

And this is what he told his people, found in 1 Chron. 15:2:
None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites:
for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God,
and to minister unto him for ever.

David learned that it is just as important to do things God's way as it is to be seeking to do God's will. There is no reason to question anyone's sincerity when they first attempted to bring the ark to Jerusalem. David was certainly sincere, and so was Uzzah. In fact, he and his brother were

to be commended because they took such an active part in the ceremony after the ark had been in their home for such a long time. And they even made, or someone made, a new cart for the occasion. But the point was that it was not God's way.

We are living in a day when the people of God are occupied with methods. Everybody you listen to seems to have their own plan about how to have a happy marriage, how to raise your children, how to run the church, how to win people to Christ, how to do this and do that. I have no argument with the desire to get things done. But what we do need to be concerned about is, Are we doing things God's way? He has not told us what He wants done and left it up to us to decide how we are going to do it. He has told us what His will is, and shown us in His Word what His way for accomplishing it is.

When David got into trouble, he continued on with his work, but he looked into the Scriptures to find the answer to his question. We need to do the same. When people give you advice, always check that advice with the Word of God. And remember that the Lord has given us a Bible that is sufficient in itself. If we had nothing but the Bible, we would have all that we need to know how to have good marriages, how to raise our children, how to conduct our businesses, how to react toward government. It is all there. God is concerned about methods, too. But He works by His methods, not ours.

Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission, said long ago, "God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply."

This is the great lesson of this chapter.

But there is one more point I must mention before I close:

V. DAVID'S UNHAPPY WIFE (2 Sam. 6:16-23).

When she saw David's behavior as the ark was brought into the city, "she despised him in her heart" (v.16b). She treated him with contempt. She felt that he had acted with a severe lack of dignity. Some feel that if her heart had been right she would have been leading the women in singing praises to the Lord like Miriam did when the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. David was not forgetting that he was king. But he put on linen garments to humble himself, and to identify himself with the people in the great joy they all felt that God had come back among His people.

The word "vile" in verse 22 means that he would humble

himself even more (something which Michal hated), but for which the godly women of Israel would give him honor.

And so for the second time in the chapter we see the judgment of God. Michal "had no child unto the day of her death" (v. 23). Quite obviously what David had done had glorified the Lord, and had been pleasing to the Lord.

Concl: I hope you see the lessons of this chapter. God's will needs to be done, but it must be done in God's way. That is what brings God's blessing. And if we want to know what both His will and His ways are, do what David did: Go to your Bible. The answers are all there.

NOT DAVID'S WORK, BUT GOD'S GIFT
2 Samuel 7:1-17

Intro: The parallel passage for this chapter is 1 Chron. 17.

David had been very busy since becoming king over all Israel. He, with the help of Hiram, king of Tyre, had built a palace for himself. The ark of the covenant had finally been brought to Jerusalem. It seems also that the priest and Levites had been organized, and were carrying on their work in much the same way that they were doing when our Lord was born. David was a good king, and he left his mark upon the kingdom which was to be there for many years afterwards. However, this chapter tells us that there was something that David still wanted to do. And we learn about this in the first three verses of 2 Samuel 7.

I. THE DESIRE OF DAVID'S HEART (2 Sam. 7:1-3).

The plan itself is stated in verse 2.

There is much that was commendable about David's plan. It shows that he had not forgotten the Lord in all of the blessing that he was seeing. Verse 1 tells us that "the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies." I take this as meaning that this was the way that David felt about it. He believed that the peace he was experiencing was of the Lord. He did not take any credit for himself for that time of peace. So often, especially when things happen too quickly, we are inclined to credit ourselves with the blessings which have actually come from God. We can see in this the effect of the hard years that David had already been through. He would never forget the hopelessness that he had felt about his circumstances, but now that the Lord had brought him to the throne, he was not about to take the glory for anything to himself.

So it surely is commendable that David wanted to build a house for the Lord. And the Lord said that it was, according to what Solomon, his son, said at a later time. When Solomon was dedicating that was finally built after the death of his father, Solomon said this:

Now it was in the heart of David my father
to build an house for the name of the Lord God of Israel.
But the Lord said to David my father,
Forasmuch as it was in thine heart
to build an house for my name, **thou didst well**
that it was in thine heart" (2 Chron. 6:7, 8).

It was David's desire to do a work for the Lord, and this is always commendable.

It sounded like such a great plan that even the prophet Nathan encouraged David to go ahead, apparently without even consulting with the Lord about it. That is how reasonable the whole thing sounded to Nathan. Nathan was sure that it was the will of God.

Nathan, being a prophet, was the equivalent of the spokesman for God to David. The Lord had been with David so clearly up to that point, that it apparently never occurred to Nathan that this plan of David's might not be the will of God.

But let us notice that the plan itself would eventually be carried out. There would be a temple built. The two questions about it, however, were:

1) When?

2) By whom?

David would have answered those questions, "Now, and by me!" But that was not the Lord's plan.

