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THE LIFE OF DAVID

**VOL. 1**

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# CHAPTER 1

## DAVID AS A YOUTH

### ~~DAVID~~ 1 SAMUEL 16 AND 17

The life of David marked an important epoch in the unfolding of God's purpose and plan of redemption. Here a little and there a little God made known the grand goal toward which all His dealings tended. At sundry times and in divers manners God spake in times past. In various ways and by different means was the way prepared for the coming of Christ. The work of redemption, with respect to its chief design, is carried on from the fall of man to the end of the world by successive acts and dispensations in different ages, but all forming part of one great whole, and all leading to the one appointed and glorious climax.

“God wrought many lesser salvations and deliverances for His church and people before Christ came. Those salvations were all but so many images and forerunners of the great salvation Christ was to work out when He should come. The church during that space of time enjoyed the light of Divine revelation, or God's Word. They had in a degree the light of the Gospel. But all those revelations were only so many forerunners and earnest of the great light which He should bring who came to be ‘the Light of the world.’ That whole space of time was, as it were, the time of night, wherein the church of God was not indeed wholly without light: but it was like the light of the moon and stars, that we have in the night; a dim light in comparison with the light of the sun. The church all that time was a minor: see ~~8040~~ Galatians 4:1-3” (Jonathan Edwards).

We shall not here attempt to summarize the divine promises and pledges which were given during the earlier ages of human history, nor the shadows and symbols which God then employed as the prefigurations of that which was to come: to do so, would require us to review the whole of the Pentateuch. Most of our readers are more or less familiar with the early history of the Israelite nation, and of what that history typically anticipated.

Yet comparatively few are aware of the marked advance that was made in the unfolding of God's counsels of grace in the days of David. A wonderful flood of light was then shed from heaven on things which were yet to come, and many new privileges were then vouchsafed unto the Old Testament Church.

In the preceding ages it had been made known that the Son of God was to become incarnate, for none but a divine person could bruise the Serpent's head (cf. <sup><69101></sup>Jude), and He was to do so by becoming the woman's "Seed" (<sup><010815></sup>Genesis 3:15). To Abraham God had made known that the Redeemer should (according to the flesh) descend from him. In the days of Moses and Aaron much had been typically intimated concerning the Redeemer's priestly office and ministry. But now it pleased God to announce that particular person in all the tribes of Israel from which Christ was to proceed, namely, David. Out of all the thousands of Abraham's descendants, a most honorable mark of distinction was placed upon the son of Jesse by anointing him to be king over his people. This was a notable step toward advancing the work of redemption. David was not only the ancestor of Christ, but in some respects the most eminent personal type of Him in all the Old Testament.

"God's beginning of the kingdom of His church in the house of David, was, as it were, a new establishing of the kingdom of Christ: the beginning of it in a state of such visibility as it thenceforward continued in. It was as it were God's planting the root, whence that branch of righteousness was afterwards to spring up, that was to be the everlasting King of His church; and therefore this everlasting King is called the *branch from the stem of Jesse*: 'And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots' (<sup><23110></sup>Isaiah 11:1). 'Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise up unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper' (<sup><23235></sup>Jeremiah 23:5). So Christ, in the New Testament, is called '*the root and offspring of David*' (<sup><6216></sup>Revelation 22:16)" (*Work of Redemption* by Jonathan Edwards, 1757).

It is deserving of our closest attention and calls for our deepest admiration that each advance which was made in the unfolding of the counsels of divine grace occurred at those times when human reason would have least expected them. The first announcement of the divine incarnation was given

not while Adam and Eve remained in a state of innocence, but after they had rebelled against their Maker. The first open manifestation and adumbration of the everlasting covenant was made after all flesh had corrupted its way on earth, and the flood had almost decimated the human race. The first announcement of the particular people from which the Messiah would spring, was published after the general revolt of men at the tower of Babel. The wondrous revelation found in the last four books of the Pentateuch was made not in the days of Joseph, but after the whole nation of Israel had apostatized (see <sup><0318></sup>Ezekiel 20:5-9).

The principle to which attention has been directed in the above paragraph received further exemplification in God's call of David. One has but to read through the book of Judges to discover the terrible deterioration which succeeded the death of Joshua. For upwards of five centuries a general state of lawlessness prevailed:

“In those days there was no king in Israel: *every man did that which was right in his own eyes*” (<sup><02125></sup>Judges 21:25).

Following this was Israel's demand for a king, and that, that they might “be like all the nations” (<sup><00831></sup>1 Samuel 8:20); therefore did Jehovah declare, “I gave thee a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath” (<sup><01311></sup>Hosea 13:11). He, too, was an apostate, and his history ends by his consulting a witch (<sup><02801></sup>1 Samuel 28), and perishing on the battlefield (<sup><03101></sup>1 Samuel 31).

Such is the dark background upon which the ineffable glory of God's sovereign grace now shone forth; such is the historical setting of the life of him we are about to consider. The more carefully this be pondered, the more shall we appreciate the marvelous interposition of divine mercy at a time when the prospects of Israel seemed well-nigh hopeless. But man's extremity is always God's opportunity. Even at that dark hour, God had ready the instrument of deliverance, “a man after His own heart.” But who he was, and where he was located, none but Jehovah knew. Even Samuel the prophet had to be given a special divine revelation in order to identify him. And this brings us to that portion of Scripture which introduces to us, David as a youth.

“And the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine

horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided Me a king among his sons” (~~<0160>~~1 Samuel 16:1).

This is the sequel to what is recorded in ~~<0160>~~1 Samuel 16:10-12. Saul had despised Jehovah, and now he was rejected by Him (~~<0153>~~1 Samuel 15:23). True, he continued to occupy the throne for some little time. Nevertheless, Saul was no longer owned of God. An important principle is here illustrated, which only the truly Spirit-taught can appreciate: a person, an institution, a corporate company, is often rejected by God secretly, a while before this solemn fact is evidenced outwardly; Judaism was abandoned by the Lord immediately before the Cross (~~<0238>~~Matthew 23:38), yet the temple stood until A.D. 70!

God had provided Him a king among the sons of Jesse the Bethlehemite, and, as ~~<3802>~~Micah 5:2 informs us, Bethlehem Ephratah was “little among the thousands of Judah.” Ah,

“God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are” (~~<40127>~~1 Corinthians 1:27, 28).

And why? “That no flesh should glory in His presence” (~~<40129>~~1 Corinthians 1:29). God is jealous of His own honor, and therefore is He pleased to select the most unlikely and unpromising instruments to execute His pleasure (as the unlettered fishermen of Galilee to be the first heralds of the Cross), that it may the more plainly appear the power is His alone.

The principle which we have just named received further illustration in the particular son of Jesse which was the one chosen of God. When Jesse and his sons stood before Samuel, it is said of the prophet that

“He looked on Eliab and said, Surely the Lord’s anointed is before Him” (~~<0166>~~1 Samuel 16:6).

But the prophet was mistaken. And what was wrong with Eliab? The next verse tells us, “But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (v. 7). Ah, my reader, this

is solemn and searching: it is at your *heart* the Holy One looks! What does He see in you?—a heart that has been purified by faith (~~4150~~ Acts 15:9), a heart that loves Him supremely (~~4886~~ Deuteronomy 6:5), or a heart that is still “desperately wicked” (~~2470~~ Jeremiah 17:9)?

One by one the seven sons of Jesse passed in review before the prophet’s eye, but the “man after God’s own heart” was not among their number. The Sons of Jesse had been called to the sacrifice (v. 5), and, apparently, the youngest was deemed too insignificant by his father to be noticed on this occasion. But “the counsel of the Lord... *shall* stand” (~~20921~~ Proverbs 19:21), so inquiry and then request is made that the despised one be sent for.


“And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he” (~~09162~~ 1 Samuel 16:12).

Most blessed is it to compare these words with what is said of our Lord in ~~22510~~ Song of Solomon 5:10, 16,


“My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chieftest among ten thousand... His mouth is most sweet: yea, He is altogether lovely.”

The principle of divine election is designed for the humbling of man’s proud heart. Striking and solemn is it to see that, all through, God ignored that in which the flesh glories. Isaac, and not Ishmael (Abraham’s firstborn), was the one selected by God. Jacob, and not Esau, was the object of His eternal love. The Israelites, and not the Egyptians, the Babylonians, or the Greeks, was the nation chosen to shadow forth this blessed truth of God’s sovereign foreordination. So here the eldest sons of Jesse were all “rejected” by Jehovah, and David, the youngest, was the one of God’s appointing. It should be observed, too, that David was the *eighth* son, and all through Scripture that numeral is connected with a *new beginning*: suitably then (and ordained by divine providence) was it that *he* should be the one to mark a fresh and outstanding epoch in the history of the favored nation.

The elect of God are *made manifest* in time by the miracle of regeneration being wrought within them. This it is which has always *distinguished* the children of God from the children of the devil; divine calling, or the new birth, is what *identifies* the high favorites of Heaven. Thus it is written, “whom He did predestinate, them He also called” (~~45830~~ Romans 8:30)—


called out of darkness into His marvelous light ( 1 Peter 2:9). This miracle of regeneration, which is the birth-mark of God's elect, consists of a complete *change of hears*, a renewing of it, so that God becomes the supreme object of its delight, the pleasing of Him its predominant desire and purpose, and love for His people its characteristic note. God's *chosen* are transformed into the *choice* ones of the earth, for the members of Christ's mystical body are predestinated to be "conformed to the image" of their glorious Head; and thus do they, in their measure, in this life, "show forth" His praises.

Beautiful it is to trace the fruits or effects of regeneration which were visible in David at an early age. At the time Samuel was sent to anoint him king, he was but a youth, but even then he evidenced, most unmistakably, the transforming power of divine grace.

"And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, *behold, he keepeth the sheep*" ( 1 Samuel 16:11).

Thus the first sight we are given of David in God's Word presents him as one who had a heart (a shepherd's care) for those who symbolized the people of God. "Just as before, when the strength of God's people was being wasted under Pharaoh, Moses, their deliverer, was hidden as a shepherd in a wilderness; so, when Israel was again found in circumstances of deeper, though less ostensible, peril, we again find the hope of Israel concealed in the unknown shepherd of an humble flock" (*David* by B. W. Newton).

An incident is recorded of the shepherd-life of David that plainly denoted his character and forecast his future. Speaking to Saul, ere he went forth to meet Goliath, he said,

"Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him" ( 1 Samuel 17:34,35).

Observe two things.

**First**, the loss of one poor lamb was the occasion of David's daring. How many a shepherd would have considered *that* a thing far too trifling to

warrant the endangering of his own life! Ah, it was love to that lamb and faithfulness to his charge which moved him to act.

**Second**, but how could a youth triumph over a lion and a bear? Through faith in the living God: he trusted in Jehovah, and prevailed. Genuine faith in God is ever an infallible mark of His elect (~~5010~~ Titus 1:1).

There is at least one other passage which sheds light on the spiritual condition of David at this early stage of his life, though only they who are accustomed to weigh each word separately are likely to perceive it.

“Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions: How he swore unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. Lo, we heard of it at *Ephratah*: we found it in the fields of the wood” (~~1920~~ Psalm 132:1-6).

A careful reading of the whole Psalm reveals to us the interests of the youthful David’s heart. There, amid the pastures of Bethlehem Ephratah, he was deeply concerned for *Jehovah’s* glory.

In closing, let us note how conspicuous was the *shepherd* character of David in his early days. Anticipating for a moment that which belongs to a later consideration, let us thoughtfully observe how that after David had rendered a useful service to King Saul, it is recorded that,

“David went and returned from Saul to feed his father’s sheep at Bethlehem” (~~0917~~ 1 Samuel 17:15).

From the attractions (or distractions) of the court, he returned *to the fold*—the influences of an exalted position had not spoiled him for humble service! Is there not a word here for the pastor’s heart: the evangelistic field, or the Bible-conference platform, may furnish tempting allurements, but your duty is to the “sheep” over the which the good Shepherd has placed you. Take heed to the ministry you have received of the Lord, that you fulfill it.

Fellow-servant of God, your sphere may be an humble and inconspicuous one; the flock to which God has called you to minister may be a small one; but *faithfulness* to your trust is what is required of you. There may be an



Eliab ready to taunt you, and speak contemptuously of “those *few* sheep in the wilderness” (~~091728~~ 1 Samuel 17:28), as there was for David to encounter; but regard not their sneers. It is written,

“His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (~~412521~~ Matthew 25:21).

As David was faithful to his trust in the humble sphere in which God first placed him, so he was rewarded by being called to fill a more important position, in which there too he honorably acquitted himself:

“He chose David also for His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the ewes great with young He brought him to feed Jacob, His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he fed them according to *the integrity of his heart*; and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands” (~~197870~~ Psalm 78:70-72).

# CHAPTER 2

## HIS ANOINTING

### ~~<0901>~~ 1 SAMUEL 16 AND 17

In our last chapter we called attention to the *time* in which David's lot was cast. The spirituality of Israel had indeed fallen to a low ebb. The law of God was no longer heeded, for "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (~~<0721>~~Judges 21:25). The terrible failure of the priesthood stands out clearly in the character of Eli's sons (~~<0902>~~1 Samuel 2:22). The nation as a whole had rejected Jehovah that He should not reign over them (~~<0908>~~1 Samuel 8:7). The one then on the throne was such a worthless reprobate that it was written,

"The Lord repented that He had made Saul king over Israel"  
(~~<0915>~~1 Samuel 15:36).

The utter contempt which the people paid to the sacred tabernacle appears in the dreadful fact that it was suffered to languish in "the fields of the wood" (~~<0926>~~Psalms 132:6). Well, then, might our patriarch cry out, "Help Lord, for the godly man ceaseth" (~~<0920>~~Psalms 12:1).

But though the righteous government of God caused Israel to be sorely chastised for their sins, He did not completely abandon them. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Amid the prevailing darkness, almighty power sustained, here and there, a light unto Himself. The heart of one feeble woman laid hold of Jehovah's strength:

"He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He hath set the world upon them: He will keep the feet of His saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness: for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall He thunder upon them: The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and He *shall* give strength

unto His King, and exalt the horn of His *Anointed*" (~~<34008>~~1 Samuel 2:8-10).

That was the language of true faith, and faith is something which God never disappoints. Most probably Hannah lived not to *see* the realization of her Spirit-inspired expectations, but in "due season" they were realized.

How encouraging and comforting ought the above to be to the little remnant of God's heritage in this "cloudy and dark day"! To outward sight, there is now much, very much, to distract and dishearten. Truly

"men's hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (~~<22135>~~Luke 21:26).

But, blessed be His name, "the Lord hath *His* way in the whirlwind" (~~<34008>~~Nahum 1:3). Faith looks beyond this scene of sin and strife, and beholds the Most High upon His throne, working "all things after the counsel of His own will" (~~<40011>~~Ephesians 1:11). Faith lays hold of the Divine promises which declare, "at eveningtide it shall be light" (~~<38147>~~Zechariah 14:7); and

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (~~<23919>~~Isaiah 59:19).

In the meantime God's grace is sufficient for the feeblest who really trusts Him.

Samuel was given by God in response to the prayers of Hannah, and who can doubt that David also was the answer to the earnest supplications of those who sought Jehovah's glory. And the Lord's ear has not grown heavy that it can no longer hear; yet the *actions* of present-day professing Christians say they believe that it has! If the diligence which is now paid to the ransacking of daily newspapers in search for sensational items which are regarded as "signs of the times," and if the time that is now given to Bible conferences was devoted to confession of sin and crying unto God to raise up a man after His own heart, whom He would use to bring back His wayward people into the paths of righteousness, it would be spent to much greater profit. Conditions are not nearly so desperate today as they were at the close of the "dark ages," nor even as bad as they were when God raised up Whitefield. To your knees, my brethren: God's arm is not shortened that it cannot save.

Now not only was the raising up of David a signal demonstration of divine grace working in the midst of a people who deserved naught but untempered judgment, but, as pointed out before, it marked an important stage in the unfolding of God's counsels, and a further and blessed adumbration of what had been settled upon in the everlasting covenant. This has not been sufficiently emphasized by recent writers, who, in their zeal to stress the *law* element of the Mosaic economy, have only too often overlooked the grace element which was exercised throughout. No "new dispensation" was inaugurated in the days of David, but a most significant advance was made in the divine foreshadowings of that kingdom over which the Messiah now rules. The Mediator is not only the arch Prophet and High Priest, but He is also the King of kings, and *this* it is which was now to be specifically typified. The *throne*, as well as the altar, belongs to Christ!

From the days of Abraham, and onwards for a thousand years, the providential dealings of God had mainly respected that people from whom the Christ was to proceed. But now attention is focused on that particular person from whence He was to spring. It pleased God at this time to single out the specific man of whom Christ was to come, namely, David.

"David being the ancestor and great type of Christ, his being solemnly anointed to be king over his people, that the kingdom of His church might be continued in his family forever, may in some respects be looked on as an anointing of Christ Himself. Christ was as it were anointed in him; and therefore Christ's anointing and David's anointing are spoken of under *one* in Scripture: 'I have found David My servant; with My holy oil have I anointed him' (<sup><1880></sup>Psalm 89:20). And David's throne and Christ's are spoken of as one: 'And the Lord shall give Him the throne of His father David' (<sup><4013></sup>Luke 1:32). 'David—knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne' (<sup><4420></sup>Acts 2:30)" (Jonathan Edwards).

The *typical* character of David's person presents a most precious line of study. His very name signifies "the Beloved." His being an inhabitant of Bethlehem was ordained to point to that place where the Darling of God's heart was to be born. His "beautiful countenance" (<sup><0163></sup>1 Samuel 16:13) spoke of Him who is "fairer than the children of men." His occupation as a

shepherd set forth the peculiar relation of Christ to God's elect and intimated the nature of His redemptive work. His faithful discharge of the pastoral office forecast the love and fidelity of the great Shepherd. His lowly occupation before he ascended the throne prefigured the Savior's humiliation prior to His glorious exaltation. His victory over Goliath symbolized the triumph of Christ over the great enemy of God and His people. His perfecting of Israel's worship and instituting of a new ecclesiastical establishment anticipated Christ as the Head and Law-Giver of His Church.

But it is in the *anointing* of David that we reach the most notable feature of our type. The very name or title "Christ" means "the Anointed" One, and David was the first of Israel's kings who thus foreshadowed Him. True, Saul also was anointed, but he furnished a solemn contrast, being a dark foreboding of the antichrist. At an earlier period, Aaron had been anointed unto the sacerdotal office (<sup><0802></sup>Leviticus 8:12); and, at a later date, we read of Elisha the prophet being anointed (<sup><11916></sup>1 Kings 19:16). Thus the threefold character of the Mediator's office as Prophet, Priest and Potentate, was fully typed out centuries before He was openly manifested here on earth.

It is a remarkable fact that David was anointed *three* times.

**First**, privately at Bethlehem (<sup><091613></sup>1 Samuel 16:13).

**Second**, by the men of Judah (<sup><10004></sup>2 Samuel 2:4).

**Third**, by the elders of Israel (<sup><10003></sup>2 Samuel 5:3). So also was that august One whom he foreshadowed. This will appear the more evident if we quote the following:

"Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in (or "from") the midst of his brethren: and *the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward*" (<sup><091613></sup>1 Samuel 16:13).

Concerning our Lord, His humanity was miraculously conceived and sanctified by the Spirit and endowed with all graces in the Virgin's womb (<sup><01035></sup>Luke 1:35).

**Second**, He was publicly "anointed with the Spirit" (<sup><44038></sup>Acts 10:38) at His baptism, and thus equipped for His ministry (see <sup><236101></sup>Isaiah 61:1).

**Third**, at His ascension He was “anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows” (<sup><194506></sup>Psalm 45:6, 7). It was to *this* that the anointing of David more especially pointed.

It is striking to observe that God anointed David *after* Saul, to reign in his room. He took away the crown from him who was higher in stature than any of his people, and gave it to one who resided in Bethlehem, which was “little among the thousands of Judah” (<sup><3802></sup>Micah 5:2). In this way was God pleased to prefigure the fact that He who, when on earth, was “despised and rejected of men,” should take the kingdom from the great ones of the earth. At a later date, this was more expressly revealed, for in the Divine interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream Daniel declared,

“In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the Stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it break in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter” (<sup><2004></sup>Daniel 2:44, 45).

It was the mediatorial reign of Christ which David foreshadowed, and of which he prophesied:

“Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of Thy kingdom is a right scepter” (<sup><194506></sup>Psalm 45:6).

That “throne” is His *mediatorial* throne, and that “scepter” is the symbol of authority over His mediatorial kingdom. Those metaphors are here applied to Christ as setting forth His kingly office, together with His dignity and dominion, for the throne whereon He sits is “the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (<sup><3800></sup>Hebrews 8:1).

“Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore, God, thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows” (<sup><194507></sup>Psalm 45:7).

This is in contrast from the days when He was “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” It denotes His triumph and exaltation. It was at His ascension that He was “crowned with glory and honor.”

Just as the priestly office and work of Christ were foreshadowed by Melchizedek and Aaron, so the kingship and kingdom of the Mediator were typed out by both David and Solomon. It would lead us too far afield to enlarge upon this, but the interested reader will do well to ponder such scriptures as <sup><10712></sup>2 Samuel 7:12-16; <sup><23165></sup>Isaiah 16:5; <sup><22316></sup>Jeremiah 23:5, 6; <sup><44134></sup>Acts 13:34; <sup><66187></sup>Revelation 3:7; 5:5. And let us not be robbed of the preciousness of these passages by the attempts of some who would have us believe they belong only to the future. In many instances their insistence upon *literalizing* many portions of Holy Writ has resulted in the *carnalizing* of them, and the missing of their true and *spiritual* import. Let the reader beware of any system of interpretation which takes away from the Christian any portion of God's Word: all Scripture is "profitable for *doctrine*" (<sup><5816></sup>2 Timothy 3:16).

Between the first and the third anointings of David, or between Samuel's consecrating of him to the kingly office and his actually ascending the throne, there was a period of severe trials and testings, during which our patriarch passed through much suffering and humiliation. Here too we may discern the accuracy of our type. David's Son and Lord trod a path of unspeakable woe between the time when the Holy Spirit first came upon Him and His exaltation at the right hand of the Majesty on high. It is indeed blessed to read through the first book of Samuel and take note of the series of wonderful providences by which God preserved David's life until the death of Saul; but it is yet more precious to see in these so many adumbrations of what is recorded in such passages as <sup><40216></sup>Matthew 2:16; <sup><40429></sup>Luke 4:29; <sup><43859></sup>John 8:59; <sup><43181></sup>John 10:31, 39, etc.

Ere passing on, let us seek to make practical application unto ourselves of what has just been referred to above. God promised Abraham a son, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed (<sup><01123></sup>Genesis 12:3), yet he performed it not for thirty years (<sup><01212></sup>Genesis 21:2). God anointed David king over Israel, yet before the kingdom was actually given to him, his faith was severely tested, and he was called on to endure many sore buffetings. He was hated, persecuted, outlawed and hunted like a partridge on the mountains (<sup><12321></sup>1 Samuel 26:20, etc.). Yet was he enabled to say,

"I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry" (<sup><19401></sup>Psalm 40:1).

So the Christian has been begotten to a glorious inheritance, but "we *must* through *much* tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (<sup><44422></sup>Acts 14:22).

It is only “through faith and patience (we) inherit the promises”  
(<sup><3062></sup>Hebrews 6:12).

Another thing which God did at that time toward furthering the great work of redemption was to inspire David to show forth Christ and His salvation in divine songs. David was endowed with the spirit of prophecy, and is called “a prophet” (<sup><4029></sup>Acts 2:29, 30) so that here too he was a type of Christ.

“This was a great advancement that God made in this building; and the light of the Gospel, which had been gradually growing from the fall, was exceedingly increased by it; for whereas before there was but here and there a prophecy given of Christ in a great many ages, now here Christ is spoken of by David abundantly, in multitudes of songs, speaking of His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension into heaven, His satisfaction, intercession; His prophetic, kingly, and priestly office; His glorious benefits in this life and that which is to come; His union with the church and the blessedness of the church in Him; the calling of the Gentiles. All these things concerning Christ and His redemption are abundantly spoken of in the book of Psalms” (Jonathan Edwards).

To quote again from this Spirit-taught man,

“Now first it was that God proceeded to choose a particular city out of all the tribes of Israel to place His name there. There is several times mention made in the law of Moses of the children of Israel’s bringing their oblations to the place which God should choose, as (<sup><6126></sup>Deuteronomy 12:5-7; but God had never proceeded to it till now. The tabernacle and ark were never pitched, but sometimes in one place, and sometimes in another; but now God proceeded to choose Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem was never thoroughly conquered or taken out of the hands of the Jebusites, till David’s time. It is said in (<sup><0656></sup>Joshua 15:63, ‘As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out.’ But now David wholly subdued it, as we have an account in (<sup><0680></sup>2 Samuel 5. And now God proceeded to choose that city to place His name there, as appears by David’s bringing up the ark thither soon after; and therefore this is mentioned afterwards as the first time God proceeded to choose a city to place His name there: (<sup><4068></sup>2 Chronicles 6:5,6; 12:13.



“The city of Jerusalem is therefore called the *holy city*; and it was the greatest type of the church of Christ in all the Old Testament. It was redeemed by David, the captain of the hosts of Israel, out of the hands of the Jebusites to be God’s city, the holy place of His rest forever, where He would dwell; as Christ, the Captain of His people’s salvation redeemed His church out of the hands of devils, to be His holy and beloved city. And therefore how often does the Scripture, when speaking of Christ’s redemption of His church, call it by the names of *Zion and Jerusalem!* This was the city that God had appointed to be the place of the first gathering and erecting of the Christian Church after Christ’s resurrection, of that remarkable pouring out of the Spirit of God on the apostles and primitive Christians, and the place whence the Gospel was to sound forth into all the world; the place of the first Christian Church, that was to be, as it were, the mother of all other churches in the world; agreeably to that prophecy, ~~ABB~~ Isaiah 2:3, 4: ‘out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem’” (*Work of Redemption*).

