

"THOU ART THE MAN"

2 Samuel 12

Intro: Chapter 12 is the sequel of chapter 11. It took place at least nine months later than the tragic events of chapter 11, but it could have been a little longer than that. Some suggest the possibility that it could have been a couple of years later.

The child which Bathsheba had conceived by David had been born. The amazing thing is that David had not yet confessed his sin. And it was not until the Lord sent the prophet Nathan to him that David was forced to admit his guilt, and to confess his sin.

We are concerned mainly with the first 25 verses. It can easily be divided into three parts:

- 1) Nathan's ministry and David's confession (vv. 1-14).
- 2) The sickness and death of David's son (vv. 15-23).
- 3) The conception and birth of Solomon (vv. 24, 25).

Let us notice, first of all,

I. THE DIFFICULTY OF NATHAN'S MINISTRY.

We were first introduced to Nathan in chapter 7 where he responded to David in David's desire to build a house for the Lord. He had complete confidence in David's ability to discern the will of God because he had seen such great evidence that the Lord was with David.

We also learn from 2 Sam. 5:14 that David had a son by the name of Nathan. It is possible that he was given that name because of David's respect for and love for this man of God. This is speculation, but there is a strong possibility that it is true.

But even from the details that we have, it seems that there was a very close relationship between the king and the prophet. Therefore, it would have been very difficult for Nathan to have such an assignment from the Lord. He was sent by the Lord to David, we are told in 2 Sam. 12:1.

However, we can see that Nathan valued his relationship to the Lord even more than his relationship with King David. Faithfulness is the primary requirement for any servant of the Lord. Paul told the Corinthian church,

Let a man so account of us,
as of the minister of Christ,
and stewards of the mysteries of God.
Moreover it is required in stewards,

that a man be found **faithful** (1 Cor. 4:1, 2).

A task like Nathan had could sometimes be very dangerous. You will remember that it cost John the Baptist his life to be faithful to the Lord before Herod.

And yet what Nathan did was the best thing that could be done for David at this point in his life. Prov. 27:6 tells us that "faithful are the wounds of a friend." As difficult as it must have been for Nathan to carry out this assignment, yet it had to be most gratifying to him when he saw David's response.

The second things that we need to notice in this chapter is:

II. THE SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS OF DAVID.

There is no question at this point in David's life about his relationship to the Lord. He had been chosen because he was a man after God's heart. This could never have been said about an unregenerate man. David knew the Lord. The Lord knew David. We have abundant evidence of this in the chapters we have covered in the life of David. But it was this man, this man of God, this man after God's heart, who seemed content to forget about all that he had done. He seemed content to move ahead with his life as though those terrible things had never been done.

Therefore, when we quote Jer. 17:9, 10, let us remember that those evidence of deception are still in our hearts. We can be like David, indignant at the rich man in Nathan's parable for doing what amounted to nothing in comparison with what David had done, and yet do nothing about our own sins that might be 1000% worse! Charles Simeon once said, "It is scarcely to be conceived to what a degree sin will blind the eyes, and harden the heart" (Vol. 3, p. 269). Our hearts will deceive us because they are sinful hearts. We would think that it would have been impossible for David to sleep at night having committed such a list of terrible sins. But he did sleep, and apparently slept well. It was not until he condemned himself by his response to Nathan's story that his past was brought vividly to his conscience.

Paul was thinking about unbelievers when he wrote to Timothy these words:

And the servant of the Lord must not strive;
but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,
In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves;
**if God peradventure will give them repentance
to the acknowledging of the truth** (2 Tim. 2:24, 25).

But the same truth applies to believers. It is God Who

always gives repentance. True repentance never comes from us. We can regret the consequences of our sin. Unbelievers feel that way. But only God can give us true repentance. And that is what was happening to David in the verses that we read in this chapter. The Lord was dealing with David about sins that David seems to have been content to forget.

And so let us go on to look at:

III. DAVID'S REPENTANCE.

Many have been disappointed with David's confession. As it is stated here it amounted to only six words! He told Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." In the Hebrew text it is only two words.

However, when we examine his words we can see much to commend his words as an expression of true repentance. (1) He admitted that he had sinned, that what he had done was sin. He did not just call it a mistake (or by any other word that men are often inclined to use to excuse their sin. He called it by its right name: SIN! (2) He confessed that although he had sinned against Bathsheba, and against her husband, Uriah, and against all of his people, yet he saw that his guilt was the greatest because he had sinned against the Lord. (3) He made no attempt to explain to Nathan why he had done what he had done. He was not interested in excusing himself, but in getting things right with the Lord. (4) Neither did he get angry with Nathan because Nathan had come to bring his sin to his attention. (5) And then we learn as we go on reading our Bibles that in the presence of the Lord David extensively confessed his sin. Cf. Psa. 51. The place for us to go into detail about our sins is before the Lord. (6) Finally, it would seem that David's Psalms of Confession (Psalm 32 is another one) were written that others might know the distress that David experienced because of his sin, and not do as he had done. Those who use David's sin as an excuse for doing the same thing are only revealing how sinful their hearts are!

The good news for David was expressed in those word found in the latter part of verse 13: "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." He deserved to die for adultery and for murder, and possibly also for his deceit (if that were to be considered as bearing false witness). But he was forgiven, and preserved from death. This can only be explained in terms of the mercy and grace of God. Where would any of us be if it were not that God is the kind of a God He is?

Now let us notice:

IV. GOD'S JUDGMENT.

Read verses 10 through 12.

The Lord does not always deal with His people in the same way, but David's sin was especially grievous because of who he was. He was the King of Israel. He should have been the one to see the example for godliness. And he did for the greater part of his life. But his fall had a greater effect than would have been the case of some little-known Israelite. One thing that Nathan told David was that he had given "great occasion for the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme" (2 Sam. 12:14). Although I would not compare David with prominent evangelists in our day who have gotten into sin, yet we can see by what people have said how non-Christians often take great pleasure when some religious leader gets into difficulty, especially where the sins of the flesh are concerned.

But one thing that Nathan did tell David was that the child which had been conceived through his sin would die.

And our text reveals how that took place. It was an especially hard time for David and Bathsheba to have to give up their little son. How often children are involved in the consequences of our sins! That alone ought to make us walk in holiness before the Lord.

Finally, I can't leave this chapter without calling your attention to:

VI. THE GRACE OF GOD.

I have already mentioned that the Lord spared David from death. That was the grace of God. But there are some other indications in the chapter.

It was an act of God's grace that:

- A. God waited even though David seemed content to forget about his sin.

When we are inclined to get impatient with the Lord because we have had to wait for Him, let us remember how long He has waited on us, perhaps waiting for us to confess our sins. Or at least waited for us to do what He has told us in His Word that He wants us to do.

- B. The Lord sent Nathan to David.

That fact has grace written all over it. When the Lord

reminds us of our sins, let us remember that it is evidence that He is a God of all grace. It is painful for us to remember how we have displeased God, but the Lord causes us to remember so that we will not go out and do the same thing all over again.

- C. The Lord did not take away David's confidence that God was a God of grace. See vv. 21, 22.

David could easily have felt that the Lord would never again hear his prayer, but he had the courage to believe that the Lord might even be gracious in sparing his child. Sins are often so overruled by the Lord that instead of discouraging us in prayer, prayer take on a larger place in our lives than it ever had before. It probably was that way with David.

- D. The Lord gave David and Bathsheba another son, Solomon, who was a great joy to them, and who was to be the one who would continue the line of the family leading to Christ. See vv. 24, 25. Solomon means peace; Jedidiah means beloved of Jah (an abbreviation of Jehovah).

How good is the God we adore! When He would be justified in casting us from His presence forever, He restores us, and, in spite of our troubles, continues to pour out upon us the riches of His love and His grace and His mercy.

Concl: May the Lord teach us from these two chapters how much we need to avoid sin if we are to please Him, and if we are to live lives of happiness for ourselves that will bring glory and honor to Him Who loved us so much that He gave His only begotten Son to save us from our sins.

THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS

2 Samuel 12:26-13:39

Intro: I come tonight to another episode in the life of David which is hard to teach, and hard to preach. It is very similar to chapter 11 where we had the account of David's sins. In fact, the two sins David committed are the very sins in which his children were involved in chapter 13: adultery and murder.

However, before we look at chapter 13, let me direct your attention to the last six verses of chapter 12. It brings out the cruelty that heretofore had not been seen in David, but we also see an impudence manifested by Joab which was not good. It all had to do with:

I. THE WAR AGAINST THE AMMONITES (2 Sam. 12:26-31).

Joab continued the successful military campaigns of the armies of Israel, and here we see him as he was ready to take their "royal city." And he sent for David to come to take part in the final invasion saying, "Lest I take the city, and it be called after my name" (2 Sam. 12:28b). Some think that Joab was being considerate of David and his position, but it seems that his words carried with them a feeling of impatience and resentment toward King David. It is sometimes hard to interpret certain passages of Scripture where we cannot hear the tone of voice which was used when something was said. But it seems to me that Joab's attitude toward David was not what it had been formerly.

And then when we see what David did to the Ammonites, we can be surprised at this also. It is true that the Ammonites were cruel in this same fashion after defeating their enemies, and that the Ammonites sought the complete destruction of Israel, and yet the hard punishment which David exercised against them was hardly what we would have expected from David. It probably was due to things like this that David was not permitted to build the Temple as he had wanted to do. I agree with Matthew Henry who said that what David did in punishing the Ammonites in such a cruel manner was "a sign that David's heart was not yet made soft by repentance" (II, 505). We would think that, after all that David had been through, he would have shown more mercy toward his enemies. It would have been more merciful to kill them outright than to kill them in the cruel manner that he did.

Jeremiah was to teach us later that the heart of man is "desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9). The seeds of cruelty are in all of us, and it is only by the grace of God that we have not done worse than we have. The Spirit of God must have

included this period in David's life as a warning to all of us. When we think of God's gracious dealings with us, it ought to make us more tolerant of others.

But let us go on to chapter 13.

There are two sections to this chapter:

- 1) Amnon's adultery (vv. 1-20).
- 2) Amnon's murder by the servants of Absalom (vv. 21-39).

Before we get into the story, let us get acquainted with the people we meet in this chapter.

- 1) Amnon -- 2 Sam. 3:2 tells us that he was David's firstborn, and that his mother was Ahinoam the Jezreelitess.
- 2) Tamar was Absalom's sister. Absalom was David's third son, but his mother was Maachah who was the daughter of Talmai, the king of Geshur. This means that Amnon and Tamar were half-brother and sister. And so Absalom was also Amnon's half-brother.
- 3) Jonadab, who made the evil suggestion to Amnon about trapping Tamar, was a son of Shammah, David's older brother. So this made him a first cousin of Amnon and Tamar.

When we put all of this together, we can see that the sins of chapter 13 were a family affair. And to make matters worse for David, he was the one who sent Tamar to Amnon, and he was the one who gave permission for Amnon and all of his brothers to go with Absalom.

We immediately, therefore, come to two important lessons in this passage:

- 1) Problems that result from multiple marriages. Amnon probably would not have let his passion run away with him if Tamar had been his full sister. But, because she was his half-sister, he pursued his evil desires. Even after Amnon had defiled her, she felt that it would be all right for them to be married. And so David's many marriages created some real problems for his children.

When the Lord established marriage, he gave Adam only one wife. Polygamy, though it was practiced by many of the people of God in the OT, was never the will of God. It created problems for Abraham. It created problems for Jacob. It created problems for David, and it created problems for Solomon. What God permits, is not always in accordance with His will. Therefore, we need to know His divine plan for marriage, and stick with it. Kings particularly were told in Deut. 17 that they were not to "multiply wives."

The other truth that we learn from David's circumstances is:

- 2) We are not to marry outside of the family of God.

Absalom's mother was the daughter of the King of Geshur who, as far as we know, was a heathen. And you can see in 2 Sam. 13:37 that Absalom went to his grandfather on his mother's side after he had Amnon murdered. He knew that he would be safe there.

A union between a believer and an unbeliever is an unequal yoke, and is destined for trouble. It might sound unreasonable, young people, to follow such instruction from the Word of God, but it is the only safe way to go. Seek always to do that which is pleasing to the Lord, and you will have reason to expect the blessing of the Lord upon your marriage.

When the Lord pronounced judgment upon David in chapter 12, one of the things that he said to David was this, found in verse 11: "I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house." This does not mean that God caused Amnon to commit adultery with Tamar. Nor does it mean that the Lord was the cause of the deception by which Tamar was led into her half-brother's trap. And it certainly does not mean that God caused Absalom to kill Amnon. But it does mean that the Lord did not restrain them. The Lord let them do what naturally was in their hearts. All the Lord has to do with any of us is to lift His restraining hand from us, and there is no telling what we will do. That is why David prayed at some time in his life,

Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins;

let them not have dominion over me (Psa. 19:13a).

And this is why the Lord taught us to pray that He would deliver us from the Evil One. Cf. Matt. 6:13a. One power that the Lord continually exercises in all of our lives is power restraining us from sin. The only reason that King Abimelech had not sinned with Sarah after Abraham said that she was his sister was, as the Lord told Abimelech, "I also withheld thee from sinning against me" (Gen. 20:6).

The Lord restrains us by our consciences. The Lord restrains us by His Word. He restrains us from sin by providentially intervening in our circumstances. There is never a day that we are not restrained by the Holy Spirit, and kept from sins that we would otherwise commit.

BUT, IF WE ARE DISPLEASED THE LORD, OR IGNORING WHAT HE DOES TO RESTRAIN US, HE MAY LIFT THAT RESTRAINT TO SHOW US HOW MUCH WE NEED HIM, AND HOW UTTERLY DEPENDENT UPON HIM WE ARE. We need to beware of any transgression of the Word of God. It can only lead to more sinning. The same is true of the natural restraints that God has placed in our hearts, and the blocks that He puts in the way, as He restrained Balaam with his donkey. We can praise the Lord for the forgiveness of our sins, but also for the many ways He has kept us from

sinning. We need to thank God every day for His restraining power. When the Restrainer is withheld from this world, the world will enter the Great Tribulation. 2 Thess. 2 tells us that.

But let us look at these two sections for just a moment or two.

II. AMNON'S ADULTERY (2 Sam. 13:1-20).

Amnon engaged in thinking that could only lead to sin. Instead of turning away from Tamar, and getting his mind on other things, he fed that evil passion day after day. And the Devil will always see to it that the wrong people are around to encourage the sinner in his sin. In order to accomplish his evil desires, Amnon agreed to deceive his father, and to get Tamar into his quarters where she would not be able to get away from him. Do you see how sins travel together, and how one sin helps another sin?

And he was able to do what he wanted to do.

But this was not love; this was evil passion. Everything was wrong about it. And so, when Amnon had sinned, he hated her more than he had loved her, or thought that he loved her, before. All of her pleading to make something good out of this which was so bad, was of no avail. Amnon had her not only put out, but locked out!

Tamar was not at fault. She was deceived and trapped by a man who was intent on satisfying his lust. He did not love her; he loved himself, and made her his victim.

These accounts are recorded for us in Scripture to warn us against the evil that is in all of our hearts. Young people, and those of us who are no longer young, we need to make sure that we are living according to the Word of God.

Let me ask one question before we leave this section of Scripture. Do you suppose that David's sin made Amnon feel freer to do what he did? Coming so close together, there must be some connection. I will let you think about that. But remember that sinful passion is responsible for more tragedies in life than we will ever be able to calculate.

What about the second part of the chapter?

III. AMNON'S MURDER BY THE SERVANTS OF ABSALOM (2 Sam. 13:21-39).

Notice an important lesson concerning both Amnon and Absalom:

What they did resulted in death for both of them. How many times people have started out to have a good time, or to get even with someone, only to have it result in tragedy.

I personally am surprised that David did not do something. Perhaps he was still crippled from the effects of his own sin, maybe even blaming himself for what Amnon had done. Whatever the reason may have been, this is where Absalom comes on the scene. He had planned for two full years to do what he finally did. That was to kill Amnon.