And so beginning with verse 4 of 2 Samuel 7, we have:

II. THE REVELATION OF GOD'S WILL (2 Sam. 7:4-17).

Neither 2 Sam. 7 nor 1 Chron. 17 says that Nathan went home to pray about it. Both chapters relating this same incident, simply say that "that night...the word of the Lord came to Nathan." The Lord often gives us guidance even though we have not asked for it. Such was the case with Nathan.

2 Sam. 7 says that the Lord gave Nathan a question to ask David. It was this: "Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?" (v. 5). The account in 1 Chron. 17:4 says that the Lord said to Nathan, "Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in."

And then the Lord did a curious thing--actually two curious things. First, He briefly surveyed the history of Israel and asked if He had ever spoken "a word" to anyone about building Him a house of cedar. The answer to that was, "No." This is in verses 6 and 7. And then, secondly, he reminded David of how the Lord had been pleased to deal with him (David). Notice all of the references in verses 8 through 11 to what the Lord had done for David.

A "sheepcote" can either be a sheepfold or the pasture where the sheep graze.

The point in verses 8 through 11 is that the Lord is the One Who had done everything that had been done. It was not David's plan to begin with. Nor did David get his own

victories over his enemies. Nor had David brought them into the land which they occupied. Nor were the people given judges because David thought that it was best.

And so, while David was commended for wanting to build a temple, these words were a gentle rebuke and a clear reminder that it is the Lord Who chooses His people, and leads His people. He is the One Who provides for them. And even in things which clearly are His will, He is the One Who says when and by whom! Not only would this have been a rebuke to David, but it was also a rebuke to Nathan. Past blessings, past evidences that the Lord is "with" us, do not give us the liberty to go ahead on our own.

Instead, at this very time when David was thinking about houses, Nathan was sent to tell David the words which we find at the end of verse 11: "Also the Lord telleth thee that **he will make thee an house.**"

There is no question but that David's heart was right, but the Lord had a greater honor for him than that of being the one to build Israel's first temple. The Lord would build David a house.

Application: There is a message here that is very important for all of us. It is this: There is a tendency in all of us to be more concerned about what we are going to do for the Lord, rather than thinking in terms of what the Lord wants to do either in us, or for us, or both.

We have numerous examples of this in the Word of God.

Remember also the story of Joseph, and how everything that happened to him moved him farther away from the fulfillment of the dreams that the Lord had given him. What did Joseph learn through all of that? The answer is given in Joseph's words found in Gen. 45:5-8. And he had to say essentially the same thing again after Jacob died. Cf. Gen. 50:19, 20.

Think, e.g., of the reason the Lord gave to Moses for his rejection by Pharaoh after Moses went in to Pharaoh and told him exactly what the Lord had told Moses to tell him. The answer is given in the first 8 verses of Exodus 6.

Or go ahead with Moses and the children of Israel to the Red Sea. They were blocked by the Sea, and Pharaoh and his men were coming. See what the Lord said to them in Ex. 14:13, 14.

To mention one more, take that marvelous story in 2 Chron. 20 about the wonderful victory the Lord gave His people over three other nations when it was not necessary for them to do any of the fighting. See 2 Chron. 20:15-18.

I have reminded you many times of Isa. 55:8, 9:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
 neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.
 For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
 so are my ways higher than your ways,
 and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Perhaps I could paraphrase what the Lord told Isaiah by saying this way: Our plans are not always His plans, and our timing is not always His timing.

And, without exception in all of these examples I have given you, the Lord was more concerned at the moment about what He was doing in His people, and in their leaders, than He was in what He was doing for them.

That was true of David also. He had victory after victory, and blessing after blessing. The Lord knew that it was time to stop things for the moment, and do something greater for David than it would have been for him to build the Temple.

What was the Lord going to do for David?

He was going to build David a house. What did this mean? Well, to put it briefly, this meant that David was the first king in a whole line of kings which would lead to the establishment of a kingdom that would never end. How much of this David understood, we do not know, but I am of the opinion that David understood that the Lord was promising him that from his house that the Lord was building, the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, would eventually come, as David's greatest Son, the One Who is destined to reign forever and ever.

David would have the desire of his heart filled through Solomon because Solomon would build the temple that David had wanted to build. But the promise of God went beyond David, and it went beyond Solomon. And tonight we know that we are yet to see the ultimate fulfillment of the promise that the Lord gave to David that morning when Nathan the prophet came to him with his message from the Lord.

Concl: We can all rejoice in the promise that the Lord gave to David because a part of that promise was the provision of our salvation which would be made through our Lord Who was born of the seed of David.

But, as important as it is to think about David's house, let me make the application to my life and to your life. How does the Lord have you stymied tonight--blocked, confused, baffled, frustrated? What is it that you want to do, but can't do? Or what is it even that you wish the Lord would do

for you, and yet He isn't doing it? I can assure you that I have some requests on my list that have me at a standstill. What does it mean? Does it mean that the Lord doesn't know? Or does it mean that the Lord doesn't hear our prayers, or care about us even though the Word says that He does? Yes, He knows, and, yes, He cares. But one suggestion that seems to arise out of all of these passages is that the Lord is working, but He is working where we are not likely to look-- at least not in the beginning.