# CHAPTER 3

## ENTERING SAUL'S SERVICE

### 1 SAMUEL 16 AND 17

In our last chapter we contemplated David's anointing; in our present study an entirely different experience in his varied career is before us. The two halves of ~~16:1~~ 1 Samuel 16 present a series of striking contrasts. In the former, we behold David called to occupy the throne, in the latter he is seen entering the place of service. There we see the Spirit of the Lord coming upon David (v. 13), here we behold the Spirit of the Lord departing from Saul (v. 14). In the one David is anointed with the holy oil (v. 13), in the other Saul is troubled with an evil spirit (v. 14). Samuel was "mourning" (v. 1), Saul is "refreshed" (v. 23). Samuel approached Jesse with an heifer for sacrifice (v. 2), Jesse sends David to Saul with bread, wine, and a kid for feasting (v. 20). David was acceptable in God's sight (v. 12), here he found favor in Saul's eyes (v. 22). Before he was tending the sheep (v. 11), now he is playing the harp in the palace (v. 23).

God did not set David upon the throne immediately: after his "anointing" came a season of testing. The coming of the Spirit upon him was followed by his having to face the great enemy. Thus it was with David's Son and Lord, the One whom, in so many respects, he foreshadowed. After the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him at His baptism, Christ was tempted of the devil for forty days. So here: the next thing we read of is David's being sent to calm Saul who was terrified by an evil spirit, and shortly after that he goes forth to meet Goliath—figure of Satan. The principle which is here illustrated is one that we do well to take to heart: patience has to be tested, humility manifested, faith strengthened, before we are ready to enter into God's best for us; we must use rightly what God has given us, if we desire Him to give us more.

"But the Spirit of the Lord departed From Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him" (~~16:14~~ 1 Samuel 16:14).

Exceedingly solemn is this, the more so when we consider that which precedes it. In ~~(D150)~~ 1 Samuel 15:1-3 the Lord, had, through Samuel, given a definite commission unto Saul to “utterly destroy Amalek, and all that they had.” Instead of so doing, he compromised:

“But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them” (~~(D150)~~ 1 Samuel 15:9).

When faced by God’s faithful prophet, the king’s excuse was “the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen to sacrifice unto the Lord” (v. 15). Then it was that Samuel said, “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and in sacrifices, as in *obeying* the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is *better* than sacrifice, to hearken than the fat of rams” (v. 22).

Saul had openly defied the Lord by deliberately disobeying His plain commandment. Wherefore the prophet said unto him, “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king” (v. 23). And now we come to the dreadful sequel. “The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.” Having forsaken God, God forsook him. Rightly did Matthew Henry say upon this verse: “They that drive the good Spirit away from them, do of course become a prey to the evil spirit. If God and His grace do not rule us, sin and Satan will have possession of us.”

“But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.” Great care needs to be taken against our reading into these words what is really not in them, otherwise we shall make one part of Scripture contradict another. The Holy Spirit had never been given to Saul as the Spirit of regeneration and sanctification: but He had been given to him as a Spirit of prophecy (see ~~(D100)~~ 1 Samuel 10:10 and contrast ~~(D206)~~ 1 Samuel 28:6), and as a Spirit of wisdom for temporal rule, thus fitting him for the discharge of his royal duties, In like manner, when we read that “God gave him another heart” (~~(D100)~~ 1 Samuel 10:9), this must not be confounded with “a new heart” (~~(D66)~~ Ezekiel 36:26)—the “another heart” was not in a moral and spiritual sense, but only in a way of wisdom for civil government, prudence to rule, courage to fight against his enemies, fortitude against difficulties and discouragements.

It is a serious mistake to suppose that because the Holy Spirit has not come as the Spirit of regeneration and sanctification unto many professors, that therefore He has not come to them at all. Many are “made partakers of the Holy Spirit” as the Spirit of “enlightenment” (~~(806)~~ Hebrews 6:4), of spiritual aspirations (~~(0242)~~ Numbers 24:2; 23:10 etc.), of deliverance from the “pollutions of the world” (~~(6022)~~ 2 Peter 2:20), who are never brought from death unto life. There are common operations of the Spirit as well as special, and it behooves all of us to seriously and diligently examine our hearts and lives for the purpose of discovering whether or not the Holy Spirit indwells *us* as a *Sanctifier*, subduing the flesh, delivering from worldliness, and conforming to the image of Christ. “When men grieve and quench the Spirit by willful sin, He departs, and will not strive” (Matthew Henry).

The servants of Saul were uneasy over the king’s condition, realizing that an evil spirit from God was tormenting him. They therefore suggested that a man who had skill in playing the harp should be sought out, saying,

“And it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well”  
(~~(0166)~~ 1 Samuel 16:16).

Such is the best counsel which poor worldlings have to offer unto those in trouble. As Matthew Henry says, “How much better friends had they been to him, if they had advised him, since the evil spirit was from the Lord, to make his peace with God by true repentance, to send for Samuel to pray with him, and intercede with God for him; then might he not only have had some present relief, but the good Spirit would have returned.”

How many whose consciences have convicted them of their careless, sinful, Godless ways, and who have been startled by the presence of an eternity in Hell, have been ruined forever by following a course of drowning the concerns of the soul by regaling and delighting the senses of the body, “Eat, drink, and be merry” is the motto of the world, and every effort is made to stifle all anxiety about the near prospect of a time arriving when instead of being able to go on so doing, not even a drop of water will be available to ease their unbearable sufferings. Let younger readers seriously ponder this.

“Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in

the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will surely bring thee into judgment” (~~<21109>~~ Ecclesiastes 11:9).

The suggestion made by his servants appealed to Saul, and he gave his consent. Accordingly one of them told him,

“Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him” (~~<01618>~~ 1 Samuel 16:18).

A high character is here accorded David, as one well fitted for the strange part he was to play. Not only was his person suited for the court, not only was he skilled upon the harp, but he was known for his courage and wisdom. The terming of him “a mighty valiant man” intimates that his single-handed victory over the lion and the bear (~~<01737>~~ 1 Samuel 17:37) had already been noised abroad. Finally, it was known that “the Lord is with him.” How this illustrates and demonstrates the fact that one who has received the Spirit as the Spirit of regeneration and sanctification gives dear evidence of it to others! Where a miracle of grace has been wrought in the heart, the fruits of it will soon be unmistakably manifested to all around. Very searching is this. Can those with whom we come into daily contact *see* that “the Lord is with” the writer and the reader? O to let our light

“so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven” (~~<00516>~~ Matthew 5:16).

“Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep” (~~<01619>~~ 1 Samuel 16:19).

Little did Saul think that in giving this order he was inviting to his palace the very one of whom Samuel had said,

“The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, better than thou” (~~<01528>~~ 1 Samuel 15:28)!

How marvelously does God, working behind the scenes, bring His own purpose to pass! Verily “man’s goings are of the Lord,” and well may we say “how can a man then understand his own way?” (~~<00224>~~ Proverbs 20:24). Yet while we are quite incapable of analyzing either the philosophy or

psychology of it, let us admire and stand in awe before Him of whom it is written,

“For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all *things*: to whom be glory forever, Amen” (<sup><51136></sup>Romans 11:36).

“Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep” (<sup><9169></sup>1 Samuel 16:19).

What a *testing* for David was this! He who had been anointed unto an office wherein he would command and rule over others, was now called on to serve. Lovely is it to mark his response: there was no unwillingness, no delay. He promptly complied with his father’s wishes. It was also a testing of his courage: Might not Saul have learned his secret, and now have designs upon his life? Might not this invitation to the palace cover a subtle plot to destroy him; Ah, “the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them,” and where God is truly feared, the fear of man disappears.

“And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son, unto Saul” (v. 20).

What a beautiful typical picture is here presented to us. It was the dire need of poor Saul which moved Jesse to send forth his anointed son: so it was a world lying in sin unto which the Father sent His Beloved. Behold David richly laden with presents for the king: Jesse sent him forth not with weapons of warfare in his hands, but with the tokens of his good will. So the Father sent forth His Son “not to condemn the world” (<sup><33317></sup>John 3:17), but on an errand of grace and mercy unto it.

“And David came to Saul.” Yes, at his father’s bidding he freely left his home: though the anointing oil was upon him, he went forth not to be ministered unto, but to minister. How blessedly this foreshadowed Him of whom it is written,

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death” (<sup><31706></sup>Philippians 2:6-8).

O that writer and reader may be so filled with His Spirit, that not only shall we uncomplainingly, but joyfully, perform our Father's bidding.

"And David came to Saul." Admire again the wondrous working of God. David had been called to reign over Israel, but the time had not yet arrived for him to occupy the throne. An unsophisticated shepherd-boy needed training. Observe then how the providence of God ordered it that for a season he should dwell in the royal court, thus having full opportunity to note its ways, observe its corruptions, and discover its needs. And mark it well, this was brought about *without* any scheming or effort either on his own part or of that of his friends. An evil spirit from the Lord troubled the king: his courtiers were exercised, and proposed a plan to him: their plan met with Saul's approval: David was mentioned as the one who should be sent for: the king assented, Jesse raised no demurs, David was made willing; and thus, working secretly but surely, God's purpose was accomplished. It is only the eye of faith that looks above the ordinary happenings of daily life and sees the divine hand ordering and shaping them for the accomplishment of God's counsels and the good of His people.

An important principle is here illustrated: when God has designed that any Christian should enter *His* service, His providence concurs with His grace to prepare and qualify him for it, and often it is by means of God's providences that the discerning heart perceives the divine will. God opened the door into the palace without David having to force or even so much as knock upon it. When *we* assume the initiative, take things into our own hands, and attempt to hew a path for ourselves, we are acting in the energy of the flesh.

"Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass... Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him"  
(<sup>1976</sup>Psalm 37:5-7).

Obedience to these exhortations is not easy to flesh and blood, yet they must be complied with if we are not to miss God's best. The more we appropriate and act upon such divine precepts, the more clearly will the hand of God be seen when it intervenes on our behalf: the feverish activities of natural zeal only raise a cloud of dust which conceals from us the beauties of divine providence.

"And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armourbearer. And Saul sent to Jesse,

saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favor in my sight” (vv. 21, 22).

Here too we may perceive and admire the secret workings of Godprovidence.

“The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: *He turneth it whithersoever He will*” (~~22101~~ Proverbs 21:1).

It was the divine purpose, and For David’s good, that he should spend a season at the court; therefore did the Lord incline Saul’s heart toward him. How often we lose sight of this fact. How apt we are to attribute the favor and kindness of people toward us to any thing rather than to the Lord! O my reader, if God has given you favor in the eyes of your congregation, or your employer, or your customers, give Him the glory and the thanks for it.

“And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him” (v. 23).

Here we see the readiness of David to perform every task which God allotted him. In this he evidenced his moral fitness for the important role he was yet to fill.

“Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things” (~~41221~~ Matthew 25:21),

expresses an important principle in the government of God, and one which we do well to take to heart. If I am careless in fulfilling my duties as a Sunday school teacher, I must not be surprised if God never calls me to the ministry. And if I am unfaithful in teaching and disciplining my own children, I must not be surprised if God withholds His power and blessing when I seek to teach the children of others.

The power of David’s harp to quiet the spirit of Saul and to drive away temporarily the demon, ought not to be attributed either to the skill of the player or to the charm of music. Instead, it must be ascribed alone to the Lord, who was pleased to *bless* this means to these ends. The instrument, be it weak or strong, likely or unlikely, is utterly powerless in and of itself. Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but there will be no increase unless *God gives it*. In view of ~~191755~~ 1 Samuel 17:55, 56 some have concluded that



what has been before us in the closing verses of ~~<19160>~~ chapter 16 is placed out of its chronological order. But there is no need to resort to such a supposition. Moreover, ~~<191715>~~ 1 Samuel 17:15 plainly refutes it. How long David remained in the palace we know not, but probably for quite some time; after which he returned again unto his humbler duties in the sheepfold.

# CHAPTER 4

## SLAYING GOLIATH

### ~~<0970>~~ 1 SAMUEL 17

When Samuel denounced Saul's first great sin and announced that his kingdom should not continue, he declared, "The Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart" (~~<091314>~~ 1 Samuel 13:14). To this, allusion was made by the apostle Paul in his address in the synagogue at Antioch,

"He raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also He gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after Mine own heart, which shall fulfill all My will" (~~<441322>~~ Acts 13:22).

A truly wondrous tribute was this unto the character of David, yet one which the general course of his life bore out. The dominant characteristic of our patriarch was his unfeigned and unsurpassed devotion to God, His cause, and His Word. Blessedly is this illustrated in what is now to be before us. The man after God's own heart is the one who is out and out for Him, putting His honor and glory before all other considerations.

~~<091715>~~ 1 Samuel 17:15 supplies a precious link between what was considered in our last lesson and what we are now about to ponder. There we are told, "But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem." Knowing that he was to be the next king over Israel, natural prudence would suggest that his best policy was to remain at court, making the most of his opportunities, and seeking to gain the goodwill of the ministers of state; but instead of so doing, the son of Jesse returned to the sheepfold, leaving it with God to work out His will concerning him. No seeker after self-aggrandizement was David. The palace, as such, possessed no attractions for him. Having fulfilled his service unto the king, he now returns to his father's farm.

"Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh" (~~<091701>~~ 1 Samuel 17:1).

Josephus (Antiq. 50:6, c. 9, sect. 1) says that this occurred not long after the things related in the preceding chapter had transpired. It seems likely that the Philistines had heard of Samuel's forsaking of Saul, and of the king's melancholy and distraction occasioned by the evil spirit, and deemed it a suitable time to avenge themselves upon Israel for their last slaughter of them (<sup><1940></sup>chapter 14). The enemies of God's people are ever alert to take advantage of their opportunities, and never have they a better one than when their leaders provoke God's Spirit and His prophets leave them. Nevertheless, it is blessed to see here how that God makes the "wrath of man" to praise Him (<sup><197610></sup>Psalm 76:10).

"And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines" (<sup><191712></sup>1 Samuel 17:2).

The king had been relieved, for a season at least, of the evil spirit; but the Spirit of the Lord had not returned to him, as the sequel plainly evidences. A sorry figure did Saul and his forces now cut.

"And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath of Gath... And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? Am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants; but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us. And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together. When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid" (vv. 4, 8-11).

Ere pondering the haughty challenge which was here thrown down, let us point out (for the strengthening of faith in the inerrancy of Holy Writ) a small detail which exhibits the minute accuracy and harmony of the Word.

In Numbers 13 we read that the spies sent out by Moses to inspect the promised land, declared,

"The land through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the *giants*, the sons of *Anak*, which come of the giants" (vv. 32, 33).

Now link this up with <sup><06121></sup>Joshua 11:21, 22,

“And at that time came Joshua, and cut off *the Anakims* from the mountains... there was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel: only in Gaza, in *Gath*, and in Ashdod, there *remained*.”

Here in our present passage it is stated, quite incidentally, that Goliath belonged to “Gath”! Thus, in the mouth of three witnesses—Moses, Joshua and Samuel—is the word established, concurring as they do in a manner quite artless, to verify a single particular. How jealous was God about His Word! What a sure foundation faith has to rest upon!

Goliath pictures to us the great enemy of God and man, the devil, seeking to terrify, and bring into captivity those who bear the name of the Lord. His prodigious size (probably over eleven feet) symbolized the great power of Satan. His accoutrements (compare the word “armor” in <sup><02112></sup>Luke 11:22!) figured the fact that the resources of flesh and blood can not overcome Satan. His blatant challenge adumbrated the roaring of the lion, our great adversary, as he goes about “seeking whom he may devour” (<sup><0088></sup>1 Peter 5:8). His declaration that the Israelites were but “servants to Saul” (v. 8) was only too true, for they were no longer in subjection to the Lord (<sup><0087></sup>1 Samuel 8:7). The dismay of Saul (v. 11) is in solemn contrast to his boldness in <sup><01105></sup>1 Samuel 11:5-11 and <sup><01447></sup>1 Samuel 14:47, when the Spirit of the Lord was upon him. The terror of the people (v. 11) was a sad evidence of the fact that the “fear of the Lord” (<sup><01107></sup>1 Samuel 11:7) was no longer upon them. But all of this only served to provide a background upon which the courage of the man after God’s own heart might the more evidently appear.

The terrible giant of Gath continued to menace the army of Israel twice a day for no less than forty days—a period which, in Scripture, is ever associated with probation and testing. Such a protracted season served to make the more manifest the impotency of a people out of communion with God. There was Saul himself, who “from his shoulders and upward was higher than any of the people” (<sup><00902></sup>1 Samuel 9:2). There was Jonathan who, assisted only by his armor-bearer, had, on a former occasion, slain twenty of the Philistines (<sup><01414></sup>1 Samuel 14:14). There was Abner, the captain of the host (<sup><01451></sup>1 Samuel 14:50), a “valiant man” (<sup><02615></sup>1 Samuel 26:15), but he too declined Goliath’s challenge. Ah, my reader, the best, the bravest of men, are no more than what God makes them. When He

renews not his courage, the stoutest heart is a coward. Yet God does not act arbitrarily, rather is cowardice one of the consequences of lost communion with Him: “The righteous are bold as a lion” (~~21801~~ Proverbs 28:1).

Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity. But He does not always, nor generally, act immediately, when we are brought low. No, he “*waits* to be gracious” (~~23018~~ Isaiah 30:18), that our helplessness may be the more fully realized, that His delivering hand may be seen the more clearly, and that His merciful interposition may be the more appreciated. But even at this time, when all seemed lost to Israel, when there was none in her army that dared to pick up the gauntlet which Goliath had thrown down, God had His man in reserve, and in due time he appeared on the scene and vindicated the glorious name of Jehovah. The instrument chosen seemed, to natural wisdom and military prudence, a weak and foolish one, utterly unfitted for the work before him. Ah, it is just such that God uses, and why? That the honor may be His, that “no flesh should glory in His presence” (~~40129~~ 1 Corinthians 1:29). Before considering the grand victory which the Lord wrought through David, let us carefully ponder the training which he had received in the school of God. This is deeply important for our hearts.

It was away from the crowds, in the quietude of pastoral life, that David was taught the wondrous resources which there are in God available to faith. There, in the fields of Bethlehem, he had, by divine enablement, slain the lion and the bear (v. 34, 35). This is ever God’s way: He teaches in secret that soul which He has elected shall serve Him in public. Ah, my reader, is it not just at this point that we may discover the explanation of our failures?—it is because we have not sufficiently cultivated the “secret place of the most High” (~~199101~~ Psalm 91:1). *That* is our primary need. But do we really esteem communion with God our highest privilege? Do we realize that walking with God is the source of our strength?

There had been direct dealings between David’s soul and God out there in the solitude of the fields, and it is only thus that any of *us* are taught how to get the victory. Have you yet learned, my brother or sister, that the closet is the great battlefield of faith! It is the genuine denying of self, the daily taking up of the cross, the knowing how to cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and the bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (~~471018~~ 2

Corinthians 10:5). Let the foe be met and conquered in private, and we shall not have to mourn defeat when we meet him in public. O may the Holy Spirit impress deeply upon each of our hearts the vital importance of coming forth from the presence of God as we enter upon any service unto Him: *this* it is which regulates the difference between success and failure. Note how the blessed Redeemer acted on this principle: <sup><0161></sup>Luke 6:12, 13, etc.!

“And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren; and carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge” (v. 17, 18).

Another beautiful type is this of our Savior going about His Father’s business, seeking the good of his *brethren*: a similar one is found in <sup><0171></sup>Genesis 37:13, 14. But without staying to develop this thought, let us observe how God was directing all things to the accomplishment of His purpose. Jesse had eight sons (<sup><0160></sup>1 Samuel 16:10, 11), and only three of them had joined Saul’s army (<sup><0173></sup>1 Samuel 17:13), so that five of them were at home; yet David, the youngest, was the one sent—though Jesse knew it not, God had work for *him* to do. Nothing happens by chance in this world: *all* is controlled and directed from on High (<sup><0191></sup>John 19:11).

“And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle” (v. 20).

How this evidenced the readiness and eagerness of David to obey his father’s orders! Again we may look from the type to the Antitype, and hear Him say, “Lo, I come, to do Thy will, O God” (<sup><0107></sup>Hebrews 10:7). Blessed it is to mark that David was as mindful of his father’s sheep as he was of his commands: his leaving them “with a keeper,” evidenced his care and fidelity in the discharge of his office. His faithfulness in a few things fitted him to be ruler over many things. He who is best qualified to command, is the one who had, previously, learned to obey.

“God’s providence brought him to the camp very seasonably, when both sides had set the battle in array, and as it should seem were more likely to come to an engagement than they had yet been all

the forty days (v. 21). Both sides were now preparing to fight. Jesse little thought of sending his son to the army just in that critical juncture; but the wise God orders the time, and all the circumstances, of actions and affairs, so as to serve His design of securing the interests of Israel, and advancing the man after His own heart” (Matthew Henry).

Though he had only just completed a long journey, we are told that David “ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren” (v. 22). This reminds of ~~<1029>~~ Proverbs 22:29, “Seest thou a man diligent in business? he shall stand before kings.” As David talked with his brethren, Goliath came forth again and repeated his challenge. The whole army was “sore afraid” (v. 24), and though reminding one another of the promised reward awaiting the one who slew the giant, none dared to venture his life. Such inducements as Saul offered, sink into utter insignificance when *death* confronts a man. David mildly expostulated with those who stood near him, pointing out that Goliath was defying “the armies of the living God” (v. 26).

“And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab’s anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle” (v. 28).

How this reminds us of what is said of David’s Son and Lord in ~~<4011>~~ John 1:11, etc. There is a lesson here which every true minister of Christ does well to take to heart, for by so doing he will be forearmed against many a disappointment and discouragement. Sufficient for the disciple to be as his Master: if the incarnate Son was not appreciated, his agents should not expect to be—

“For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ”  
(~~<4010>~~ Galatians 1:10).

Not only will men in general be displeased, but even the people of God, when in a low state, will neither understand nor value the actings of *faith*. The man of God must be prepared to be misinterpreted and to stand alone.

Blessed it is to mark David’s reply to the cruel taunt of his brother: it was a real testing of his meekness, but when he was reviled, he reviled not again.

Nor did he attempt any self-vindication, or explanation of his conduct—such had been quite wasted upon one with such a spirit. First, he simply asked “What have I done?”: what Fault have I committed to be thus chided; reminding us of our Lord’s meek reply under a much stronger provocation—“Why smitest thou Me?” (~~John~~<sup>John</sup> 18:23). Second, he said, “Is there not a cause?” This he left with him: there *was* a cause for his coming to the camp: his father had sent him: the honor of Israel—sullied by Goliath—required it; the glory of God necessitated it. Third, he “turned from him toward another” (v. 30).

David’s speaking to one and another soon reached the ears of Saul, who accordingly sent for him (v. 31). To the king, he at once said,

“Let no man’s heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine” (v. 32);

only to be met with this reply, “Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him,” Ah, “These that undertake great and public services must not think it strange if they be discountenanced and opposed by those from whom they have reason to expect support and assistance. But must humbly go on with their work, in the face not only of their enemies’ threats, but of their friends’ sleights and suspicions” (Matthew Henry). The language used by him in the presence of the king was not the bravado of a boaster, but the God-honoring testimony of a man of faith. Saul and his people were in despair as the consequence of their being occupied with the things of sight: the man of faith had a contemptuous disdain for Goliath because he viewed him from God’s viewpoint—as His enemy, as “uncircumcised.” Note how he attributed his previous successes to the Lord, and how he improved them to count upon Him for further victory: see verse 37.

The response made by Saul unto David’s pleading was solemnly ludicrous. First, he said, “Go, and the Lord be with thee,” which were idle words on such lips. Next we read that “Saul armed David with his own armor” (i.e., with some that he kept in his armory), in which he had far more confidence than in God. But David quickly perceived that such was unsuited to him: the one who has much to do with God in secret cannot employ worldly means and methods in public; the man of faith has no use for carnal weapons. Such things as ecclesiastical titles, dress, ritualistic ceremonies, which are imposing to the eye of the natural man, are but bubbles and baubles to the spiritual. “And David put them off him” (v. 39), and



advanced to meet the haughty Philistine with only a sling and five smooth stones. Should it be asked, But are we not justified in using *means*? The answer is, Yes, the means which *God* supplies (the “smooth stones”), but not that which man offers—his “armor.”

“When the Philistine looked about and saw David, he disdained him” (v. 42).

First, Eliab had taunted, then Saul had sought to discourage, and now Goliath scorns him. Ah, the one who (by grace) is walking by faith must not expect to be popular with men, for they have no capacity to appreciate that which actuates him. But true faith is neither chilled by a cold reception nor cooled by outward difficulties: it looks away from both, unto Him with whom it has to do. If God be “for us” (~~8088~~ Romans 8:3 1), it matters not who be against us. Nevertheless, faith has to be *tested*—to prove its genuineness, to strengthen its fiber, to give occasion for its exercise. Well may writer and reader pray, “Lord, increase our faith.”

The Philistine blustered, “cursed David by his gods” (v. 43), and vowed he would give his flesh unto the fowls and beasts. But it is written, “the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong” (~~20911~~ Ecclesiastes 9:11); and again, “God resisteth the proud” (~~5006~~ James 4:6). The response made by David at once revealed the secret of his confidence, the source of his strength, and the certainty of his victory: “I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied” (v. 45). Ah, “The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (~~20810~~ Proverbs 18:10).