It seems to me to be quite clear that David had at least two sons who did not know the Lord. Amnon gives no evidence that he was saved, and neither did Absalom. How much David had taught them, we do not know. Normally they should have been acquainted with the Mosaic Law. The Law certainly spoke about committing adultery. The seventh commandment is, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14). (By the way notice that the Law was primarily a restraining instrument of God.) Amnon must have known that. But the Law also spoke about taking vengeance. In Deut. 32:35 we have the words of the Lord when He said, "To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence." Paul rendered it like this in Rom. 12:19: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." It is not only that vengeance belongs to Him, but He has declared that He will exercise vengeance. Absalom must have known this. But, instead of waiting to see what the Lord would do, he took matters into his own hands. And he would pay the price for his sin. The passage of time only increased his desire to kill Amnon, and that is what he finally did.

It seems to me that David presented the picture of a very pathetic person in connection with the troubles that came into his family at this time. He was rather quickly comforted over the death of Amnon, but yearned over the departure of Absalom.

Concl: How can we sum up what we have here? There is much that could be said, but let me mention just points.

First, we need to beware of the sin that is in our hearts. Remember Jer. 17:9, 10.

Second, remember that the Lord has made provision not only for our deliverance from sin's penalty, but also from sin's power. We don't have to sin even though we can. We need to hide the Word in our hearts as we learn from Psa. 119:11.

Third, we need to be careful not to try to go around the road blocks that the Lord has placed in our way. Amnon made that

mistake. Absalom's mistake was that he took over the task which the Lord said belong to Himself.

And, finally, thinking of David and his sins, it is a warning to those of us who are parents, regardless of our age, to be careful that we walk with the Lord. We need to be careful about the sins of the spirit as well as sins of the flesh. People have taken David's sin as an excuse for them to do what he did. They are wrong in doing it, but they have done it nevertheless. The greatest thing that we as parents can do secure the blessing of our children is to make as sure as we can that we are seeking to live to please the Lord.

This is a chapter that has "Caution" written on it, "Beware of danger ahead." David said in Psa. 19, verses 10 and 11, with respect to the Word of God,

More to be desired are they than gold,
yea, than much find gold:
sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
Moreover by them is thy servant warned:
and in keeping of them there is great reward.

May the Lord grant that we will give heed to the warnings, and look forward to those "great rewards."

THE EXILE RETURNS

2 Samuel 14

Intro: We are first introduced to Absalom in chapter 13, but we are not until he is killed by Joab and his men in chapter 18. As we come to chapter 14, Absalom had exiled himself in the land of Geshur where the king was Talmi, his mother's father, his grandfather. Absalom fled from the land of Israel because he murdered his half-brother, Amnon. Amnon had defiled his sister, Tamar. Absalom had remained quiet about the incident for two years, but he was planning all of the time to kill Amnon. He eventually did this, and this was the reason for his exile. It seems that if David has taken the proper measures against Amnon, his troubles with Absalom might not have developed. But how could David judge his son according to the Law when he had been granted mercy from the Lord for his own sins? It is always impossible for us to say what might have happened IF something else had been done. We are left to understand what did happen, and to learn from the events which followed however tragic they might have been.

In Amnon's sin David was faced with his own sin against Bathsheba. In Absalom's sin he was faced with his sin against Bathsheba's husband, Uriah. These tragic events in David's family had come upon David as a judgment from God, and yet they were administered by God in such a way as to advance the work of God in his own soul. They were events which caused David a great deal of distress. Some of his Psalms fill in the details regarding the travail of soul which David experienced during these days.

The latter part of chapter 13 tells us that David had gotten over the death of Amnon, and that, as a father, he longed to have Absalom back. However, probably due to the fact that Absalom had sinned so grievously in killing Amnon, his own half-brother, David was reluctant to do so. And so Absalom remained in exile.

What we do know is that Joab, who was a nephew of King David, and, therefore, a cousin of Absalom, decided to do something about bringing Absalom back. What his motives were, we can only guess. He perhaps had sense the growing popularity of Absalom with the people and the corresponding decreasing popularity of David because of David's sins. He also knew that David was not going to live forever, or he might be overthrown, and so Joab was looking out for himself. In addition, he had his own sin to worry about. He had killed Abner with the help of his brother Abishai. At that time David had said,

These men the sons of Zeruah be too hard for me:
the Lord shall reward the doer of evil

according to his wickedness (2 Sam. 3:39b). The whole picture concerning Joab was becoming increasingly mysterious. However, he sought to bring Absalom back, and he determined to do it through a wise woman from Tekoah. Tekoah was located about ten miles south of Jerusalem.

The first section of 2 Samuel 14 has to do with:

I. THE WISE WOMAN OF TEKOAH (2 Sam. 14:1-20).

She is called in verse 2 "a wise woman." This probably means that this was her reputation, and David probably knew her. Being a wise woman, her story would seem more acceptable to David. Joab is the one who made up the story to get David to bring Absalom back from exile.

Her story is given in verses 4 through 7.

David was obviously impressed, and promised her that her son would be protected.

However, after asking permission to go on, she told David in verses 12 and 13 that he was guilty like the people she had described since he had not brought home his own "banished" son. We need to keep in mind that David had not "banished" Absalom; Absalom had fled into exile for his own safety--perhaps like Rebekah sent Jacob away until Esau had cooled off and abandoned his plan to kill Jacob. The point that the woman was making was that, if he would spare the woman's son, surely he would bring his own son back from exile.

At this point David told her not to hide from him the answer to the question that he would ask her. She agreed. Then David asked her if Joab were behind all that she had said. She told him that he was. She gave him the honor of being able to discern what was going on.

David then called Joab, and told him to go after Absalom, and bring him home.

II. THE RETURN OF ABSALOM, THE EXILE (2 Sam. 14:21-24).

Absalom was brought back, but with one restriction: He was not to see the king's face. David probably felt that he had to do this to satisfy his own conscience that Absalom was being punished for the sin that he had committed. However, David was not really dealing with the issue as he should have done.

The third section of the chapter tells us of:

III. ABSALOM'S INCREASING POPULARITY (2 Sam. 14:25-27).

The popularity of Absalom was actually a commentary on the low state of spiritual life in Israel at this time. This, too, was a reflection upon David. Notice that nothing is said about Absalom's faith, or his walk with the Lord. Although his father was one of the most godly men who ever lived (in spite of the sins he committed), yet he had not imparted that godliness to his son. That is not the way that we become godly.

The account in these verses tells us that Absalom was popular because he was so handsome. Physically he was without blemish. You could not but be attracted to him. In addition to a strong body, he had a beautiful head of hair. And he took full advantage of this natural gift that the Lord had given him. He let it grow until it became too heavy for him to carry around all day. It is estimated that two hundred shekels of weight was probably a little over three pounds! When it got that heavy, he had it polled, i.e., cut, or perhaps better, trimmed. You can be sure that he had his own hair dresser. When a person gives more attention to his physical appearance than he does to the condition of his soul, you can be sure that there is something very wrong in that person's heart.

To summarize what we are told about Absalom, he was a very, very proud man. There was nothing about him to indicate that he had the slightest interest in the things of the Lord. And, what is most significant, there was not an ounce of evidence that he was in the least repentant for what he had done in killing his brother, Amnon. Joab had succeeded in bringing Absalom back, but he had brought back an unrepentant sinner who would only cause more trouble for his father, the king, in the days ahead.

The last part of the chapter tells us about:

IV. ABSALOM'S FULL RESTORATION (2 Sam. 14:28-33).

Here Joab got a little of his own medicine. Absalom put him under pressure to have him accepted by the king. Joab may have felt that getting Absalom back to Jerusalem was enough, but Absalom was not only proud; he was impatient. He wanted to be restored, but on his terms. He still showed no evidence that he was even thinking of repentance. He burned Joab's barley field to get his attention. And so Joab went to the king, the king called for Absalom, and we read about the disgusting things that took place in the last part of the chapter.

David, of course, was like any father would have been: reluctant to pass judgment on his son. But his greatest mistake was to accept Absalom back under pressure. He did not talk to him about the Lord, nor about the problem that had brought about their estrangement. It seems that he was willing to forget the past, and accept Absalom back into his favor. The remaining chapter (15-18) remind us of the great mistake that David made at this point. He was only assisting his proud son to carry out his evil plan which would put David himself in disgrace and exile.

Concl: What are we to learn from this chapter?

I think that there is a strong parallel between this story about Absalom and the story the Lord told about the prodigal son, recorded for us in Luke 15:11-24. At the same time, the two accounts stand in real contrast with each other.

We are always faced with a dilemma as to what to do when someone dear to us sins against the Lord in some way. Usually pride is involved. A true believer always want to see a restoration of that broken relationship, and so we often take steps ahead of the Lord only to find that our efforts are in vain.

One thing is true when we think about ourselves, or about others, whether it is a son, or a daughter, or a friend, or even one who is a casual acquaintance. It is that only God can change our hearts. Philippians 2:13 states it as clearly as it can be stated. Until the Lord does a work in our hearts, we are all going to try to ignore our sin. We will continue on in our pride. We will want to settle things on our terms, but not on the Lord's. A kind of a reconciliation can be established, but it is never a true reconciliation. The father of the prodigal son was much wiser than King David. Do you know why? He did not go after his son; he waited until his son was repentant and came home of his own accord, sorry for what he had done and the way that he had lived. When the prodigal came home, his first words to his father were, "Father, I have sinned..." (Luke 15:21). The father did not wait for his son to finish the speech he had planned to give; he didn't need to. He knew that the son who had come back was different from the son that had gone away.

What would have happened if David had waited for a change in Absalom's heart, we do not know. But we do know that there is no real solution unless God works a change in the heart of the one who has sinned, and has run away from his sin.

May this incident in the life of David help all of us to understand more about the ways of the Lord. And may we see

how we need to pray that the Lord will work in the hearts of our children, in the hearts of those who sit under the Word of God every Sunday. We are utterly dependent upon God to change us, to change our children, and to change the hearts of those who have identified themselves with His people. If the Lord does not work, nothing we can do will take the place of the work of God.

What is there for us to do? Thinking about the life of David, we need to be careful about our own lives. We need to be an example to the people we are concerned about. We need to be given much to prayer. And we need to learn to wait upon the Lord. We cannot force people to be repentant and to do the right thing. We have to depend upon God to give them repentance, and to make they want to do His will.

We do not read a great deal in the Psalms about family life. Perhaps David was deficient in this kind of instruction for himself and his children. Maybe this is one reason that his son, Solomon, had so much to say about family life in his book of Proverbs. May the Lord be gracious to us all in working in our lives, and then working in the lives of those who have been committed to our care.

ABSALOM, THE TRAITOR
2 Samuel 15

Intro: Last week we learned at the close of chapter 14 that, under pressure from Absalom, Joab had appealed to King David, and David restored Absalom to full fellowship with himself. However, David did this without seeing any real change in Absalom. Absalom was still a rebel at heart. He had never actually repented for killing his brother Amnon. And so it is not surprising that David had to face even greater trouble because of the selfish ambition which moved Absalom to cause David even greater trouble.

It certainly is apparent that God was bringing more judgment upon David, as He had declared. All of the Lord had to do was to remove His restraining hand from Absalom. We see also how foolish it is to restore a person like Absalom to his place as a son of the king while he is still unchanged in heart. There are always people around who will say that love should be shown to such a person, and that love will change the heart of the sinner. Or people will say that it is better to have a person inside instead of outside because then the offender can be watched, or he will be influenced to do the right thing. The story of Absalom shows that all such advice is wrong.

What we need to see in a person like Absalom is a change of heart, and only God can do that. It is clear that Absalom needed the Lord. Even though he was the son of the godly King David, yet he had never been saved. He was self-willed, ambitious, deceptive, unscrupulous, and without any sense of loyalty to his own father. Even with believers, restoration of fellowship needs to await the work of the Lord in the soul of the rebel, even though he might be the king's son.

If David had wanted to restore Absalom, as obviously he did, he should have done as Paul advised Timothy years later when he said,

And the servant of the Lord must not strive;
but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,
In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves;
if God peradventure will give them repentance
to the acknowledging of the truth;
And that they may recover themselves
out of the snare of the devil,
who are taken captive by him at his will
(2 Tim. 2:24-26).

It is clear that such a person as Absalom was under the power of the Devil. David may have repeated the mistake that he had made during Absalom's growing up years. By this I mean

that there is no evidence that David met with Absalom to teach him the will of God, and to see God bring about a repentant attitude in Absalom's heart. He simply took Absalom back, and let him do whatever he wanted to do. That would have to be considered as one of the worst mistakes that David ever made! It gave Absalom the opportunity he wanted to bring about an insurrection against his father.

Notice that even a close blood relationship, such as a father and son would have, will not keep a man with a sinful, rebellious heart from doing his worst against one he should support most faithfully. Only God knows how really sinful the heart of man is. Cf. Jer. 17:9. And we are being most foolish if we look to anyone but the Lord to bring about real peace. As much as we may want peace, it is folly to move faster than the Lord is moving.

And so it is not surprising that the first part of the chapter tells us about:

I. ABSALOM'S CONSPIRACY (2 Sam. 15:1-6).

He sounds here like an American politician. The people came to the king for help, but Absalom got into a place where he could intercept them. He tried to make the people think that his father was not meeting their needs as he should have done. He wasted no time in telling them that he would do better if he had the chance. And he convinced them that life would be better for them if he were their king. He may not have expressed it in those words, but that is what he meant. Soon he began to convince the people that they were not being cared for and that he would be a better leader.

The next thing we see is:

II. ABSALOM'S HYPOCRISY (2 Sam. 15:7-9).

Probably the text of verse 7 should read four years instead of "forty years." This means that Absalom had been working at his conspiracy for four years since he had been restored to the king. When he felt that things were well in hand for what he wanted to do, he told his father that while he was in exile he had promised the Lord that if he were restored to the king's favor, he would pay his vow with a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Lord in Hebron. Hebron was his birthplace. It was there that sacrifices had been offered previously. It was one of the cities which belonged to the priests. However, the truth was that Absalom considered this as a good place to begin his actions to overthrow his father and take the kingdom away from him. David should have wondered why it took Absalom four year to get around to

paying his vow to the Lord.

However, we must be sympathetic with David. Think of how this must have impressed him that at last he was seeing some evidence of Absalom's devotion to God. David always sought to encourage anyone in their devotion to the Lord. Dr. Robert Jamieson, in the JFB Commentary, made this statement about Absalom at this point:

What a black heart must Absalom have had when he could not only plot the ruin of his father, but pursue his treasonable designs under the mask of religion (II, 252).

David sent Absalom to Hebron with his blessing little knowing what terrible things were in Absalom's heart.

The third thing in our chapter is the account of:

III. ABSALOM'S REVOLT (2 Sam. 15:10-12).

It is probably true that not many people, if any, knew up to this point what Absalom was planning to do. But Absalom was clever in laying out his course of action.

First, he sent spies out to alert the people throughout the nation that he was setting up his throne in Hebron. They were to await a signal from the trumpet as to when his reign would actually begin. Then he called two hundred men, probably armed men, who did not really know why Absalom was calling them to Hebron. Finally, he called for Ahithophel, David's trusted friend and advisor, while he, Absalom, was going through the motions of carrying out his sacrifices. The Holy Spirit recorded for us here that "the conspiracy was strong." Absalom's plans were working well.

For Ahithophel to have joined the ranks of the rebels would have been a serious blow to David. The reason for Ahithophel's revolt seems to have been that he was Bathsheba's grandfather, and that he had been greatly offended by David's sin with Bathsheba and David's murder of her husband. On Ahithophel's relationship with Bathsheba, cf. 2 Sam. 11:3 with 23:34.

For Ahithophel to support Absalom was a great blow to David, and at least two of his Psalms reflect how he was hurt by Ahithophel. See Psalms 41:9 and 55:12-14. The grief that David expressed was prophetic of the grief that the Lord experienced when Judas turned against Him.

When the revolt started, it gathered momentum until it appeared to David that the whole nation was in revolt.