The Lord has a work to do in us. That is His concern. David was concerned about a house of cedar; the Lord was concerned about a spiritual house, a house over which the Lord Jesus Christ would rule. In God's time that house of cedar was built, and David was able to help in the preparation although he never saw the house.

The Lord has His work to do in our hearts. He lets us see how powerLESS we are so that we can learn how powerFUL He is! He is strengthening our faith. He causes us to pray more, not less. Blessing is coming; we can be sure of that. But we must await the Lord's time and the Lord's instrument while He makes us more like He saved us to become. So let us take heart. When a door seems closed, it is only because the Lord is preparing to do greater things that we have asked him to do. Everybody concerned gets blessed if we wait on the Lord, and trust Him to accomplish His purposes.

THE KING'S PRAYER

2 Samuel 7:18-29

Intro: It is often said that we learn to pray by praying-- and that is true to a certain extent. But it would be better to say that we learn to pray from Scripture. And, if I could add one more thing, I would say that we learn to pray from Scripture as we face the various circumstances of our lives. We learn to pray when we are tried, but we also learn to pray when we are like David, enjoying the blessings of the Lord.

Chapter 7 and verse 1 of 2 Samuel tells us that the Lord had given him rest from all of his enemies. That was a great blessing, a tremendous blessing. There were few times like that in the history of Israel.

And then read verses 8 and 9. The Lord had taken a lowly shepherd boy, had made him king, had given him victories over all his enemies, and had given him a name as great as any of the great men of the earth. The story of David is greater than any Horatio Alger story that was ever written. Only our Lord Himself was raised from greater depths to greater heights, as we learn from Phil. 2:5-11.

As a result, David wanted to do something for the Lord. He wanted to build the Lord a house of cedar to dwell in so that the Lord could move out of the tent where He had been dwelling. Nathan the prophet also thought that this was a good idea. And so, because there had been such abundant evidence that the Lord was with David, Nathan felt that the Lord would prosper this project too. Consequently, he told David to go ahead.

But the will of God was otherwise. Instead of having David build Him a house, the Lord made known to David by a special revelation to Nathan that He, the Lord, would build David a house. It was not to be a house of cedar; David already had that. It was to mean the continuation of David's family in a kingdom that would be forever. We know this now to be the Davidic Covenant which would ultimately be fulfilled in David's greatest Son according to the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord took this time to reveal to David that His purpose in David's family was far greater than David ever had anticipated. David's son who would succeed him would built the temple that David wanted to build, but the house that the Lord was speaking about was a kingdom that would extend to the end times, to the reign of the Messiah upon the earth.

To say the least, David was overwhelmed. He had trouble believing that the Lord would do such a thing for him and his

family. But he did not just talk about it to Nathan, nor tell his family about it, nor his people. He went straight to the Lord, and what we have in verses 18 through 29 is THE KING'S PRAYER, an unplanned prayer, a prayer the likes of which had never been prayed before, a prayer born at that moment in the heart of David by the Holy Spirit in response to the message that he had received from the Lord.

The prayer has two parts:

- I. DAVID'S WORSHIP (2 Sam. 7:18-24).
- II. DAVID'S FAITH (2 Sam. 7:25-29).

As we examine his prayer, let us remember that it is not recorded here so we would know how David prayed, but it is here to help us when we pray. So let us examine carefully what David said to the Lord.

I. DAVID'S WORSHIP (2 Sam. 7:18-24).

This chapter began with David speaking to Nathan about what he wanted to do for the Lord. But notice how that has all changed as David began to pray. Now he was speaking about all that the Lord had done for him.

Let me read this first part of his prayer so that you will see the emphasis that I am talking about. (Read.)

You see, the lesson is clear. We are worshiping God when we talk about what He has done for us, not when we are thinking about what we have done, or want to do, for Him. As David looked back over the history of Israel, and over his own reign up to that point, he saw more clearly than ever that all of the good things that had happened were attributable to the work of God, and had been done for the glory of God. He didn't talk about Abraham, or Moses, or Joshua; he spoke about God and all that God had done.

As he did this he spoke of what this indicated:

- 1) About himself--in verses 18-21. (Read.)

You can always tell that a person is seeing things as he should when he can truly say before the Lord, "Who am I, O Lord God? ..." God always blesses us in grace, and David knew this. What had happened to David was not according to the ways of men (see v. 19), but it was according to the ways of God. (See God's ways as Paul spoke of them in 1 Cor. 1:26-29.)

- 2) About the Lord--in v. 22.

David did not see himself as great, but he saw by the way that God had seen fit to deal with him that it was a manifestation of the greatness of God. This is true of all of us regardless of what position we might have. God

works with us for His own glory, not ours. And we are learning to worship when we feel in our hearts a desire to glorify Him in our worship.

3) About the nation Israel--in vv. 23, 24.

No nation on the face of the earth had experienced the special blessing of the Lord the way Israel had. He had chosen them to be His people forever, and He had made Himself their God. And yet, when we look at Israel's history, we can see that the choice of Israel was a gracious choice, too.