The reader is so familiar with the blessed sequel that little comment on it is required. Faith having brought God into the scene could announce the victory in advance (v.46). One stone in its hand was worth more than all the Philistine’s armor on the giant of unbelief. And why? Because that stone, though flung by David’s sling, was directed and made efficacious by the hand of God. It is pitiable to find how some of the best commentators missed the real point here. Verse 6 begins the description of Goliath’s armor by saying “he had a helmet of brass upon his head”: some have suggested this fell off when he lifted up his hand to curse David by his gods (v. 43); others supposed he left the visor open that he might see the better. But David’s stone did not enter his eye, but his “forehead”—divine power sent it through the helmet of brass! In David’s cutting off his head (v. 51) we have a foreshadowment of what is recorded in ~~80214~~ Hebrews 2:14.

# CHAPTER 5

## HIS EARLY EXPERIENCES

### ~~<0910>~~ 1 SAMUEL 18

Had we sought a topical title for this chapter, “The Price of Popularity” might well have been selected. The ~~<091701>~~ seventeenth chapter of 1 Samuel closes by recounting the memorable victory of David over Goliath the Philistine giant; the eighteenth chapter informs us of a number of things which formed the sequel to that notable achievement. There is much which those who are ambitious and covetous of earthly honor do well to take to heart. An accurate portrayal is given of different phases and features of human nature that is full of instruction for those who will duly ponder the same. Much is condensed into a small compass, but little imagination is required in order to obtain a vivid conception of what is there presented. One scene after another is passed in rapid review, but amid them all, the man after God’s own heart acquitted himself admirably. May the Lord enable each of us to profit from what is here recorded for our learning.

“And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul” (~~<091801>~~ 1 Samuel 18:1 and cf. verses 3, 4).

Let us admire here the tender grace of God, and behold an illustration of a blessed principle in His dealings with us. Jonathan was the son of Saul, and, therefore (ordinarily), “heir apparent to the throne.” But, as we have seen, David had been anointed unto that position. There was, therefore, occasion for Jonathan to look upon David as his rival, and to be filled with jealousy and hatred against him. Instead, his heart is united unto him with a tender affection. This should not be attributed to the amiability of his character, but is to be ascribed unto Him in whose hand are all our hearts and ways.

What we have just called attention to above, is not sufficiently recognized and pondered in these evil days, no, not even by the people of God. There

is nothing recorded of Jonathan which really shows that he was a saved man, but not a little to the contrary—particularly in the closing scenes of his life. When, then, the heart of a man of the world is drawn out to a saint, when he shows kindness unto him, we should always discern the secret workings of God’s power, graciously exercised for us. He who employed ravens to feed His servant Elijah (1 Kings 17), often moves the hearts and minds of unregenerate people to be kind toward His children. It was the Lord who gave Joseph “favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison” (<sup><01321></sup>Genesis 39:21), the Israelites “favor in the sight of the Egyptians” (<sup><00821></sup>Exodus 3:21) at the time of their exodus, Esther in the sight of king Ahasuerus (<sup><17822></sup>Esther 5:2). It is so still; and we only honor God when we perceive and own this, and praise Him for it.

David’s finding favor in the eyes of Jonathan was the more noteworthy, in that the envy and enmity of Saul was soon stirred against him. What a mercy from God was it, then, for David to have a true friend in his enemy’s household! The value of it will come before us later. It was by this means that our hero received warning and his safety was promoted. In like manner, there are few of God’s children unto whom He does not, in critical seasons, raise up those who are kindly disposed toward them, and who in various ways help and succor them. Thus it has been in the life of the writer, and we doubt not, with many of our readers also. Let us admire the Lord’s goodness and adore His faithfulness in thus giving us the sympathy and assistance of unsaved friends in a hostile world.

**“And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father’s house” (v. 2).**

The purpose of God concerning David was beginning to ripen. First, He had so overruled things, that Saul had sent for him to attend the king occasionally in his fits of melancholia. But now David was made a permanent member of the court. This was but fitting in view of the promise which had been made to him by the king before he encountered Goliath: that if victorious, Saul’s daughter should be given to him to wife (<sup><091725></sup>1 Samuel 17:25). Thus was David being fitted for his royal duties. It is blessed when we are able to realize that each providential change in our lives is another step toward the accomplishing of the divine counsels concerning us.

“And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely; and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the

sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants" (v. 5). Beautiful it is to behold here the humility and fidelity of the one upon whom the anointing oil already rested: diligently had he fulfilled his trust in the sheepfold at Bethlehem, dutifully did he now carry out the orders of the king. Let this be duly laid to heart by any who are tempted to chafe under the situation which they now occupy. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (<sup><210910></sup>Ecclesiastes 9:10), defines the duty of each one of us. The teaching of the New Testament is, of course, the same: "Not slothful in business; Fervent in spirit" (<sup><451211></sup>Romans 12:11). Whatever position you occupy, dear reader, no matter how humble or distasteful,

"whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (<sup><510823></sup>Colossians 3:23).

"And behaved himself wisely." How very few do so! How many have, through injudicious conduct, not only hindered their spiritual progress, but ruined their earthly prospects. Such a word as the one now before us needs to be turned into prayer—believing, fervent, persevering. Especially is that counsel timely unto the young. We need to ask God to enable us to carry ourselves wisely in every situation in which He has placed us: that we may redeem the time, be on our guard against temptations, and perform each duty to the very best of our ability. "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (<sup><410106></sup>Matthew 10:16), does not mean, be compromisers and temporizers, tricky and deceitful; but, take into consideration the fickleness of human nature and trust none but God. In David's behaving himself "wisely" he points again unto Him of whom God said, "Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently" (<sup><25213></sup>Isaiah 52:13).

Saul now set David "over the men of war": though not made commander-in-chief, some high military office was given him, possibly over the king's bodyguard. This was a further step toward the equipping of David for his life's work: there was much fighting ahead of him, powerful enemies of Israel which had to be conquered; thus was God making all things "work together" for his good. What a change from the obscurity and peace of pastoral life, to becoming a courtier and soldier. "And he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants." God gave their future ruler favor in the eyes both of the common people and of the court. How this reminds us of what is recorded of the Antitype:

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (<sup><41025></sup>Luke 2:52).

“And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women answered as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (vv. 6, 7).

How this incident served to make manifest the low spiritual state into which the nation of Israel had now sunk.

“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh”  
(~~401234~~ Matthew 12:34):

the language we employ, is a sure index to the condition of our souls, “They are *of* the world, therefore *speak* they of the world” (~~60406~~ 1 John 4:5). It is indeed distressing, yet ought not to be surprising, that so few professing Christians in their general conversation with each other, “minister grace unto the hearers” (~~40429~~ Ephesians 4:29)—not surprising, because the great majority of them are strangers to the power of godliness.

The language used by the women of Israel when celebrating the death of Goliath and the defeating of the Philistines, gave plain indication that their hearts and minds were occupied only with the human victors. “*God* was not in all their thoughts” (~~191004~~ Psalm 10:4). Alas that this is so often the case today: we are living in an age of hero worship, and Christendom itself is infected by this evil spirit. Man is eulogized and magnified on every hand, not only out in the world, but even in the so-called churches, Bible conferences, and religious periodicals—seen in the advertising of the speakers, the printing of their photos, and the toadying to them. O how little hiding behind the Cross, how little self-effacement there is today. “Cease ye from *man*” (~~23122~~ Isaiah 2:22), needs to be placed in large letters over the platforms of all the big religious gatherings in this man-deifying age. No wonder the Holy Spirit is “grieved” and “quenched,” yet where are the voices being raised in faithful protest?

“And the women answered as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.” What a sad contrast was this from what we find recorded in Exodus 15! A far greater overthrow of the enemy was witnessed by Israel at the Red Sea, than what had just taken place in the valley of Elah (~~491719~~ 1 Samuel 17:19). Yet we do not find the mothers of these women of Israel magnifying Moses and singing *his*

praises. Instead, we hear Miriam saying to her sisters, “Sing ye to the Lord, for *He* hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea” (v. 21). Jehovah was there given His true place, the victory being ascribed to Him and not to the human instruments. See to it, dear reader, that—no matter what the common and evil custom be to the contrary—you give *all* the glory to Him unto whom alone it rightfully belongs.

“And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?” (v. 8).

The song of the women was not only dishonoring to God, but was impolitic as well. As we saw in verse 15, David “behaved himself *wisely*”; but the conduct of Israel’s daughters was in sharp contrast therefrom. The honoring of David above Saul, was more than the king’s proud heart could endure: the activity of the “flesh” in the women acted upon the “flesh” in him. Unable to rejoice in what God had wrought through another, Saul was envious when he heard the superior praises of David being sung; he could not tolerate the thought of being second.

Perhaps someone may be inclined to raise the question, Why did not God restrain those women from exalting David in song above Saul (as He could easily have done), and thus prevented the rising of the king’s jealousy? Several answers may be returned to this query: it subserved God’s purpose, and promoted the spiritual good of David. God often withholds His curbing hand in order that it may the better appear what is in fallen and unregenerate man. Were He not to do so, the distinction between the children of God and the children of the devil would not be so evident. Moreover, David was being flattered, and flattery is ever a dangerous thing; therefore does God often wisely and mercifully check our proud hearts from being unduly elated thereby, by causing some to think and speak evil of us.

“For every great and good work a man must expect to be envied by his neighbor: no distinction or pre-eminence can be so unexceptionably obtained, but it will expose the possessor to slander and malice, and perhaps to the most fatal consequences. But such trials are very *useful* to those who love God, they serve as a counterpoise to the honor put upon them, and check the growth

of pride and attachment to the world; they exercise them to faith, patience, meekness, and communion with God; they give them a fair opportunity of exemplifying the amiable nature and tendency of true godliness, by acting with wisdom and propriety in the most difficult circumstances; they make way for increasing experience of the Lord's faithfulness, in restraining their enemies, raising them up friends, and affording them His gracious protection; and they both prepare them for those stations in which they are to be employed, and open their way to them: for in due time modest merit will shine forth with double lustre" (T. Scott).

Ere passing on, let it be remembered that each detail of this chapter, and every thing in the Old Testament Scriptures, is "written for our learning" (~~45104~~ Romans 15:4). Especially does it need to be emphasized for the benefit of the young, that lavish commendations from those who admire and love us, in such a world as this, often prove a real injury; and in all cases every thing should be avoided which can excite envy and opposition—except the performance of our duty to God and man. "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you" (~~4036~~ Luke 6:26). During the twelve years He was in the pastorate, the writer deemed it expedient to retire into the vestry as soon as the service was over: the "flesh" loves to hear the eulogies of the people, but they are not conducive to humility. "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek *them not*" (~~2486~~ Jeremiah 45:5).

"And Saul eyed David from that day and forward" (v. 9). Perceiving that David was looked upon favorably by the people (v. 5), jealous of the praise which was accorded him (v. 7), fearful that he might soon lose the kingdom (v. 8), Saul now regarded the slayer of Goliath with a malignant eye. Instead of looking upon David with esteem and gratitude, as he should have done because of his gallant behavior, he jealousy observed his ways and actions, biding his time to do him injury. What a solemn example does this provide of the inconstancy of poor human nature! Only a little before Saul had "loved him greatly" (~~9121~~ 1 Samuel 16:21), and now he hated him. Beware, my reader, of the fickleness of the human heart. There is only One who can truthfully say "I change not" (~~3006~~ Malachi 3:6).

If David was counting upon the stability of Saul's affection for him, if he concluded that his military prowess had established him in the king's favor, he was now to meet with a rude awakening. Instead of gratitude, there was cruel envy; instead of kindly treatment, his very life was sought. And this

too is recorded for our instruction. The Holy Scriptures not only unveil to us the attributes of God, but they also reveal to us the character of man. Fallen human nature is faithfully depicted as it actually is. The more attentively God's Word be pondered and its teachings and principles absorbed, the better will we be fortified against many a bitter disappointment. There is no excuse for any of us being deceived by people: if we took to heart the solemn warnings which the Bible furnishes, we should be far more upon our guard, and would heed such exhortations as are found in ~~<19618>~~ Psalm 146:3; ~~<201718>~~ Proverbs 17:18; ~~<24904>~~ Jeremiah 9:4; 17:5; ~~<33006>~~ Micah 7:5.

“And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house. And David played with his hand, as at other times; and there was a javelin in Saul's hand. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall. And David avoided out of his presence twice” (vv. 10, 11).

How swiftly troubles follow on the heels of triumphs! What a contrast between hearing the acclaiming songs of the women, and dodging a murderous weapon! And yet how true to life! Well, then, does each of us need to seek grace that we may learn to hold everything down here with a light hand. Rightly did one of the Puritans counsel, “Build not thy nest in any earthly tree, for the whole forest is doomed to destruction.” It is only as the heart is set upon things above that we find an object which will never disappoint nor pall.

“The evil spirit came from God upon Saul.” Yes, the wicked as well as the righteous, evil spirits as well as holy angels, are under the absolute and immediate control of God, cf. ~~<00923>~~ Judges 9:23. But let us not miss the solemn *connection* between what is recorded in verse 9 and in verse 10: when we indulge jealousy and hatred, we give place to the devil (~~<40026>~~ Ephesians 4:26, 27). “And he prophesied:” all prophesyings are not inspired by the Holy Spirit, that is why we need to heed ~~<61401>~~ 1 John 4:1. Observe the enemy's subtilty: no doubt Saul's prophesying was designed to take David off his guard—he would least expect an attempt on his life at such a time. Blessed is it to note that after avoiding the deadly weapon cast at him, David did not pick it up and hurl it at Saul: instead, he quietly withdrew from his presence. May like grace be granted unto both writer and reader when tempted to retaliate upon those who wrong us.



# CHAPTER 6

## HIS EARLY EXPERIENCES (CONTINUED)

### ~~1812~~ 1 SAMUEL 18

Human nature is quite apt to turn eyes of envy upon those who occupy exalted positions. It is commonly supposed that they who are stationed in seats of eminence and honor enjoy many advantages and benefits which are denied those beneath them; but this is far more imaginary than real, and where true is offset by the added responsibilities incurred and the more numerous temptations which are there encountered. What was before us in our last chapter ought to correct the popular delusion. David on the plains of Bethlehem was far better off than David in the king's household: tending the sheep was less exacting than waiting upon Saul. Amid the green pastures he was free from jealous courtiers, the artificial etiquette of the palace, and the javelin of a mad monarch. The practical lesson to be learned by us is, to be contented with the lowly position which the providence of God has assigned us. And why should those who are joint-heirs with Christ be concerned about the trifles and toys of this world?

Resuming now at the point where we broke off, we next read, "And Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul" (~~1812~~ 1 Samuel 18:12). The word for "afraid" here is a milder one than that employed in verse 15, and might be rendered "apprehensive." The king was becoming increasingly uneasy about the future. Consequent upon his disobedience, the prophet of God had plainly told Saul, "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king," and then he added,

"The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou"  
(~~1523~~ 1 Samuel 15:23, 28).

While he was probably ignorant of David's anointing (~~1613~~ 1 Samuel 16:13), it is plain that Saul was now growing more fearful that the man

who had vanquished Goliath was he whom Jehovah had selected to succeed him.

**First**, it was evident to all that the Lord had given the young shepherd the victory over Goliath, for none had dared, in his own courage, to engage the mighty giant.

**Second**, David's behaving himself so wisely in every position assigned him, and his being

“accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants” (~~01875~~ 1 Samuel 18:5),

indicated that he would be popular with the masses were he to ascend the throne.

**Third**, the song of the women caused the jealous king to draw his own conclusion: “they have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands, and what can he have more but *the kingdom*?” (v. 8). And now that his personal attack upon David's life had been frustrated (v. 11), Saul was apprehensive, for he saw that the Lord was with David, while he knew that He had forsaken himself.

“And Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him” (v. 12). The proofs that the special favor of God rested upon David were too plain and numerous for Saul to deny. Jehovah was protecting and preserving, prospering and succeeding David, giving him victory over his enemies and acceptance in the sight of the people. Ah, my reader, when the smile of the Lord is resting upon any of His saints, even the wicked are obliged to take note of and acknowledge the same. The chief captain of Abimelech's host admitted to Abraham, “God is *with thee* in all that thou doest” (~~01222~~ Genesis 21:22)—what a testimony was that from a heathen! When Joseph was in the house of Potiphar, we are told, “And his master *saw* that the Lord was with him” (~~01308~~ Genesis 39:3). Can those among whom our lot is cast perceive that the special blessing of Heaven is resting upon us? If not, our hearts ought to be deeply exercised before God.

“And Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul.” An additional cause of Saul's alarm was the knowledge that the Lord had departed from him, and therefore was he destitute of strength of mind and courage, wisdom and prudence, and had become mean and abject, and exposed to the contempt of his subjects. The

reference is to chapter <sup><D1614></sup>1 Samuel 16:14. A solemn warning is this for us. It was because of his rebellion against the Lord, that Saul was now deserted of God. How often God withdraws His sensible and comforting presence from His people, through their following of a course of self-will.

“He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will *manifest* Myself to him” (<sup><31421></sup>John 14:21).

“Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people” (v. 13).

Solemn indeed is it to behold how Saul acted here. Instead of humbling himself before God, he sought to rid himself of the man whose presence condemned him. Instead of judging himself unsparingly for the sin which had caused the Spirit of God to leave him, the wretched king was loath to look any more at the one upon whom Jehovah’s favor manifestly rested. Flow differently did sinning David act at a later date! Behold him as he cried,

“For I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.... Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me” (<sup><15103></sup>Psalms 51:3, 4, 11).

Ah, here is the great difference between the unregenerate and the regenerate: the one harden themselves in their sin, the other are broken before God on account of it.

“Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.” But let us admire again the hand of God overruling, yea, directing, the reprobate monarch’s actions to the carrying out of His own designs. Though it was hatred of his person that caused the king to remove David from the court, and perhaps partly to please his subjects and partly because he hoped he might be slain in battle, that our hero was now made captain over a regiment; yet this only served the more to ingratiate him with the people, by affording him the opportunity of leading them to victory over their enemies. Abundant opportunity was thus afforded to all Israel to become acquainted with David and all his ways.

Let us also take note of another line in the typical picture here. Though anointed king of Israel (<sup><01613></sup>1 Samuel 16:13), David was, nevertheless, called upon to endure the hatred of the ruling power. Thus it was with David's Son and Lord. The One who lay in Bethlehem's manger was none other than "*Christ* ('the Anointed') the Lord" (<sup><0211></sup>Luke 2:11), and "born King of the Jews" (<sup><0102></sup>Matthew 2:2); yet the king of Judea sought His life (<sup><01216></sup>Matthew 2:16)—though fruitlessly, as in our type. So too at a later date, when His public ministry had begun, we read that,

"the Pharisees went out and held a council against Him, how they might destroy Him" (<sup><01214></sup>Matthew 12:14).

Blessed is it to see how that, instead of attempting to take things into his own hands, David was content to quietly wait the time which God had appointed for his coronation. In like manner, our blessed Lord willingly endured the "sufferings" before He entered into His "glory." May Divine grace grant unto us all needed patience.

"And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord was with him" (v. 14).

Observe that little word "all," and turn it into prayer and practice. Whether on the farm, in the court, or on the battlefield, the man after God's own heart conducted himself prudently. Here too he foreshadowed Him of whom it was declared "He hath done all things *well*" (<sup><01037></sup>Mark 7:37). Let this ever be our desire and aim. "And the Lord was with him," protecting and prospering. That word in <sup><01452></sup>2 Chronicles 15:2 still holds good, "The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him: and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you." If we diligently seek to cultivate a daily walk with God, all will be well with us.

"Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them" (vv. 15, 16).

When the God-forsaken king perceived that he had gained no advantage against David, but that instead he succeeded in all his undertakings, and was more and more in favor with the people, Saul was greatly alarmed, lest the hour was drawing near when the kingdom should be rent from him and given to his rival. When the wicked discern that the awe and blessing of God is upon the righteous, they are "afraid" of them: thus we read that

“Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy”  
(~~<4061>~~ Mark 6:20).

When it is known that God is in the assemblies of His saints, even the great ones of the earth are convicted and rendered uneasy: see ~~<9482>~~ Psalm 48:2-6.

“And Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the Lord’s battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him” (v. 17).

This was said not in friendship and good-will to David, but as designed to lay a snare for him. Thoroughly obsessed with envy, the king was unable to rest. If it could be accomplished without incurring direct guilt, he was determined to encompass David’s destruction. Formerly he had made a personal attack upon his life (~~<9181>~~ 1 Samuel 18:11), but now he feared the people, with whom David was so popular (v. 16); so Saul deemed it wiser to devise this vile plot. He would have David work out his own doom. Remarkable is it to note that this was the very way in which Saul’s own career was ended—he was slain by the Philistines: see ~~<9310>~~ 1 Samuel 31:1-5.

“Only be thou valiant for me and fight the Lord’s battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him.” Was this incident before David when he wrote,

“The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords” (~~<9521>~~ Psalm 55:21)!

How unspeakably dreadful was this: here was a man with murder in his heart, deliberately plotting the death of a fellow-creature; yet, at that very moment, talking about “fighting *the Lords* battles”! O how often is the vilest hypocrisy cloaked with spiritual language! How easy it is to be deceived by fair *words*! How apt would be the bystanders who heard this pious language of Saul, to conclude that the king was a godly man! Ah, my reader, learn well this truth: it is *actions* which speak louder than words.

“And David said unto Saul, Who am I? and what is my life, or my father’s family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?”  
(v. 18).

Some of the commentators have supposed that Saul promised David his daughter to wife at the time when he went forth to engage Goliath; but there is nothing in Scripture which directly supports this. What is recorded in <sup>(191725)</sup>1 Samuel 17:25 was the words of Israel, and not of the king—they *supposed* he would do this and more. When Saul's proposal was made known to him, the modesty and humility of David was at once manifested. Some think that the reference made by David to his "family," had in view his descent from Ruth the Moabitess.

It is blessed to behold the lowly spirit which was displayed by David on this occasion. No self-seeking time-server was he. His heart was occupied in faithfully performing each duty assigned to him, and he aspired not after earthly honors and fleshly advantages. "Who am I?" at once evidenced the mean estimate which he entertained of himself. Ah, *that* is the man whom the Lord uses and promotes:

"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble"  
(<sup>(50406)</sup>James 4:6).

"And what is my life?" breathes the same sentiment: the pitting of *my* life against the Philistine is no equivalent to receiving the *king's* daughter in marriage. Here again we see the subject of these articles adumbrating the perfections of his Lord: "learn of Me, for I am meek and *lowly in heart*" (<sup>(40129)</sup>Matthew 11:29) gives us what the modesty of David but imperfectly represented. Let writer and reader earnestly seek grace to heed that word

"not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly" (<sup>(51218)</sup>Romans 12:3).

"But it came to pass at the time when Merab Saul's daughter should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife" (v. 19).

What was the word of such a man worth? Be very slow, dear reader, in resting upon the promises of a fallen creature. No doubt the perfidy of the king is so grossly affronting David was designed to anger him. Such shameful treatment was calculated to stir up to mutiny one who had the right to claim the fulfillment of Saul's agreement; and thus the king thought he could gain an advantage against him. It is striking and solemn to discover that the curse of God rested upon that marriage; for the five sons born by Merab to the Meholathite (brought up by Michal) were delivered into the hands of the Gibeonites, and "hanged" (<sup>(102108)</sup>2 Samuel 21:8,9)!

“And Michal Saul’s daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him” (vv. 20, 21).

A new opportunity now presented itself unto the wicked king’s purpose. Michal, another of his daughters, fell in love with David: he therefore proposed to give her to him for a wife instead of Merab, hoping that he would now have opportunity of bringing about his death. But let us look beyond the devil-possessed monarch, and behold and admire the wondrous ways of Him who maketh “all things work together for good” to them that love Him. Just as of old the Lord turned the heart of the daughter of Pharaoh unto Moses and thus foiled the evil designs of her father to destroy all the male children of the Hebrews, so He now drew out the affections of Michal unto David, and used her to thwart the murderous intentions of Saul: see <sup><0911></sup>1 Samuel 19:11-17. What a proof that *all* hearts are in God’s hands!

Conscious that his own word would have no weight with him, the king slyly employed his servants to gain David’s confidence. They were commanded to commune with him “secretly,” and to assure him “the king hath *delight* in thee, and all his servants love thee: now therefore be the king’s son-in-law” (v. 22). When the secret restraints of God are withdrawn from them “the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (<sup><21081></sup>Ecclesiastes 8:11). They will scruple at nothing, but employ any and every means to hand for accomplishing their evil designs: they will flatter and praise or criticize and condemn, advance or abase, the object of their spleen, as best serves their purpose.

When David was informed of the king’s intention, his reply again evidenced the lowliness of his heart: “Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king’s son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed?”—by the king (v. 23). From what follows, it seems evident that David was here pointing out his inability to bring to the king’s daughter the dowry that might be expected: compare <sup><02918></sup>Genesis 29:18; <sup><08412></sup>1 Samuel 34:12; <sup><102216></sup>Exodus 22:16, 17. Beautifully has Matthew Henry, in his comments on this verse, pointed out: “If David thus magnified the honor of being son-in-law to the king, how highly then should we think of it to be the sons (not in law, but in Gospel) to the King of kings! ‘Behold what manner of love the Father bath bestowed upon us!’ (<sup><01801></sup>1 John 3:1). Who are we that we

should be thus dignified?” Utterly unable as we were to bring any “dowry” to recommend us unto God.

When his servants made known unto Saul David’s reply, the real design of the king became apparent. “The condition of the marriage must be that he kill a hundred Philistine; and, as proof that those he had slain were uncircumcised, he must bring in their foreskins cut off. This would be a great reproach upon the Philistines, who hated circumcision, as it was an ordinance of God; and perhaps David’s doing this would the more exasperate them against him; and make them seek to be revenged on him, which was the thing Saul desired and designed” (Matthew Henry). Even to such a stipulation David did not demur: knowing that God was with him, jealous of His glory to slay His enemies, he went forth and killed double the number required. Verily, God maketh the wrath of man to praise Himself ( ~~197610~~ Psalm 76:10).