Consequently, beginning with verse 13 of this chapter we have:

IV. DAVID'S FLIGHT (2 Sam. 15:13-37).

The whole account of his flight from Jerusalem continues into chapter 16, and verse 14. But we will just go to the end of chapter 15 tonight.

The account in this chapter has to do with several groups, and several individuals, who were supportive of David. The Lord did not leave David friendless even though this was a worse time for David than any that he had experienced when he was fleeing from Saul.

David knew that they would all be killed if they stayed in Jerusalem, and so he made immediate plans to leave.

The first part of the account tells us of:

A. The loyalty of his servants and of the original six hundred men (vv. 13-18).

This had to be encouraging to David, but they were not enough to stand against the men who were with Absalom.

Next notice:

B. The loyalty of Ittai, the Gittite (vv. 19-23).

Ittai was a Philistine, a Gentile. He was one of the six hundred. David tried to make him go back, but Ittai refused. He pledged himself to be faithful to the king even if it meant his own death. Again, the Lord must have meant this for David's encouragement. Solomon wrote in Prov. 17:17,

A friend loveth at all times,
and a brother is born for adversity.

Absalom, David's son, might rebel against him, but Ittai, a Philistine, proved to be a true friend, a man whose heart the Lord had touched.

C. The case of Zadok, the priest, and the ark of the covenant (vv. 24-29).

To have the ark of the covenant meant having the presence of God and the blessing of God. But this is one place where David was insistent on what was the right thing to do. And it is here that we find the first expression of David's faith and his confidence that all of the circumstances were at the Lord's disposal. Cf. vv. 25, 26. David truly was trusting the Lord with the outcome of all of these heartbreaking

circumstances. Also he knew that the priests would be of more value to him in Jerusalem than if they were to join the escape of David and his men.

D. The report about Ahithophel (2 Sam. 15:31).

This prompted the prayer from David that, although he knew that Ahithophel was a very wise man, the Lord would turn his advice for Absalom into foolishness. And we will see how the Lord did just that.

The chapter concludes with:

E. David's instructions to Hushai, the Archite (vv. 32-37).

It seems that he was a Jew who was from a small town near Bethel. He had the distinction of being a friend of David, like Ittai. But David considered him a wise man who also would have been more valuable to him in Jerusalem where he could help to confound the counsel of Ahithophel, as well as providing David with information about the state of things in Jerusalem through the sons of the priests.

And so Hushai returned to Jerusalem at about the same time that Absalom arrived there from Hebron. Absalom had done exactly as David had thought that he would do, i.e., go to Jerusalem as quickly as he could get there. How providential it was that David had escaped first.

Concl: We will leave the story here for tonight, but I want to point out two things for our own encouragement. The child of God, and particularly those who are involved in the Lord's work, often find themselves in difficult positions. The Lord's work is not without its risks. This chapter carries with it special encouragement.

The first is this: The preservation of David, and the provision of those who would support him. The Lord was most gracious to David, and that is a great comfort to any servant of the Lord in a time of trial.

The second comes from David himself. You can see that, while he had to flee in humiliation, he was not thinking in terms of defeat. He knew that, while it might not include him, yet the conspiracy of Absalom would fail, as is the case with every person who dares to set himself against God. Our labor is not in vain in the Lord. This is always true.

THE HUMBLING OF THE KING
2 Samuel 16

Intro: This chapter contains three tragic events, and by each one of them David was humbled. We cannot but recognize that this was the purpose of God for His servant in each instance, but they must have not only been humbling but humiliating for King David. We might say that these things were all a part of what God was doing to judge David for his sins with Bathsheba and Uriah, her husband. And this would be true. However, we need to remember that, while the Lord may appear to be against His people for a time, yet that is never really the case. Even when He brings us into difficult circumstances, it is always with the idea of blessing us, not destroying us. That was the purpose of God even during this time when David was under the chastening hand of the Lord.

We have to recognize, too, that high places of responsibility bring trials which people in lower places never have to endure. For example, in David's case, there were those who were envious of his position as King, and wanted to take it away from him. This was the case with Absalom, his own son. In the case of Ziba, Mephibosheth's servant, we see a man who was trying to better his own condition. Therefore, he came to the King with a false report at a time when the King was naturally looking for friends and helpers. And then there were others who would take advantage of the King's declining popularity to disgrace him publicly. This was the case with Shimei. This also was the case with Ahithophel.

In chapter 16 we see David in each of these situations, and they all were to prove humbling to this man of God, King David, who was going through one of the most difficult times in his entire life. We will consider them all in order:

- 1) Ziba (vv. 1-4).
- 2) Shimei (vv. 5-14).
- 3) Absalom and Ahithophel (vv. 15-23).

In this third instance we see that Absalom was not immune to the pretended support of one who was actually his enemy and a friend of his father. That man was Hushai.

Let us first consider,

I. THE DECEPTION OF ZIBA (2 Sam. 16:1-4).

It is amazing that Ziba, or anyone else, could be selfishly seeking his own advantage during such a time of national crisis. But that is exactly what Ziba was doing.

And yet notice how the Lord overruled through his deception to make a special provision for David and his men. Look at

verses 1 and 2. The Lord often is known to bring good out of evil. These were supplies which would have been very valuable to David for the days that were immediately ahead of him. Ziba's purpose was, however, not to help David, but to soften up David for the false information that he came to give to David. It was that Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, was hoping that through Absalom's insurrection, the throne of Israel would be his--as a grandson of Saul. None of this was true, as David was to learn later. See 2 Sam. 19:24-30.

What can we learn from what Ziba did?

David needed to be on his guard with those who pretended to be his friends, as well as with those who were known to be his enemies. Gifts (v. 1) and flattery (v. 4) are tools that are often used to deceive us. Moreover, we see that David acted very hastily for such an important matter, and there is no evidence that he sought wisdom from the Lord as to what he should have done in this case. He may have felt that the Lord had sent Ziba for his encouragement, or, on the other hand, he may have felt that he was so out of favor with the Lord that there would have been no point in his praying. Whatever the reason, David made the wrong decision, and must have sent Ziba away laughing (at least inwardly) at how easy it had been to deceive the King.

In addition to everything else that David overlooked, he forgot, at least for the moment, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9). David should have been suspicious when it was apparent that Ziba's actions were centered on his own advantage. He should have been cautious also because of what he knew about Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth had not shown any interest in the throne during the time that he had been with David; it was most unlikely that he would turn against his father's dearest friend in such a time as David was then going through.

It had to be most humbling to King David to learn later that he had been deceived, and that he had made a very wrong decision in favor of Ziba. Matthew Henry said, "The world's smiles are more dangerous than its frowns" (Vol. II, p. 527).

The second situation had to do with:

II. THE MALICE OF SHIMEI (2 Sam. 16:5-14).

What Shimei did was actually treason. David was still the King, and so Shimei's actions were inexcusable.

He was a relative of the former King Saul. He evidently had some deep resentments against David because, with the rise of

David, and the setting aside of the family of Saul, Shimei's own ambitions had probably come to an end. Casting stones at David was actually an attempt to take David's life. He cursed David. He resorted to name-calling. See verse 7. Regardless of what David had done, he was anything but a "man of Belial"--which was the equivalent of calling him a man of the Devil! And he blamed David in verse 8 for things which David had not done, and which nothing to do with the troubles that David was going through. So it is clear that this was a time when all of the discontents could vent their hatred and dissatisfaction upon King David. David had been scrupulously careful not to raise a hand against Saul during the time that Saul was King.

Abishai, David's nephew, was incensed at what Shimei was doing, and offered to go "take off his head" (v. 9). This is an indication that David could have done something about Shimei's attack, if he had chosen to do so. And it also constituted pressure upon David because it seemed foolish not to do something when there were so many other things over which David had no control. But David was looking behind the immediate scene, and thinking of the Lord's purpose in what was taking place. This is where David was extremely wise, and acted as you would expect a man of God, such as he was, to act. Verses 10 through 12 are the most wonderful part of this chapter.

David believed that the hand of the Lord was in what Shimei was doing. Twice he indicated as much to Abishai. David's words show how completely submissive he was to the Lord. But he did not do this in a fatalistic manner. He did it in faith, and we see this in what David said in verse 12. David's hope was clearly in the Lord. This sounds similar to what he said about Bathsheba's child before the child died. Cf. 2 Sam. 12:22. When we go through trials, we never know what the Lord may choose to do, but it is wonderful to be able to say, "It may be..."

Shimei was to come back into David's life at a later time, but for the time then present David had to leave Shimei in the hands of the Lord. He had not been able to injure David physically, but the experience was one that was greatly humbling to the King. David did not know who his enemies were until Absalom went into action, but then they seemed to come from everywhere.

So David saw the Lord in what Shimei did, but he trusted the Lord to bring good out of this great evil.

Charles Simeon mentioned that David was well acquainted with the story of Joseph. But we could also add that David had

seen the Lord meet his needs before. And he was well enough acquainted with the ways of the Lord to know that the Lord always has our sanctification in mind in the trials which He brings into our lives. And David was not to be disappointed although we have to leave that situation unresolved.

Finally, we come to:

III. THE WICKEDNESS OF AHITHOPHEL AND ABSALOM (2 Sam. 16:15-23).

We learned in the latter part of chapter 15 that David had sent his faithful friend Hushai back to Jerusalem. Let me read verses 32 through 37 to remind us all about what David had done, and why. (Read.)

We cannot justify Hushai in what he told Absalom when Absalom rebuked him for not being faithful to David, but he was there in Jerusalem to do what David had told him to do--to be an informant as to what Absalom was doing.

After a brief reference to Hushai, we learn that Absalom sought advice from Ahithophel.

Ahithophel was a very wise man, and he had been one of David's chief men until he went with Absalom. I suggested along with many others that Ahithophel had turned against David because he was Bathsheba's grandfather, and deeply resented what David had done to Bathsheba and her husband.

The advice which Ahithophel gave to Absalom here was good advice from a worldly standpoint, but abominable in the light of the Word of God. He encouraged Absalom not only in wickedness, but to be brazen about it. This is what Paul called glorying in their shame in his letter to the Philippian church. It is true that the Lord had said this would happen, but that did not excuse either Ahithophel nor Absalom, nor does it put the blame upon God. God knew what these men would do, and He did not hold them back from the evil which they planned.

This was the strongest thing that Absalom could have done to make it clear to the nation that he would never make up with his father. Nothing could have laid greater disgrace upon his father than this. Not only was Absalom violating the commandment that told him to honor his father and mother, but he was engaging in the sin of adultery which was also in violation of the law of Moses. So both Ahithophel and Absalom were demonstrating that they were men who did not know the Lord. With all of Ahithophel's wisdom, he had an evil heart.

Concl: What are we to learn from three such difficult situations, all of which were both humbling and humiliating to King David?

We can certainly see fresh evidence of the sin that is in the heart of man. Sometimes sin makes men appear friendly when they are not. At other times it causes men to resort to the most wicked behavior in order to accomplish their purposes.

But the most important lessons are to be seen in David's behavior. It is just as important to seek the leading of the Lord in times of trial as at any other time. We learn that from David's experience with Ziba. It is also important to trust the Lord even when we can take action in our own defense. Sometimes it is right to do things; at other times it means moving ahead of the Lord. It must have grieved David deeply that Absalom would do what he did, but he had to leave that with the Lord, too.

Perhaps the most important lesson is one which is pointed out for us by James in his epistle in the NT, not from the life of David, but from the life of Job, which David undoubtedly knew. I refer to James 5:10, 11. (Read.)

David's Psalms show that there were many times, extended periods of time, when he was confused at the silence of God. But we also see in His Psalms that he encouraged the people of God to wait upon the Lord, not in despair, but with the assurance that the Lord would finally act for the blessing of His people, and for the glory of His own Name.

So let us wait on the Lord, and learn from David that our waiting cannot be in vain.

THE COUNSEL OF AHITHOPHEL
2 Samuel 17

Intro: Who was Ahithophel? I have answered that question before, but let me repeat it so we will all be reminded of the answer.

We read in 2 Sam. 23:34 that Ahithophel was the father of one of David's mighty men, a man by the name of Eliam. In 2 Sam. 11:3 where we are first introduced to Bathsheba, we read that she was the daughter of Eliam. Assuming that they are the same Eliam (which is very likely), the son of Ahithophel and the father of Bathsheba, this would make Bathsheba the granddaughter of Ahithophel. And, if that is true, this would suggest that Ahithophel turned against David because of David's sin with Bathsheba, after which David arranged for the death of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband.

Ahithophel was David's counsellor. David had a great deal of confidence in Ahithophel because we read in 2 Sam. 16:23 that "the counsel of Ahithophel...was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God." Ahithophel must have been older than David. However, it seems that Ahithophel was one of the first of David's men to go with Absalom in his revolt against his father, the king.

We saw last week in 2 Sam. 16 that it was Ahithophel who advised Absalom to go into David's concubines in order to show the people of Israel that there was no possibility that he would change his mind and rejoin his father. From a human standpoint, as I mentioned, this was a good thing to do, but from God's standpoint this was a very wicked suggestion. As we are going to find out in this chapter, this man Ahithophel who was known for his wisdom made a fatal mistake when he decided to go with Absalom. He evidently wanted to take revenge upon David for what David had done to Bathsheba instead of leaving vengeance up to the Lord.

As we come to chapter 17 we find Ahithophel giving further advice to Absalom, and this is the first point in the chapter.

I. THE ADVICE OF AHITHOPHEL (2 Sam. 17:1-4).

Ahithophel seems to have offered this advice, although it is possible that Absalom wanted to take quick action against his father, and so was planning an attack.

Ahithophel recommended that he, Ahithophel, take 12,000 men and attack David. He knew that this would be a good time to attack since David's forces would have been in disarray.

Ahithophel's purpose would be to kill the king, and then bring the people who had gone with David back under the authority of Absalom. The advice sounded good to Absalom as well as to "all the elders of Israel" (v. 4). And so that was the plan that they decided to follow.

However, for some reason unknown to himself, Absalom decided to seek further advice. He decided that he would consult Hushai, the Archite, who actually was David's friend. This also was unknown to Absalom. Later on in the chapter we find out what was going on, and why Absalom decided to seek the advice of another counsellor.

And so this brings us to:

II. THE ADVICE OF HUSHAI TO ABSALOM (2 Sam. 17:5-14).

In 1 Chron. 27 where David's men are listed, verse 33 tells us that Ahithophel was "the king's counsellor," but that Hushai was "the king's companion," i.e., a friend. He was certainly in a position to advise the king, but that was not his responsibility like it was the responsibility of Ahithophel. So that very fact must have been demeaning (humbling) to Ahithophel.

(Read vv. 7-13 where we have Hushai's advice to Absalom.)

It differed from Ahithophel's advice in several ways.

First, Hushai told Absalom that he should lead his men against David. See v. 11.

Second, Hushai told Absalom to take his whole army against David. This also is in v. 11.

Third, he recommended that they go with the idea of annihilating David and all of the men who were with him. See vv. 12, 13.

Verse 14 tells that Absalom and his men felt after hearing Hushai that his advice was better, and so they rejected Ahithophel's advice in favor of Hushai. But the latter part of verse 14 tells us why they did. The Lord was working for the defense of His servant, David.

At this point it is good for us to remember two things:

- 1) We need to remember how David prayed when he heard that Ahithophel had joined the conspiracy with Absalom. The prayer is recorded for us in 2 Sam. 15:31. It was a short prayer, but a sincere prayer. And we have in our chapter tonight evidence that the Lord was answering that

prayer.

- 2) We need to remember why Hushai was with Absalom and not with David. Hushai was a friend loyal to David. For the answer to this, let us look again at 2 Sam. 15, verses 32-37.

The outworking of this plan is seen in the third part of our chapter.

III. HUSHAI'S WARNING TO KING DAVID (2 Sam. 17:15-22).

(Read this section.)

Hushai did just exactly as David had asked him to do if he had any message for him. Although it was done with great difficulty, the message got through to David, and he and his men passed over the Jordan River where they would be safer.

As we go on, however, we are told what happened to Ahithophel. It can be described in one word: suicide!