We do not have the place in God's plan that David had. Nor do we in the Church have the place that Israel had--and still has. But we have our place, and there is nothing that will incline our hearts toward worshiping the Lord more than for us to review what we were without the Lord, and what we have become by His grace. When we put our demerits beside His blessings to us, we, too, will say, "Lord, Who am I...?"

Moses said this in Ex. 3:11. David said this to Saul in 1 Sam. 18:18. David said it again as they gathered material for the temple. Cf. 1 Chron. 29:14. And Solomon said it in 2 Chron. 2:6.

But now let us move on in this prayer to see:

II. DAVID'S FAITH (2 Sam. 7:25-29).

Here we learn that it is not enough for us just to know the promises of the Lord, or what He has revealed about His plans for the future, but we are to claim them by faith. The Lord loves for us to show in our prayers that we know His promises, and that we trusting Him to do what He has said.

Notice in verse 25 at the end: "Do as thou has said."

Notice also what David said in verse 27.

And then notice the conclusion in verse 28, 29.

Faith is believing the promises of God, and then asking Him to do what He has said that He would do. His words are true. He cannot fail. And even though we are just as unworthy as David was (and perhaps more so), yet we trust God to give us the blessings that will enable us to bring the greatest possible glory to His Name.

Concl: If my memory serves me correctly, for the past several years I have spoken to you about turning the Word of God into prayer. I had not planned to do that this year, but it is clear to me that the Lord planned for me to

do it. It is here in our text for tonight. This is what David did. David had said that he wanted to do something for the Lord. But the Lord said that He wanted to do something for David. And then He revealed to David what it was. David was overwhelmed when he realized how far-reaching God's promise was, but he took the promise to claim it from the Lord, and said that he would never have dared to ask such a thing if the Lord had not promised it in the first place.

Solomon turned God's Word into prayer. Cf. 2 Chron. 6:14-17.

See David's words in Psa. 27:8.

Earlier Jacob prayed this way. See Gen. 32:9-12.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne once wrote to a friend, "It is a blessed way of praying, to pray upon a promise, and to plead, "Do as thou has said." Such words would not be in our Bibles if the Lord did not intend for us to claim His promises in the same way that David did.

But let us remember that worship precedes the petition. Let us marvel at the goodness of God in His past dealings with us, and then we will be encouraged to seek even greater blessings in the days to come.

BLESSING UPON BLESSING

2 Samuel 8, 9

Intro: There was a time in David's life, following his anointing by Samuel, when life was very hard for him. He was pursued by Saul until David eventually gave up hope that he would ever be king, and he went to live among the Philistines.

But then there was a change, and David began to see more of what we would call blessing in his life.

I was reminded of David this morning as John was teaching the second chapter of Acts during the SS hour. Things had not been easy for the apostles during the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially those last days before He was arrested and crucified. Peter was so fearful for his life that he denied the Lord three times. Thomas was so discouraged that he would not believe that the Lord had been raised from the dead even though all of the other apostles said that He had been.

But then on the day of Pentecost there was a change--a great change! Peter preached that wonderful message recorded in Acts 2, and 3,000 people were saved--really saved! And after that the Lord continued to save people and to add them to the Church. That was a very encouraging time, and a time when it seemed that blessing came upon blessing. They continued to have troubles, but the book of Acts is a book recording the wonderful triumphs of the early Church through the preaching of the Gospel.

In 2 Samuel 8 we have the account of the way in which the Lord gave David BLESSING UPON BLESSING. It must have been quite overwhelming to David, and even difficult to keep up with all that the Lord was doing. Let me point out the blessings that are recorded in the eighth chapter.

I. THE BLESSINGS OF GOD UPON DAVID (2 Sam. 8).

First of all, we read of:

A. David's victories in war.

In verses 1 through 8 we have an account of what apparently were the main victories, but then in verse 12 we have what seems to be a summary of those victories. Edom is added to the list in verse 14.

From what we know of those nations in Scripture, these victories were no small accomplishment. It was an amazing

record of victories which David was able to win. It was very clear that the Lord was with David in all of those conquests.

But we see another way in which the Lord blessed David:

B. The Lord protected David.

This is stated twice in the chapter: verses 6 and 14.

Those were days when the kings went to war with their armies, and it was always a part of the military strategy to go for the king. If the king could be killed or even captured, then it meant victory for the opposing forces. And it seems that the only reason that David escaped was that "the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went." It made no difference who the enemy was, nor under what conditions they fought, David always came home safely. This must have been discouraging to Israel's enemies, but it was a great blessing to David, his men, and the people of Israel. How faithful the Lord was to him.

The third blessing:

C. The Lord blessed David materially.

We read that the Moabites in verse 2 "brought gifts" to David, and verse 6 says the same thing about the Syrians, but we read in verse 4 of the horses and chariots that David took from Hadadezer, the king of Zobah. And then verse 8 and 9 tell of "the shields of gold" and "exceeding much brass" that the Lord took from the same king.

Then, as a friendly gesture, Toi, king of Hamath, was so happy that David had defeated Hadadezer, that he sent gifts to David of silver, gold, and brass (v. 10). And verse 11 indicates that David took gold from all of the kings that he defeated.