# CHAPTER 7

## FLEEING FROM SAUL

### 1 SAMUEL 19

At the close of <sup><091801></sup>1 Samuel 18 there is a striking word recorded which supplies a most blessed line in the typical picture that was furnished by the man after God's own heart. There we read, "David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by"—the marginal reading is still more suggestive: "so that his name was *precious*." What a lovely foreshadowing was this of Him whose "Name" is "as ointment poured forth" (<sup><220103></sup>Song of Solomon 1:3)! Yes, both to His Father and to His people the name of Christ is "much set by." He has "obtained a more excellent name" than angels bear (<sup><801004></sup>Hebrews 1:4); yea, He has been given "a name which is above every name" (<sup><310109></sup>Philippians 2:9). "Precious" beyond description is that Name unto His own: they plead it in prayer (<sup><61413></sup>John 14:13); they make it their "strong tower" (<sup><201810></sup>Proverbs 18:10).

"And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David" (<sup><091901></sup>1 Samuel 19:1).

How vivid and how solemn is the contrast presented between the last sentence of the preceding chapter and the opening one of this! And yet perhaps the spiritually minded would hardly expect anything else. When the "name" of the "Beloved" (for that is what 'David' signifies) is "much set by," we are prepared to see the immediate raging of the enemy—personified here by Saul. Yes, the picture here presented to our view is true to life. Nothing is more calculated to call into action the enmity of the Serpent against the woman's Seed than the extolling of His "name," with all that that scripturally includes. It was thus in the days of the apostles. When they announced that

"There is none other Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (<sup><440412></sup>Acts 4:12),

the Jewish leaders “commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus” (v. 18); and because they heeded not, the apostle’s were “beaten” and again commanded “not to speak in the name of Jesus” (~~<4050>~~ Acts 5:40).

The previous plot of Saul upon David’s life had failed. Instead of his being slain by the Philistines, they fell under the hand of David, and the consequence was that the son of Jesse became more esteemed than ever by the people. His name was held in high honor among them. Thus it was too with his Antitype: the more the chief priests and Pharisees persecuted the Lord Jesus, the more the people sought after Him:

“From that day forth, they took counsel together for to put Him to death... and the Jews’ passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves. Then sought they for Jesus” (~~<3115>~~ John 11:53, 55, 56).

So it was after His ascension: the more His witnesses were persecuted, the more the Gospel prospered. There seems little room for doubt that the death of Stephen was one of the things used by God to convict him who afterwards became the mighty apostle to the Gentiles. When the early church was assailed, we are told,

“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word” (~~<4080>~~ Acts 8:4).

Thus does God make the wrath of man to praise Him.

Saul was growing desperate, and now hesitated not to make known unto his own son his fierce hatred of David. Yet here again we may behold and admire the directing hand of Providence, in the king’s not concealing his murderous designs from Jonathan. The son shared not his father’s enmity, accordingly we read,

“But Jonathan Saul’s son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself: and I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee” (~~<0902>~~ 1 Samuel 9:2, 3).

It is blessed to see such true and disinterested friendship, for it should not be forgotten that Jonathan was the natural heir to the throne. Here we see him faithfully acquainting David of his danger, and counseling him to take precautionary measures against it.

Not only did Jonathan warn his beloved friend of the evil intentions of his father, but he also entreated the king on his behalf. Beautiful it is to see him interceding before Saul (vv. 4, 5), at the imminent risk of bringing down his anger upon his own head. Jonathan reminded Saul that David had never wronged him; so far from it, he had delivered Israel from the Philistines, and had thus saved the king's throne; why then should he be so set upon shedding "innocent blood"? Jonathan must not here be regarded as a type of Christ, rather is he a vivid contrast. Jonathan's plea was based upon David's personal merits. It is the very opposite in the case of the Christian's Intercessor. Our great High Priest appears before the King of the universe on behalf of His people not on the ground of any good *they* have done, but solely on the ground of that perfect satisfaction or obedience which *He* offered to divine justice on their behalf; no merits of theirs can He plead, but His own perfect sacrifice prevails for them.

Jonathan's intercession was successful: "And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan" (v. 6). He not only gave his son a fair hearing, but was duly impressed by the arguments used, and was convicted for the present that he was wrong in seeking the life of David. Yet here again the intercession of Jonathan and that of the Lord Jesus for His people are in striking contrast: the former had naught but a temporary and transient effect upon his father, whereas that of our Advocate is eternally efficacious—forever be His name praised. "And Saul sware, As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain" (v. 6). Once more we see how easy it is for wicked men to make use of pious expressions, and appear to superficial observers godly men. The sequel shows of what little value is the solemn oath of a king, and warns us to place no confidence in the engagements of earthly rulers. They who are acquainted with the Scriptures are not surprised when even national and international treaties become only worthless "scraps of paper."

Reassured by Jonathan, David returned to Saul's household (v. 7). But not for long: a fresh war (probably local, and on a small scale) broke out with the Philistines. This called for David to resume his military activities, which he did with great success (v. 8), killing many of the enemy and putting the

remainder to flight. A blessed example does the man after God's own heart here set us. Though serving a master that little appreciated his faithful efforts, nay, who had vilely mistreated him, our hero did not refuse to perform his present duty.

“David continues his good services to his king and country. Though Saul had requited him evil for good, and even his usefulness was the very thing for which Saul envied him, yet he did not therefore retire in sullenness, and decline public service. Those that are ill paid for doing good, yet must not be weary of well-doing, remembering what a bountiful benefactor our heavenly Father is” (Matthew Henry).

“And the evil spirit from the Lord was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand” (v. 9).

The opening word of this verse seems to intimate that the fresh victory of David over the Philistines stirred up the spiteful jealousy of the king, and thus by “giving place to the devil” (~~6006~~ Ephesians 4:26, 27) became susceptible again to the evil spirit. “And David played with his hand,” no doubt upon the harp. One who had been so successful upon the battlefield, and was held in such honor by the people, might have deemed such a service as beneath his dignity; but a gracious man considers no ministry too humble by which he may do good to another. Or, he might have objected on the basis of the danger he incurred the last time he performed this office for Saul (~~0980~~ 1 Samuel 18:10), but he counted upon God to preserve him in the path of duty.

“And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin” (v. 10). In view of his so recently acceding to his son's intercession and swearing that David should not be slain, our present verse furnishes an illustration of a solemn and searching principle. How often unsaved people, after sudden conviction have *resolved* to break from their evil doings, and serve the Lord, but only after a short season to return to their course of sin, like a washed sow to her wallowing in the mire (~~61022~~ 2 Peter 2:22). Where there has been no miracle of mercy wrought within the heart, no change of disposition, and where there is no dependence upon divine grace for needed strength, resolutions, however sincere and earnest, seldom produce any lasting effect. Unmortified lusts quickly break through the most solemn vows; where the fear of God does not possess the heart, fresh temptations

soon arouse the dormant corruptions, and this gives Satan good opportunity to regain complete mastery over his victim.

But he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall; and David fled, and escaped that night" (v. 10). How wonderful is the care of God for His own! Though invisible, how real are His protecting arms! "Not a shaft of hate can hit, till the God of love sees fit." What peace and stability it brings to the heart when faith realizes that "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them" (<sup>198407</sup>Psalm 34:7). Men may be filled with malice against us, Satan may rage and seek our destruction, but none can touch a hair of our heads without God's permission. The Lord Almighty is the "Shield and Buckler," the "Rock and Fortress" of all those who put their trust in Him. Yet note that David was not foolhardy and reckless. Faith is not presumptuous: though we are to trust Him, we are forbidden to *tempt* the Lord; therefore it is our duty to retire when men seek our hurt (cf. <sup>401023</sup>Matthew 10:23).

Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal David's wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life tonight, tomorrow shalt thou be slain" (v. 11). Saul was thoroughly aroused: chagrined by his personal failure to kill David, he now sent his guards to assassinate him. These were to surround his house and wait till daylight, rather than enter and run the risk of killing some one else, or allowing him to make his escape during the confusion and darkness. But man proposes, and God disposes. The Lord had other services for David to perform, and the servant of God is immortal until the work allotted him has been done. This time the king's own daughter, who had married David, was the one to befriend him. In some way she had learned of her father's plan, so at once took measures to thwart it. First, she acquainted her husband of his imminent danger.

Next we are told,

"so Michal let David down through a window; and he went, and fled, and escaped" (v. 12).

In like manner, Rahab had let down the spies from her house in Jericho, when the king's messengers were in quest of him; and as the disciples let down the apostle Paul at Damascus, to preserve him from the evil designs of the Jews. Though the doors were securely guarded, David thus escaped through a window, and fled swiftly and safely away. It is of deep interest at

this point to turn to the fifty-ninth Psalm, the heading of which (inspired, we believe) tells us it was written “when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.” In this critical situation, David betook himself to prayer:

“Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men. For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul: the mighty are gathered against me; not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O Lord” (<sup>1950b</sup> Psalm 59:1-3).

Blessed is it to see that ere he completed the Psalm, full assurance of deliverance was his:

“But I will sing of Thy power, yea, I will sing aloud of Thy mercy *in the morning*”(v. 16).

“And Michal took an image, and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats’ hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth, and when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He is sick” (vv. 13, 14).

Water will not rise above its own level. We cannot expect the children of this world to act according to heavenly principles. Alienated as they are from the life of God (<sup>4048</sup> Ephesians 4:18), utter strangers to Him in experience (<sup>4012</sup> Ephesians 2:12), they have no trust in Him. In an emergency they have no better recourse than to turn unto fleshly schemings and devisings. From a natural viewpoint Michal’s fidelity to her husband was commendable, but from a spiritual standpoint her deceit and falsehood was reprehensible. The one who commits his cause and case unto the Lord, *trusting* also in Him to bring to pass His own wise purpose and that which shall be for his own highest good (<sup>1957b</sup> Psalm 37:5), has no need to resort unto tricks and deceptions. Does not David’s having yoked himself to an unbeliever supply the key to his painful experiences in Saul’s household!

“And Saul sent the messengers again to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him” (v. 15).

Bent on David’s destruction, the king gave orders that, sick or no, he should be carried into his presence, and this for the specific purpose of slaying him by his own hand. Base and barbarous was it to thus triumph over one whom he thought was sick, and to vow the death of one that, for all he knew, was dying by the hand of nature. Spurred on by him who is “a

murderer from the beginning” (~~<BR4>~~ John 8:44), the savage cruelty of Saul makes evident the extreme danger to which David was exposed: which, in turn, intensifies the blessedness of God’s protection of him. How precious it is for the saint to know that the Lord places Himself as the Shield between him and his malicious foe!

“As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever” (~~<BCD>~~ Psalm 125:2).

When the servants returned to and entered Michal’s house, her plot was exposed and the flight of David discovered (v. 16). Whereupon the king asked his daughter,

“Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped?” (v. 17).

How thoroughly blurred is the vision of one who is filled with envy, anger and hatred! He who had befriended Saul again and again, was now regarded as an “enemy.” There is a solemn lesson for us in this: if pride, prejudice, or self-seeking rule our hearts, we shall regard those who are our wisest counselors and well-wishers as foes. Only when our eye be single is our whole body full of light. Solemn is it to note Michal’s answer to Saul: “He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?” (v. 17), thereby representing David as a desperate man who would have slain her had she sought to block his escape. Still more solemn is it to find the man after God’s own heart married to such a woman!

“So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth” (v. 19).

It was by Samuel he had been anointed, and through him he had first received the promise of the kingdom. Probably David now sought God’s prophet for the strengthening of his faith, for counsel as to what he should do, for comfort under his present troubles, for fellowship and prayer: it was through Samuel he was now most likely to learn the mind of the Lord. And too, he probably regarded asylum with Samuel as the most secure place in which he could lodge. Naioth was close to Ramah, and there was a school of the prophets: if the Philistines gave no disturbance to the “hill of God” and the prophets in it (~~<BCD>~~ 1 Samuel 10:5), it might be reasonably concluded that Saul would not.

“And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah.” And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied” (vv. 19, 20). Notwithstanding the sacredness of the place David was in, Saul sent servants to arrest him. But again the Lord interposed, by causing His Spirit to fall upon Saul’s messengers, who were so much taken up with the religious exercises, they neglected the errand on which they had been sent. How this reminds us of the Pharisees and chief priests sending officers to apprehend Christ, but who instead of executing their commission, returned to their masters, saying, “Never man spake like this Man” (~~John~~ <sup>John</sup> 7:32,45,46)! Saul sent others of his servants, a second and a third time, to seize David, but before he reached the place where David was, the Spirit of God came upon him and threw him into a kind of trance, in which he continued all day and night; giving David plenty of time to escape. Such strange methods does Jehovah sometimes employ in bringing to naught the efforts of His enemies against His servants.



# CHAPTER 8

## HIS WANDERINGS

### 1 SAMUEL 20

The picture which the Holy Spirit has given in Scripture of David's character and life is a composite one. It is somewhat like a painting in which the dominant colors are white, black and gold. In many details David has left an example which we do well to follow. In other respects he presents a solemn warning which we do well to heed. In other features he was a blessed type of Christ. Thus, the meeting together of these three distinct things in David may well be likened unto a composite picture. Nor do we exercise a wrong spirit (providing our motive be right), or sully the grace of God by dwelling upon the sad defects in the character of the Psalmist or the failures in his life; rather will the Spirit's design be realized and our souls be the gainers if we duly take to heart and turn them into earnest prayer, that we may be delivered from the snares into which he fell.

At the close of our last chapter we saw how that, to escape the murderous hatred of Saul, David took refuge with Samuel at Naioth. Thither did his relentless enemy follow him. But wondrously did God interpose. Three times the messengers which the king had sent to arrest David were restrained and awed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Not only so, but when Saul himself came in person, the Spirit of God subdued and threw him into a kind of ecstatic trance. One would have thought that this signal intervention of God for David had quieted all his fears, and filled his soul with praise and thanksgiving unto Him who had shown Himself strong on his behalf. Was it not plain that God did not intend Saul to harm the one whom His prophet had anointed? Ah, but David too was a man of like passions with us, and unless divine grace wrought effectually *within* him, no outward providences would avail to spiritualize him. The moment the Lord leaves us to ourselves (to try us, to show what we are), a fall is certain.

Instead of continuing at Naioth, quietly waiting the next token of God's goodness, David became alarmed, and took matters into his own hands.

Instead of being occupied with the divine perfections, David now saw only a powerful, inveterate, bloodthirsty enemy. Accordingly, the next thing we read is, “And David fled from Naioth in Ramah” (<sup>Q1011</sup>1 Samuel 20:1): true he “fled” from Saul, but he also turned his back upon Samuel. “And came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?” It is solemn to see David preferring a conference with Jonathan rather than with the prophet of God. As usual, the key is hung upon the door; the opening verse of this chapter explains to us what is found in the later ones. It was “natural” that David should turn for help to a “friend,” but was it *spiritual*?

Do not the questions David put to Jonathan reveal to us the state of his heart? The “I,” “mine,” “my,” “my,” show plainly enough the condition of his mind. God was not now in all his thoughts, yea, *He* was not mentioned at all. The repeated attempts of Saul upon his life had thoroughly unnerved him, and his “there is but a step between me and death” (<sup>Q1015</sup>1 Samuel 20:3), intimates plainly that unbelieving fears now possessed him. Ah, David needed to turn unto an abler physician than Jonathan if his feverish anxiety was to be allayed: only One was sufficient for laying a calming and cooling hand upon him. O how much the saint loses when he fails to acknowledge the Lord in all his ways (<sup>Q1016</sup>Proverbs 3:6). But worse: when communion is broken, when the soul is out of touch with God, temptation is yielded unto and grievous sin is committed. It was so here. Afraid that Saul’s anger would return when his absence from the table was noted, but fearful to take his place there, David bids Jonathan utter a deliberate lie on his behalf (<sup>Q1015</sup>1 Samuel 20:5, 6). May this speak loudly to each of our hearts, warning of the fearful fruits which issue from severed fellowship with the Lord.

The first false step David had taken was in marrying the daughter of Saul, for it is evident from the sacred narrative that she was no suited partner for the man after God’s own heart. His second mistake was his fleeing from Naioth, and thus turning his back upon the prophet of God. His third failure was to seek aid of Jonathan. The true character of his “friend” was exhibited on this occasion: seeing David so perturbed, he had not the moral courage to acknowledge the truth, but sought to pacify him with a prevarication (<sup>Q1012</sup>1 Samuel 20:2). Surely Jonathan could not be ignorant of Saul’s having thrown the javelin at David, of the instructions given to the servants to slay him (<sup>Q1022</sup>1 Samuel 19:11), of the messengers sent to arrest him (<sup>Q1021</sup>1 Samuel 19:20), and of his going after David in person

(~~01922~~ 1 Samuel 19:22). But all doubt is removed by “Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should *kill* David” (~~01901~~ 1 Samuel 19:1). Jonathan deliberately equivocated in (~~02012~~ 1 Samuel 20:2, and “evil communications corrupt good manners” (~~06153~~ 1 Corinthians 15:33): thus it was here—David lied too (~~02015~~ 1 Samuel 20:5,6).

We do not propose to go over this twentieth chapter verse by verse, for we are not now writing a commentary upon 1 Samuel. A plan was agreed upon by Jonathan whereby he should ascertain the latest attitude of his father and acquaint David with the same. A solemn covenant was entered into between them: Jonathan here, and David much later (~~02001~~ 2 Samuel 9), faithfully carried out its terms. The words “David hid himself in the held” (v. 24 and cf. 35, 41), at once expose his lie in verse 6, though the commentators have glossed it over. When David was missed from the king’s table and inquiry was made, Jonathan repeated the lie which David had suggested to him. Thereupon the king reviled his son, and declared that David “shall surely die” (v. 31). When Jonathan sought to expostulate, and ask why David should be slain, Saul threw his javelin at him. The meeting between Jonathan and David in the field, and their affectionate leave-taking is touchingly described (vv. 41, 42).

“Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest” (~~02201~~ 1 Samuel 21:1). When a real saint is out of touch with God, when he is in a backslidden state, his conduct presents a strange enigma and his inconsistent ways are such as no psychologist can explain. But much that is inexplicable to many (even to ill-informed believers) is solved for us by ~~08017~~ Galatians 5:17:

“for the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

Here we have set forth the conflict of the two “natures” in the Christian, the irreconcilable opposition between the two mainsprings of conduct, the “flesh” and the “spirit.” According as one or the other of these two principles is actuating and dominating the saint, such will be his course of action. The final clause of this verse has a double force: the presence of the “flesh” hinders the “spirit” from completely realizing its desires in this life (~~08015~~ Romans 7:15-25); the presence of the “spirit,” prevents the “flesh” from fully having its way.

Galatians 5:17 supplies the key to many a mysterious experience in the life of a Christian, and sheds much light on the checkered histories of Old Testament saints. We might add many paragraphs at this point by illustrating the last sentence from the lives of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Elijah, etc., but instead, we will confine our attention to the leading subject of these chapters. In his meeting the attacks of the wild animals (<sup>191734</sup>1 Samuel 17:34-36), in his devotion for the tabernacle (<sup>192216</sup>Psalms 132:1-7), in his engagement with Goliath, the “spirit” was uppermost in David, and therefore was the Lord before his heart. There had been severe testings of courage and faith, but his trust in the Lord wavered not. Then followed a season in the king’s household, where it was much harder to preserve this spirituality. Then Saul turned against him, and again and again sought his life. Deprived of the outward means of grace, David’s faith flagged, and as it flagged fears replaced it, and instead of being occupied with the Lord, his powerful foe filled his vision.

In his flight from Saul, David first sought unto Samuel, which shows that the “flesh” in him was not completely regnant, as it never is in a truly regenerate soul: “Sin shall not have *dominion* over you” (<sup>190614</sup>Romans 6:14)—it shall not render you its absolute slave. But in his flight from Samuel and his turning to Jonathan for help, we see the “flesh” more and more regulating his actions—still more plainly manifested in the falsehood which he put into his friend’s mouth. And now in his flight unto Ahimelech and the manner in which he conducted himself, the anointed eye may discern the conflict which was at work within him. It now seemed clear unto David that no change for the better was to be expected in Saul: as long as the king was alive, he was in danger. An outcast from the court, he now became a lonely wanderer, but before he journeyed farther afield, his heart was first drawn to Nob, whither the tabernacle had been removed.

Various motives and considerations seem to have moved David in his repairing to Nob. Foreseeing that he must now be an exile, he wished to take leave of the tabernacle, not knowing when he should see it again, it is plain from many of his Psalms that the sorest grief of David during the time of his banishment was his isolation from the house of God and his restraint from public ordinances:

“How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord.... For a day in

thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness”  
 (<1841> Psalm 84:1, 2, 10 and cf. <1913> Psalm 42:3, 4, etc.)

**Second**, it seems clear from <19210> 1 Samuel 22:10 that David’s purpose was to enquire of the Lord through the high priest, to obtain directions from Him as to his path.

**Third**, from what follows here, it appears that food was also his quest.

“And Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David”  
 (<19210> 1 Samuel 21:1).

Evidently the high priest had heard of David’s having fallen under the displeasure of Saul, and so concluded that he was a fugitive. Knowing the type of man the king was, Ahimelech was fearful of endangering his own life by entertaining David. “And said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee?” That there were some “young men” with him is clear from verse 4 and also <19123> Matthew 12:3, yet having won such renown both in camp and court, it might well be expected that David should be accompanied by a suitable equipage. The disdain which the high priest showed for David the outcast, illustrates the merciless attitude of the world toward a fallen and impoverished hero.

“And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place” (<192102> 1 Samuel 21:2).

Here again we see David guilty of a gross untruth. How solemn to find the Psalmist of Israel telling a deliberate lie at the threshold of the house of God, whither he had come to inquire the mind of the Lord. Verily, each one of us has real need to pray “Remove from me the way of lying” (<19329> Psalm 119:29). David’s heart quailed under the embarrassing question of the priest, and he who had dared to meet single-handed the Philistine giant was now afraid to speak the truth. Ah, there cannot be the calm and courage of faith, where faith itself is inoperative. Elijah shrank not from meeting the four hundred prophets of Baal, yet later he fled in terror from Jezebel. Peter dared to step out of the ship onto the sea, yet trembled before a maid. “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.”

It is easier to trust God in days of sunshine than in times of gloom and darkness.

“David had often, indeed, before known difficulty and danger: from the day of his conflict with Goliath he had known little else: but then, there was this difference—in former difficulties he had been enabled to triumph. Some ray of brightness had gilded every cloud; some honor awaited him out of each affliction. But now, God seemed no longer to interfere on his behalf. The full enmity of Saul was allowed to take its course; and God interfered not, either to subdue or to chasten. He appeared no longer to intend raising David above circumstances, but to allow him to be overcome by them. David’s heart seemed unable to bear this. To trust God whilst overcoming is one thing; to trust Him when being overcome is another” (B. W. Newton).

David now asked Ahimelech for five loaves of bread (<sup>(19218)</sup>1 Samuel 21:3): bear in mind that he stood at the door of the tabernacle, and not before the priest’s personal residence. All that was to hand were the twelve loaves which had rested for a week on the golden table in the sanctuary, and which, being replaced at once by twelve more, became the property of the priests and their families. Assuring Ahimelech that he and his men met the requirements of <sup>(19195)</sup>Exodus 19:15, David pressed for the bread being given to him. To what a low estate had the son of Jesse fallen: now that Saul’s rooted malice was generally known the people would be afraid and unwilling to befriend him. In Matthew 12 we find the Lord Jesus vindicating this action, which shows us that the ordinances of religion may be dispensed with where the preservation of life calls for it: ritual observances must give way to moral duties, and in the case of urgent providential necessity that is permissible which ordinarily may not be done.

“Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the Lord; and his name was Doeg, an Edomite, the chiefest of the herdmen that belonged to Saul” (<sup>(192107)</sup>1 Samuel 21:7).

And yet in *his* hearing David had preferred his urgent request. Surely natural common sense would have prompted him to act with more prudence. Ah, my reader, when the saint is in a backslidden state of soul, he often acts more foolishly than does the man of the world. This is a righteous judgment of God upon him. He has given us His Word to walk

by, and that Word is one of *wisdom*, containing salutary counsel. We turn from it at our peril and irreparable loss. To lean unto our own understanding is to court certain disaster. Yet, when communion with God is broken, this is exactly what we do. Then it is that we are suffered to reap the bitter fruits of our evil ways and made to feel the consequences of our folly.


Next, David asked Ahimelech for a weapon, and was told that the only one available was “the sword of Goliath,” which had been preserved in the tabernacle as a monument of the Lord’s goodness to Israel. When told of this, David exclaimed, “There is none like that, give it to me.” Alas, alas, how had the mighty fallen.

“Surely it augured ill for David, that *his* hand—that hand which had placed the sword of Goliath in the sanctuary of the God of Israel—that hand which had once taken the pebble and the sling as the symbol of its strength, because it trusted in the Lord of hosts—it augured ill that his hand should be the first to withdraw the giant weapon from its resting-place in order that he might transfer to *it* a measure, at least of that confidence which he was withdrawing from God. How different the condition of David now, and on the day of Goliath’s fall! Then, trusting in the God of Israel, and associated with Israel, he had gone out in owned weakness; but now, forsaking Israel and the land of Israel, he went forth armed with the sword of Goliath, to seek friendship and alliance with the Philistines, the enemies of Israel, and the enemies of God” (B. W. Newton).

Thus David now set forth, provisioned (temporarily, at least) and armed. But at what a cost? The unsuspecting priest had believed David’s lies, and assured by him that Saul had commissioned him, feared not the presence of Doeg the king’s servant (v. 7). But he paid dearly for listening, against his better judgment, to David’s falsehoods. That treacherous Edomite informed Saul (<sup>09219</sup>1 Samuel 22:9, 10), and later he was ordered by the enraged king to reek a fearful vengeance:

“And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod. And Nob, the city of the priests smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep” (<sup>09218</sup>1 Samuel 22:18, 19).