IV. THE SUICIDE OF AHITHOPHEL (2 Sam. 17:23).

Spurgeon once said this about Ahithophel: "To put his house in order, showed that he was a prudent man; to hang himself, showed that he was a fool" (Vol. 52, p. 326). Here was a man concerned about his earthly affairs, but who made no preparation for eternity. His pride destroyed him. He could not tolerate having Hushai's advice accepted, and his rejected. Ahithophel may have been very wise in many ways, but he did a foolish thing to join with Absalom so as to be able to get even with David. The final act of his life was the height of foolishness. He took his own life, and we must assume that he found himself in eternal torment. The fact that a man may be wise in earthly matters does not mean that he is wise in everything. Some of the wisest men who ever lived have neglected their souls. Let us be sure that we are not making that mistake.

This is to me the great danger of a college or university education. We get enamored with the wisdom of the world, and get drawn away from the wisdom of God.

We next come to three verses which tell us of:

V. ABSALOM'S PURSUIT OF HIS FATHER, DAVID (2 Sam. 17:24-26).

Absalom had to cross the Jordan like David did. He changed his chief of staff from Joab to Amasa. These men were cousins to each other, nephews of David because they were sons of two of David's sisters. We do not know the reason

for the change, but Absalom may have been suspicious of Joab because Joab was the head of the army under David. After this Absalom was ready to carry out Hushai's plan to attack David. This part of the story we will have to leave until next Sunday when we get into chapter 18, the Lord willing.

The chapter ends with a wonderful account of:

VI. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD (2 Sam. 17:27-29).

Notice those words at the beginning of verse 24: "Then David came to Mahanaim." And these words are picked up again in verse 27.

Do you remember how this place got its name? Please turn to Gen. 32:1, 2. (Read.) Jacob was the one who named the place David went to, "Mahanaim." He said, "This is God's host," or camp. And he called it "Mahanaim" which means, two camps. It was Jacob's camping place, but it was also the camping place of "the angels of God" who came to meet him as he was returning home and facing the prospect of meeting Esau.

What happened to David at Mahanaim?

Three men came with a marvelous provision for David and his men who were weary and hungry. Look at the list of things mentioned in verses 28 and 29.

But it is all the more amazing when we see who these men were.

There were three of them:

- 1) Shobi.
- 2) Machir.
- 3) Barzillai.

Shobi was a son of Nahash, the Ammonite king who had befriended David. When David sought to honor his son, Hanun, when Nahash died, you will remember how David's men were shamefully treated. So here the Lord used the brother of one who had been his enemy. Cf. 2 Sam. 10.

Machir was the man who had take care of Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, until David brought him to live with him in Jerusalem. Cf. 2 Sam. 9:4.

Barzillai is a man we are introduced to here for the first time, but we will meet him again in chapter 19. He was an 80 year old man of considerable means who evidently was looking for an opportunity to show his loyalty to the king.

So we see how the Lord blessed David in a most unexpected way and with a strange group of men. But to David it had to be a great encouragement that the Lord had not forgotten him, and would continue to provide for him and protect him.

Concl: What can we learn from a chapter like this?

We have a wonderful illustration of the sovereignty of God.

We see that God does answer prayer.

We see also that the Lord provides for us even when we have not asked Him for help. And, in addition, we see that He can provide help from the most unexpected sources.

David knew that he deserved all that he was getting, but he was to learn that the Lord would not forsake him even though he had sinned so grievously against him. How thankful we can be, along with David, that the Lord has not dealt with us after our sins... Cf. Psa. 103:10.

DAVID'S VICTORY AND HIS GRIEF
2 Samuel 18

Intro: 2 Samuel 11 records for us the most tragic events in the life of David--his sin with Bathsheba, and then the calculated way in which David disposed of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, in an attempt to hide his sin.

However, 2 Samuel 18 is the saddest chapter in the life of David. David had lost the son which Bathsheba gave birth to as a result of David's sin, but it seems that he quickly recovered from that. Although his servants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, David quickly recovered after he heard the sad news, and quickly resumed his duties.

But the death of Absalom was different. Probably no one can really understand David's feelings in this chapter unless he is a father who has been in the same situation. Many have been critical of David's attitude here, and would express their disgust like Joab did in the next chapter (19). But, as Spurgeon said in commenting on this chapter, it is only because they have not been where David was.

If there is an example in Scripture of the prodigal son of Luke 15 (verses 11-24), it is Absalom. However, the difference is that the prodigal son came back home and made things right with his father. Absalom did not have that chance, nor was he even interested in such a thing. At the suggestion of Ahithophel, Absalom had gone into his father's concubines to prove that he would never be interested in a reconciliation with his father. It is clear that the David had kept the door open for Absalom to come back, but he never came.

The chapter begins with:

I. DAVID'S PREPARATION FOR WAR WITH HIS SON, ABSALOM (2 Sam. 18:1-5).

This was not something that David wanted to do; it was something that he had to do. The rebellion had to be crushed. It appears that no one seems to have questioned the possibility that David could do it because a large segment of the army had remained faithful to him.

David divided his forces so that they were under the command of three of his loyal followers. Two were his nephews: Joab (who had been replaced by Absalom), and Abishai, his brother. The other military commander was Ittai, the Gittite, a man who had been with David since the days that he had been in exile among the Philistines.

It was David's purpose to be the commander-in-chief, and to go into battle with his men against Absalom, but his men would not allow him to do such a thing.

I am reminded in this of the time when the Philistines went against Saul, and the men in the Philistine army did not want David and his men to go with them. We can see the hand of the Lord in that because David, who had refused to lift his hand against Saul, would have been grief-stricken for the rest of his life if he had taken part in the conflict which was going to result in the death of Saul and Jonathan.

In the same way we can see the hand of the Lord upon David when his men refused to let him to into battle. David's grief would have been far more than it was if he had participated in a war which led to the death of Absalom.

The argument that David's men used to change his mind was that he was worth more than ten thousand of them. And so David was hindered from going to battle. If Absalom had listened to Ahithophel, he would not have been there either. But we can see the hand of the Lord in the fact that Absalom was there. Remember 2 Sam. 17:14.

When the three generals prepared to go into battle, David's command was not that they make sure they killed Absalom. In fact, it was just the opposite. He told all three of them so that the whole army knew what he had said: "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom" (2 Sam. 18:5).

The next section deals with:

II. THE DEATH OF ABSALOM (2 Sam. 18:6-18).

The first thing that we are told is that Absalom lost 20,000 men. They were not only killed by David's men, but as some fled from David, running through the woods, they fell over cliffs and into large holes. We do not know what all happened, but more were killed in their flight from David's men than were killed by the sword.

However, the most significant thing that happened was that when Absalom was fleeing, his hair was caught in a tree, his mule kept going, and Absalom was left hanging utterly helpless in the air.

We learned about Absalom and his hair back in 2 Sam. 14, verses 25, 26. It was a source of great pride to Absalom. It is interesting that such a thing should have been a problem in David's time. Spurgeon made this comment about Absalom;

When young people are taken up with their own persons, and are vain of their hair, their looks, and their dress, we are sure that they are not safe, for pride is always in danger (Spurgeon's Sermons, Vol. 24, p. 514).

When a person's heart is not right, his appearance begins to show it.

Paul wrote in his day a principle that is true in every generation: "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" See 1 Cor. 11:14. And Solomon's warning certainly found an illustration in what happened to Absalom. You will find it recorded in Prov. 16:18,

Pride goeth before destruction,
and an haughty spirit before a fall.

So there was much to indicate that Absalom was headed for trouble at the hands of the Lord.

One of the soldiers saw what had happened, but he did not kill Absalom because of what King David had told his men as they went off to fight the rebels. Joab was outraged that the soldier had not killed Absalom, and told him that he had missed out on a great reward because he had failed to do what he had the opportunity to do. This did not change the soldier's mind even if he could have gotten a far greater reward.

So Joab in disgust left him, and proceeded to place where Absalom was hanging from the tree. There he and his men shot darts into Absalom's heart, cast him into a pit, and buried him under a pile of stones.

The rest of the chapter tells how David heard about the death of Absalom, and the grief that he immediately experienced.

III. DAVID'S GRIEF (2 Sam. 18:19-33).

We have read the account of how Cush and Ahimaaz took the news to David, but I want you to note the question that David asked both of the runners. You will find it, the same question, in verses 29 and 32: "Is the young man Absalom safe?"

David was hoping to hear that the rebellion was over, but that somehow the life of Absalom had been spared. It does not seem to have bothered David that 20,000 of his Israelites had died in the conflict, and possibly by this time, many more. He just wanted to know about his son. Was he safe? Was he still alive?

The answer to David's question is given in the latter part of

verse 32. (Read.) Cushie may have felt that this would be good news to David, a report that the rebellion had been put down. But it was the worst news that anyone could have possibly given to David. Stated briefly it meant: Absalom was dead!

Only someone who has gone through what David went through at that moment, can understand how he felt and what he said.

Concl: In conclusion, let me deal with David's question, a question that every parent needs to ask about his, or her, children.

David had undoubtedly done a lot of thinking during those hours when the battle was going on about what he had done, or not done, to contribute to his son's safety.

Had he been a lenient parent? Had his love for Absalom (because he seems to have been his father's favorite) kept him from disciplining Absalom as he should have done. Let us all recognize that rebellion in a child is not always due to a lack of discipline on the part of the parents. Children will often go bad when they have been raised under careful discipline, when they have had praying parents (as David certainly was). A family of children can all be raised the same way; some will go bad, others good. But because Absalom seems to have been his father's favorite, it is possible that David had not punished Absalom, and taught Absalom, when he should have.

In the second place, we learn from Absalom's experience that a rebellious child is never "safe" from death. Absalom did not take into account that he was dealing with the living God. Perhaps he scoffed at the idea that the Lord had anything to do with his life. But he was too late, only after it was too late, that the man who defies the ways of the Lord is never "safe." Physical life hangs by a thread when anyone walks in rebellion against the Lord. And the more light we have, the greater the danger we face.

Finally, do you suppose that there was even the possibility that David was asking about the safety of Absalom's soul? We know that he was worried about his physical life, but what about his spiritual life. Was there any at all in Absalom's heart. The evidence seems to say "no." This may have been one of the reasons that David's grief was inconsolable, and it ought to be a question that is written upon all of our hearts for those we love. Are they safe? Not if they are without Christ!

May the Lord make us concerned about body and soul.

THE KING'S RETURN
2 Samuel 19

Intro: We are dealing with that terrible period in the life of David in which he committed adultery with Bathsheba, had her husband Uriah put to death, which was followed with what to David was the very disturbing rebellion against himself led by his son, Absalom. But, we we come to chapter 19, the revolt is over because Absalom has been killed. Chapter 18 ends and chapter 19 begins by showing us the great grief which David was experiencing. It was so great, in fact, that David really forgot about his own circumstances, as well as the sacrifices of the people who had remained loyal to him.

Consequently the chapter opens with:

I. DAVID'S GRIEF AND JOAB'S HEARTLESS REBUKE (2 Sam. 19:1-8).

(Read.)

Let us turn back to 2 Sam. 12 where Nathan declared the judgment of God upon David. Note especially verses 10 and 11a. (Read.)

This was undoubtedly the most severe of the judgments which Nathan declared to David. The first phase was over, but more was to come. However, as much as David had been humiliated by Absalom, Absalom was his son, quite possibly his favorite son, and the grief of losing Absalom had devastated David. I have no doubt but that David had prayed that the Lord would change Absalom's heart. He had hoped against hope that this would be the will of God. But, as we have heard about unanswered prayer during our conference with Dr. Waltke, this was one of those times when David did not see his prayers answered. Absalom was dead, and David was grief-stricken. And it seemed that no one could console him. His men had been afraid of what he might have done when his child by Bathsheba died, but it seems that there was far more danger at this point in David's life that he might have taken his own life.

David, of course, had not only to face the reality that Absalom was gone, but also that he was in a great measure responsible for what Absalom had done. David could have reasoned that, if he had not sinned against the Lord, such a thing would not have taken place. And so it was very hard for him.

However, there may have been another reason for David's

grief.

You will remember that, when David's child by Bathsheba died back in chapter 12, David consoled himself by saying, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Sam. 12:23b). He did not say that when Absalom died. Apparently David knew that he would never see Absalom again. We have no evidence whatsoever to cause us to think that Absalom was a believer, a child of God. So David's grief was compounded by the fact that Absalom died without the Lord.

Joab, in his rebuke of the king, was doing what needed to be done, but the way in which he did it showed that he was as hard as nails. He was completely without any sympathy or feeling for his king, who was also his uncle. Even though David had allowed his grief to make him forget his people, it is unthinkable that anyone could speak as Joab spoke to a man whose son had just been killed.

Let this be a lesson to all of us that it is possible to do the right thing in the wrong way. Joab did the right thing, but in the wrong way. And we are seeing more clearly as we go along the true character of Joab.

However, this is one place where we see the spiritual stature of David. David accepted the rebuke. He got up, and went to sit in the gate. Keil and Delitzsch pointed out that this means that David reviewed his troops, and gave them the honor and respect which they deserved.

There is another point that we need to recognize when David did this.

David was obviously a man under the judgment of God. And yet it is clear that the Lord had not forsaken him because the Lord was using all of these circumstances to carry on his work in David's soul. Even in judgment the Lord did not leave David at the mercy of his circumstances. And, although Joab was harsh and cruel in the way he spoke to the King, we see David's willingness to recognize that he was wrong, and to take steps immediately to make things right. Such humility on David's part was clearly an evidence of the work of the Lord in his heart.

This ought to encourage us, too. The Lord does not just work some things together for our good, depending upon what those circumstances are and how we got into them. But He works "all things together for good." That is illustrated at this moment in the life of David.

In the next seven verses we see:

II. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD (2 Sam. 19:9-15).

Even at this time there seems to have been the beginning of a rift in the nation which was to cause the division of Israel into two nations under Rehoboam. It was the ten tribes against Judah. And somehow, we do not know how, the word got to David that the people of Israel to the north were having trouble with each other and asking why nothing was being said about bringing King David back.

After David heard this, he sent the two priests, Zadok and Abiathar, to Judah to ask them why they were not talking this way when the northern tribes were discussing this. He appealed to them because Judah was his tribe. His message moved their hearts, and they became united as one man in their purpose to bring the king back.

But apparently, as a concession to them, he agreed to make another of his nephew's, Amasa, the general of his army. This was not a wise move on David's part because Amasa had been the head of Absalom's army. It showed that David went too far in seeking to please his men, as well as the people of Judah. And so we learn from this that every decision we make needs to be examined before the Lord very carefully. He was getting tired of Joab, but he needed to wait on the Lord before make such an important change.

However, with all of this the move was on to bring the king back.

At this point the writer of this record turns our attention to:

III. THREE MEN (2 Sam. 19:16-40).

The first is Shimei. The second is Mephibosheth. The third is Barzillai.

A. Shimei (2 Sam. 19:16-23).

For the background on Shimei we need to go back to 2 Sam. 16:5-14).

Shimei was a member of Saul's family. And he took Absalom's rebellion as an opportunity to get even with David for the downfall of Saul. David was in no way responsible for the death of Saul, but Shimei thought he was. And so he wanted to humiliate the King. He wanted to harm him. And probably he would have been very happy if he could have killed David.

At that time Abishai offered to decapitate Shimei, but David

would not allow him to do so, saying that the Lord had told Shimei to do it.

Now, as David is returning, Shimei evidently felt that, for the sake of his own life, he had better make things right with King David. He confessed his sin to David, and sought his forgiveness. Abishai still wanted to kill him, but David would not let him do it. And then David forgave Shimei, saying that he would not die.

This also showed the work of the Lord in David's heart. And this brings us to another of our memory verses: Eph. 4:32. That verse, of course, had not been written yet, but the truth of it was in David's heart. David knew how much the Lord had forgiven him, and it seemed like a small thing in comparison to forgive Shimei for the things that he had done.

Next we come to:

B. Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 19:24-30).