Therefore, materially David experienced great blessing from the Lord.

Next let me point out what is mentioned in verse 13:

D. David's name.

It is stated as though this was something that David did for himself, but we know that this, too, was a blessing from the Lord. For him to have a name as a man of war meant that nations would think twice, and more than that, before they would go to war with David. To engage David in battle was asking for defeat. This alone did much to establish the

security of the nation Israel.

I have one more blessing to mention. Perhaps we could call this two blessings in one.

E. The situation at home.

Verse 15 suggests that things went well among the people. Verses 16 through 18 tell us that David had some good strong men who were standing with him.

Therefore, whether you looked on the outside, or on the inside, there was much evidence of the Lord's blessing. It was truly a time in which David experienced BLESSING UPON BLESSING.

We do not know all of the reasons for the fact that the Lord often deals this way with His people. The trials which precede such a time of blessing are designed, of course, to humble the people, and to purify them. After the trials that we often go through, we know that only the Lord can bring us out. And so we learn to trust the Lord. We learn to pray. We are less likely to trust in ourselves. We stand guard more diligently against the attacks of the Devil which can come upon us at any time. However, the Lord uses the trials to strengthen us in Him, and to prepare the way to greater blessing. 2 Samuel 8 is a very encouraging chapter.

But now let us turn our attention to 2 Samuel 9. What do we have here?

II. DAVID, AN INSTRUMENT OF BLESSING (2 Sam. 9).

In chapter 9 we learn that David was only in a secondary way the recipient of blessing, but he became an instrument of blessing in another way. While our Lord was here on earth, He taught His disciples that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). So we can say that David was blessed by being a blessing. The one to whom he ministered was Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, whom we met back in 2 Samuel 4. He was only a small child when his father Jonathan was killed in the battle with the Philistines. As his nurse picked him up to escape so as to protect him, she dropped him, and he was crippled for the rest of his life.

We do not know what motivated King David to do what he did in this chapter. Perhaps it was because of his gratitude to God for his blessing. Perhaps it was the way he saw God's protection of his life, and remembered his dear friend who had not been so fortunate.

Whatever the reason may have been, he started looking for a descendant of Saul so that he could show him "kindness for Jonathan's sake."

This word "kindness" is used three times in this chapter: in verses 1, 3, 7. It is the ordinary OT word for mercy. Like the word grace, it speaks of an undeserved blessing, but mercy really has to do with relieving someone of any kind of misery they might be under.

Evidently the family of Saul was not too popular in Israel. Mephibosheth did not even live in Jerusalem. He lived far to the north on the eastern side of the Jordan River in a city called Lodebar. It must have frightened him to learn that the king wanted to see him because, when he came into the king's presence, he "fell on his face" before the king. After greeting him, David's first words to him were, "Fear not" (v. 7). And then he gave Mephibosheth good news. (Read the rest of verse 7.)

David was going to show him mercy by doing two things:

- 1) Restore to him all of the land that had belonged to his grandfather (which was his by right of inheritance, but had evidently been taken away from him).
- 2) Provide food for him at the king's table for the rest of his life. He was to have a position equal to that of the rest of David's sons.

This latter point is spoken of three more times in the chapter. See vv. 10, 11, 13. Quite obviously this is the important part of the chapter, and no one was more amazed by this display of mercy from David than was Mephibosheth himself.

The background for what David did is found in 1 Sam. 20:11-16. (Read.)

You will notice the word "kindness" in verses 14 and 15 of 1 Sam. 20--the same word that David used in our text in 2 Sam. 9. David did what he wanted to do in helping and providing for Mephibosheth for the rest of his life, but he did it also because he was bound by his covenant promise to Jonathan.

Concl: Many years ago Lucille and I were at The Firs in Bellingham, Washington when our children were with us. We were there to hear Lewis Johnson speak. We heard him speak on 2 Samuel 9. I do not have any notes on his message, nor do I remember in detail what he said except for this: He saw in this account a picture of our salvation.

I think that it was Martin Luther who used to say about

Onesimus in the book of Philemon that "we are all the Lord's Onesimi." Lewis Johnson pointed that out to us about Mephibosheth. He may not have said it in this words (I do not remember), but this was his point: "We are all the Lord's Mephibosheths." David here is a type of God. Jonathan is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. David was providing this great blessing for Mephibosheth, not for Mephibosheth's sake, but for Jonathan's sake. In the same way God has shown "mercy" to us, not for our sake, but for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake. And it is our privilege to have "every blessing" that we will ever need provided for us by God through Christ.

Please turn to Titus 3:1-7. (Read.)

And then let me remind you of 1 Pet. 1:3-5 and Eph. 1:3.

We, too, feast every day at the King's table. He has made an eternal provision for us. And every bit of it is because of the Lord's "kindness" and because of His "mercy." We deserve none of it. We belong out in Lodebar. Some think that name means no pasture.

But before I close let me call your attention to the last statement in the chapter. In spite of all the blessings that David provided for Mephibosheth, He still "was lame on both his feet." I do not know if this meant that he could not walk at all, or that he was just crippled. Whatever it means, that pictures us, too, for the present. Our walk is not all that it should be, nor all that it can be, by the grace of God. We are still only sinners saved by grace, sitting daily at the King's table. Our seat is reserved for us there.