Such were some of the fearful results of David's lies, as he afterwards acknowledged to the one remaining child of Ahimelech:

“I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house” ( 1 Samuel 22:22).

May it please the Holy Spirit to powerfully move both writer and reader to lay to heart the whole of this solemn incident, that we may pray daily with increasing earnestness, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”



# CHAPTER 9

## HIS FLIGHT TO ZIKLAG

### 1 SAMUEL 21

There are times when God's tender love for His people *seems* to be contradicted by the sore testings which He sends upon them, times when His providences appear to clash with His promises; then it is that faith is tested, and so often fails; then it is also that the superabounding grace of God is evidenced by delivering the one who has given way to unbelief. These principles are illustrated again and again on the pages of Holy Writ, especially in the Old Testament, and one of their chief values is for us to lay them to heart, turn them into earnest prayer, and seek to profit from them. God forbid that we should "wrest" them to our destruction (<sup><01201></sup>2 Peter 3:16). God forbid that we should deliberately sin in order that grace may abound (<sup><01001></sup>Romans 6:1, 2). And God forbid that we should take the failures of those who preceded us as excuses for our own grievous falls, thus endeavoring to shelter behind the faults of others. Rather let us seek grace to regard them as danger-signals, set up to deter us from slipping into the snares which tripped them.

To Abraham God promised a numerous seed (<sup><01122></sup>Genesis 12:2), but His providences seemed to run counter to the fulfillment. Sarah was barren! But the sterility of her womb presented no difficulty to Omnipotence. Nor was there any need for Abraham to attempt a fleshly compromise, by seeking a son through Hagar (Genesis 16). True, for a while, his plan appeared to succeed? but the sequel not only demonstrated the needlessness for such a device, but in Ishmael a bitter harvest was reaped. And this is recorded as a warning for us. To Jacob God said,

"Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred, and I will be with thee" (<sup><01308></sup>Genesis 31:3).

During the course of his journey, messengers informed him that Esau was approaching with four hundred men, and we read that "Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed" (<sup><01307></sup>Genesis 32:7). How human! True, and how sad,

how dishonoring to God! What cause for fear was there when Jehovah was with him? O for grace to “trust in Him at all times” (<sup>1931B</sup> Psalm 62:8).

Learn, dear brethren and sisters, that faith must be tested—to prove its genuineness. Yet only He who gives faith, can maintain it; and for this we must constantly seek unto Him. What has just been before us receives further illustration in the subject of these chapters. David was the king elect, yet another wore the crown. The son of Jesse had been anointed unto the throne, yet Saul was now bitterly persecuting him. Had God forgotten to be gracious? No, indeed. Had He changed His purpose? That could not be (<sup>1931B</sup> Malachi 3:6). Why, then, should the slayer of Goliath now be a fugitive? He had been appointed to be master of vast treasures, yet he was now reduced to begging bread (<sup>1921B</sup> 1 Samuel 21:3). Faith *must* be tested, and we *must* learn by painful experience the bitter consequences of *not trusting* in the Lord with all our hearts, and the evil fruits which are borne whenever we lean unto our own understandings, take matters into our own hands, and seek to extricate ourselves from trouble.

Concerning Hezekiah we read that

“God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart” (<sup>1423B</sup> 2 Chronicles 32:31).

None of us knows how weak he is till God withdraws His upholding grace (as He did with Peter) and we are left to ourselves. True, the Lord has plainly told us that “without Me ye can do nothing.” We think we believe that word, and in a way we do; yet there is a vast difference between not calling into question a verse of Scripture, an assenting to its verity, and an inward acquaintance with the same in our own personal history. It is one thing to believe that I am without strength or wisdom, it is another to *know* it through actual experience. Nor is this, as a rule, obtained through a single episode, any more than a nail is generally driven in securely by one blow of the hammer. No, we have to learn, and re-learn, so stupid are we. The Truth of God has to be burned into us in the fiery furnace of affliction. Yet this ought not to be so, and would not be so if we paid more heed to these Old Testament warnings, furnished in the biographies of the saints of yore.

In our last chapter we saw that, following the murderous attack of Saul upon him, David fled to Naioth, But thither did his relentless enemy follow him. Wondrously did God interpose on His servant’s behalf. Yet, being a

man of like passions with ourselves, and the supernatural grace of God not supporting him at the time, instead of David's fears being thoroughly removed, and instead of waiting quietly with Samuel to receive a word of Divine guidance, he was occupied with his immediate danger from Saul, and after vainly conferring with Jonathan, took things into his own hands and fled to Nob. There he lied to the priest, by means of which he obtained bread, but at the fearful cost of Saul reeking vengeance through Doeg in slaying eighty-five of those who wore the linen ephod. Disastrous indeed are the consequences when we seek to have our own way and hew out a path for ourselves. How differently had things turned out if David trusted the Lord, and left Him to undertake for him!

God is all-sufficient in Himself to supply all our need (~~1049~~ Philippians 4:19) and to do for us far more exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think (~~4983~~ Ephesians 3:20). This He can do either in an immediate way, or mediately if He sees fit to make use of creatures as instruments to fulfill His pleasure and communicate what He desires to impart to us. God is never at a loss: all things, all events, all creatures, are at His sovereign disposal. This foundational truth of God's all-sufficiency should be duly improved by us, taking heed that we do not by our thoughts or actions reflect upon or deny this divine perfection. And this we certainly do when we use *unlawful* means to escape imminent dangers. Such was the case with Abram (Genesis 20) and Isaac (Genesis 26) when they denied their wives, concluding that that was a necessary expedient to save their lives—as though God were not able to save them in a better and more honorable way. Such we shall see was the case with David at Ziklag.

We also made brief reference in our last chapter to the fact that when the saint is out of touch with God, when he is in a backslidden state, his behavior is so different from his former conduct, so inconsistent with his profession, that his actions now present a strange enigma. And yet that enigma is capable of simple solution. It is only in God's light that any of us "see light" (~~19819~~ Psalm 36:9). As the Lord Jesus declares, "he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness" (~~49812~~ John 8:12). Yes, but it is only as we are really "following" Him, our hearts engaged with the example which He has left us, that we shall see, know, and take that path which is pleasing and honoring to Him. There is only one other alternative, and that is seeking to please either our fellows or ourselves, and where this is the case, only confusion and trouble can ensue.

When communion with God (who is “light”) is severed, nothing but spiritual darkness is left. The world is a “dark place” (~~<6019>~~ 2 Peter 1:19), and if we are not ordering our steps by the Word (~~<199105>~~ Psalm 119:105), then we shall flounder and stumble.

“The backslider in heart shall be filled with his *own* ways”  
(~~<20144>~~ Proverbs 14:14),

not with the “ways” of God (~~<19A307>~~ Psalm 103:7). Where fellowship with the Lord is broken, the mind is no longer illuminated from Heaven, the judgment is clouded, and a lack of wisdom, yea, folly itself, will then characterize all our actions. Here is the key to much in our lives, the explanation of those “unwise doings,” those “foolish mistakes” for which we have had to pay so dearly—we were not controlled by the Holy Spirit, we acted in the energy of the flesh, we sought the counsel of the ungodly, or followed the dictates of common sense.

Nor is there any determining to what lengths the backslider may go, or how foolishly and madly he may not act. Solemnly is this illustrated in the case now before us. As we saw in the preceding paper, David was worried at being unarmed, and asked the high priest if there were no weapon to hand. On being informed that the only one available was “the sword of Goliath,” which had been preserved in the tabernacle as a memorial of the Lord’s goodness to His people, David exclaimed, “There is none like it, give it me” (~~<192109>~~ 1 Samuel 21:9). Alas, “how had the fine gold become dim”! He who when walking in the fear of the Lord had not hesitated to advance against Goliath with nothing in his hand save a sling, now that the fear of man possessed him, placed his confidence in a giant’s sword. Perhaps both writer and reader are inclined to marvel at this, but have we not more reason to *mourn* as we see in this incident an accurate portrayal of many of our past failures?

“And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath” (~~<192110>~~ 1 Samuel 21:10).

Fearing that Saul would pursue him were he to make for any other part of the land of Israel, and not being disposed to organize a company against him, David took refuge in Gath of the Philistines. But what business had he in the territory of God’s enemies? None whatever, for he had not gone there in *His* interests. Verily, “oppression maketh a wise man mad” (~~<210707>~~ Ecclesiastes 7:7). Few indeed conduct themselves in extreme

difficulties without taking some manifestly false step: we should therefore “watch and pray that we enter not into temptation” (<sup>4064</sup>Matthew 26:41), earnestly seeking from God the strength which will alone enable us to successfully resist the Devil.

“And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath.” It is evident from what follows that David hoped he would not be recognized. Thus it is with the backslidden Christian as he fraternizes with the world: he attempts to conceal his colors, hoping that he will not be recognized as a follower of the Lord Jesus. Yet behold the consummate folly of David: he journeyed to Gath with “the sword of Goliath” in his hands! Wisdom had indeed deserted him. As another has said, “Common prudence might have taught him, that, if he sought the friendship of the Philistines, the sword of Goliath was not the most likely instrument to conciliate their favor.” But where a saint has grieved the Holy Spirit, even common sense no longer regulates him.

“And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying Saul hath slain his thousands and David his ten thousands?” (v. 11).

God will not allow His people to remain incognito in this world. He has appointed that they should “be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without blame in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation among whom” they are to “shine as lights in the world” (<sup>5045</sup>Philippians 2:15), and any efforts of theirs to annul this, He will thwart. Abraham’s deception was discovered. Peter’s attempt to conceal his discipleship failed—his very speech betrayed him. So here: David was quickly recognized. And thus it will be with us. And mercifully is this the case, for God will not have His own to settle down among and enjoy the friendship of His enemies.

“And David laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath” (v. 12).

What right had David to be at Gath? None whatever, and God soon caused circumstances to arise which showed him that he was out of his place, though in wondrous mercy He withheld any chastisement. How sad to hear of him who had so courageously advanced against Goliath now being “sore afraid”! “The righteous are bold as a lion” (<sup>1801</sup>Proverbs 28:1); yes, the “righteous,” that is, they who are right with God, walking with Him, and

so sustained by His grace. Sadder still is it to see how David now acted: instead of casting himself on God's mercy, confessing his sin, and seeking His intervention, he had recourse to deceit and played the fool.

“And he changed his behavior before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard” (v. 13).

Afraid to rely upon the man whose protection he had sought, the anointed of God now feigned himself to be crazy. It was then that he learned experimentally,

“It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes”  
(~~1980~~ Psalm 118:9).

The king elect “feigned himself mad”: “such was the condition into which David had sunk. Saul himself could scarcely have wished for a deeper degradation” (B. W. Newton). Learn from this, dear reader, what still indwells the true saint, and which is capable of any and every wickedness but for the restraining hand of God. Surely we have need to pray daily “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe” (~~1991~~ Psalm 119:117).

“Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore then have ye brought him to me? Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?” (vv. 14, 15).

How evident is it to the anointed eye, from the whole of this incident, that the Holy Spirit's object here was not to glorify David, but to magnify the longsuffering grace of God, and to furnish salutary instruction and solemn warning for us! Throughout the Scriptures the character of man is accurately painted in the colors of reality and truth.

Many are the lessons to be learned from this sad incident. Though ingenious falsehoods may seem to promote present security, yet they insure future disgrace. They did for Abraham, for Isaac, for Jacob, for Peter, for Ananias. Leaning unto his own understanding conducted David to Gath, but he soon learned from the shame of his folly that he had not walked in wisdom. Not only was David deeply humiliated by this pitiful episode, but Jehovah was grievously dishonored thereby. Marvelous indeed was it that he escaped with his life: this can only be attributed to the secret but invincible workings of His power, moving upon the king of the Philistines,

for as the title of Psalm 34 informs us, “Achish drove him away, and he departed.” Such was the means which an infinitely merciful God used to screen His child from imminent danger.

From Gath David fled to the cave of Adullam. Blessed is it to learn of the repentant and chastened spirit in which the servant of God entered it. The thirty-fourth Psalm was written by him then (as its superscription informs us), and in it the Holy Spirit has given us to see the exercises of David’s heart at that time. There we find him blessing the Lord, his soul making his boast in Him (vv. 1-3). There we hear him saying, “I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears” (v. 4). There he declares,

“This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them” (vv. 6, 7).

But it was more than praise and gratitude which filled the restored backslider. David had learned some valuable lessons experimentally. Therefore we hear him saying,

“Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace and pursue it” (vv. 11-14).

“He had proved the evil of lying lips and a deceitful tongue, and now was able to warn others of the pitfall into which he had fallen” (B. W. Newton).

But it is blessed to mark that the warned, not as one who was left to reap the harvest of his doings, but as one who could say,

“The Lord redeemeth the soul of His servants, and none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate” (v. 22).

# CHAPTER 10

## IN THE CAVE OF ADULLAM

### ~~<1021>~~ 1 SAMUEL 22

At the close of the preceding chapter, we saw the backslider restored to communion with God. As David then wrote, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous”—most of them brought upon themselves through sinful folly—“but the Lord delivereth him out of them all” (~~<193419>~~ Psalm 34:19). Yet, in His own good time. The hour had not yet arrived for our patriarch to ascend the throne. It would have been a simple matter for God to have put forth His power, destroyed Saul, and given His servant rest from all his foes. And this, no doubt, is what the energetic nature of David had much preferred. But there were other counsels of God to be unfolded before He was ready for the son of Jesse to wield the scepter. Though *we* are impulsive and impetuous, God is never in a hurry; the sooner we learn this lesson, the better for our own peace of mind, and the sooner shall we “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him” (~~<193707>~~ Psalm 37:7).

“God had designs other than the mere exaltation of David. He intended to allow the evil of Saul and of Israel to exhibit itself. He intended to give to David some apprehension of the character of his own heart, and to cause him to learn subjection to a greater wisdom than his own. He intended also to prove the hearts of His own people Israel; and to try how many among them would discern that the Cave of Adullam was the only true place of excellency and honor in Israel” (B. W. Newton).

Further discipline was needed by David, if he was to learn deeper lessons of dependency upon God. Learn from this, dear reader, that though God’s *delays* are trying to flesh and blood, nevertheless they are ordered by perfect wisdom and infinite love.

“For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come” (~~<3113>~~ Habakkuk 2:3).



“David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam” (<sup><0220></sup>1 Samuel 22:1).

Still a fugitive, David left the land of the Philistines, and now took refuge in a large underground cavern, situated, most probably, not far from Bethlehem. To conceal himself from Saul and his blood-thirsty underlings, our hero betook himself to a cave—it is probable that the Holy Spirit made reference to this in <sup><81138></sup>Hebrews 11:38. The high favorites of Heaven are sometimes to be located in queer and unexpected places. Joseph in prison, the descendants of Abraham laboring in the brick-kilns of Egypt, Daniel in the lions’ den, Jonah in the great fish’s belly, Paul clinging to a spar in the sea, forcibly illustrate this principle. Then let us not murmur because we do not now live in as fine a house as do some of the ungodly; *our* “mansions” are in Heaven!

“David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam.” It is blessed to learn how David employed himself at this time; yet close searching has to be done before this can be ascertained. The Bible is no lazy man’s book: much of its treasure, like the valuable minerals stored in the bowels of the earth, only yield up themselves to the diligent seeker. Compare <sup><1000></sup>Proverbs 2:1-5. By noting the superscriptions to the Psalms (which, with many others, we are satisfied are Divinely inspired), we discover that two of them were composed by “the sweet singer of Israel” at this time. Just as the 34<sup>th</sup> casts its welcome light upon the close of <sup><0210></sup>1 Samuel 21, so <sup><0570></sup>Psalms 57 and 142 illuminate the opening verses of <sup><0220></sup>1 Samuel 22.

The underground asylum of David made an admirable closet for prayer, its very solitude being helpful for the exercise of devotion. Well did C. H. Spurgeon say, “Had David prayed as much in his palace as he did in his cave, he might never have fallen into the act which brought such misery upon his latter days.” We trust the spiritual reader will, at this point, turn to and ponder Psalms 57 and 142. In them he will perceive something of the exercises of David’s heart. From them he may derive valuable instruction as to how to pray acceptably unto God in seasons of peculiar trial. A careful reading of the fifty-seventh Psalm will enable us to follow one who began it amid the gloomy shadows of the cavern, but from which he gradually emerged into the open daylight. So it often is in the experiences of the believer’s soul.

Perhaps the Psalm 142 was composed by David before the Psalm 57: certainly it brings before us one who was in deeper anguish of soul. Blessed indeed is it to mark the striking contrast from what is here presented to us and what was before us as we passed through ~~(1920)~~ 1 Samuel 20 and 21. There we saw the worried fugitive turning to Jonathan, lying to Ahimelech, playing the madman at Gath. But vain was the hope of man. Yet how often we have to pass through these painful experiences and bitter disappointments before we thoroughly learn this lesson! Here we behold the son of Jesse turning to the only One who could do him any real good.

“I cried unto the Lord with my voice I poured out my complaint before Him. I showed before Him my trouble” (vv. 1, 2).

This is what *we* should do: thoroughly unburden our hearts unto Him with whom we have to do. Note how, at the close of this Psalm, *after* he had so freely poured out his woes, David exclaimed, “Thou *shalt* deal bountifully with me”!

“And Jonathan loved him as his own soul... all Israel and Judah loved David” (~~(1918)~~ 1 Samuel 18:1, 16).

Now their love was tested, now an opportunity was furnished them to manifest their affections for him. This was the hour of David’s unpopularity: he was outlawed from the court; a fugitive from Saul, he was dwelling in a cave. Now was the time for devotion to David to be clearly exhibited. But only those who truly loved him could be expected to throw in their lot with an hated outcast. Strikingly is this illustrated in the very next words.

“And when his brethren and all his father’s house heard it, they went down thither to him” (~~(1920)~~ 1 Samuel 22:1).

Ah, true love is unaffected by the outward circumstances of its object. Where the heart is genuinely knit to another, a change in his fortunes will not produce a change in its affections. David might be, in the eyes of the world, in disgrace; but that made no difference to those who *loved* him. He might be languishing in a cavern, but that was all the more reason why they should show their kindness and demonstrate their unswerving loyalty. Among other things, this painful trial enabled David to discover who were, and who were not, his real friends.

If we look beneath the surface here, the anointed eye should have no difficulty in discerning another striking and blessed type of David's Son and Lord. First, a type of him when He tabernacled among men, in "the days of his flesh." How fared it then with the Anointed of God? By title the throne of Israel was His, for He was born "the King of the Jews" (~~4102~~ Matthew 2:2). That God was with him was unmistakably evident. He too "behaved Himself wisely in all His ways." He too performed exploits: healing the sick, freeing the demon possessed, feeding the hungry multitude, raising the dead. But just as Saul hated and persecuted David, so the heads of the Jews—the chief priests and Pharisees—were envious of and hounded Christ. Just as Saul thirsted for the blood of Jesse's son, the leaders of Israel (at a later date) thirsted for the blood of God's Son.

The analogy mentioned above might be drawn out at considerable length, but at only one other point will we here glance, namely, the fact of the solemn foreshadowment furnished by David as first the friend and benefactor of his nation, now the poor outcast. Accurately did he prefigure that blessed One, who when here was "the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Trace His path as the Holy Spirit has described it in the New Testament. Behold Him as the unwanted One in this world of wickedness. Hear His plaintive declaration, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head" (~~4103~~ Matthew 8:20). Read too,

"And every man went unto his own house; Jesus went unto the mount of Olives" (~~4105~~ John 7:53; 8:1);

and it is evident that David's Lord was the Homeless Outcast in this scene.

But were there none who appreciated Him, none who loved Him, none who were willing to be identified with and cast in their lot with Him who was "despised and rejected of men"? Yes, there were some, and these, we believe, are typically brought before us in the next verse of the scripture we are now pondering:

"And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him" (~~1921~~ 1 Samuel 22:2).

What a strange company to seek unto God's anointed! No mention is made of the captains of the army, the men of state, the princes of the realm,

coming unto David. No, they, with all like them, preferred the court and the palace to the cave of Adullam.

Is not the picture an accurate one, dear reader? Is it not plain again that these Old Testament records furnished something more than historical accounts, that there is a typical and spiritual significance to them as well? If David be a type of Christ, then those who sought him out during the season of his humiliation, must represent those who sought unto David's Son when He sojourned on this earth. And clearly they did so. Read the four Gospels, and it will be found that, for the most part, those who sought unto the Lord Jesus, were the poor and needy; it was the lepers, the blind, the maimed and the halt, who came unto Him for help and healing. The rich and influential, the learned and the mighty, the leaders of the Nation, had no heart for Him.

But what is before us in the opening of ~~<19231>~~ 1 Samuel 22 not only typed out that which occurred during the earthly ministry of Christ, but it also shadowed forth that which has come to pass all through this Christian era, and that which is taking place today. As the Holy Spirit declared through Paul,

“For ye see your calling brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things which are: That no flesh should glory in his presence” (~~<40126>~~ 1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

The second verse of ~~<19231>~~ 1 Samuel 22 sets before us a striking gospel picture. Note,

**First**, that those who came to David were *few in number*: “about four hundred.” What a paltry retinue! What a handful compared with the hosts of Israel! But did Christ fare any better in the days of His flesh? How many friends stood around the Cross, wept at His sepulcher, or greeted Him as He burst the bars of death? How many followed Him to Bethany, gazed at His ascending form, or gathered in the upper room to await the promised Spirit? And how is it today? Of the countless millions of earth's inhabitants what percentage of them have even heard the gospel? Out of those who

bear His name, how many evidence that they are denying self, taking up their cross daily, and following the example which He has left, and thus proving themselves by the only badge of discipleship which He will recognize? A discouraging situation, you say. Not at all, rather is it just what faith expects. The Lord Jesus declared that His flock is a “little one” (~~<123>~~ Luke 12:32), that only “few” tread that narrow way which leadeth unto life (~~<1074>~~ Matthew 7:14).

**Second**, observe again the particular *type of people* who sought out David: they were “in distress, in debt, and discontented.” What terms could more suitably describe the condition they are in when the redeemed first seek help from Christ! “In debt”: in all things we had come short of the glory of God. In thought, word, and deed, we had failed to please Him, and there was marked up against us a multitude of transgressions. “In distress”; who can tell out that anguish of soul which is experienced by the truly convicted of the Holy Spirit? Only the one who has actually experienced the same, knows of that unspeakable horror and sorrow when the heart first perceives the frightful enormity of having defied the infinite Majesty of heaven, trifled with His longsuffering, slighted His mercy again and again.

“Discontented.” Yes, this line in the picture is just as accurate as the others. The one who has been brought to realize he is a spiritual pauper, and who is now full of grief for his sins, is discontented with the very things which till recently pleased him. Those pleasures which fascinated, now pall. That gay society which once attracted, now repels. O the emptiness of the world to a soul which God hath smitten with a sense of sin! The stricken one turns away with disgust from that which he had formerly sought after so eagerly. There is now an aching void within, which nothing without can fill. So wretched is the convicted sinner, he wishes he were dead, yet he is terrified at the very thought of death. Reader, do you know anything of such an experience, or is all this the language of an unknown tongue to you?

**Third**, these people who were in debt, in distress, and discontented, *sought out* David. They were the only ones who did so; it was a *deep sense of need* which drove them to him, and a hope that he could relieve them. So it is spiritually. None but those who truly feel that they are paupers before God, with no good thing to their credit, absolutely destitute of any merits of their own, will appreciate the glad tidings that Christ Jesus came into this world to pay the debt of such. Only those who are smitten in their

conscience, broken in heart, and sick of sin, will really respond to that blessed word of His, “Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Only those who have lost all heart for this poor world, will truly turn unto the Lord of glory.

**Fourth**, the spiritual picture we are now contemplating is not only a type of the first coming to Christ of His people, but also of their subsequent *going forth* “unto Him without the camp” (<sup><581313></sup>Hebrews 13:13). Those who sought David in the Cave of Adullam turned their backs upon both the court of Saul and the religion of Judaism. There was none to pity them there. Who cared for penniless paupers? Who had a heart for those in distress? So it is in many churches today. Those who are “poor in spirit” have nothing in common with the self-satisfied Laodiceans. And how “distressed” in soul are they over the worldliness that has come in like a flood, over the crowds of unregenerate members, over the utter absence of any scriptural discipline? And what is to be the attitude and actions of God’s grieved children toward those having nothing more than a form of godliness? This “from such turn away” (<sup><5815></sup>2 Timothy 3:5). Identify yourself with Christ on the outside; walk alone with Him.

**Fifth**, “And he became a *captain over them*” (<sup><0212></sup>1 Samuel 22:2). Important and striking line in the picture is this. Christ is to be received as “Lord” (<sup><51016></sup>Colossians 2:6) if He is to be known as Savior. Love to Christ is to be evidenced by “keeping His commandments” (<sup><43145></sup>John 14:15). It mattered not what that strange company had been who sought unto David, they were now his servants and soldiers. They had turned away from the evil influence of Saul, to be subject unto the authority of David. This is what Christ requires from all who identify themselves with Him. “Take My yoke upon you” is His demand (<sup><40112></sup>Matthew 11:29). Nor need we shrink from it, for He declares “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

# CHAPTER 11

## HIS RETURN TO JUDEA

### ~~1023~~ 1 SAMUEL 22 AND 23

In our last chapter we left David in the Cave of Adullam. An incident is recorded in ~~1023~~ 2 Samuel 23 which throws an interesting light on the spiritual life of our hero at this time.

“And three of the thirty chief went down and came to David in the harvest-time unto the cave of Adullam: and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim. And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. And David longed, and said, Oh, that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate! And the three mighty men brake through the hosts of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord. And he said, Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink of it” (vv. 13-17).