The background for what happened here is given to us in 2 Sam. 16:1-4. Mephibosheth was Jonathan's son. His servant Ziba had told David when David was fleeing from Jerusalem and Absalom, that Mephibosheth had stayed in Jerusalem thinking that Absalom might make him king—which was a lie! But David had foolishly told Ziba that he could have all that belonged to Mephibosheth.

Now, here in chapter 19, Mephibosheth comes to meet David as he is returning, and it is obvious that Mephibosheth has been in mourning since David was driven out of the city. He tells David how Ziba deceived him, and how Ziba had slandered him to the King. The King believed Mephibosheth, and told him to divide everything with Ziba—which was another mistake. Ziba actually had nothing coming to him, and showed that he was totally unworthy of even a token gift.

It is interesting to see how the Lord was clearing things up, but it is also instructive to see how quickly David could make mistakes when he made decisions so quickly. Perhaps his generosity with Ziba was another way he had of expressing his gratitude to the Lord for forgiving him. However, he needed to make righteous judgments.

The last of the three men mentioned here is:

C. Barzillai (2 Sam. 19:31-40).

For the background to this account, see 2 Sam. 17:27-29.

Barzillai was one of three men who brought supplies to David when he was fleeing from Absalom. The other two men were Shobi and Machir. They were the men through whom the Lord made a very needed provision for David and his men when they were in need of supplies. Although he was 80 years old, he came down to help David and his men get over the Jordan River. David wanted to take Barzillai with him to live in Jerusalem. Barzillai refused, for the reasons given in this passage, but sent his servant, Chimham, in his place. 2 Kings 2:7 seems to indicate that Chimham may have been a son of Barzillai. To this David reluctantly agreed, and Barzillai went back to Rogelim.

The chapter ends with:

IV. THE DISPUTE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND JUDAH (2 Sam. 19:41-43).

The men of Israel were angry with the men of Judah because the men of Judah had brought the King back. The men of Israel knew that the idea was theirs first.

This is a rather ominous conclusion because it is the forerunner to more trouble ahead for the nation Israel. Both sides were unwilling to back down, but for the present it seemed that the people of Judah were the stronger.

Again, let us notice that the will of God was being done. But because of pride and selfishness it was being done in a manner that was displeasing to the Lord. Disunity always displeases the Lord.

Concl: What lessons stand out in this passage?

First, in David's case, we see the high cost of sin.

I was impressed with Dr. Waltke's emphasis last night on Psa. 3:4--one of the things we need to remember when we are experiencing unanswered prayer, and are inclined to turn away from the Lord. Sin never brings true happiness, and it behooves us to avoid it at all times.

Second, we see the faithfulness of God. Although David had greatly displeased the Lord, making it necessary for the Lord to bring judgment upon him, yet the Lord did not forsake David nor His plans for David. In fact, we see that God is greater than David's sin, making even the judgments which David experienced to make him more like the Lord wanted him to be.

Third, we see how important it is for us to remember the Lord's gracious dealings with us when we deal with those who

sin against us.

There are many lessons in this chapter, but let me mention just one more. We see, fourth, how easy it is for us to make mistakes when we are trying to do the right thing just because we do not consult the Lord and because we do not wait upon him. E.g., David's appointment of Amasa, and his gift to Ziba.

How careful we need to be that we always are doing the will of God in the way the Lord wants us to do it.

A SECOND REVOLT
2 Samuel 20

Intro: In Psalm 42:7 David wrote, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." He was trying to picture his experiences, his trials, poetically. He said that it was like being hit with one wave after another, and that one wave called upon another to follow. He felt that they would destroy him eventually, just as he would have been at the mercy of the sea if he had been caught in a storm that would not stop.

It is thought by many that Psalm 42 was one of the Psalms which was written at this period in David's life, either during Absalom's rebellion, or the rebellion under Sheba, which is described in the chapter we are considering tonight. It may not be possible for us to distinguish between what David meant by a wave as compared with a billow, but the careful reader of Scripture will note that David said "**thy waves**" and "**thy billows**." He did not consider that the waves and billows of difficulty which he was experiencing were like a storm which we might say from a human standpoint was out of control. They were God's waves and God's billows--under God's control, and serving a divine purpose in his life. It is only such a realization that could have kept David from complete despair when it must have seemed to him that his trials would never end.

This must have been the way that David felt when "Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite" sought to initiate a new revolt against David. No sooner had the rebellion of Absalom been put to an end than David found himself faced with a new one.

The writer of 2 Samuel, whoever he may have been (and we really do not know), has given us the facts of David's history at this time in his life, but he did not tell us what was going on in David's soul at this time, how David was reacting in his relationship with the Lord, and the spiritual progress that he was making at the time. We are really dependent upon chapters like 2 Samuel 22 to help us see what the Lord was doing in David himself. From the study of many devout students of the Word, we have reason to believe that many of David's Psalms were written at this time. Before I close tonight I want to look at a couple of those Psalms to fill us in with details of David's inner man which are not given to us by the one who wrote this history.

But before we do that, let us look at the history here in 2 Samuel 20.

We see in this chapter:

- 1) The beginning of the revolt, and the two sides which were formed, one with David, the other against him (vv. 1, 2).
- 2) David's treatment of his concubines (v. 3).
- 3) David's preparations to put down the revolt (vv. 4-13).
- 4) The pursuit of Sheba which ended at the city of Abel, and which resulted in the death of Sheba (vv. 13-22).
- 5) The kingdom re-established under David (vv. 23-26).

Let us look at each of these sections.

I. THE BEGINNING OF THE REVOLT (2 Sam. 20:1, 2).

Practically nothing is known of this man Sheba. He is not mentioned before we get to chapter 20, nor is he mentioned afterwards. We know that he was of the tribe of Benjamin, Saul's tribe. And we know that he was "a man of Belial."

The first time this name appears in Scripture is in Deut. 13:13. The Lord called people in any of the cities of Israel who would encourage idolatry, "the children of Belial." Dr. Feinberg, who was my Hebrew teacher in Seminary, said in his article in Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, p. 513, that it is generally accepted that this name was formed from two Hebrew words which mean "without" and "to profit," or worthless. And that which is worthless in God's sight is wicked. And so in Scripture "a man of Belial" would not only be a wicked man, but "an extremely ungodly individual," or a sinner "of the worst type" (Ibid.)

In the NT we find that Paul used Belial in 2 Cor. 6:15 as possibly an equivalent for Satan when he asked,

And what concord [accord, harmony, agreement]
hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath
he that believeth with an infidel.

So all of this means that although Sheba was a Jew, he was not a child of God. In fact, he was just the opposite; he was a very evil man. And He sought to take advantage of David's situation to make a name and a place of authority for himself. The Lord did not stop this man. But we can be encouraged to see that the Lord used this man with a very wicked heart to further His own purposes in the life of David as well as the whole nation. But it was another strong, rolling wave in David's life--a great trial which David had to face.

David was of the tribe of Judah. Sheba appealed to this, that the other tribes had no claim upon him, and therefore should cast him down from his throne. And to begin with, it seemed that he was going to be very successful. The men of

Israel were still smarting under the fact that Judah had brought David back without including them, and that their words in 2 Sam. 19:43 made them even more angry than they had been before. The men of Judah either did not know, or did not remember, what Solomon would write at a later date:

A soft answer turneth away wrath:

but grievous words stir up anger (Prov. 15:1).

Sheba was anxious to take advantage of this unrest in Israel--and he did!

The expression, "Every man to his tents, O Israel," was a call to revolt. This was the call given when the ten tribes rebelled against Rehoboam. Cf. 1 Kings 12:16. At the outset it seemed that Sheba would succeed. Israel and Benjamin stood solidly with him.

II. DAVID AND HIS CONCUBINES (2 Sam. 20:3).

With multiple marriages David displeased the Lord throughout his reign. He had been disgraced by the action of Absalom who committed adultery with these women. Therefore, David could not take them back, nor were they permitted to marry someone else. There was no Scriptural way for David to deal with them, but he knew that he could not continue his relationship with them after what Absalom had done.

The death of Absalom was in part a judgment for what he had done with his father's concubines. Lev. 18:8 and 29 show that the punishment for such sin was death. Even though David had violated the will of God with his multiple marriages, it seems to have been an even greater sin for Absalom to defile those who were married to his father.

Probably the seclusion of these women was David's attempt to put this reminder of Absalom's rebellion out of the minds of the people.

Next we come to:

III. DAVID'S PREPARATION TO PUT DOWN THE REVOLT (2 Sam. 20:4-13).

David appointed Amasa as his military leader to go against Sheba, thus replacing Joab. Amasa had been Absalom's military chief-of-staff, and David may have done it to attract sympathy from the Israelites who had been under his command.

However, for some reason, Amasa did not have his men ready for war within the three days that David had set, and so David turned to Abishai. David knew that time would work in

Sheba's favor, and he did not want to let that happen. All of these men were related. Joab and Abishai were brothers, and Amasa was their cousin. And so all were David's nephews. In turning first to Amasa, and then to Abishai, David twice has bypassed Joab.

Abishai was successful in getting the men of Judah mobilized for war, and they left Jerusalem to pursue Sheba. Joab joined them, apparently content to serve under his brother, Abishai. However, when they got to Gibeon, it appears that Amasa assumed command of David's forces. Joab took this as the time for him to satisfy his jealousy and his envy on Amasa, and so he with great deception killed Amasa. This was done, as far as we can tell, in front of David's army, and for a time it put a halt to their advance. But some man removed Amasa's body, and David's men advanced under the leadership of Joab. David very clearly did not want Joab to head his forces, but it seems that nothing he could do could keep Joab out of that position.

Matthew Henry suggested in his commentary that, when David heard of Joab's cruel murder of Amasa, he probably reflected on two things:

- 1) That it was Joab he had used to see that Uriah, the Hittite was killed.
- 2) That he was at fault because he had not brought Joab to justice when he killed Abner.

Nevertheless, this was not the time to take care of such unfinished business.

And so this was followed with:

IV. THE PURSUIT OF SHEBA (2 Sam. 20:14-22).

It would seem that Sheba's immediate success in rallying the people of Israel around him, had not continued. After going through all of the tribes of Israel seeking support, he had finally gone to the city of Abel seeking protection. Joab and his men knew that they were there, and so prepared to batter down the wall of the city in order to take Sheba.

However, again we see the hand of the Lord in protecting His people. Abel, it seems, was known as a center of wisdom, and people who needed counsel were in the habit of turning to Abel for guidance. And what they were told, they did. An unknown woman in Abel reminded Joab of this, and asked him why he would destroy people like herself who were peace loving and faithful to the Lord in Israel. While ungodly people were involved in what was taking place, yet there were the true people of God on both sides. This woman was appealing to Joab on behalf of the nation.

Joab listened to her, and told her that his real purpose was to get Sheba who was leading a revolt against the king. He told her that if she would deliver Sheba over to them, he would depart from the city. The woman said that she would throw Sheba's head over the wall. She consulted with the leaders of the city. They agreed. Sheba was beheaded, and Joab went back to Jerusalem. The revolt was over!

How important it is for all of us who are the Lord's people to remember that, although we may have our differences doctrinally and otherwise, yet we are the Lord's people and we should not treat each other as enemies. It certainly was of the Lord that Joab listened to the woman. Much bloodshed was avoided, and the division between Judah in the south and Israel to the north, was not widened.

How good it would be for all of us to remember the words of Abraham to Lot when their herdsmen were having trouble with each other over the lack of pasture land. Abraham said to Lot,

Let there be no strife, I pray thee,
between me and thee,
and between my herdmen and thy herdmen;
for we be brethren (Gen. 13:8).

See also Psalm 133 which David wrote: "Behold, how good and how pleasant..."

The chapter ends with a statement of:

V. DAVID'S KINGDOM RE-ESTABLISHED (2 Sam. 20:23-26).

Perhaps David had been persuaded that he should keep Joab, in spite of his violence toward Amasa, because he had settled the revolt without further bloodshed.

Concl: As I said at the beginning, this chapter of history tells us what happened at this period in David's reign, but it does not help us to understand what was going on in David's heart, in his soul. The historical scene was the stage upon which God was working to improve the state of David's spiritual life. This is where the Psalms help us in David's case. We need both the history and the Psalms to get the full perspective of the work of the Lord in those days.

Several Psalms were written at this time. Among them were two of the Psalms Dr. Waltke used during our recent Spring Bible Conference: Psalms 3 and 4. Also it is possible that Psalms 61, 62, and 63 were written at this time--if not during Sheba's revolt, at least during Absalom's revolt. The 84th Psalm is another one that has been suggested for this time in David's history.

However, the two Psalms that I want to call your attention to as we close tonight, are Psalms 143 and 144. In them we see something of the work of the Lord in David's soul.

First, let me read Psalm 143 to you. (Read.)

It would take another Sunday night to deal with this Psalm as we could and should, but let me point out just a few of the highlights of the Psalm:

- 1) Verses 1 and following show that this was a time when David prayed, when David knew that his only hope for survival was in God--not in his own military ability, nor in power of his army, but in God! There is nothing like trials to teach us to pray and to call upon the Lord.
- 2) Verses 3, 4, 7, 9, and 11 show how desperate David was, and how low he had been brought because of his enemies.
- 3) Verses like 5 and 6 show that David's trials had brought him to place where he had a deeper hunger in his heart for the Lord.

I will mention just one more thing from Psalm 143:

- 4) Verses 7-11 show that he had a renewed sense of his dependence upon God. Look at:
 - a) Verse 7: "Hear me..."
 - b) Verse 8: "Cause me..."
 - c) Verse 9: "Deliver me..."
 - d) Verse 10: "Teach me..."
 - e) Also verse 10: "Lead me..."
 - f) Verse 11: "Quicken me..."
 - g) And in verse 11 at least expressed, bring me...

What wonderful insight this gives us to what was going on David's heart at the time when his troubles were so many and so heavy.

Psalm 144 must have been written later than Psalm 143 because in this Psalm we see a note of triumph. David is singing a victory song here. But the Psalm also reflects that David knew that he was not beyond trouble. He anticipated that there were more troubles to come. But,

- 1) In verses 1 and 2 he gave the Lord the glory for his victory.
- 2) In the latter part of verse 2 and down through verse 8 he compared the greatness of God with the littleness, the vanity, of man. See also verse 11.
- 3) And then from verse 9 down to the end of the Psalm we see how David anticipated giving even greater praise to the Lord as he sought the restoration of the evidences of God's blessing upon the nation.

Notice that the word "that" appears seven times in verses 12 through 14.

And then as the Psalm ends we can ask the question, Did

David's trials make him rebellious against the Lord. The answer is, "NO!" He believed that trials give us the opportunity to prove, by the grace of God, that our God is sufficient, and more than sufficient, for our every need. David believed firmly that our trials, though so often justified, are instruments in the hand of the Lord to make us love the Lord more, to trust the Lord more, to delight more in fellowship with Him, and to seek to be more like He wants us to be, more like He is.

We should pray that the study of the life of David should cause us to seek the same blessings from our trials that David received from the Lord as a result of His trials.

A NATION UNDER JUDGMENT

2 Samuel 21

Intro: As we come to chapter 21, two revolts against David had been crushed: the revolt led by Absalom, and the revolt led by Sheba. And so it seemed that the nation might expect a time of peace. But then it was that a new problem faced David and the Israelites. It was:

I. A FAMINE (2 Sam. 21:1-14).

The first year nobody seems to have paid a great deal of attention to it. Nor did it bother anyone the second year. But the third year David realized that something was wrong. He knew that God was dealing with His people, but he did not know what the problem was, how they had sinned against God.

And so verse 1 tells us that "David enquired of the Lord." The Lord was not wrong in answering. He told David that it was because of what Saul had done to the Gibeonites. He had killed many of them, and apparently intended to kill all of them.

A surprising thing about this attack upon the Gibeonites is that it is not mentioned any place in the history of Saul's reign. The only time any mention is made of this event is here in 2 Samuel 21. However, it was a matter that had greatly displeased the Lord, and had never been settled to the Lord's satisfaction. If the Lord had not brought a famine upon Israel, it never would have been settled.

In order to understand this situation, we need to go back to the days of Joshua when the children of Israel were subduing the Canaanite nations. The story is in Joshua 9.