But, thank God, the day is coming when we will not be crippled any more. The Lord Jesus said to the church at Sardis that there were those there who would "walk with me in white" (Rev. 3:4). The limping will be over then because we will be with the Lord and like the Lord.

Remember there is only room for you at the King's table if you come in response to the kindness of God and the mercy that has been extended to crippled sinner through our Lord Jesus Christ. If you have not come to the King's table, come tonight. He seeks you as David sought Mephibosheth, and he calls you to come to Him, as David called Mephibosheth.

Those of us who are at the table must never forget how we got there. It is not because of anything we are, or anything that we have done. It is in spite of all of that. We are there because of Christ and what He in mercy has done for us.

THE WISDOM OF JOAB
2 Samuel 10

Intro: This chapter seems to be of little importance in the life of David because it records for us just another of the many battles in which David had been involved. But there are important lessons to be learned from this chapter. It not only tells us a great deal about the character of David, but we also see Joab, his nephew and the leader of the armies of Israel, in what might be called his finest hour. In Scripture as well as out of Scripture we usually see a contrast in the lives of men when they are, on the one hand, at their worst, and other times when they were at their best. This is the time when we see Joab at his best.

This chapter might be called, War With The Ammonites. In the first five verses we see:

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH LED TO WAR (2 Sam. 10:1-5).

We do not know when or how Nahash, the king of Ammon, had shown kindness to David and his men. Robert Jamieson in the JFB Commentary (II, p. 239) suggested that it might have been some time during David's flight from Saul when Nahash had, because of his great hatred for Saul, befriended David. Scripture does not give us the details.

Anyway, when Nahash, who had been a very cruel king, died, David wanted to return the favor that Nahash had shown to him but sending a group of his own men to comfort the new king of Ammon, Hanun, Nahash's son.

David evidently felt very grateful to the Lord at this time in his life. His own power was increasing almost daily. God had blessed him far beyond anything that he had ever expected. And so, after showing kindness to Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, and Saul's grandson, he proceeded to extend a friendly hand to the king of Ammon.

However, some of Hanun's men warned him that this was not an act of comfort on David's part, but it manifested the fact that David planned to conquer the Ammonites next. Therefore, instead of accepting David's overtures of comfort, Hanun had the men's garments cut off half way down their bodies, and he shaved off half of their beards. It throws some question on just how much Hanan believed his men because it seems that he would have killed them if he had thought that they were spies.

Nevertheless, this was a most humiliating thing to do to David's men. David himself was sympathetic with his men, and

told them to stay in Jericho until their beards had grown out again. But what the Ammonites had done had made war with Israel inevitable.

There are several things of interest here.

First of all, we can see that, whatever kindness Nahash had previously shown to David, David did not try to figure out why he had done this. He probably considered it as a part of all that God was doing to take care of him during that time. And so he sought to behave as a child of God when Nahash's family was in sorrow. We can see from 2 Cor. 1:3, 4 that the Lord's people are to be comforters. This is one reason for our trials. God comforts us so that we can comfort others.

But we also can see from this incident in David's life that when we are dealing with unregenerate people, as the Ammonites were, we cannot always expect that the right interpretation will be put upon our actions. This was a case of one who was in the light dealing with one who was in darkness. Hanun and his men could not believe, because they were evil themselves, that David could have had any other motive than they themselves would have had.

Contrasting David and the Ammonites, it would seem that David was inclined to put the best motives on what Nahash had done, while the Ammonites were inclined to think the worst of David.

When the whole plan backfired, David, whose trials had made him a very tender person even though he had become a man of war, showered sympathy upon his men, perhaps feeling responsible for the humiliation that they had experienced. David and his men were forced into a very explosive situation. It may have been at this time when he wrote,

I am for peace: but when I speak,
they are for war (Psa. 120:7).

It appears that David did not panic. Nor in the personal injury that he felt himself did he disregard the embarrassment of his men. But the men of Ammon realized that what they had done had made them utterly detestable in David's eyes.

This leads us to the second part of the chapter.

II. PREPARATIONS FOR WAR (2 Sam. 10:6-12).

It seems very clear that the Ammonites started their preparation for war before David did. What was actually in David's mind, we do not know. But he did not seem to be hasty in avenging the wrong that had been done to his men.

However, when the Ammonites began to prepare, and did so by hiring mercenary Syrians, David was left with no alternative but to prepare for battle as well.

And so he sent Joab, his commander-in-chief, and his mighty men, to get ready for the battle.

Here we see the wisdom of Ammon. He divided the forces of Israel, taking the choice men with himself to face the Syrians who evidently were more skilled and dangerous in war, and leaving the rest of the forces of Israel under the command of Abishai, his brother.

But then notice what he told Abishai. See verses 11, 12. (Read.)