No doubt the trials of his present lot had called to David’s mind his happy life at home. The weather being hot, he expressed a longing for a drink from the family well of Bethlehem, though with no thought that any of his men would risk their lives to procure it for him. Yet this is precisely what happened: out of deep devotion to their outlawed captain, three of them fought their way through a company of the Philistines who were encamped there, and returned to David with the desired draught. Touched by their loyalty, stirred by their self-sacrifice, David felt that water obtained at such risk was too valuable for him to drink, and was fit only to be “poured out unto the Lord” as a “drink-offering.” Beautifully has Matthew Henry made application of this, thus: “Did David look upon that water as very precious, which was got but with the hazard of these men’s blood, and shall not we

much more value those benefits for the purchasing of which our blessed Savior shed His blood”?

We quote from another who has commented upon this incident.

“There is something peculiarly touching and beautiful in the above scene, whether we contemplate the act of the three mighty men in procuring the water for David, or David’s act in pouring it out to the Lord. It is evident that David discerned, in an act of such uncommon devotedness, a sacrifice which none but the Lord Himself could duly appreciate. The odor of such a sacrifice was far too fragrant for him to interrupt it in its ascent to the throne of the God of Israel. Wherefore he, very properly and very graciously, allows it to pass him by, in order that it might go up to the One who alone was worthy to receive it, or able to appreciate it. All this reminds us, forcibly, of that beautiful compendium of Christian devotedness set forth in ~~<3807>~~Philippians 2:17, 18: ‘Yea, and if I be poured out upon the sacrifice, and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all; for this cause ye also joy and rejoice with me.’ In this passage, the apostle represents the Philippian saints in their character as priests, presenting a sacrifice and performing a priestly ministration to God; and such was the intensity of his self-forgetting devotedness, that he could rejoice in his being poured out as a drink-offering upon their sacrifice, so that all might ascend, in fragrant odor to God” (C. H. M.).

Some commentators have denied that the above touching episode occurred during that section of David’s history which we are now considering, placing it at a much later date. These men failed to see that ~~<3115>~~1 Chronicles 11:15 and ~~<10230>~~2 Samuel 23 recount things out of their chronological order. If the reader turn back to ~~<1970>~~1 Samuel 17:1, 19:8, etc., he will see that the Philistines were quite active in making raids upon Israel at this time, and that David, not Saul, was the principal one to withstand them. But now he was no longer in the position to engage them. Saul, as we shall see in a moment, had dropped all other concerns and was confining his whole attention to the capture of David: thus the door was then wide open for the Philistines to continue their depredations. Finally, be it said, all that is recorded after David came to the throne, makes it altogether unlikely that the Philistines were then encamped around



Bethlehem, still less that the king should seek refuge in the cave of Adullam.

“And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, and be with you, till I know what God will do for me. And he brought them before the king of Moab: and they dwelt with him all the while that David was in the hold” (~~19218~~ 1 Samuel 22:3, 4).

We are convinced that what has been before us in the above paragraphs supplies the key to that which is here recorded. In ~~19220~~ 1 Samuel 22:1 we learn that “all his family” had come to David in the Cave. From ~~09160~~ 1 Samuel 16:1 we learn that their home was in Bethlehem: but the Philistines were now encamped there (~~102314~~ 2 Samuel 23:14), so they could not return thither. David did not wish his parents to share the hardships involved by his wanderings, and so now he thoughtfully seeks an asylum for them. Blessed is it to see him, in the midst of his sore trials, “honoring his father and his mother.” Beautifully did this foreshadow what is recorded in ~~431926~~ John 19:26, 27.

While Saul was so bitterly opposed to David, there was no safety for his parents anywhere in the land of Israel. The deep exercises and anguish of David’s heart at this time are vividly expressed in Psalm 142, the Title of which reads, “A Prayer when he was in the Cave.” “I cried unto the Lord with my voice, with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication. I poured out my complaint before Him: I showed before Him my trouble. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then Thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. I cried unto Thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living. Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low; deliver me from my persecutors, for they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for Thou shalt deal bountifully with me.” Blessed is it to mark the note of confidence in God in the closing verse.

“And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, and be with you.” What was it induced David to trust his parents unto the protection of the Moabites? We quote, in part, from the answer given by J. J. Blunt in his

very striking book, *Undesigned Coincidences in the Old and New Testament*, “Saul, it is true, had been at war with them, whatever he might then be—but so had he been with every people round about; with the Ammonites, with the Edomites, with the kings of Zobah. Neither did it follow that the enemies of Saul, as a matter of course, would be the friends of David. On the contrary, he was only regarded by the ancient inhabitants of the land, to which ever of the local nations they belonged, as the champion of Israel; and with such suspicion was he received amongst them, notwithstanding Saul’s known enmity towards him, that before Achish king of Gath, he was constrained to feign himself mad, and so effect his escape...

“Now what principle of preference may be imagined to have governed David when he committed his family to the dangerous keeping of the Moabites? Was it a mere matter of chance? It might seem so, as far as appears to the contrary in David’s history, given in the books of Samuel; and if the book of Ruth had never come down to us, to accident it probably would have been ascribed. But this short and beautiful historical document shows us a *propriety* in the selection of Moab above any other for a place of refuge to the father and mother of David; since it is there seen that the grandmother of Jesse, David’s father, was actually a *Moabitess*; Ruth being the mother of Obed, and Obed the father of Jesse. And, moreover, that Orpah, the other Moabitess, who married Mahlon at the time when Ruth married Chilion his brother, remained behind in Moab after the departure of Naomi and Ruth, and remained behind with a strong feeling of affection, nevertheless, for the family and kindred of her deceased husband, taking leave of them with tears (<sup>(80114)</sup>Ruth 1:14). She herself then, or at all events, her descendants and friends might still be alive. Some regard for the posterity of Ruth, David would persuade himself, might still survive amongst them...

“Thus do we detect, not without some pains, a certain fitness, in the conduct of David in this transaction which makes it to be a real one. A forger of a story could not have fallen upon the happy device of sheltering Jesse in Moab simply on the recollecting of his Moabitish extraction two generations earlier; or, having fallen upon it, it is probable he would have taken care to draw the attention of his readers towards his device by some means or other, lest the evidence it was intended to afford of the truth of the history might be thrown away upon them. As it is, the circumstance itself is asserted without the smallest attempt to explain or account for it.

Nay, recourse must be had to another book of Scripture, in order that the coincidence may be seen.”

Unto the king of Moab David said, “Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth and be with you, till I know what God will do for me.” Slowly but surely our patriarch was learning to acquiesce in the appointments of God. Practical subjection unto the Lord is only learned in the school of experience: the theory of it may be gathered from books, but the actuality has to be hammered out on the anvil of our hearts. Of our glorious Head it is declared,

“Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered” (~~3018~~ Hebrews 5:8).

This word of David’s also indicates that he was beginning to feel the need of waiting upon God for directions: how much sorrow and suffering would be avoided did *we* always do so. His “what God will do *for* me,” rather than “with me,” indicated a hope in the Lord.

“And the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold; depart, and get thee into the land of Judea. Then David departed, and came into the forest of Hareth” (v. 5).

In the light of this verse, and together with ~~19223~~ 1 Samuel 22:23, we may see that “the excellent” of the earth (~~191613~~ Psalm 16:3) were more and more gathering to him who was a type of Christ in His rejection. Here we see the prophet of God with him, and shortly afterwards he was joined by the high priest—solemn it is to contrast the apostate Saul, who was now deserted by both. David had been humbled before God, and He now speaks again to him, not directly, but mediately. Two reasons may be suggested for this: David was not yet fully restored to Divine communion, and God was honoring His own institutions—the prophetic office: cf. ~~192319~~ 1 Samuel 23:9-11.

“And the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold; depart, and get thee into the land of Judah.” It is quite clear from the language of this verse that at the time God now spoke to His servant through the prophet, he had not returned to the Cave of Adullam, but had sought temporary refuge in some stronghold of Moab. Now he received a call which presented a real test to his faith. To appear more openly in his own country would evidence the innocency of his cause, as well as display his confidence in the Lord. “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord”

(<sup>198723</sup>Psalm 37:23), yet the path He appoints is not the one which is smoothest to the flesh. But when God calls, we must respond, and leave the issue entirely in His hands.

“When Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men that were with him, (now Saul abode in Gibeah under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants standing about him); then Saul said unto his servants...” Here the Spirit takes up again another leading thread around which the history of 1 Samuel is woven. Having traced the movements of David since the leaving of his home (<sup>191911</sup>1 Samuel 19:11, 12) up to the Cave of Adullam and his now receiving orders to return to the land of Judea, He follows again the evil history of Saul. The king had apparently set aside everything else, and was devoting himself entirely to the capture of David. He had taken up his headquarters at Gibeah: the “spear in his hand” showed plainly his blood-thirsty intentions.

The news of David’s return to Judea, soon reached the ears of Saul, and the fact that he was accompanied by a considerable number of men, probably alarmed him not a little, fearful that the people would turn to his rival and that he would lose his throne. His character was revealed again by the words which he now addressed to his servants (v. 7), who were, for the most part, selected from his own tribe. He appealed not to the honor and glory of Jehovah, but to their cupidity. David belonged to Judah, and if he became king then those who belonged to the tribe of Benjamin must not expect to receive favors at his hands—neither rewards of land, nor positions of prominence in the army.

“All of you have conspired against me, and there is none that showeth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you that is sorry for me, or showeth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day” (v. 8).

Here Saul charges his followers with having failed to reveal to him that which he supposed they knew, and of showing no concern for the circumstance in which he was then placed; this he construed as a conspiracy against him. His was the language of ungovernable rage and jealousy. His son is charged as being ringleader of the conspirators, merely because he would not assist in the murder of an excellent man whom he loved! True, there was a covenant of friendship between Jonathan and David, but no plot to destroy Saul, as he wildly imagined. But it is the

nature of an evil person to regard as enemies those who are not prepared to toady to him or her in everything.

It was in response to Saul's bitter words to his men, that Doeg the Edomite made known David's secret visit to Ahimelech, and his obtaining victuals and the sword of Goliath (vv. 9, 10). Nothing was mentioned of the high priest being imposed upon, but the impression was left that he joined with David in a conspiracy against Saul. Let us learn from this that we may "bear false witness against our neighbor" as really and disastrously by maliciously *withholding* part of the truth, as by deliberately inventing a lie. When called upon to express our opinion of another (which should, generally, be declined, unless some good purpose is to be served thereby), honesty requires that we impartially recount what is in his favor, as well as what makes against him. Note how in His addresses to the seven churches in Asia, the Lord commended the good, as well as rebuked that which was evil.

The terrible sequel is recorded in verses 11-19. Ahimelech and all his subordinate priests were promptly summoned into the king's presence. Though he was by rank the second person in Israel, Saul contemptuously called the high priest "the son of Ahitub" (v. 12). Quietly ignoring the insult, Ahimelech addressed the king as "my lord," thus giving honor to whom honor was due—the occupant of any office which God has appointed is to be honored, no matter how unworthy of respect the man may be personally. Next, the king charged the high priest with rebellion and treason (v. 13). Ahimelech gave a faithful and ungarnished account of his transaction with David (vv. 14, 15). But nothing could satisfy the incensed king but death, and orders were given for the whole priestly family to be butchered.

One of the sons of Ahimelech, named Abithai, escaped. Probably he had been left by his father to take care of the tabernacle and its holy things, while he and the rest of the priests went to appear before Saul. Having heard of their bloody execution, and before the murderers arrived at Nob to complete their vile work of destroying the wives, children and flocks of the priests, he fled, taking with him the ephod and the urim and thummim, and joined David (v. 21). It was then that David wrote the <sup><1521></sup>fifty-second Psalm. Three things may be observed in connection with the above tragedy. First, the solemn sentence which God had pronounced against the house of Eli was now executed (<sup><1823></sup>1 Samuel 2:31-36; 3:12-14)—thus the iniquities

of the fathers were visited upon the children. Second, Saul was manifestly forsaken of God, given up to Satan and his own malignant passions, and was fast ripening for judgment. Third, by this cruel carnage David obtained the presence of the high priest, who afterwards proved a great comfort and blessing to him (~~192306~~ 1 Samuel 23:6, 9-13; 30:7-10)—thus did God make the wrath of man to praise Him and work together for good unto His own.

# CHAPTER 12

## DELIVERING KEILAH

### 1 SAMUEL 23

The first section of <sup><0230></sup>1 Samuel 23 (which we are now to look at) presents some striking contrasts. In it are recorded incidents exceedingly blessed, others fearfully sad. David is seen at his best, Saul at his worst. David humbly waits on the Lord, Saul presumes upon and seeks to pervert His providences. Saul is indifferent to the wellbeing of his own subjects, David delivers them from their enemies. David at imminent risk rescues the town of Keilah from the marauding Philistines; yet so lacking are they in gratitude, that they were ready to hand him over unto the man who sought his life. Though the priests of the Lord, with their entire families, had been brutally slain by Saul's orders, yet the awful malice of the king was not thereby appeased: he is now seen again seeking the life of David, and that at the very time when he had so unselfishly wrought good for the nation.

It is instructive and helpful to keep in mind the *order* of what has been before us in previous chapters, so that we may perceive one of the important spiritual lessons in what is now to be before us. David had failed, jailed sadly. We all do; but David had done what many are painfully slow in doing: he had humbled himself before the Lord, he had repented of and confessed his sins, in our last chapter, we saw how that David had been restored, in considerable measure at least, to communion with the Lord. God had spoken to him through His prophet. Light was now granted again on his path. The word was given him to return to the land of Judah (<sup><0218></sup>1 Samuel 22:5). That word he had heeded, and now we are to see how the Lord *used* him again. Strikingly does this illustrate <sup><0186></sup>1 Peter 5:6: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."

"Then they told David, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshingfloors" (<sup><0230></sup>1 Samuel 23:1).

Here we may see another reason (more than those suggested at the close of our last chapter) why God had called David to return to the land of Judah: He had further work for him to do there. Keilah was within the borders of that tribe (<sup><0652></sup>Joshua 15:21, 44). It was a fortified town (v. 7), and the Philistines had laid siege to it. The “threshingfloors” (which were usually situated outside the cities: <sup><0761></sup>Judges 6:11, <sup><0882></sup>Ruth 3:2, 15) were already being pilfered by them. Who it was that acquainted David with these tidings we know not.

“Therefore David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines?” (v. 2).

Very blessed is this, and further evidence does it supply of David’s spiritual recovery. Saul was neglecting the public safety, but the one whom he was hounding was concerned for it. Though he had been ill treated, David was not sulking over his wrongs, but instead was ready to return good for evil, by coming to the assistance of one of the king’s besieged towns. What a noble spirit did he here manifest! Though his hands were full in seeking to hide from Saul, and provide for the needs of his six hundred men (no small task!), yet David unselfishly thought of the welfare of others.

“Therefore David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines?” This is very beautiful. Having been anointed unto the throne, David considered himself the protector of Israel, and was ready to employ his men for the public weal. He had an intense love for his country, and was desirous of freeing it from its enemies, yet he would not act without first seeking counsel of the Lord: he desired that *God* should appoint his service. The more particularly we seek direction from God in fervent prayer, and the more carefully we consult the sacred Scriptures for the knowledge of His will, the more He is honored, and the more we are benefited.

“And the Lord said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah” (v. 2).

Where God is truly sought—that is, sought sincerely, humbly, trustfully, with the desire to learn and do that which is pleasing to Him—the soul will not be left in ignorance. God does not mock His needy children. His Word declares,

“In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He *shall* direct thy paths” (<sup><0806></sup>Proverbs 3:6).



So it was here. The Lord responded to David's inquiry—possibly through the prophet Gad—and not only revealed His will, but gave promise that he should be successful.

“And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?” (v. 3).

This presented a real test to David's confidence in the Lord, for if his men were unwilling to accompany him, how could he expect to relieve the besieged town? His men were obviously “afraid” of being caught between two fires. Were they to advance upon the Philistines and Saul's army should follow them up in the rear, then where would they be? Ah, their eyes were not upon the living God, but upon their difficult “circumstances,” and to be occupied with these is always discouraging to the heart. But how often has a man of God, when facing a trying situation, found the unbelief of his professed friends and followers a real hindrance. Yet he should regard this as a test, and not as an obstacle. Instead of paralyzing action, it ought to drive him to seek succor from Him who never fails those who truly count upon His aid.

“Then David inquired of the Lord yet again” (v. 4). This is precious. David did not allow the unbelieving fears of his men to drive him to despair. He could hardly expect them to walk by *his* faith. But he knew that when God works, He works at both ends of the line. He who had given him orders to go to the relief of Keilah, could easily quiet the hearts of his followers, remove their fears, and make them willing to follow his lead. Yes, with God “all things are possible.” But He requires to be “inquired of” (<sup><3637></sup>Ezekiel 36:37). He delights to be “proved” (<sup><3010></sup>Malachi 3:10). Oft He permits just such a trial as now faced David in order to teach us more fully His sufficiency for every emergency.

“Then David inquired of the Lord yet again.” Yes, this is blessed indeed. David did not storm at his men, and denounce them as cowards. That would do no good. Nor did he argue and attempt to reason with them. Disdaining his own wisdom, feeling his utter dependency upon God, and more especially for their benefit—to set before them a godly example—he turned once more unto Jehovah. Let us learn from this incident that, the most effectual way of answering the unbelieving objections of faint-hearted followers and of securing their co-operation, is to refer them unto the

promises and precepts of God, and set before them an example of complete dependency upon Him and of implicit confidence in Him.

“And the Lord answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah: for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand” (v. 4).

How sure is the fulfillment of that promise, “Them that honor Me, I will honor” (~~(v. 4)~~ 1 Samuel 2:30)! We always lose by acting independently of God, but we never lose by seeking counsel, guidance and grace from Him. God did not ignore David’s inquiry. He was not displeased by his asking a second time. How gracious and patient He is! He not only responded to David’s petition, but He gave an answer more explicit than at the first, for He now assured His servant of entire victory. May this encourage many a reader to come unto God with every difficulty, cast every care upon Him, and count upon His succor every hour.

“So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah” (v. 5).

Animated by a commission and promise from God, David and his men moved forward and attacked the Philistines. Not only did they completely rout the enemy, but they captured their cattle, which supplied food for David’s men, food which the men greatly needed. How this furnishes an illustration of “Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly *above* all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (~~(v. 5)~~ Ephesians 3:20)! God not only overthrew the Philistines and delivered Keilah, but as well, bountifully provided David’s army with a supply of victuals.

“And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand” (v. 6).

This was a further reward from the Lord unto David for obeying His word. As we shall see later, the presence of the high priest and his ephod with him, stood David in good stead in the future. We may also see here a striking example of the absolute control of God over all His creatures; it was David’s visit to Ahimelech that had resulted in the slaying of all his family; well then might the only son left, feel that the son of Jesse was the last man whose fortunes he desired to share.

“And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars” (v. 7).

Surely David’s signal victory over the common enemy should have reconciled Saul to him. Was it not abundantly clear that God was with him, and if *He* were with him, who could be against him? But one who is abandoned by the Lord can neither discern spiritual things nor judge righteously, and therefore his conduct will be all wrong too. Accordingly we find that instead of thinking how he might most suitably reward David for his courageous and unselfish generosity, Saul desired only to do him mischief. Well might our patriarch write,

“They regarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul”  
(~~19512~~ Psalm 35:12).

“And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars.” How easy it is for a jaundiced mind to view things in a false light. When the heart is wrong, the providences of God are certain to be misinterpreted. Terrible is it to behold the apostate king here concluding that God Himself had now sold David into his hands! That man has sunk to a fearful depth who blatantly assumes that the Almighty is working to further his wicked plans. While David was at large, hiding in caves and sheltering in the woods, he was hard to find; but here in a walled town, Saul supposed he would be completely trapped when his army surrounded it.

“And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men” (v. 8).

if we omit the last clause and read on through the next verse, it will be seen that the unscrupulous Saul resorted to a dishonest ruse. To make war against the Philistines was the ostensible object which the king set before his men; to capture David was his real design. The last clause of verse 8 states Saul’s secret motive. While pretending to oppose the common enemy, he was intending to destroy his best friend. Verily, the devil was his father, and the lusts of his father he would do.

“And David knew that Saul secretly practiced mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar, the priest, Bring hither the ephod” (v. 9).

Yes, “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him” (~~192514~~ Psalm 25:14). Ah, but *only* with them that truly “fear” Him. “If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not” (~~61109~~ John 11:9). “He that followeth Me,” said Christ, “shall not walk in darkness” (~~43812~~ John 8:12). O what a blessed thing it is, dear reader, to have light upon our path, to *see* the enemy’s snares and pitfalls. But in order to this, there must be a walking with Him who is “the Light.” If we are out of communion with the Lord, if we have for the moment turned aside from the path of His commandments, then we can no longer perceive the dangers which menace us.

“And David knew that Saul secretly practiced mischief against him.” This is very blessed, and recorded for our instruction. We ought not to be ignorant of Satan’s devices (~~470211~~ 2 Corinthians 2:11), nor shall we be if our hearts are right with God. Observe carefully that this 9th verse opens with the word “And,” which announces the fact that it is connected with and gives the sequel to what has gone before. And what *had* preceded in this case? First, David had sought counsel of the Lord (v. 2). Second, he had refused to be turned aside from the path of duty by the unbelieving fears of his followers (v. 3). Third, he had maintained an attitude of complete dependency upon the Lord (v. 4). Fourth, he had definitely obeyed the Lord (v. 5). And now God rewarded him by acquainting him with the enemy’s designs upon him. Meet the conditions, my brother or sister, and you too shall know when the devil is about to attack you.

David was not deceived by Saul’s guile. He knew that though he had given out to his men one thing, yet in his heart he purposed quite another.

“Then said David, O Lord God of Israel, Thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake” (v. 10).

This too is very blessed; once more David thus turns to the living God, and casts all his care upon Him (~~47021~~ 1 Peter 5:7). Observe well his words: he does not say “Saul purposeth to slay *me*, but he seeketh to destroy *the city* for my sake,” on my account. Is it not lovely to see him more solicitous about the welfare of others, than the preserving of his own life!

“Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hands? will Saul come down, as Thy servant hath heard? O Lord God of Israel, I beseech Thee, tell Thy servant. And the Lord said, He will come down” (v. 11).

It is to be noted that the two questions here asked by David were not orderly put, showing the perturbed state of mind he was then in. We should also observe the manner in which David addressed God, as “Lord God of Israel” (so too in ver. 10), which was His *covenant* title. It is blessed when we are able to realize the covenant-relationship of God to us (~~8133~~ Hebrews 13:20, 21), for it is ever an effectual plea to present before the Throne of Grace. The Lord graciously responded to David’s supplication and granted the desired information, reversing the order of his questions. God’s saying “he (Saul) will come down” (that is his purpose), here manifested His omniscience, for He knows all contingencies (possibilities and likelihoods), as well as actualities.

“Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?” (v.12).

Wise David, He had good cause to conclude that after so nobly befriending Keilah and delivering it from the Philistines, that its citizens would now further his interests, and in such case, he and his own men could defend the town against Saul’s attack. But he prudently refrained from placing any confidence in their loyalty. He probably reasoned that the recent cruel massacre of Nob would fill them with dread of Saul, so that he must not count upon their assistance. Thus did he seek counsel from the Lord. And so ought we: we should never confide in help from others, no, not even from those we have befriended, and from whom we might reasonably expect a return of kindness. No ties of honor, gratitude, or affection, can secure the heart under powerful temptation. Nay, we know not how *we* would act if assailed by the terrors of a cruel death, and left without the immediate support of divine grace. We are to depend *only* upon the Lord for guidance and protection.

“And the Lord said, They will deliver thee up” (v. 12). This must have been saddening to David’s heart, for base ingratitude wounds deeply. Yet let us not forget that the kindness of other friends whom the Lord often unexpectedly raises up, counterbalances the ingratitude and fickleness of those we have served. God answered David here according to His knowledge of the human heart. *Had* David remained in Keilah, its inhabitants would have delivered him up upon Saul’s demand. But he remained not, and escaped. Be it carefully noted that this incident furnishes a clear illustration of human responsibility, and is a strong case in point

against bald fatalism—taking the passive attitude that what is to be, must be.

“Then David and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah, and he forbore to go forth. And David abode in the wilderness in strongholds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand” (vv. 13, 14).

This too is blessed: David was willing to expose himself and his men to further hardships, rather than endanger the lives of Keilah! Having no particular place in view, they went forth wherever they thought best. The last half of verse 14 shows God’s protecting hand was still upon them, and is Jehovah’s reply to Saul’s vain and presumptuous confidence in verse 7.

# CHAPTER 13

## HIS SOJOURN AT ZIPH

### ~~1020~~ 1 SAMUEL 23

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous” (~~1934~~<sup>1934</sup> Psalm 34:19): some internal, others external; some from friends, others from foes; some more directly at the hand of God, others more remotely by the instrumentality of the devil. Nor should this be thought strange. Such has been the lot of all God’s children in greater or lesser degree. Nor ought we to expect much comfort in a world which so basely crucified the Lord of glory. The sooner the Christian makes it his daily study to pass through this world as a stranger and pilgrim, anxious to depart and be with Christ, the better for his peace of mind. But it is natural to cling tenaciously to this life and to love the things of time and sense, and therefore most of the Lord’s people have to encounter many buffetings and have many disappointments before they are brought to hold temporal things with a light hand and before their silly hearts are weaned from that which satisfies not.

There is scarcely any affliction which besets the suffering people of God that the subject of these chapters did not experience. David, in the different periods of his varied life, was placed in almost every situation in which a believer, be he rich or poor in this world’s goods, can be placed. This is one feature which makes the study of his life of such practical interest unto us today. And this also it was which experimentally fitted him to write so many Psalms, which the saints of all ages have found so perfectly suited to express unto God the varied feelings of their souls. No matter whether the heart be cast down by the bitterest grief, or whether it be exultant with overflowing joy, nowhere can we find language more appropriate to use in our approaches unto the Majesty on High, than in the recorded sobs and songs of him who tasted the bitters of cruel treatment and base betrayals, and the sweetness of human success and spiritual communion with the Lord, as few have done.