The Gibeonites were inhabitants of a city of the Amorites by that name, Gibeon. It was called a royal city, a city with many mighty men. The fear of God came upon those men, and they feared for their own lives when the Israelites began to destroy the cities of Canaan. And so they disguised some of their men, made it appear that they had come from a distant city to make peace with Israel because they had heard about "the name of the Lord thy God" (Joshua 9:9). They wore old clothes, and had moldy bread to make their story appear reasonable.

This was one time when Joshua failed as the leader of Israel because, without asking counsel of the Lord, he made "a league" with them--which was a compact or a covenant. It amounted to a vow that the Gibeonites could live securely among the people of Israel.

Joshua 9:16 tells us that three days later Joshua and the children of Israel realized what they had done, and that they had not come from a far country, but were Amorites who lived in this land which was marked out for divine judgment.

We would think that because the Gibeonites had used great deception in getting the covenant, the covenant would not need to be honored. But that is not the way of the Lord. Joshua could make servants out of them, but he could not kill them. And no future king was free to kill them either. This is perhaps an evidence of the faithfulness of God to His Word. When He makes a covenant with Israel or any other people, He will never go back on His Word. And He will not let His people go back on their word either. David's son, Solomon was to express the will of God regarding covenants or vows when he wrote years later,

Better is that thou shouldest not vow,
than that thou shouldest vow and not pay
(Ecc. 5:5).

And so the children of Israel were bound by their oath.

What caused Saul to want to kill the Gibeonites, we do not know. Nor do we know when this took place during his reign. As I have mentioned, there is no record of it in the Word. But we know that it happened.

As far as we can tell, the Lord brought this famine upon Israel about 35 years after Saul died. That is how long David had reigned. So it was farther back in Israel's history than that, maybe 40 or 45 years, possibly even longer. It had been so long that David, who may have known about it, did not even suspect that Saul might have been the cause of the famine. And so he went to the Lord honestly seeking to know why the Lord was displeased with them.

As soon as David found out the cause of God's displeasure, he went to the Gibeonites and asked them what he could do to make things right with them. They asked that seven sons of Saul be put to death by hanging for what Saul had done.

And so David took two sons of Rizpah, Saul's concubine, and five sons of Michal, whom she had given birth to when she was living with Adriel. David gave these men into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they were all hung at the same time. It is a terrible story, and, unless these sons were involved in what Saul did to the Gibeonites (and they may have been), it was the death of seven innocent men. Saul's sin was against God, against his family, and against the nation Israel. And in David's day the nation was suffering because of what their leader had done many, many years before!

The Gibeonites had no law about taking the bodies down by the end of the day, and so they were allowed to remain hanging just as they had died. But Rizpah, the mother of two of them, set up a tent, and kept watch over those bodies day and night until the rains started again--which would have shown that the Lord was removing the famine.

David heard about it, and sent to Jabesh Gilead to get the bones of Saul and Jonathan, and took their bones, along with the bones of the seven men who had died, and buried them in the land of Benjamin--the tribe to which they all belonged. When this was done, we read at the end of 2 Sam. 21:14, "And after that God was intreated for the land."

Now I want to read something to you which was written and preached by Charles Simeon when he preached on the first verse of 2 Samuel 21. His messages were published in the early 1800's. But this is what he said:

The history teaches us,

I. In what light we should view public calamities--

[The Scripture uniformly represents them as punishments inflicted on account of sin. Personal troubles may be sent for the purpose of calling into action the grace that has been bestowed, and for the advancing of God's glory in the exercise of that grace. But the troubles of a nation are judgments sent from God. In this light, "war, famine, pestilence, and the noisome beast," are frequently mention; and in this light they should be viewed. We are indeed very averse to regard them as coming from God: we are ready to ascribe them to second causes, and to overlook the first Great Cause of all: but in the Scriptures we behold them, as in the plagues of Egypt, so manifestly proceeding from a divine hand, that we cannot help referring them to God: and thus we ought to do, whatever be the more immediate occasion of them-- --David in the first and second years of famine did not behold any expression of the divine displeasure, or think of inquiring wherefore the visitation was sent: it was only when the pressure of the affliction was very heavy and of long continuance, that he thought of tracing the hand of God in it: had he acted in the first year as he did in the third, we have no reason to think that the judgment would have been repeated: but his blindness constrained God to repeat the stroke, till it was noticed as proceeding from him. In like manner God will continue his chastisements to us, till we are made sensible that have offended him, and provoked his just displeasure.]

And then Mr. Simeon added, "Whatever be the calamities with which we are afflicted, we may learn from this history" (Vol.

3, pp. 302, 303). And I would add that the lesson is made most powerful by the fact that it comes from the Word of God.

We all know what has happened this past week in LA--the shameful loss of life and destruction of property. There are 41 known to be dead, and there may be more. The damaged has been estimated at one-half billion dollars--that is \$500,000,000 (five hundred million dollars! Some people's lives will never be the same again. We have been disgraced in the eyes of the people of the world.

We think we know the cause. We say that the verdict in the case of the four LA policemen who beat up Rodney King caused such indignation among the black of LA that they, along with others, went on a rampage, and this is what has been the result.

The question that our text for tonight raises is this: Are we spending our time looking at second causes? There is no doubt but that the verdict given to the four LA policemen was what triggered this, but I wonder if there is not something far greater for us to learn here than all of the things we have heard discussed by people on radio and TV. Are we not seeing the hand of God against us as a nation because of the way we have despised His way, His Word--and all that is right and good and holy in His sight? We have dishonesty in government. Immorality is no longer immorality in our nation. People actually boast in public about their sins. We defend homosexuality, and have done our best to explain to ourselves that there is nothing wrong with it. We have dishonesty in business, and dishonesty in government, and dishonesty in personal lives. We are a nation of Epicureans. We don't care what happens tomorrow as long as we are having a good time today.

Personally I am convinced that God is speaking to us as a nation. God could have prevented this whole thing, but He took His restraining hand off of those people in LA, and let them do according to what was in their hearts. And we are going to face divisions among segments of our society in the days to come that will make the last look like world peace.

And I want to mention one other thing that we have overwhelming evidence of every day, and yet we as a nation are so spiritually blinded that we cannot see it. We talk as though jobs and education and equal opportunities will solve our problems. We talk as though man is good by nature. For a long time our nation has scorned any talk about sin, and preachers who have proclaimed the depravity of man, the total depravity of man, have been charged with overstating the case.

What is it going to take for us to learn that God is God, and that He is not going to put up with our continued sinfulness and our defiance of His Word and of His Son? We are seeing many evidences of the judgment of God. Just a little over a year ago we were at war. We have an epidemic of AIDS. Crime is plaguing every major city in the US, and many of the smaller cities. Human life has gotten so cheap that we can hear of 41 people being killed, and it hardly phases us. We need to wake up because greater judgments, worse judgments, are just around the corner if we do not see the hand of God in all of these things.

What happened when the Lord was satisfied with the repentance of David and the Israelites?

The rain started again. And the Lord granted David victory over the Philistines. That is how our chapter ends.

II. VICTORY OVER THE PHILISTINE GIANTS (2 Sam. 21:15-22).

Four of the men who were feared the most by David and his men, met death at their hands. It was not something that the Israelites were able to do; God's hand was in the latter part of the chapter as well as in the first part of the chapter. And what we need to do is to stop looking at what Charles Simeon called "second causes," and look at "the first Great Cause of all," the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Concl: What can we do? We are not in LA, and would be as helpless there as the people of LA are. What happened in LA is not just a message for the people of that city; it is a message for our whole country. What happened there can easily happen here. What can we do?

Let me make three suggestions.

First, let us make sure that our lives are pleasing to the Lord. It is so easy to let our standards down just because of what is going on in the world. If there were ever a need for holiness in the lives of the Lord's people, it is today.

Second, let us give ourselves to prayer. That is what David did, and that is what we need to do. We need to pray that God will again be merciful to us. How amazing is the longsuffering of God! How many national sins would we as a nation be guilty of if the Lord were to go back 40 or 50 years with us. God hears and answers prayer. I have struggled with this myself in recent days because it has seemed that we are living in a time when we are not seeing answers to prayer. There is a lot of noise from some segments of the professing church, but sometimes that only

covers up a lot of corruption. But just as history shows that God judges sinful nations, so it also shows that the Lord hears the prayers of His people when they cry out to Him from hearts that are right with Him. And so let us pray.

Third, let us be more bold in our witness of the Gospel. Jobs are needed. Education has its place. But all of the benefits of life, if Christ is left out, only make it possible for us to continue on in our sin. The problem in American is S-I-N! Only Christ can change the heart of a rebel. Only in Christ is there hope.

We don't know how the Lord may see fit to work, but we do know that our only hope is that He may in His grace move once again upon the hearts of people in our country, drawing them to Christ. Let us live, and let us pray, that this might be what we will see in the days ahead.

A PSALM OF ANSWERED PRAYER
2 Samuel 22

Intro: This chapter is a psalm of David. Although there are differences of opinion as to when this psalm was written, I am inclined to believe that its place in 2 Samuel shows when it was written. Chapter 21 closes by telling of the victories of David, or of his men, over four powerful Philistines. And although this was not the end of David's troubles, yet he gave expression to his thanksgiving to God.

We find this psalm recorded with some variation as Psalm 18 in the book of the Psalms. Why would we have it twice? I don't know that anyone knows for sure, but it seems to me that there is a lot in favor of the suggestion that here in 2 Sam. 22 we have David's expression of praise for himself, while in Psalm 18 we see it given as a psalm for the people to use when they expressed their own praise to the Lord for the way that the Lord blessed and delivered them.

It would be wonderful if this were the purpose behind the writing of all sacred music. Most of us do not have the poetic gift which David had, and so we have to depend upon the writings of others to give us the words with which we can praise the Lord in song. But I am sure that it would lessen our interest in any song to find out that the writer was just expressing words when he wrote that song, that it did not express the true feeling of his heart, and that he wrote it only for others to have something to sing. In our day, unfortunately, the writing of music is a business. We are warned against copying hymns without permission, or without paying some royalty. No so with David! He wrote to express the thanksgiving that was in his own heart toward the Lord, and he was thankful if anyone found in his words the expression that they needed to praise the Lord fittingly for the way He had delivered them in their times of trial. And so this is the reason I believe we have it twice in the Word of God--once as David's praise; the second time for the people.

However, in addition to that, it must also have been a psalm which touched the heart of God, and expresses a way in which we can truly glorify the Lord.

You know, singing is a form of praying. That is why we always should pay attention to the words which we sing. I am always looking for help in my prayer life. I feel sure that many of you are the same way. Well, this psalm is to help us to pray. Let us examine it briefly, and yet completely, to see how it can help us to praise the Lord.

First of all, let me point out:

I. SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

There are at least four significant things that are mentioned about David in verse 1 before we get to the Psalm.

- A. Notice that the words were important. In fact, even though this is a psalm, it is said that he "spake" these words. The words we use when we praise the Lord are important to the Lord, and they should be important to us.
- B. Notice also that he was speaking these words "unto the Lord." He was not singing to the people, nor was he trying to impress anyone with his ability to sing. His praise was directed toward the Lord.
- C. Third, he was prompt in offering his praise to the Lord. We might be able to postpone some things, but we should never postpone our praise. Keep up to date in thanking God for His mercies toward you. As the blessings come, let praise arise from our hearts to the Lord.
- D. Fourth, we can see that the David took none of the credit to himself; he gave it all to the Lord. He had often been highly involved in the victories. He was known for his military ability. But when it came to recognizing why he had been victorious, David always gave the praise to the Lord.

Now let us turn to:

II. AN ANALYSIS OF THE PSALM.

We immediately become aware of a very vital personal relationship which David had with the Lord. See vv. 2, 3. The Lord was a great reality in David's life. He was not satisfied to say that the Lord was simply a rock, or a fortress, and so on. No less than nine times in these two verses David said "my" in speaking of what God was to Him.

It is one thing to know that the Lord is a rock, but it is so much more to be able to say, "The Lord is **my** rock."

The second thing that he did here was to tell about his prayer to God, why he prayed, and what happened as a result of his praying. This occupied David's attention from verse 4 down through verse 28.

Notice the way he described the response of the Lord in verses 8 through 16. David did not refer to himself at all in these words. He is remembering the majesty of the Lord. Of course, he is speaking poetically, but his words are an accurate description of how the Lord responded to his prayer. It was like David was gazing upon a spectacular manifestation of the glory and power of God before he thought at all about what the Lord had done for him.

But beginning with verse 17 David begins to talk about what the Lord had done for him. Notice this down through verse 20. It was as though David had nothing to do in fighting his enemies. It is expressed so much in favor of the Lord that you can see that David believed that the Lord took over his battles, and was completely sufficient to give David the victory.

However, in the last part of verse 20 David introduced a subject which he continued down through verse 28 showing how grateful David was that he had been living so as to please the Lord. This does not mean that we cannot expect the Lord to help us if we have been unfaithful, but it does tell us how much greater our confidence will be if we are walking with Him and seeking to do the will of the Lord.

This is another way of saying that the Lord brings trials upon us in order that we may examine our own lives, to see where things are wrong, and to make them right before the Lord. How careful we need to be with our lives! Notice what David recognized as the truth about the Lord's dealings with His people in verses 26-28. While our troubles do not always mean that we are displeasing the Lord, yet they always show us places in our lives where we can please the Lord more than we have been pleasing Him.

Then we come to a new emphasis in verse 29. Here David begins to speak about what the Lord was doing through him. Before it was what the Lord had done for him; now he speaks of what the Lord was doing through him. The point in these verses, down through verse 46, is like the Apostle Paul made in Phil. 4:13. And it is like the Lord made with His disciples when He spoke of Himself as the Vine, and of them as the branches. "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Be sure to notice verse 31. (Read.)

As we have studied the life of David, haven't you felt at times like David should have legitimately been able to tell the Lord that he had been given enough in the way of trials and testings? I have. But when the battles were over, David could offer no complaint against the Lord. In fact, he said

that the Lord's ways could not be improved upon--"As for God, his way is perfect." Nor did he have any complaint with regard to the Word of God. "Tried" means tested and proven to be true. And so David had no argument with God, no argument with His ways, no argument with His Word. And he could say that his case was not a special case, but that all who trusted the Lord would come to the same conclusion about the Lord that he had.

So, when we speak of the sovereignty of God, and about the accomplishment of His purposes, we do not mean that the Lord takes over our battles, while we sit at home and drink tea! He works for us. But He also works in us, and then He works through us. Notice this emphasis in these verses. (Read verses 29-46.)

Finally, the Psalm ends with a burst of praise and thanksgiving to God, declaring that he would continue to give God thanks in the days ahead, and even before the heathen. We have this in verse 47 through 51.

These last five verses suggest a way in which we can bear testimony even to those who do not know the Lord. We can tell people about the Lord, and about what He has done for us. There is no better way to let people see that trusting God is not just some fanciful idea, but that we serve a living God, Who hears us when we pray, and Who, even though our paths may often be rough, will always be faithful to His people.

Concl: After briefly surveying this psalm I am sure that you will agree with me when I say that it deserves to have two places in the Word of God. David had something to sing about, didn't he? Perhaps it would be better to say that he had SOMEONE to sing about.

But notice one more thing about the last verse of the Psalm. It is very likely that David had two ideas in mind when he spoke of "his seed":

- 1) He was obviously thinking about his children, his grandchildren, his great grandchildren, and so on. We tell our children about the Lord, and we encourage them to trust the Lord in the trials that they have. But how powerful that lesson can be when they see that we trust the Lord in our trials. And there is nothing that will be more convincing to us that we want them to live like we have lived than to experience the faithfulness of the Lord in our lives. Let us not make a super-saint out of David. We have seen something of his weaknesses. But he knew the grace of God, and knew that God is unchanging, and so his children and grandchildren could do no better

than to live their lives trust the Lord and His Word. But I believe there is another thought that probably was in the mind of David at this point:

2) We all know that there was One coming Who was David's greatest Seed, or Descendant! He was, and is, the Lord Jesus Christ. One reason that it was so important for David to be preserved was because he was in the family through whom the Lord Jesus Christ would come. He would experience trials and sufferings greater, far greater, than David ever experienced. And David was more confirmed than ever that God's faithfulness to him, David, was in the long run, God's faithfulness to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. God was faithful to His purposes in David, and David knew that God would be faithful to David's greatest Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who was coming as the Savior of sinners.