Verse 11 is what we might expect, but verse 12 shows that Joab was speaking and preparing to go into battle as a man of God. We see the influence of his close relationship with David. Although they had been victorious at this point in battle after battle, Joab knew that the outcome of this battle was in the hands of the Lord. It did not follow, in his mind, that because the Ammonites were the offenders, that the victory would automatically be given to the armies of Israel. And yet it seemed that his reason for calling upon Abishai to be courageous was because the battle was in the hands of the Lord. *This was THE WISDOM OF JOAB.*

This was a very common exhortation among the people of Israel. One outstanding example of it is found in the words which the Lord spoke to Joshua when he took over the leadership of the nation from Moses. Cf. Joshua 1:5-9 where three times the Lord told Joshua to be courageous. (Read.) This expression meant that Abishai was to find his strength for the battle in the Lord, not in his experience, nor in his military training, nor in their previous victories, but in the Lord. "If God be for us, who can be against us," is what the Apostle Paul told the Romans. The people of God might suffer a temporary setback, but the victory is ultimately ours. We are "more than conquerors through him that loved us"--also from Romans 8.

The last part of the chapter tells us about:

III. THE BATTLE AND ITS OUTCOME (2 Sam. 10:13-19).

It was a fairly easy victory in spite of the numbers that Hanun had been able to bring against the Israelites. In fact, Israel's enemies became tributaries to them, and the Syrians had learned their lesson. They were afraid to help the Ammonites any more, especially in any action against the

people of God.

Concl: What can we conclude about this battle?

We can only conclude that the Lord had done, in the words found in verse 12, "that which seemeth him good." When the Ammonites put their hands on those men of Israel, and humiliated them, they were dealing with the God of Israel. David was insulted and incensed against the people he had tried to help, but that was nothing compared to the indignation of the Lord. If we could only realize how dear we are to the Lord as His people, we would never worry again about anything.

Next week, the Lord willing, we come to one of the saddest, most tragic chapters, in all of the Bible. And it is important for us to link the blessing, the wonderful victory of this chapter, with what may have been one of the contributing factors to David's sin with Bathsheba. We always need to be careful about the effect of blessing, of victory, on our lives, because the Word of God teaches us that after great victories the Devil is most likely to renew his attacks upon us. Our only safety is to continue to find our strength in the Lord, and to trust Him to continue His blessing upon us.

THE SINS OF DAVID

2 Samuel 11

Intro: This chapter records some of the saddest incidents in all of Scripture. They are sad because they are the sins of one of the greatest men in all of Scripture, whether OT or NT. It might not shock us to find other names here, but it is shocking to find David's name listed here as the sinner. This is the one who is called a man after God's heart. Cf. 1 Sam. 13:14. This expression had to mean, among other things, that David was a man committed to doing that which would please the Lord. And that was what characterized the greater part of his life.

This is the man who was so careful not to take matters into his own hands against the Lord's anointed. He waited patiently during all of those years that he was pursued by Saul. His life was exemplary in all respects, with possibly one exception. He was a man who loved God as few men (or women) love Him. He has given us many wonderful psalms which he wrote under the direction of the Holy Spirit. And so he was one of those men Peter wrote about who was "moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). We would never have thought that David would have been guilty of such sins.

There are many times in Scripture when the sins of other men of God could have been recorded; why do we have this dark page out of the life of David? Was the Lord simply trying to expose David so that we would not love him and appreciate him as we otherwise might?

We cannot think that God took any pleasure at all in making this a part of his Word. What, then, can possibly be the explanation?

I can think of two NT passages which provide us with at least a part of the answers to those questions:

- 1) Rom. 15:4.
- 2) 1 Cor. 10:11, 12.

There have been some people who have taken David's sin as an excuse to do what he did. But for the true child of God, this chapter was written so that we might be warned against doing what he did, or something else just as bad.

When Paul and Barnabas were in Lystra, you will remember that the people were ready to offer sacrifices to them. This greatly distressed those two servants of the Lord, and so we read that they "ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you..." They meant that they were not gods, but ordinary human beings like they were, capable of

the same weaknesses and sin.

The same was true of David. We are inclined to put the men and women of God in Scripture upon a pedestal as though they were above us, and possibly no longer capable of sin. But that is not the case. It is very likely that he had been king for twenty years, half of the total years he reigned over Judah and Israel, a man of fifty years of age. He was past those years when such a sin as adultery might be expected, but he fell into that sin and other sins also.

The point is that it comes here as a warning for all of us. In this life we never get beyond the possibility of sin. In fact, we sin in some way every day of our lives. But I am speaking now of sins like David committed in this chapter which brought disgrace upon himself, dishonor to the Lord, and trouble for his family and for the nation over which he had ruled so well. And we need to tell ourselves that, if David could fall, we can, too. That is one of the main reasons we have this account in the Word.

But now let us be specific: What were his sin?

I. THE SINS OF DAVID.

I doubt if anyone could list them all because there clearly must have been sins in David's heart which led up to the sins that are mentioned here. But let us see what we are told in the chapter itself.

A. He was not doing what he should have been doing.

We can see this in the first verse of 1 Sam. 11. (Read.) He should have been with his men when they went against the Ammonites, but he stayed at home. Why, we are not really told. He may have been weary with all of the fighting that had been done, and felt that he needed a rest. But the point is that he was not where he should have been: with his men.