Oftentimes the providences of God seem profoundly mysterious to our dull perceptions, and strange unto us do appear the schoolings through which

He passes His servants; nevertheless Faith is assured that Omniscience makes no mistakes, and He who is Love causes none of His children a needless tear. Beautifully did C. H. Spurgeon introduce his exposition of Psalm 59 by saying, “Strange that the painful events in David’s life should end in enriching the repertoire of the national minstrelsy. Out of a sour, ungenerous soil spring up the honey-bearing flowers of psalmody. Had he never been cruelly hunted by Saul, Israel and the church of God in after ages would have missed this song. The music of the sanctuary is in no small degree indebted to the trials of the saints. Affliction is the tuner of the harps of sanctified songsters.” Let every troubled reader seek to lay this truth to heart and take courage.

“And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day but God delivered him not into his hand” (~~192314~~ 1 Samuel 23:14).

It is blessed to behold David’s self-restraint under sore provocation. Though perfectly innocent, so far as his conduct toward Saul was concerned, that wicked king continued to hound him without any rest. David had conducted himself honorably in every public station he filled, and now he has to suffer disgrace in the eyes of the people as a hunted outlaw. Great must have been the temptation to put an end to Saul’s persecution by the use of force. He was a skilled leader, had six hundred men under him (v. 13), and he might easily have employed strategy, lured his enemy into a trap, fallen upon and slain him. Instead, he possessed his soul in patience, walked in God’s ways, and waited God’s time. And the Lord honored this as the sequel shows.

Ah, dear reader, it is written,

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (~~20162~~ Proverbs 16:32).

O for more godly self-control; for this we should pray earnestly and oft. Are you, like David was, sorely oppressed? Are you receiving evil at the hands of those from whom you might well expect good? Is there some Saul mercilessly persecuting you? Then no doubt you too are tempted to take things into your own hands, perhaps have recourse to the law of the land. But O tried one, suffer us to gently remind you that it is written,

“Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath... vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine



enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink” (⌞51219⌟ Romans 12:19,20).

Remember too the example left us by the Lord Jesus,

“Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously” (⌞10223⌟ 1 Peter 2:23).

“And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood” (v. 15).

How this illustrates what we are told in ⌞40429⌟ Galatians 4:29, “But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now”! And let us not miss the deeper spiritual meaning of this: the opposition which Isaac encountered from Ishmael adumbrated the lustings of the “flesh” against “the spirit.” There is a continual warfare within every real Christian between the principle of sin and the principle of grace, commonly termed “the two natures.” There is a spiritual Saul who is constantly seeking the life of a spiritual David: it is the “old man” with his affections and appetites, seeking to slay the new man. Against his relentless attacks we need ever to be on our guard.

“And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood.” “Ziph” derived its name from a city in the tribe of Judah: ⌞61525⌟ Joshua 15:25.

It is surely significant that “Ziph” signifies “a refining-place”: possibly the “mountain” there (v. 14) was rich in minerals, and at Ziph there was a smelter and refinery. Be this as it may, the spiritual lesson is here written too plainly for us to miss. The hard knocks which the saint receives from a hostile world, the persecutions he endures at the hands of those who hate God, the trials through which he passes in this scene of sin, may, and should be, improved to the good of his soul. O may many of the Lord’s people prove that these “hard times” through which they are passing are a “refining place” for their faith and other spiritual graces.

“And Jonathan Saul’s son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth. And they two made a covenant before the Lord: and David abode in the wood, and

Jonathan went to his house” (vv. 16-18). These verses record the final meeting on earth between David and the weak, vacillating Jonathan. Attached to David as he was by a strong natural affection, yet he lacked grace to throw in his lot with the hunted fugitive. He refused to join with his father in persecuting David, yet the pull of the palace and the court was too strong to be resisted. He stands as a solemn example of the spiritual compromiser, of the man who is naturally attracted to Christ, but lacks a supernatural knowledge of Him which leads to full surrender to him. That he “strengthened David’s hand in God” no more evidenced him to be a regenerate man, than do the words of Saul in verse 21. Instead of his words in verse 17 coming true, he fell by the sword of the Philistines on Gilboa.

“Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? Now therefore, O King, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down; and our part shall be to deliver him into the king’s hand” (vv. 19, 20).

Alas, what is man, and how little to be depended upon! Here was David seeking shelter from his murderous foe, and that among the people of his own tribe, and there were they, in order to curry favor with Saul, anxious to betray him into the king’s hands. It was a gross breach of hospitality, and there was no excuse for it, for Saul had not sought unto nor threatened them. It mattered not to them though innocent blood were shed, so long as they procured the smile of the apostate monarch. That Day alone will show how many have fallen victims before those who cared for nothing better than the favor of those in authority.

“And Saul said, Blessed be ye of the Lord; for ye have compassion on me” (v. 21).

Thankfully did Saul receive the offer of these treacherous miscreants. Observe well how he used the language of piety while bent on committing the foulest crime! Oh my reader, for your own good we beg you to take heed unto this. Require something more than fair words, or even religious phrases, before you form a judgment of another, and still more so before you place yourself in his power. *Promises are easily made, and easily broken by most people.* The name of God is glibly taken upon the lips of multitudes who have no fear of God in their hearts. Note too how the

wretched Saul represented himself to be the aggrieved one, and construes the perfidy of the Ziphites as their loyalty to the king.

“Go, I pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his place where his haunt is, and who hath seen him there: for it is told me that he dealeth very subtly. See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hideth himself, and come ye again to me with the certainty and I will go with you: and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah” (vv. 22, 23).

Before he journeyed to Ziph, Saul desired more specific information as to exactly where David was now located. He knew that the man he was after had a much better acquaintance than his own of that section of the country. He knew that David was a clever strategist; perhaps he had fortified some place, and the king wished for details, so that he might know how large a force would be needed to surround and capture David and his men. Apparently Saul felt so sure of his prey, he considered there was no need for hurried action.

Then news that the Ziphites had proved unfaithful reached the ears of David, and though the king’s delay gave him time to retreat to the wilderness of Maon (v. 24), yet he was now in a sore plight. His situation was desperate, and none but an Almighty hand could deliver him. Blessed is it to see him turning at this time unto the living God and spreading his urgent case before Him. It was then that he prayed the prayer which is recorded in Psalm 54, the superscription of which reads “A Psalm of David, when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?” In it we are given to hear him pouring out his heart unto the Lord; and unto it we now turn to consider a few of its details.

“Save me, O God, by Thy name, and judge me by Thy strength”  
(~~154~~ Psalm 54:1).

David was in a position where he was beyond the reach of human assistance: only a miracle could now save him, therefore did he supplicate the miracle-working God. Without any preamble, David went straight to the point and cried, “Save me, O God.” Keilah would not shelter him, the Ziphites had basely betrayed him, Saul and his men thirsted for his blood. Other refuge there was none; God alone could help him. His appeal was to His glorious “Name,” which stands for the sum of all His blessed attributes;

and to His righteousness—“judge me by Thy strength.” This signifies, Secure justice for me, for none else will give it me. This manifested the innocency of his cause. Only when our case is pure can we call upon the power of divine justice to vindicate us.

“Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth”  
(~~1541D~~ Psalm 54:2).

How *we* need to remember and turn unto the Lord when enduring the contradiction of sinners against ourselves: to look above and draw strength from God, so that we be not weary and faint in our minds. Well did C. H. Spurgeon write, “As long as God hath an open ear we cannot be shut up in trouble. All other weapons may be useless, but all-prayer is evermore available. No enemy can spike this gun.”

“For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. Selah” (~~1541B~~ Psalm 54:3).

Those who had no acquaintance with David, and so could have no cause for ill-will against him, were his persecutors; strangers were they to God. In such a circumstance it is well for us to plead before God that we are being hated for *His* sake.

We must not here expound the remainder of this Psalm. But let us note three other things in it.

**First**, the marked change in the last four verses, following the “Selah” at the end of verse 3. On that word “Selah” Spurgeon wrote, “As if he said, ‘Enough of this, let us pause.’ He is out of breath with indignation. A sense of wrong bids him suspend the music awhile. It may also be observed, that more pauses would, as a rule, improve our devotions: we are usually too much in a hurry.”

**Second**, his firm confidence in God and the assurance that his request would be granted: this appears in verses 4-6, particularly in the “He *shall* reward evil unto mine enemies”—the “cut them off” was not spoken in hot revenge, but as an Amen to the sure sentence of the just Judge.

**Third**, his absolute confidence that his prayer was answered: the “hath delivered me” of verse 7 is very striking, and with it should be carefully compared and pondered, <sup><4112></sup>Mark 11:24.

It now remains for us to observe *how* God answered David’s prayer.

“And they arose, and went to Ziph before Saul: but David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the plain of the south of Jeshimon” (v. 24).

The term “wilderness” is rather misleading to English ears: it is not synonymous with desert, but is in contrast from cultivated farmlands and orchards, often signifying a wild forest.

“And when Saul heard that, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon. And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them” (vv. 25, 26).

How often is such the case with us: some sore trial presses, and we cry unto God for relief, but before His answer comes, matters appear to get worse. Ah, that is in order that His hand may be the more evident.

David’s plight was now a serious one, for Saul and his men had practically enveloped them, and only a “mountain,” or more accurately, a steep cliff, separated them. Escape seemed quite cut off: out-numbered, surrounded, further flight was out of the question. At last Saul’s evil object appeared to be on the very point of attainment. But man’s extremity is God’s opportunity. Beautifully did Matthew Henry comment, “This mountain (or cliff) was an emblem of the Divine Providence coming between David and the destroyer, like the pillar of cloud between the Israelites and the Egyptians.” Yet, a few hours at most, and Saul and his army would either climb or go around that crag. Now for the striking and blessed sequel.

“But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land. Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines: therefore, they called that place The rock of divisions. And David went up from thence and dwelt in strong holds at Engedi” (vv. 27-29).

How marvelously and how graciously God times things! He who orders all events and controls all creatures, moved the Philistines to invade a portion of Saul's territory, and tidings of this reached the king's ear just at the moment David seemed on the brink of destruction. Saul at once turned his attention to the invaders, and thus he was robbed of his prey and God glorified as his (David's) Protector. Thus, without striking a blow, David was delivered. O how blessed to know that the same God is *for* His people today, and without them doing a thing He can turn away those who are harassing. God *does* hear and answer the prayer of faith! David and his little force now had their opportunity to escape, and fled to the strong holds of Engedi, on the shore of the Dead Sea.

# CHAPTER 14

## SPARING SAUL

### ~~<10241>~~ 1 SAMUEL 24

We began our last chapter by quoting “many are the afflictions of the righteous,” the remainder of the verse reading “but the Lord delivereth him out of them all” (~~<198419>~~ Psalm 34:19). This does not mean that God always rescues the afflicted one from the physical danger which menaces him. No indeed, and we must be constantly on Our guard against carnally interpreting the Holy Scriptures. It is quite true that there are numerous cases recorded in the Word where the Lord was pleased graciously to put forth His power and extricate His people from situations where death immediately threatened them: the deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea, Elijah from the murderous intentions of Ahab and Jezebel, Daniel from the lions’ den, being striking illustrations in point. Yet the slaying of Abel by Cain, the martyrdom of Zechariah (~~<10235>~~ Matthew 23:35), the stoning of Stephen, are examples to the contrary. Then did the promise of ~~<198419>~~ Psalm 34:19 fail in these latter instances? No indeed, they received a yet more glorious fulfillment, for they were finally delivered out of this world of sin and suffering.

David was the one whose hand was moved by the Holy Spirit to first pen ~~<198419>~~ Psalm 34:19, and signally was it fulfilled in his history in a physical sense. Few men’s lives have been more frequently placed in jeopardy than was his, and few men have experienced the Lord’s delivering hand as he did. But there was a special reason for that, and it is this to which we would now call attention. David was one of the progenitors of Israel’s Messiah, and it is indeed striking and blessed to note the wonderful works of God of old in His miraculously preserving the chosen seed from which Christ, after the flesh, was to spring. Indeed it is this more particularly, which supplies the key to many a divine interposition on behalf of the patriarchs and others, who were in the immediate line from which Jesus of Nazareth issued.

Strikingly does this appear in the history of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who for so many years dwelt in the midst of the Canaanites. The inhabitants of that land were heathen, and most wicked, as <sup><01516></sup>Genesis 15:16 intimates. Abraham and his descendants were exposed to them as sojourners in the land, and men are most apt to be irritated by the peculiar customs of strangers. It was, then, a most remarkable dispensation of Providence which preserved the patriarchs in the midst of such a people: see <sup><19A52></sup>Psalms 105:42,

“Thus was this handful, this little root that had the blessing of the Redeemer in it, preserved in the midst of enemies and dangers which was not unlike to the preserving of the ark in the midst of the tempestuous deluge” (Jonathan Edwards).

Wondrously too did God preserve the infant nation of Israel in Egypt, in the wilderness, and on their first entering the promised land.

Still more arresting is the illustration which this principle receives in the divine preserving of the life of him who was more immediately and illustriously the sire of Christ. How often was there but a step betwixt David and death! His encountering of the lion and bear in the days of his shepherd life, which, without divine intervention, could have rent him in pieces as easily as they caught a lamb from his flock; his facing Goliath, who was powerful enough to break him across his knee, and give his flesh to the beasts of the field as he threatened; the exposing of his life to the Philistines, when Saul required one hundred of their foreskins as a dowry for his daughter; the repeated assaults of the king by throwing his javelin at him; the later attempts made to capture and slay him—yet from all these was David delivered. “Thus was the precious seed that virtually contained the Redeemer and all the blessings of redemption, wondrously preserved, when all earth and hell were conspired against it to destroy it” (Jonathan Edwards).

But we must now turn to our present lesson, a lesson which records one of the most striking events in the eventful life of David. Well did Matthew Henry point out, “We have hitherto had Saul seeking an opportunity to destroy David, and, to his shame, he could never find it; in this chapter David had a fair opportunity to destroy Saul, and, to his honor, he did not make use of it; and his sparing Saul’s life was as great an instance of God’s *grace in him*, as the preserving of his own life was of God’s *providence over him*.” Most maliciously had Saul sought David’s life, most generously



did David spare Saul's life. It was a glorious triumph of the spirit over the flesh, of grace over sin.

“And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi” (<sup>92401</sup>1 Samuel 24:1).

From these words we gather that Saul had been successful in turning back the invading Philistines. This illustrates a solemn principle which is often lost sight of: human success is no proof of divine approbation. The mere fact that a man is prospering outwardly, does not, of itself, demonstrate that his life is pleasing unto the Lord. No one but an infidel would deny that it was *God* who enabled Saul to clear his land of the Philistines, yet we err seriously if we conclude from this that He delighted in him. As oxen are fattened for the slaughter, so God often ripens the wicked for judgment and damnation by an abundance of His temporal mercies. The immediate sequel shows clearly what Saul still was.

“And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi.” This may be regarded as a testing of Saul, for every thing that happens in each of our lives tests us at some point or other. Miserably did Saul fail under it. Nothing in the outward dispensations of God change the heart of man: His chastisements do not break the stubborn will, nor His mercies melt the hard heart. Nothing short of the regenerating work of the Spirit can make any man a new creature in Christ Jesus. The success with which God had just favored Saul's military enterprise against the Philistines, made no impression upon the reprobate soul of the apostate king. Pause for a moment, dear reader, and face this question, Has the goodness of God brought *you* to repentance?

“Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats” (v. 2). What a terribly solemn illustration does this verse supply of what is said in <sup>21081D</sup>Ecclesiastes 8:11, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is *fully* set in them to do evil.” Wicked men are often interrupted in their evil courses, yet they return unto them when the restraint is removed, as if deliverance from trouble were only given that they should add iniquity unto iniquity. It was thus with Pharaoh: time after time God sent a plague which stayed that vile monarch's hand, yet as soon as respite was granted, he hardened his

heart again. So Saul had been providentially blocked while pursuing David, by the invading Philistines; but now, as soon as this hindrance was removed, he redoubled his evil efforts. O, unsaved reader, has it not been thus with you? Your course of self-pleasing was suddenly checked by an illness, your round of pleasure-seeking was stopped by a sick-bed.

Opportunity was given you to consider the interests of your immortal soul, to humble yourself beneath the mighty hand of God. Perhaps you did so in a superficial way, but what has been the sequel? Health and strength have been mercifully restored by God, but are they being used for His glory, or are you now vainly pursuing the phantoms of this world harder than ever?

Ought not the very invasion of the Philistines to have changed Saul's attitude toward the one whom he was so causelessly and relentlessly pursuing? Ought he not to have realized now more forcibly than ever, that he needed David at the head of his army to repulse the common enemy? And O unbelieving reader, is not the case very much the same with thee? The faithful servant of God, who has your best interests at heart, you despise; that Christian friend who begs you to consider the claims of Christ, the solemnities of an unending eternity, the certain and terrible doom of those who live only for this life, you regard as a "kill-joy." Saul is now in the torments of Hell, and in a short time at most *you* will be there too, unless you change your course and beg God to change your heart.

Let us turn our thoughts once more unto David. As we saw at the close of our last chapter, in answer to believing prayer, God granted him a striking deliverance from the hand of his enemy. Yet that deliverance was but a brief one. Saul now advanced against him with a stronger force than before. Does not every real Christian know something of this in his own spiritual experience? It is written that "we must through *much* tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (<sup>4142</sup>Acts 14:22). Troubles come, and then a respite is granted, and then new troubles follow on the heels of the old ones. Our spiritual enemies will not long leave us in peace; nevertheless, they are a blessing in disguise if they drive us to our knees. Very few souls thrive as well in times of prosperity as they do in seasons of adversity. Winters' frosts may necessitate warmer clothes, but they also kill the flies and garden pests.

David had now betaken himself unto "The rocks of the wild goats." Thither Saul and his large army follow him. Once more God undertook for him, and that in a striking way. "And he came to the sheepcotes by the

way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave” (v. 3). In that section of Palestine there are large caves, partly so by nature, partly so by human labor, for the sheltering of sheep from the heat of the sun; hence we read in the ~~22107~~ Song of Solomon 1:7 of “where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon.” In one of these spacious caverns, David, and some of his men at least, had taken refuge. Thither did Saul, separated apparently from his men, now turn, in order to seek repose. Thus, by a strange carelessness (viewed from the human standpoint), Saul placed himself completely at David’s mercy.

“And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee” (v. 4).

David’s men at once saw the hand of the Lord in this unexpected turn of events. So far, so good. None but an infidel believes in things happening by chance, though there are many infidels now wearing the name of “Christian.” There are no accidents in a world which is governed by the living God, for “of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen” (~~451136~~ Romans 11:36). Therefore does faith perceive the hand of God in every thing which enters our lives, be it great or small. And it is only as we recognize His hand molding all our circumstances, that God is honored, and our hearts are kept in peace. O for grace to say at all times,

“It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good” (~~00018~~ 1 Samuel 3:18).

“And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee.” It is not difficult to trace the line of thought which was in their minds. They felt that here was an opportunity too good to be missed, an opportunity which Providence itself had obviously placed in David’s way. One stroke of the sword would rid him of the only man that stood between him and the throne. Not only so, but the slaying of this apostate Saul would probably mean the bringing back of the whole nation unto the Lord. How many there are in Christendom today who believe that the end justifies the means: to get “results” is the all-important thing with them—*how* this is done matters

little or nothing. Had such men been present to counsel David they had argued, “Be not scrupulous about slaying Saul, see how much good it will issue in!”

“What a critical moment it was in David’s history! Had he listened to the specious counselors who urged upon him to do what Providence, seemingly, had put in his way, his life of faith would have come to an abrupt end. One stroke of his sword, and he steps into a throne! Farewell poverty! Farewell the life of a hunted goat. Reproaches, sneers, defeat, would cease; adulations, triumphs, riches would be his. But his at the sacrifice of faith; at the sacrifice of a humbled will, ever waiting on God’s time; at the sacrifice of a thousand precious experiences of God’s care, God’s provision, God’s guidance, God’s tenderness. No, even a throne at that price is too dear. Faith will wait” (C. H. Bright).

But there is a deeper lesson taught here, which every Christian does well to take thoroughly to heart. It is this: we need to be exceedingly cautious *how we interpret* the events of Providence and what conclusions we draw from them, lest we mistake the opportunity of following out our own inclinations for God’s approbation of our conduct. God had promised David the throne, had His time now come for removing the one obstacle which stood in his way? It looked much like it. Saul had shown no mercy, and there was not the least likelihood that he would do so; then was it God’s will that David should be His instrument for taking vengeance upon him? It seemed so, or why should He have delivered him into his hand! David had cried to God for deliverance and had appealed unto divine justice for vindication (<sup>195406</sup> Psalm 54:1), had the hour now arrived for his supplication to be answered? The unexpected sight of Saul asleep at his feet, made this more than likely. How easy, how very easy then, for David to have made an erroneous deduction from the event of Providence on this occasion!

God was, in reality, *testing* David’s faith, testing his patience, testing his piety. The testing of his faith lay in submission to the Word, which plainly says, “thou shalt not kill,” and God had given him no exceptional command to the contrary. The testing of his patience lay in his quietly waiting God’s time to ascend the throne of Israel: the temptation before him was to take things into his own hands and rush matters. The testing of his piety lay in the mortifying of his natural desires to avenge himself, to act in grace, and

show kindness to one who had sorely mistreated him. It was indeed a very real testing, and blessed is it to see how the spirit triumphed over the flesh.

The application of this incident to the daily life of the Christian is of great practical importance. Frequently God tests *us* in similar ways. He so orders His providences as to try our hearts and make manifest what is in them. How often we are exercised about some important matter, some critical step in life, some change in our affairs involving momentous issues. We distrust our own wisdom, we want to be sure of God's will in the matter, we spread our case before the Throne of Grace, and ask for light and guidance. So far, so good. Then, usually, comes the testing: events transpire which seem to show that it *is* God's will for us to take a certain step, things appear to point plainly in that direction. Ah, my friend, that may only be God trying your heart. If, notwithstanding your praying over it, your *desires* are really set upon that object or course, then it will be a simple thing for you to misinterpret the events of Providence and jump to a wrong conclusion.

An accurate knowledge of God's Word, a holy state of heart (wherein self is judged, and its natural longings mortified), a broken will, are absolutely essential in order to clearly discern the path of duty in important cases and crises. The safest plan is to *deny* all suggestions of revenge, covetousness, ambition and impatience. A heart that is established in true godliness will rather interpret the dispensations of Providence as trials of faith and patience, as occasions to practice self-denial, than as opportunities for self-indulgence. In any case,

“he that believeth shall not make haste” (<sup>273816</sup>Isaiah 28:16).

“Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass... Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him” (<sup>495706</sup>Psalms 37:5, 7).

O for grace to do so; but such grace has to be definitely, diligently and daily sought for.

# CHAPTER 15

## HIS ADDRESS TO SAUL

### ~~<0240>~~ 1 SAMUEL 24

In our last chapter we left the apostate king of Israel asleep in the cave of Engedi, the very place which had been made a refuge by David and his followers. There Saul lay completely at the mercy of the man whose life he sought. David's men were quick to perceive their advantage, and said to their master

“Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold I will deliver thine enemy into Wine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee” (~~<0240>~~ 1 Samuel 24:4).

A real temptation presented itself to the sweet Psalmist of Israel, and though he was not completely overcome by it, yet he did not emerge from the conflict without a wound and a stain. “Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.” How true it is that “evil communications corrupt good manners” (~~<4653>~~ 1 Corinthians 15:33)! Did this incident come back to his mind when, (probably) at a later date, the Spirit of God moved him to write,

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly” (~~<1900>~~ Psalm 1:1)?

Possibly so; at any rate, we find here a solemn warning which each of us does well to take to heart.

“And it came to pass afterward that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt” (~~<0240>~~ 1 Samuel 24:5):

which means, his conscience accused him, and he repented of what he had done. Good is it when our hearts condemn us for what the world regards as trifles. Though David had done no harm to the king's person, and though he had given proof it was in his power to slay him, nevertheless his action was a serious affront against the royal dignity. No matter what be

the personal character of the ruler, because of his office, God commands us to “honor the king” (~~10217~~ 1 Peter 2:17). This is a word concerning which all of us need reminding, for we are living in times when an increasing number “despise dominion, and *speak evil* of dignities” (~~6018~~ Jude 8). God takes note of this!

“David’s heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul’s skirt.” With this should be compared ~~10240~~ 2 Samuel 24:10, “And David’s heart smote him after that he numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech Thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of Thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.” From these passages it is evident that David was blest with a tender conscience, which is ever a mark of true spirituality. In solemn contrast therefrom, we read of those “having their conscience seared with a hot iron” (~~5402~~ 1 Timothy 4:2), and of some “being past feeling” (~~6049~~ Ephesians 4:19), which is a sure index of those who have been abandoned by God. David soon regretted his rash action and realized he had sinned. May God graciously grant unto reader and writer a sensitive conscience.

“And he said unto his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord’s anointed, to stretch Forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord” (v. 6).

How honest of David! He not only repented before God of his rash conduct, but he also confessed his wrong-doing unto those who had witnessed the same. It requires much grace and courage to do this, yet nothing short of it is required of us. Moreover, we know not to whom God may be pleased to bless a faithful and humble acknowledgement of our sins. David now let his men know plainly that he was filled with abhorrence for having so insulted his sovereign Lord. Observe how that it was his looking at things from the *divine* viewpoint which convicted him: he now regarded Saul not as a personal enemy, but as one whom *God* had appointed to reign as long as he lived.