David's experience was an assurance of his salvation. And David's experience should provide us with greater assurance, too, that regardless of how great or how many our trials may be, God will let nothing stand in the way of His purposes in the redemption of His people. Let us follow in the steps of David, and learn to praise the Lord like David did.

LAST WORDS AND MIGHTY MEN
2 Samuel 23

Intro: In this chapter we are coming to the close of the life of David as it appears in 1 and 2 Samuel. The chapter begins with a record of David's LAST WORDS, and then it gives us a record of the MIGHTY MEN the Lord used to give David the outstanding reign which he had over all of the nation Israel.

Let us consider, first:

I. DAVID'S LAST WORDS (2 Sam. 23:1-7).

Sometimes men speak their last words without knowing that they will be their last words, but there are other times when men realize that death is near and so their last words can be very significant.

In the OT we have the last words of Jacob (in Genesis 48 and 49), of Moses (making up the whole book of Deuteronomy).

In the NT we have the last words of Paul in 2 Timothy, and we also have the last words of Peter in 2 Peter--last words when they knew that they were their last words.

In our text before us we have the last words of David.

The first verse tells us about:

- A. The speaker of the "LAST WORDS" recorded here (2 Sam. 23:1).

He had:

1. A lowly beginning: "the son of Jesse" (v. 1).
2. An exalted position in life (v. 1):
 - a. "The anointed of the God of Jacob."
 - b. "The sweet psalmist of Israel."

We see the grace of God written all over the biography of David. He was what he was by the grace of God. From his lowly beginning he was raised by God to be, not only the king of Israel, but one who stood in the Messianic line as well as one who was in himself a wonderful type of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As "the sweet psalmist of Israel," David will always be remembered, not just as a musician, but as a man whose life was marked in a singular way by his devotion to God and the

way that he worshiped the Lord. But not only that, (as wonderful as it is), but he was one who with his psalms taught others to worship God. Think of the countless numbers of the Lord's people who have come to God using the very words of David to express their adoration of God and their thanksgiving to Him for His many, many blessings which He has poured out upon His people.

We could spend much time talking about these three titles of David. But we must go on.

In verse 2 we come to"

B. His "LAST WORDS" (vv. 2-7).

Isn't it interesting that David's "last words" were in reality the words of God. Cf. v. 2. He spoke here as one who was used to give the Word of God to the people of God in his generation, and to all of the Lord's people in future generations--even down to the present day. I believe that it is generally true that the older we get, the more we treasure the words of God.

But notice the words that he chose as his "last words."

They were words which spoke of Christ. He alone is the Just One, and He alone will rule over men and nations "in the fear of God." See verse 3.

They were words which spoke of our Lord's reign upon the earth. See verse 4.

They were words which spoke of salvation. See verse 5.

They were words which spoke of the certainty of David's hope, and of the opposition of all of the wicked forces which have always attempted, and will attempt, to thwart the purposes of God, to the very end of time. See verses 6 and 7. We can be sure that ultimately they will be completely overthrown so that nothing will stand in the way of the fulfillment of God's purposes on the earth! The opposition was terrible at times during his life, so much so that at one point he seemed to give up. But God overruled, and David was convinced that God would continue to overrule until all of His purposes for His Son would be completely fulfilled.

David made the words of God his words. He made the hope of God his hope. It is a wonderful thing when our last words are the words of God. And that is what David's last words were.

The chapter ends with an account of:

II. DAVID'S MIGHTY MEN (2 Sam. 23:8-39).

Although David won some great victories on the fields of battle, yet it is apparent that he did not do it alone. The Lord blessed him by giving him a group of men who, I am confident that we can say, have never been surpassed for their ability nor for their victories on the fields of battle.

This list appears also in 1 Chron. 11:10-47, but the list is expanded in 1 Chron. by some 16 names. So we know that our list in 2 Sam. 23 is not a complete list, and probably the same is true about the list in 1 Chron. 11. These were not men who joined David at the end of his life, but they were with him before he became king. They remained faithful to him up to the end of David's life.

First we read about the three who were the greatest: Adino (v. 8), Eleazar (vv. 9, 10), and Shammah (vv. 11, 12).

Then in verse 13 he started to mention three more, but he only mentioned two. The first was Abishai (vv. 18, 19); the second was Benaiah (vv. 20-23). Who the third one was, we do not know, but they were the three who went to get water for David from "the well of Jerusalem." See vv. 13-17.

The last are mentioned in vv. 24 through 39. One sad note is sounded when we see Uriah's at the end of the list in 2 Sam. 23, verse 39. All of these were faithful men, Uriah among them. It is amazing that he was not around at the end because David had ordered his death.

For what reasons are the names of these men listed at this point in David's life? I think that we can see several reasons.

First, we can see that all of David's men were not great to the same extent. Some were capable to greater feats of strength than were others. We always get into trouble when we are inclined to compare ourselves with others. They were all great to God, and great to David, even though there were differences.

Second, there is a statement mentioned in connection with the first three which is not stated for any of the rest. You will find it in vv. 10 and 12. It is this: "And the Lord wrought a great victory that day," or simply, "And the Lord wrought a great victory."

This was undoubtedly for the three mightiest men, as well as for the others, but it was also for the people. What does it tell us? It tells us that as mighty and as brave and skilled as those men were, they would have failed without the help of the Lord. That is always true. Did not our Lord tell His own disciples, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5)?

We must not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, nor should we think more highly of others than we ought to think. Cf. Rom. 12:3. It is easy to put certain servants of the Lord on a pedestal. We can be thankful for the blessings that we receive through them, but let us always be careful to remember that the blessings have come from God, not from any man.

Third, this verse shows us that with all of the glory that David achieved on the battle fields, he did not do it alone. He could not have done it alone. Behind him were a group of faithful men who stood with him from the beginning to the end. And I am sure that David himself did not want them to be forgotten in the divine record.

Let us remember this even today. Nobody among the Lord's people is unimportant. Perhaps some can do no more than pray, and yet what is more important than prayer. Others do things that no one notices, but as we will learn in a moment, not even a cup of cold water given "in the name of a disciple," even when given to a little child, shall not go unrewarded. Cf. Matt. 10:42. And the Lord said, you will remember, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40b).

I see a fourth point of interest when the three men went to Bethlehem to get water for David from the well of Bethlehem. They have been criticized for being foolhardy in going on such an errand, but that is because the critics do not understand how much David meant to his men. They would have done anything for him. This is a perfect example of the statement, "Your slightest wish is my command." His men were willing to face any danger in order to make life a little more enjoyable for David. This must have touched the heart of God, and it was He Who saw that they got back safely from what was a very dangerous mission.

When this happened, David had been anointed, but he was not yet king. But these men believed that day would come. We could certainly consider this an act of faith. Even though David was being disgraced in the eyes of most Israelites, his men were men who believed that God is faithful to His promises. In the meantime, they would treat him as though he were already on the throne.

However, as much as David wanted the water, he could not force himself to drink it. To him it would have been like drinking the life-blood of the men who went to get it for him. And so he poured it out on the ground as a thank offering to the Lord--probably in gratitude for the Lord's preservation of their lives, and for the love that those men had shown toward him when David and his men were in such terrible circumstances.

Therefore, we can see that David was very conscious, and very thankful, for the way the Lord was using his men to preserve his life and to meet his needs.

Concl: Therefore, contrary to what we might think, this chapter is a great testimony to the faithfulness of God. In the first part we see how the Lord had worked in David's heart, making the truth of the Gospel and his hope in the Messiah the dearest treasures he possessed. In the second part we see how the Lord had provided for David through his men. It was the same God in both instances. He works in us, and he works in the hearts of others to standby us when things are dark, and the future seems so uncertain. But whichever way we look, it is always to the Lord that the praise must be given.

ANOTHER OF DAVID'S SINS

2 Samuel 24

Intro: The story of David's life in 1 and 2 Samuel actually does not come to its conclusion until 1 Kings 2:11. But we have come in our studies to the last chapter of 2 Samuel, and so we only have a chapter and eleven verses to go after our study this evening.

Unfortunately this twenty-fourth chapter of 2 Samuel is another chapter dealing with the sin of David. It was a sin which cost the Israelites 70,000 lives. And yet, as we read this chapter, it seems like such a minor thing that David did for him and the Israelites to get such a severe judgment. What David did was to number the children of Israel, that is, he took a census, apparently to determine how many fighting men he had.

Matthew Henry asked some important questions about this event in David's life. These are his questions taken from Vol. II, p. 570:

What harm was there in it? Did not Moses twice number the people without any crime? Does not political arithmetic come in among the other policies of a prince? Should not the shepherd know the number of his sheep? Does not the Son of David [referring to our Lord] know all his own by name? Might not he make good use of this calculation?

But there is another strange situation involving David's sin. We are told that "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel" in verse 1, and that the Lord "moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." Since, that is the case, was not the Lord, then, responsible for what David did?

There are many things in Scripture which we may not be able to work out to our own satisfaction. This is one of them.

This morning I told those who are in The Pastor's Class that every major doctrine in Scripture has its problems. By that I meant that for every major doctrine in Scripture there is a verse, or verses, which seem to be in contradiction to it. And I suggested at least two reasons why the Bible has been given to us in this way:

- 1) The Lord wants us to read all of Scripture so that we can get the truth about any doctrine from all of the Word of God.
 - 2) The Lord wants us to recognize that we are dependent upon the Holy Spirit for our understanding of the Word of God.
- Matthew Henry was looking at Scriptures which seemed to apply

to this situation in David's life when he asked the question, "Did not Moses twice number the people without any crime?" It would seem that Moses' numbering of the people would mean that what David did was not a sin.

And what about that statement in verse 1 of our chapter about the Lord moving David to number the people. Does this not place the blame for David's sin at the Lord's feet?

Such a thought is abhorrent to a true believer. We know that God has never sinned, nor has He ever been responsible for the sin of any man. James stated this very clearly chapter 1 of his epistle, and the latter part of verse 13: "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." Therefore, although it appears that God was an accomplice, we know that He was not an accomplice.

How, then, can we explain what happened?

The parallel chapter for our text is 1 Chron. 21. This is the way that chapter begins, relating the same trouble in David's life:

And Satan stood up against Israel,
and provoked David to number Israel.

The two passages, 2 Sam. 24 and 1 Chron. 21, agree on one point: IT WAS ISRAEL THAT SOMEHOW HAD DISPLEASED GOD. And we can assume that the Lord took His restraint away from David so that David did not only what was in his heart, but he did that which would have dire consequences for a nation which had displeased the Lord. How Israel was sinning at this time, we are not told. But they were a people who deserved judgment, and this is how it came about. As a result, 70,000 of David's fighting men died!

However, having said that, we have to realize also that things were not totally right in David's heart. And so the Lord was dealing with David along with his people although David may not have been guilty of doing what his people were doing. David realized after he had ordered Joab to number the people that he had done the wrong thing, and he confessed his sin as though he were totally to blame for the judgment that followed.

Now let me give you the divisions of this chapter so we can all understand the lessons that are here for us.

The outline:

- I. DAVID'S COMMAND TO NUMBER THE PEOPLE (2 Sam. 24:1-4).
- II. JOAB'S RELUCTANT OBEDIENCE TO THE KING (2 Sam. 24:5-9).
- III. DAVID'S CONFESSION OF SIN (2 Sam. 24:10).

- IV. THE JUDGMENT OF GOD UPON ISRAEL, AND HIS MERCY (2 Sam. 24:11-17).
- V. DAVID'S FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD RESTORED (2 Sam. 24:18-25).

Let us look, first, at:

I. DAVID'S COMMAND TO NUMBER THE PEOPLE (2 Sam. 24:1-4).

We have seen that the Lord removed the His restraining hand from David, and that David did what was in his heart. WHY?

Many suggestions have been made.

David was older at this time, and he knew that he would not be living too much longer. It may have been that he was glorying somewhat in his record as King and as a military leader.

Some have pointed out that David had no specific instructions from the Lord to number the people, and that before he seems to have been very careful to inquire of the Lord before he did anything. It is easy for any of us to do what appears to be right to us without seeking the leading of the Lord in prayer.

Other reasons have been given, but I really don't think that most of what I have read really deserve serious consideration. It appears to have the touch of pride upon it, pride in his accomplishments, as I have said, and possibly a feeling of self-confidence in the large army that he had.

Possibly, and I say, possibly, pride was the problem that the children of Israel were guilty of. There is hardly anything that is more distasteful to the Lord because, in one way or another, pride is involved in most of our sins, possibly all of them.

Even when Joab tried to persuade King David to call off the census, David, who by this time had little confidence in Joab, refused to listen to him. Let us listen to what people say to us, even though they may not even be saved. The Lord might be using them to warn us against doing the very thing that we are planning to do.

II. JOAB'S RELUCTANT OBEDIENCE TO THE KING (2 Sam. 24:5-9).

You will see that the numbers in this chapter and in 1 Chron. 21 are different. Here they total up 1,300,000. In 1 Chron. 21, 1,570,000. The two totals may come from the fact that different people were included in the 2 Chron. 21 list.

Whatever may be the correct explanation, it was a great army that King David had under his command. And they had been constantly victorious in the field of battle under the blessing of the Lord.

Next we have:

III. DAVID'S CONFESSION OF SIN (2 Sam. 24:10).

Sometimes we do not realize how sinful we are until we have done something which we know has grieved the Lord. No one told David that he had sinned; his heart told him. The Lord has put this safeguard within us, and we need to pay attention to it before something bad takes place.

The Apostle John was speaking of this when he wrote:

And hereby we know that we are of the truth,
and shall assure our hearts before him.
For if our heart condemn us,
God is greater than our heart,
and knoweth all things.
Beloved, if our heart condemn us not,
then have we confidence toward God
(1 John 3:19-21).

In David's confession, he not only confessed that he had done the wrong thing, but he sought cleansing from the Lord. This is true confession. It is only when we confess and forsake our sins that we can expect to have the mercy of God poured out upon us. Cf. Prov. 28:13, "He that covereth..."

The nation, however, was to fall under the judgment of God.

IV. THE JUDGMENT OF GOD, AND HIS MERCY (2 Sam. 24:11-17).

Through the prophet, Gad, the Lord gave David three choices. Note what they were in verse 13.

A pestilence meant some terrible catastrophe, either like a plague, or an epidemic of some kind.

David chose immediately to put himself in the hands of the Lord rather than in the hands of men--for one reason: "For his mercies are great." Although Habakkuk had not prayed his prayer found in chapter 3 of his prophecy, David was pleading as Habakkuk did, "In wrath remember mercy" (Hab. 3:2).

We can see from verse 17 in our text that whatever may have been the sin of Israel, David felt that his sin was far worse. And although David had already been under the judgment of God because of his sin with Bathsheba, yet he

prayed that he might get the punishment so that his people could be spared.

It is good to notice passages like this so that we will be able to test the reality of our own confessions. We often hate the consequences of our sin, but we do not hate our sin.

David's experience also teaches us that things which can be rightly and properly the will of God under certain circumstances, can be sin in other circumstances. It appears to me to be certain that pride was David's problem.

Now we come to the final section of the chapter.

V. DAVID'S FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD RESTORED (2 Sam. 24:18-25).

In verse 10 David had prayed, as he confessed his sin, that his sin might be taken away!

What can wash away my sin?
 Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
 What can make me whole again?
 Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
 O precious is that flow
 That makes me white as snow;
 No other fount I know,
 Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

The Apostle John expressed it this way:

If we confess our sins,
 he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,
 and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness
 (1 John 1:9).

But when David sinned, the blood of Jesus had not been shed. What could he do? He did what was always done in OT times. He offered sacrifices in faith which looked forward to that greater sacrifice of Christ, and so he was forgiven and cleansed by the same blood which purchased forgiveness and cleansing for all of our sins.