B. He committed adultery with Bathsheba.

This is recorded for us in verses 2 through 4. It would have been a sin if it had been a single woman, but Bathsheba had a husband. She was a married woman. And that made his sin that much more to be deplored.

C. He was dishonest.

He called Uriah home from the war, and tried to get him to go home to his wife so that he would think that the child that Bathsheba was going to have by David, was his own.

When the loyal Uriah refused to go to his wife because the army was in the field, then David tried a third dishonest measure:

- D. He sought to get Uriah drunk so that then he would go home to Bathsheba.

But even in his drunken state Uriah stayed that night with the servants, and did not go down to be with his wife.

After this, and since all of his plans had failed, David did a most despicable thing:

- E. He had Uriah murdered.

This was done in war, but it was premeditated and coldly calculated murder. And the blame for the death of Uriah was placed on David where it actually belonged.

After that, he waited until the days of Bathsheba's mourning was over, and then he took her as his wife. Here we have a sixth sin:

- F. He acted as though nothing sinful had taken place.

At least this is the way he wanted to appear outwardly. Some of his psalms indicate that he was in great turmoil of soul because of what he had done.

However, we need to pay particular attention to the last statement of the chapter. Here we see the real issue. We read, "But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord." The Lord looked upon the whole thing as one tragic sin made up of several sins. Every part of it was displeasing to the Lord.

Now let us see if we can single out at least some of the lessons that we can learn from this dark period in David's life.

II. THE LESSONS WE NEED TO LEARN.

Most of the things we observe in David's life, are things that we could, and should, incorporate into our own lives. But, of course, that is not the case with this chapter. This chapter teaches us what to avoid.

- A. We need to be careful to fulfill the responsibilities that we have. And if we have time for ourselves, we need to make sure that we use that time profitably.

We all need to rest from the duties that are upon us regularly, but we need to be careful about the way we use that time.

B. We need to be careful about the things that we look at.

Look at verse 2. (Read.)

This whole series of sins started when David saw Bathsheba bathing herself. Now we could argue that Bathsheba should have been bathing in a secluded place where no one could see her, but we are thinking about David. David looked, and he continued to look until his heart was filled with the wrong thoughts and the wrong plan.

Let me recommend something to all of you. I have done this before, but I want to do it again tonight. I would like to commend to all of you the daily reading of the book of Proverbs. I started doing this back in August of 1986, and I plan, the Lord willing, to keep it up as long as I live. I have found it tremendously helpful. And I have learned that it takes the re-reading of the book to get the truths of Proverbs into my mind and heart. But I have read the book every month from that time to this, and I find that certain passages will come to mind, prompted by the Holy Spirit, I am sure, just when I need them.

One such passage is Prov. 4:25-27. (Read.)

David was not looking back, or looking to one side or the other (maybe). And he could not avoid the sight that he saw, but he made his mistake by continuing to look at Bathsheba as she was bathing.

Let me give you another example of how treacherous it is to look at the wrong things. It is in Achan's words found in Joshua 7:21. (Read.)

And there is still another illustration in Gen. 3:6. (Read.)

We would never be able to calculate the sin that originates by looking at the wrong things. And we are especially susceptible today. We have trashy novels, pornographic magazines (and that includes many that used to be good), television, plus all that people do to uncover their bodies. You and I can't leave our homes without seeing things that we ought not to see.

When I started reading the Proverbs each month, I noticed over the months that Solomon said a great deal about

adultery. And then I began to ask myself, "Why?" I came to the conclusion that this is one of the strongest temptations that we as human beings face. And it becomes a thousand times more prevalent when we remember the words of our Lord Jesus on this subject. He said,

But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt. 5:28).

David's sins started with a look which he did not check.

When I was younger we taught our children to sing, "Be careful, little eyes, what you see." We need to revive that song so that we all can sing it. Cf. our Lord's words in Matt. 6:22, 23. (Read.)

C. Sins rarely travel alone.

David, in order to avoid detection, had to try to cover his sin, and the only way he could do it was with other sins. One sin led to another. So one way to avoid sins (pl.) is not to sin.

There are other lessons that I could point out from this chapter, but let me close by mentioning one more.

D. Sin is not confined to our youthful years, nor is it found only in people who do not know the Lord.

Tonight we are talking about one of the most godly men who ever lived, a man who lived his life pleasing God. But in a time of temptation, he fell into grievous sin, and did many things that you would think that David would never have done, even as a young man. And there is no evidence that he did those things. But we need to realize that if David could fall, being the man he was, then there is always the possibility that any of us can fall.

So we are never safe until we get to heaven. We need to keep hiding the Word of God in our hearts. Cf. Psa. 119:11. The Bible tells us in many places how to deal with sin. We need to put on the whole armor of God--every day! Cf. Eph. 6:10-20. We need to pray that we will be delivered from temptations that can so easily lead to sin.

Concl: Let us pray for grace to be obedient to the Lord each day we live, that it might not be written about us as we grow older that the thing that we have done has been displeasing to the Lord.