I won't go into the details of David's sacrifice. But I want you to know that David was washed clean from his sin so that no spot, not even a stain, remained.

Concl: David's sins involving Bathsheba and her husband Uriah, were sins which disgraced him. There was nothing obviously disgraceful in the eyes of men about conducting a census. But all three events were sin in God's

sight, and all could only be cleansed by blood, the blood of Jesus Christ.

What a warning this chapter contains for all of us! And perhaps it is the greatest warning for those of us who are well along in our course. Let us be careful, extremely careful, that we are doing the will of God. Judge any evidence of pride when it first appears. It is the root sin, and, if not judged, will lead us into other sins.

It is wonderful to be cleansed after we have sinned, but it is far better not to have sinned. The possibility is always there, but the victory can be ours through Christ.

THE DOWNFALL OF AN UPRISING

1 Kings 1

Intro: (Read the chapter.)

We need some background from Scripture in order to understand the situation here at the close of David's life.

I hope that you remember that David was king in Hebron over Judah for seven years before he became king over the whole nation of Israel. We learn from 2 Samuel 3:2-5 that during those seven years in Hebron six sons were born to David, and each son had a different mother. We do not need to be concerned here about all of them, just the first four.

David's first four sons were Amnon, Chileab, Absalom, and Adonijah. We know as we come to 1 Kings 1 that Amnon was dead. He was killed by the servants of Absalom, his brother, because he had violated Absalom's sister, Tamar. We don't know anything about Chileab. This is the only time he is mentioned in Scripture. We also know that Absalom was dead, killed after he rebelled against his father and tried to get the kingdom away from him. Adonijah is the one in this chapter who tried to get the throne for himself. He may have been the only surviving son of the first four. We cannot say for certain about Chileab. But, at any rate, Adonijah felt that the throne belonged to him. Why, we cannot say for sure. It may have been a lust for power.

But before we get to Adonijah, let us see what our chapter tells us about:

I. KING DAVID, THE OLD MAN (1 Kings 1:1-4).

We are told in 2 Samuel 5:4 that David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and that he reigned for forty years. This meant that David was about 70 years old at this time. His strenuous military campaigns had taken their toll upon him physically, and so it is very likely that he was old for his age. Alexander Maclaren said that he was "a worn-out man" (Vol. 2, p. 151).

He did not seem to know what was going on in the kingdom. He did not know anything about the conspiracy of Adonijah and even his interest in Bathsheba seems to have declined to the point where it had practically disappeared. At this point in his life his main problem seems to have been how to stay warm.

To remedy the physical problem David was having, his servants conducted a search throughout Israel to find a beautiful

young virgin who would take care of him. I am sure that we are talking about another wife. David already had many wives, but it may have been that none of them were capable of taking care of him. And so Abishag was brought to the king. She kept him warm, but was not actually a wife to him. There does not seem to be, even on David's part, any concern for the will of God in this. The servants did that which was a source of grief to the Lord about David and many others in his day because of his many wives.

There is no question but that David had lived a wonderful life, and that he had seen more blessings during his life than he would have been able to count. In fact, he said so in Psalm 40:5: "Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts..."

But the days of glory for David were past. He would soon be with the Lord. It is hard to think of what he had been and to compare it with what he was then. What is the lesson for us in these first four verses?

It tells us how temporary this life is. And it also tells us how we ought to make every moment that we have count for the Lord. When you are young, time does not seem that important. But as we get older, we realize more and more how precious time is. And so we need to "redeem the time" and to do all that we can to glorify God. David knew these things. These thoughts appear more than once in his Psalms.

But let us go on to another point arising out of this chapter.

II. DAVID'S FAMILY LIFE (1 Kings 1:5-21).

David had many wives, and many children--so many that he really did not have the time for any of them that he should have taken. It was a sin for David or anyone else in the OT to have more than one wife. And we have abundant evidence in Scripture that multiple wives and multiple children created situations where there would eventually be trouble. It was hard to keep one from being jealous of another. The stories of Amnon and Absalom have already been recorded in the Scriptures, and they are tragic. They were the cause of much sorrow for David. As we come to 1 Kings 1 we find that he was having trouble with his fourth son, Adonijah. And there is a clear indication as to why Adonijah would inevitably cause David heartache. It is in verse 6. (Read.)

This means that what Adonijah wanted, Adonijah got. He knew nothing about the chastening hand of David such as we were talking about this morning in Hebrews 12. The Lord had been

very gracious to David and to Adonijah because it is stated in verse 5 of our text that Adonijah was "a goodly man." So in spite of the lack of training he had, he was the kind of a person everyone liked. But that was a snare to him. What may have been the main reason for doing what he did, we do not know. But we find that pride and selfish ambition can be lodged in the heart of even a good man, waiting only for the right opportunity to express itself.

This ought to be a warning to every parent. Some children are always testing you to find out how far they can go. Others seem to be willing to do whatever you want, and so you are inclined to let them go their own way. And then you are suddenly in for a big surprise. This is what happened to David.

Let us realize that the best of children are still sinners at heart, and need discipline as much as anyone else. Everyone needs discipline. We may be inclined to let up on our discipline as we get older. An older missionary told Lucille and me while we were in Seminary, "Bad children are cute, but they are cute for such a short time that it is not worth it." Whether it was that David was too busy, or that he was deceived by Adonijah's goodness, or both, we do not know. But in David's old age, when it was too late to do anything about Adonijah, Adonijah was to join the list with Amnon and Absalom in causing grief to his father when his father was old and declining in strength.

Let me mention one more point about David:

III. HIS ZEAL FOR THE LORD AND HIS WILL (1 Kings 1:28-40).

It was Nathan the prophet who found out about what Adonijah was doing, and who told Bathsheba. He suggested that Bathsheba go in to the king to tell him about Adonijah, and while she was in with the King, he would come to tell the king the same story. They wanted to know one thing: Was Solomon supposed to be David's successor, or was Adonijah? Who was to say?

Our answer is not found in 2 Samuel, but in 1 Chronicles. Please turn to 1 Chron. 22:6-10. (Read.)

David had been told before Solomon was born that he was to be the next king of Israel. Solomon was God's choice, and David knew it. And David was in full accord with the revelation that God had made to him. Therefore, the action of Adonijah was a clear violation of the will of God. Adonijah does not seem to have been concerned about God's will. He may have even been jealous of Solomon, envious of his younger half-

brother. And so he made preparations to take the throne of David for himself.

David called his trusted servants: Zadok, the priest; Nathan, the prophet; Benaiah, the soldier. He told them to get his mule, set Solomon on it, and anoint him king. Then a trumpet was to be blown, and they were to shout, "God save king Solomon" (1 Kings 1:34). (Read also verse 35.)

All of this was done with great speed. The majority of the people were thankful to hear what King David had done, and they gave their full support. Look at the reaction of the people as it is described in verse 40.

I have no doubt but that David believed in the sovereignty of God. But he also believed that when the will of God is being thwarted by rebellious men, that we, trusting in the overruling hand of God, must do everything within our power to keep them from carrying out their purposes. And God, in His faithfulness, granted David and his men success.

Doing the will of God calls for courage. It may sometimes, as in this instance, mean the undoing of something that has been done. But David had lived his life zealously doing the will of God. Therefore, it was no trouble for him, even in his weakened physical condition, to fly into action to make sure that the right son was seated on the throne.

May God give us that kind of fearless zeal today when we see so many things going on, even among the Lord's people, which we know are contrary to the will of God.

One thing remains:

IV. THE DOWNFALL OF ADONIJAH AND THE GRACE OF SOLOMON (1 Kings 1:41-53).

Adonijah's followers vanished as soon as they heard what King David had done lest they be accused of treason. The uprising which seemed certain to succeed was suddenly over. The short lived glory of Adonijah was suddenly turned into shame. We see in Adonijah where pride will get you.

Those of you who have read the book of Proverbs know that Solomon had much to say about pride! His own brothers, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah, were object lessons which illustrated the truth of what he had to say.

Remember, for example, Prov. 16:8, "Pride goeth..." He also wrote in Prov. 11:2, "When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom."

On the other hand we have a verse which describes Solomon although it was not written for 1,000 years or more after Solomon lived. I am referring to what the Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Pet. 5:6,

Humble yourselves therefore
under the mighty hand of God,
that he may exalt you in due time.

It is significant that Solomon was not the one who tried to stop Adonijah. He did not rush in to tell his mother or his father what was going on. He surely knew, probably as soon as Zadok, the priest, did. But Solomon was content to leave those affairs in the Lord's hands, and the Lord did not disappoint him.

So it is not surprising that Solomon did not take Adonijah's life immediately. He extended grace to him when Adonijah deserved to die, and was afraid that he would die!

Concl: You can see that there are many wonderful lessons to be found in a chapter like this. May the Lord help us to remember what we have seen, and to trust Him as we should.

DAVID'S PARTING WORDS

1 Kings 2:1-11

Intro: The report of the closing days of David's life in 1 Chronicles is most different from the report given in 1 Kings 2. The report in 1 Chronicles occupies seven chapters; the report in 1 Kings, only eleven verses.

The account in 1 Chronicles has to do with the Levites and priests, military matters, tribal affairs, governmental leaders, the preparations that David had made for the building of the Temple, and finally David's words to all the people of Israel concerning the reign of his son, Solomon.

The account in 1 Kings 2 gives us a brief word, but a very important summary of what David told his son, Solomon, about how his son should live, and then the king's advice to Solomon concerning Joab, the sons of Barzillai, and Shimei.

The outline of these eleven verses is very clear:

- 1) David's charge to Solomon (vv. 1-4).
- 2) David's commands concerning certain people (vv. 5-9):
 - a) Joab (vv. 5, 6).
 - b) The sons of Barzillai (v. 7).
 - c) Shimei (vv. 8, 9).
- 3) David's death and the record of his reign (vv. 10, 11).

Let us begin, then, with:

I. DAVID'S CHARGE TO SOLOMON (1 Kings 2:1-4).

Two things stand out in verse 1. First, it is clear that even the best of men must die. The people of God are not spared from death. David had lived a full life, but he knew that his time to die had come. His description of it was, "I go the way of all flesh." The Hebrew would bear the translation, "I am walking in it" (Henry, M., II, 585). For a child of God, it is the way which leads into the presence of God. David had written earlier,

Yea, though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:
for thou art with me...

In Psalm 16:11 David had written,

Thou wilt shew me the path of life:
in thy presence is fulness of joy;
at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

And in Psalm 17:15 we read that David said,

As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness:
I shall be satisfied when I awake,
with thy likeness.

These verses reveal a tremendous knowledge of truth concerning life after death for a child of God. I am sure that David was not anxious to die, but he knew that he had come to that time in his life, that it was the Lord's time for him to go. And so he could console himself with the fact that the life to come was better, that he was about to see the Lord, not in his sin, but clothed in the righteousness of his Redeemer, and that he would be completely satisfied!

There was no evidence of panic in David's words. He was at complete peace about his approaching death. He did not even try to play upon the sympathies of Solomon, nor did he try to console Solomon. David's concern was for Solomon and how he could be assured of the blessing of the Lord upon his reign. It is the mark of a true man of God that, when the time comes for him to die, he is more concerned about the continuation of the Lord's blessing upon his family and his people than he is about himself.

And that is the second thing that we see in David's words. He wanted to see the Lord's blessing continue upon Solomon, and upon the people of Israel. For one certain way to see the Lord's blessing was to deal with the spiritual life of their leader.

We should note that David did not just give Solomon some advice; he gave Solomon a charge. This was a divine commission which was binding upon him because of the position which he was to hold. Cf. Paul's charge to Timothy in 2 Tim. 4:1, 2. Those who are leaders in the work of the Lord do not choose their own way; they are under orders to do the will of God.

In examining David's charge to Solomon we can see:

- 1) That Solomon's primary concern was himself, his own relationship with the Lord, to be strong, and to behave as a man, a man of God.
- 2) That he could only become and remain strong by faithfully walking in the ways of the Lord.
- 3) That he must pay attention to all of the Word of God (statutes, commandments, judgments, testimonies). Solomon had not right to pick and choose, but he was under a divine order to obey all of the Word of God. And, according to verse 4 Solomon's obedience must be with all of his heart, and with all of his soul.

This was Solomon's responsibility. David knew that the Lord would be faithful to His promise. Although Solomon did not obey the Lord perfectly, yet the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon show how deeply he learned to drink of the truth of the Word of God. And like

his father, he became one of God's instruments for giving the Word of the Lord to Israel and to the world.

How wonderful it would be if there were more fathers like David! Next Sunday is Father's Day. The first four verses of 1 Kings 2 would be an excellent text for Father's Day.

But let us go on. The second thing that David did was to give Solomon:

II. DAVID'S COMMANDS CONCERNING CERTAIN PEOPLE (1 Kings 2:5-9).

It had to do with Joab, who was David's nephew and who had been the leader of his army. The second had to do with the sons of Barzillai who had shown such loyalty to David during Absalom's revolt. The third man that David mentioned who had cursed David, throwing stones at him, when David was leaving Jerusalem in flight from Absalom.

A. Joab (1 Kings 2:5, 6).

Joab was a murderer two times. David had been very patient with him, but it was apparent at the time of David's death that Joab had not repented. And there was a strong likelihood that he would be a major obstacle standing in Solomon's way and opposing Solomon's desire to do the will of God. Joab was a man of unconcealed ambition, who knew nothing of the ways of the Lord, and who did not know the Lord. He was to die even though he was an old man and many years had gone by since he had committed those crimes. Time does not erase our sins; only the blood of our Redeemer can do that. There is no evidence that Joab ever turned to the Lord.

B. The sons of Barzillai (1 Kings 2:7).

We probably can assume that Barzillai was dead by this time. He was an old man when he helped David. But the Lord would not let David forget what he had done. And by his good works Barzillai brought blessings years later into the lives of his sons. Verse 7 is another good Father's Day text. Barzillai had helped to feed David's hungry men, and so his sons were never, according to David's words in this verse, to lack for anything to eat. They were to be fed at King Solomon's table. This was good, and shows that often the Lord rewards our families because we have sought to please Him.

Barzillai is not mentioned again, either in 1 Kings, nor in 1 or 2 Chronicles. But we can be sure that Solomon did what his father wanted him to do. No honor on earth could have been greater for the sons of Barzillai.

C. Shimei.

David had spared Shimei's life when Shimei came to him after the death of Absalom saying, "I have sinned." See 2 Sam. 19:20. But evidently it had become apparent through the years that Shimei had not changed. He was still the same unregenerate man, and it would have been only a matter of time and he would have treated Solomon the way he had treated David. And so David ordered his death.

Judgment came quickly for both Joab and Shimei, as well as for Adonijah who had tried to take the throne away from Solomon. Before chapter 2 ends, all three of these men were put to death, and Abiathar was put out of the priesthood because he had taken sides with Adonijah.

We need to recognize that as much as we would like to see the hearts of all men changed, that is not going to be. And what a warning it should be that all of these men had such a personal relationship with David, and yet their hearts were not changed. Eventually judgment fell upon them.

And now we come to the last point:

III. DAVID'S DEATH AND THE RECORD OF HIS REIGN (1 Kings 2:10, 11).

David's life was over. His course was finished, and he had run a good race.

But the thing that impresses me about these two verses is that they are a testimony to the faithfulness of God. David had failed the Lord on occasion, but the Lord had never failed David. The Lord had Samuel anoint David as King of Israel, and then all of the power of Saul stood in the way of his becoming king. And yet he became king. And even in spite of the opposition of Absalom and the many wars in which David was involved, David remained king! And he stayed as King until his race was finished.

Concl: However, the best is yet to be. The Lord chose David to be in the line of those who would lead down to the Lord Jesus Christ, Who was David's Son according to the flesh. And, although the world pays no attention to Biblical prophecy and the plan of God, yet we all know that the day is coming when our Lord, the Son of David, will reign forever as King of kings, and Lord of lords. And so let us close our studies in the life of David remembering the faithfulness of David's God, and give all of the honor and praise to Him, and to our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.