“So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul” (v. 7). “Stayed” here signifies, pacified or quieted them, hindering them from laying rough hands upon the king. The first word of this verse is deeply significant: “So,” in this manner, by what he had just said—how evident that God clothed his words with power! Few things have greater weight with men than their beholding of *reality* in those who bear the name of the Lord. David had honored God by calling the attention

of his men to the fact that Saul was His “anointed,” and now He honored David by causing his honest confession to strike home to the hearts of his men. Thus, by restraining his followers David returned good for evil to him from whom he had received evil for good.

“But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way” (v. 7). Utterly unconscious of the danger which had threatened him, the king awoke, arose, and went forth out of the cave. How often there was but a step betwixt us and death, and we knew it not. Awake or asleep, our times are in God’s hands, and with the Psalmist faith realizes “*Thou holdest my soul in life*” (~~1969~~ Psalm 66:9). None can die a moment before the time his Maker has appointed. Blessed is it when the heart is enabled to rest in God. Each night it is our privilege to say,

“I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety” (~~1908~~ Psalm 4:8).

But how unspeakably solemn is the contrast between the cases of the godly and the wicked: the one is preserved for eternal glory, the other is reserved unto everlasting fire. Such was the difference between David and Saul.

“David also arose afterward and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king” (v. 8).

“Though he would not take the opportunity to slay him, yet he wisely took the opportunity, if possible, to slay his enmity, by convincing him that he was not such a man as he took him for” (Matthew Henry).

In thus revealing himself to Saul, David intimated that he still entertained an honorable opinion of his sovereign: this was further evidenced by the respectful language which he employed. “And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.” How surprised the blood-thirsty monarch must have been in hearing himself addressed by the one whose life he sought! The posture of David was not that of a cringing criminal, but of a loyal subject. In what follows we have one of the most respectful, pathetic and forcible addresses ever made to one of earth’s rulers.

“And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men’s words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?” (v. 9).



It is beautiful to see how David commenced his speech to the king, wherein he endeavors to show how much he was wronged in being so relentlessly persecuted, and how much he desired Saul to be reconciled to him. Most graciously did David throw the blame upon Saul's courtiers, rather than upon the king himself. In the question here asked Saul, it was suggested that his prejudice against David had been provoked by slanderous reports from others. Herein important instruction is furnished us as to what method to follow when seeking to subdue the malice of those who hate us: proceeding on the assumption that it is not the individual's own enmity against us, but that it has been unjustly stirred up by others. Particularly does this apply to those in authority: respect is due unto them, and where they err, due allowance should be made for their having been ill-informed by others.

It is the practical application of the teaching of Scripture to the details of our own lives which is so much needed today. Of what real value is a knowledge of its history or an understanding of its prophecies, if they exert no vital influence upon our conduct? God has given us His Word not only for our information, but as a law to walk by, and every chapter in it contains important rules for us to appropriate and put into practice. What is before us above supplies a timely case in point. How often differences arise between men, breaches between friends, and misunderstandings between fellow-Christians; and how rarely do we see the spirit displayed by David unto Saul, exercised now in efforts to effect a reconciliation! Let us earnestly seek grace to profit from the lovely and lowly example here set before us.

“Behold, this day, thine eyes have seen how that the Lord had delivered thee today into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eyes spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed” (v. 10).

First, David had refrained from reproaching or sharply expostulating Saul, now he shows that there was no ill-will in his own heart against him. He appealed to the most decisive proof that he had no intention of injuring him. The king had been completely at his mercy, and his men had urged him to dispatch his enemy, but pity for the helpless monarch had restrained him. Moreover, the fear of God governed him, and he dared not to lay violent hands upon His “anointed.” By such mild measures did David seek to conciliate his foe. Let us take a leaf out of his copybook, and seek by

acts of kindness to prove unto those that harbor false thoughts against us that Satan has misled them.

“Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it” (v. 11).

“He produceth undeniable evidence to prove the falseness of the suggestion upon which Saul’s malice against him was grounded. David was charged with seeking Saul’s hurt: ‘see,’ saith he, ‘yea, see the skirt of thy robe:’ let this be a witness for me, and an unexceptional witness it is; had that been true which I am accused of, I had now had thy head in my hand, and not the skirt of thy robe; for I could as easily have cut off that as this” (Matthew Henry).

Well for us is it when we can go to one filled with unjust suspicions against us, and confirm our words with convincing proofs of our good-will.

It is touching to see David here reminding Saul that there was a more intimate relation between them than that of king and subject; he had been united in marriage to his daughter, and therefore does he now address him as “my father” (v. 11). Here was an appeal not only to his honor, but to his affection: from a monarch one may expect justice, but from a parent we may surely look for affection. David might have addressed Saul by a hard name, but he sought to “overcome evil with good.” Blessedly did he here prefigure his Lord, who, at the time of his arrest in the garden, addressed the treacherous Judas not as “Betrayor” or “Traitor,” but “Friend.” Nothing is gained by employing harsh terms, and sometimes “A soft answer turneth away wrath” (<sup><201501></sup> Proverbs 15:1).

“The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee” (v. 12).

David now appealed unto a higher court. First, he desires that Jehovah Himself shall make it appear who was in the right and who in the wrong. Second, he counts upon the retribution of Heaven if Saul should continue to persecute him. Third, he affirms his steadfast resolution that no matter what he might suffer, nor what opportunities might be his to avenge himself, he would not do him hurt, but leave it with God to requite the evil.

This was indeed a mild method of reasoning with Saul, and the least offensive way of pointing out to him the injustice of his conduct. If men would deal thus one with another how much strife could be avoided, and how many quarrels be satisfactorily ended!

“As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee” (v, 13),

This intimates that it is permissible for us to make a right use of the wise sayings of others, particularly of the ancients, even though they are not directly inspired of God. Such aphorisms as “Look before you leap,” “Too many cooks spoil the broth,” “All is not gold that glitters,” are likely to stand us in good stead if they are stored in the memory and duly pondered. In days gone by, such proverbs were frequently spoken in the hearing of children (we are thankful that they were in ours), and the general absence of them today is only another evidence of the decadence of our times.

“As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.” The use which David here made of this proverb is obvious: he reminds Saul that a man is revealed by his actions. As a tree is known by its fruits, so our conduct makes manifest the dispositions of our hearts. It was as though David said, “Had I been the evil wretch which you have been made to believe, I would have had no conscience of taking away your life when it was in my power. But I could not: my heart would not let me.” Though the dog barks at the sheep, the sheep do not snap back at the dog.

“After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea” (v. 14).

Here David descends and reasons with Saul on the lowest grounds: in your own judgment I am a worthless fellow, then why go to so much trouble over me! Is it not altogether beneath the dignity of a monarch to take so much pains in hunting after one who is not worthy of his notice? In likening himself to a “flea,” David, by this simile, depicts not only his own weakness, but the circumstances he was in: obliged to move swiftly from place to place, and therefore not easily taken; and if captured, of no value to the king. Why then be so anxious to give chase to one so inconspicuous? “To conquer him would not be his honor, to attempt it only his disparagement. If Saul would consult his own reputation he would slight such an enemy (supposing he were really his enemy), and would think

himself in no danger from him.” If Saul had a spark of generosity in him, the humble carriage of David here would surely abate his enmity.

“The Lord therefore be Judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand” (v. 15).

Having pleaded his case so forcibly, David now solemnly warned his enemy that Jehovah would judge righteously between them, deliver him out of his hand, and avenge his cause upon him. When we are innocent of the suspicions entertained against and preferred upon us, we need not fear to leave the issue with God. This is what our Lord Himself did:

“When he suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously” (~~(11223)~~ 1 Peter 2:23).

Assured that God would, in due time, vindicate him, David acted faith upon Him and rested in His faithfulness. The justice of God should ever be the refuge and comfort of those who are wrongfully oppressed: the day is coming when the Judge of all the earth shall recompense every evil-doer, and reward all the righteous.

A brief analysis of what we may term David’s “defense” teaches us what methods we should follow when seeking to show a person that we have given no cause for his malice against us. First, David asked Saul if he had not been unjust in listening to slanders against him (v. 9)? Second, he pointed out that because the fear of God was upon him, he dared not sin presumptuously (v. 10). Third, he appealed to his own actions in proof thereof (v. 11). Fourth, he affirmed he had no intention to retaliate and return evil for evil (v. 12). Fifth, he argued that the known character of a person should prevent others from believing evil reports about him (v. 13). Sixth, he took a lowly place, shaming pride by humility (v. 14). Seventh, he committed his case unto the justice of God (v. 15).

# CHAPTER 16

## HIS VICTORY OVER SAUL

### ~~10240~~ 1 SAMUEL 24

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (~~2062~~ Proverbs 16:32).

A man who is “slow to anger” is esteemed by the Lord, respected by men, is happy in himself, and is to be preferred above the strongest giant that is not master of self. Alexander the Great conquered the world, yet in his uncontrollable wrath, slew his best friends. Being “slow to anger” is to take time and consider before we suffer our passions to break forth, that they may not transgress due bounds; and he who can thus control himself is to be esteemed above the mightiest warrior. A rational conquest is more honorable to a rational creature than triumph by brute force.

The most desirable authority is self-government. The conquest of ourselves and our own unruly passions, requires more regular and persevering management than does the obtaining of a victory over the physical forces of an enemy. The conquering of our own spirit is a more important achievement than the taking of a foe’s fortress. He that can command his temper is superior to him that can successfully storm a fortified town. Natural courage, skill and patience, may do the one; but it requires the grace of God and the assistance of the Holy Spirit to do the other. Blessedly was all this exemplified by David in that incident which has occupied our attention in the last two chapters. He had been sorely provoked by Saul, yet when the life of his enemy was in his hand, he graciously spared him, and returned good for evil.

“A soft answer turneth away wrath” (~~2050~~ Proverbs 15:1). Strikingly was this illustrated in what is now to be before us. A child of God is not to rest satisfied because *he* has not originated strife, but if others begin it, he must not only not continue it, but endeavor to end it by mollifying the matter. Better far to pour oil on the troubled waters, than to add fuel to the fire.

“The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (<sup><5087></sup>James 3:17).

We are to disarm resentment by every reasonable concession. Mild words and gentle expressions, delivered with kindness and humility, will weaken bitterness and scatter the storm of wrath. Note how the Ephraimites were pacified by Gideon’s mild answer (<sup><0780></sup>Judges 8:1-13). The noblest courage is shown when we withstand our own corruptions, and overcome enemies by kindness.

“Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us” (<sup><2104></sup>Luke 11:4).

Wherein does this forgiving of others consist? First, in withholding ourselves from revenge.

“Forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any” (<sup><5083></sup>Colossians 3:13):

“forbearing and forgiving” are inseparably connected. Some men will say, We will do to him as he has done to us; but God bids us,

“Say *not* I will do so to him as he hath done unto me, I will render to the man according to his work” (<sup><0749></sup>Proverbs 24:29).

Corrupt nature thirsts for retaliation, and has a strong inclination that way; but grace should check it. Men think it a base thing to put up with wrongs and injuries; but this it is which gives a man a victory over himself, and the truest victory over his enemy, when he forbears to revenge.

By nature there is a spirit in us which is turbulent, revengeful, and desirous of returning evil for evil; but when we are able to deny it, we are ruling our own spirit. Failure so to do, being overcome by passion, is moral weakness, for our enemy has thoroughly overcome us when his injuring of us prevails to our breaking of God’s laws in order to retaliate. Therefore we are bidden

“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (<sup><6121></sup>Romans 12:21):

then is grace victorious, and then do we manifest a noble, brave and strong spirit. And wondrously will God bless our exemplifications of His grace,

for it is often His way to shame the party that did the wrong, by overcoming him with the meekness and generosity of the one he has injured. It was thus in the case of David and Saul, as we shall now see.

“And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept” (~~12416~~ 1 Samuel 24:16).

Though his mind was so hostile to David, and he had cruelly chased him up and down, yet when he now saw that the one he was pursuing had forborne revenge when it was in his power, he was moved to tears. In like manner, when the captains of the Syrians, whom the prophet had temporarily blinded, were led to Samaria, fully expecting to be slain there, we are told that the king “prepared great provisions for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away.” And what was the sequel to such kindness unto their enemies? This; it so wrought upon their hearts, their bands “came no more into the land of Israel” (~~12630~~ 2 Kings 6:20-23). May these incidents speak loudly unto each of our hearts.

“And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept.” Let us pause and adore the restraining power of God. Filled with wrath and fury, so eager to take David’s life, Saul, instead of attempting to kill him, had stood still and heard David’s speech without an interruption. He who commands the winds and the waves, can, when He pleases, still the most violent storm within a human breast. But more; Saul was not only awed and subdued, but melted by David’s kindness. Observe the noticeable change in his language: before, it was only “the son of Jesse,” now he says, “my son, David.” So deeply was the king affected, that he was moved to tears; yet, like those of Esau, they were not tears of real repentance.

“And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil” (v. 17).

Saul was constrained to acknowledge David’s integrity and his own iniquity, just as Pharaoh said,

“I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you” (~~121016~~ Exodus 10:16);

and as many today will own their wrong-doing when shamed by Christians returning to them good for evil, or when impressed by some startling providence of God. But such admissions are of little value if there is no change for the better in the lives of those who make them. Nevertheless, this acknowledgment of Saul's made good that word of God's upon which He had caused His servant to hope:

“He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday” (<sup><195706></sup>Psalm 37:6).

They who are careful to maintain

“a conscience void of offense toward God and man” (<sup><42446></sup>Acts 24:16),

may safely leave it unto Him to secure the credit of it.

“This fair confession was sufficient to prove David innocent, even his enemy himself being judge; but not enough to prove Saul himself a true penitent. He should have said, ‘Thou art righteous, and I am wicked,’ but the utmost he will own is this, ‘Thou art more righteous than I.’ Bad men will commonly go no farther than this in their confessions: they will own they are not so good as some others are; there are that are better than they, more righteous” (Matthew Henry).

Ah, it takes the supernatural workings of Divine grace in the heart to strip us of all our fancied goodness, and bring us into the dust as self-condemned sinners, it requires too the continual renewings of the Holy Spirit *to keep us in the dust*, so that we truthfully exclaim,

“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake” (<sup><19501></sup>Psalm 115:1).

“And thou hast showed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the Lord had delivered me into thine hand, thou killest me not” (v. 18).

This is striking: even the most desperate sinners are sometimes amenable to acts of kindness. Saul could not but own that David had dealt far more mercifully with him, than he would have done with David if their position had been reversed. He acknowledged that he had been laboring under a



misapprehension concerning his son, for clear proof had been given that David was of a far different stamp than what he had supposed.

“We are too apt to suspect others to be worse affected towards us than they really are, and than perhaps they are proved to be; and when afterwards our mistake is discovered, we should be forward to recall our suspicions as Saul doth here” (Matthew Henry).

“And thou hast showed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the Lord had delivered me into thine hand, thou killest me not.” In view of the later sequel, this is also exceedingly solemn. Saul not only recognizes the magnanimity of David, but he perceives too the providence of God: he owns that it was none other than the hand of Jehovah which had placed him at the mercy of the man whose life he had been seeking. Thus it was plain that God was *for* David, and who could hope to succeed *against* him! How this ought to have deterred him from seeking his hurt afterwards; yet it did not: his “goodness was as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away” (~~2004~~ Hosea 6:4). Alas, there are many who mourn for their sins, but do not truly repent of them; weep bitterly for their transgressions, and yet continue in love and league with them; discern and own the providences of God, yet do not yield themselves to Him.

“For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?” (v. 19). No, this is not the customary way among men. “Revenge is sweet” to poor fallen human nature, and few indeed refuse to drink from this tempting cup when it is presented to them. And if there be more lenity shown unto fallen enemies today than there was in past ages, it is not to be ascribed unto any improvement in man, but to the beneficent effects of the spread of Christianity. That this is the case may be clearly seen in the vivid contrasts presented among nations where the Gospel is preached, and where it is unknown: the “dark places” of the earth are still “full of the habitations of cruelty” (~~197420~~ Psalm 74:20).

“For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?  
wherefore the Lord reward thee good for that thou hast done unto  
me this day” (v. 19).

Strange language this for a would-be murderer! Yes, even the reprobate have spurts and flashes of seeming piety at times, and many superficial people who “believeth every word” (~~20415~~ Proverbs 14:15) are deceived

thereby. “Seemingly pious” we say, for after all, those fair words of Saul were empty ones. Had he really meant what he said, would he not personally and promptly have rewarded David himself? Of course he would. He was king; he had power to; it was his duty to reinstate David in the bosom of his family, and bestow upon him marks of the highest honor and esteem. But he did nothing of the sort. Ah, dear reader: do not measure people by what they say; it is *actions* which speak louder than words.

“And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand” (v. 20).

The realization that God had appointed David to succeed him on the throne, was now forced upon Saul. The providence of God in so remarkably preserving and prospering him, his princely spirit and behavior, his calling to mind of what Samuel had declared, namely; that the kingdom should be given to a neighbor of his, better than he (~~091518~~ 1 Samuel 15:18)—and such David was by his own confession (v. 17); and the portion cut off his own robe—which must have been a vivid reminder of Samuel rending his mantle, when he made the solemn prediction; all combined to convince the unhappy king of this. Thus did God encourage the heart of His oppressed servant, and support his faith and hope. Sometimes He deigns to employ strange instruments in giving us a message of cheer.

“Sware now therefore unto me by the Lord, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father’s house” (v. 21).

Under the conviction that God was going to place David upon the throne of Israel, Saul desired from him the guaranty of an oath, that he would not, when king, extirpate his posterity. What a tribute this was unto *the reality* of David’s profession! Ah, the integrity, honesty, veracity of a genuine child of God, is recognized by those with whom he comes into contact. They who have dealings with him know that *his* word is his bond. Treacherous and unscrupulous as Saul was, if David promised in the name of the Lord to spare his children, he was assured that it would be fulfilled to the letter. Reader, is *your* character thus known and respected by those among whom you move?

“Sware now therefore unto me by the Lord, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father’s house.” How tragically this reveals the state of his heart. Poor Saul was more concerned about the credit and interests of his Family in this world, than he was of securing the forgiveness of his sins before he entered the world to come. Alas, there are many who have their seasons of remorse, are affected by their dangerous situations, and almost persuaded to renounce their sins; they are convinced of the excellency of true saints, as acting from superior principles to those which regulate their own conduct, and cannot withhold from them a good word; yet are they not thereby humbled or changed, and sin and the world continue to reign in their hearts until death overtakes them.

“And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home: but David and his men gat them unto the hold” (v. 22).

David was willing to bind himself to the promise which Saul asked of him, and accordingly swore to it on oath. Thus he has left us an example to “be subject unto the higher powers” (~~cf~~ Romans 13:1). His later history evidences how he respected his oath to Saul, by sparing Mephibosheth, and in punishing the murderers of Ishbosheth. It is to be noted that David did not ask Saul to sware unto him that he would no more seek his life. David knew him too well to trust in a transient appearance of friendliness, and having no confidence in his word. Nor should we deliberately place a temptation in the way of those lacking in honor, by seeking to extract from them a definite promise.

“And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.” David did not trust Saul, whose inconstancy, perfidy and cruel hatred, he full well knew. He did not think it safe to return unto his own house, nor to dwell in the open country, but remained in the wilderness, among the rocks and the caves. The grace of God will teach us to forgive and be kind unto our enemies, but not to trust those who have repeatedly deceived us; for malice often seems dead, when it is only dormant, and will ever long revive with double force. “They that, like David, are innocent as doves, must thus, like David, be wise as serpents” (Matthew Henry).

Note how verse 22 pathetically foreshadowed ~~cf~~ John 7:53 and 8:1.

Here then is the blessed victory that David gained over Saul, not by treacherous stealth, or by brute force but a moral triumph. How complete his victory was that day, is seen in the extent to which that haughty monarch humbled himself before David, entreating him to be kind unto his offspring, when he should be king. But the great truth for us to lay hold of, the central lesson here recorded for our learning is that David first gained the victory over himself, before he triumphed Over Saul. May writer and reader be more diligent and earnest in seeking grace from God that we may not be overcome by evil, but that we may “overcome evil with good.”

# CHAPTER 17

## HIS AFFRONT FROM NABAL

### 1 SAMUEL 25

The incident which is now to engage our attention may seem, at first sight, to contain in it little of practical importance for our hearts. If so, we may be sure that our vision is dim. There is nothing trivial in Holy Writ. Everything which the Spirit has recorded therein has a voice for us, if only we will seek the hearing ear. Whenever we read a portion of God's Word, and find therein little suited to our own case and need, we ought to be humbled: the fault is in us. This should at once be acknowledged unto God, and a spiritual quickening of soul sought from Him. There should be a definite asking Him to graciously anoint our eyes (~~REVEL~~ Revelation 3:18), not only that we may be enabled to behold wondrous things in His Law, but also that He will make us of quick discernment to perceive *how* the passage before us *applies to ourselves*—what are the particular lessons we need to learn from it. The more we cultivate this habit, the more likely that God will be pleased to open His Word unto us.

It is the *practical* lessons to be learned from each section that all of us so much need, and this is uppermost in our mind in the composing of this present series. What, then, is there here for us to take to heart? David, in his continued wanderings, applies to a well-to-do farmer for some rations for his men. The appeal was suitably timed, courteously worded, and based upon a weighty consideration. The request was presented not to a heathen, but to an Israelite, to a member of his own tribe, to a descendant of Caleb; in short, to one from whom he might reasonably expect a favorable response. Instead, David met with a rude rebuff and a provoking insult. Obviously, there is a *warning* here for us in the despicable meanness of Nabal, which must be turned into prayer for divine grace to preserve us from being inhospitable and unkind to God's servants.

But it is with David that we are chiefly concerned. In our last three chapters we have seen him conducting himself with becoming mildness and magnanimity, showing mercy unto the chief of his enemies. There we saw

him resisting a sore temptation to take matters into his own hands, and make an end of his troubles by slaying the chief of his persecutors, when he was thoroughly in his power. But here our hero is seen in a different light. He meets with another trial, a trial of a much milder nature, yet instead of overcoming evil with good, he was in imminent danger of being overcome with evil. Instead of exercising grace, he is moved with a spirit of revenge; instead of conducting himself so that the praises of God are “*shown forth*” (~~1009~~ 1 Peter 2:9), only the works of the flesh are seen. Alas, how quickly had the fine gold become dim! How are we to account for this? And what are the lessons to be learned from it?

Is the reader surprised as he turns from the blessed picture presented in the second half of ~~1040~~ 1 Samuel 24 and ponders the almost sordid actions of David in the very next chapter? Is he puzzled to account for the marked lapse in the conduct of him who had acted so splendidly toward Saul? Is he at a loss to explain David’s spiteful attitude toward Nabal? If so, he must be woefully ignorant of *his own heart*, and has yet to learn a most important lesson: that no man stands a moment longer than divine grace upholds him. The strongest are weak as water immediately the power of the Spirit is withdrawn; the most mature and experienced Christian acts foolishly the moment he be left to himself; none of us has any reserve strength or wisdom in himself to draw from: our source of sufficiency is all treasured up for us in Christ, and as soon as communion with Him be broken, as soon as we cease looking alone to Him for help, we are helpless.

What has just been stated above is acknowledged as true by God’s people in general, yet many of their thoughts and conclusions are glaringly inconsistent therewith—or why be so surprised when they hear of some eminent saint experiencing a sad fall! The “eminent saint” is not the one who has learned to walk alone, but he who most feels his need of leaning harder upon the “everlasting arms.” The “eminent saint” is not the one who is no longer tempted by the lusts of the flesh and harassed by the assaults of Satan, but he who knows that in the flesh there dwelleth no good thing, and that only *from Christ* can his “fruit” be found (~~28408~~ Hosea 14:8). Looked at in themselves, the “fathers” in Christ are just as frail and feeble as the “babes” in Christ. Left to themselves, the wisest Christians have no better judgment than has the new convert. Whether God is pleased to leave us upon earth another year or another hundred years, all will constantly need to observe that word,

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (~~4064~~ Matthew 26:41).

And God has many ways of teaching us the “weakness” of the flesh. One of these receives striking illustration in the incident to be before us, and which has no doubt been painfully realized in the experience of each Christian reader: that in some great crisis we have been enabled to stand our ground, strong in faith, whereas before some petty trial we have broken down and acted as a man of the world would act. It is thus that God stains our pride, subdues our self-sufficiency, and brings us to the place of more real and constant dependence upon Himself. It is the “little foxes” (~~2215~~ Song of Solomon 2:15) that spoil the vines, and it is our reaction unto the lesser irritations of everyday life which most reveal us to ourselves—humbling us through our failures, and fitting us to bear with more patience the infirmities of our brethren and sisters in Christ.

Who would have thought that he who had taken so meekly the attacks of the king upon his life, should have waxed so furious when a farmer refused a little food for his men! Rightly did Thomas Scott point out, “David had been on his guard against anger and revenge when most badly used by Saul, but he did not expect such reproachful language and insolent treatment from Nabal: he was therefore wholly put off his guard; and in great indignation he determined to avenge himself.” Lay this well to heart, dear reader: a small temptation is likely to prevail after a greater has been resisted. Why so? Because we are less conscious of our need of God’s delivering grace. Peter was bold before the soldiers in the Garden, but became fearful in the presence of a maid. But it is time for us to consider some of the details of our passage.

“And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered *together* and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah” (~~0250~~ 1 Samuel 25:1).

How often will people sorrow outwardly for one when dead to whom they did not care to listen when living. There had been a time when Samuel was appreciated by Israel, particularly when they were feeling the pressure of the Philistine yoke; but more recently he has been despised (~~0980~~ 1 Samuel 8). They had preferred a king to the prophet, but now Saul was proving such a disappointment, and the breach between the king and David showed no signs of being healed, they lamented the removal of Samuel.

“And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran”  
 (<0270> 1 Samuel 25:1).

David too was despised by the greater part of the nation. Once he had been the hero of their songs, but now he was homeless and outlawed. Few cared to own him. Learning of Samuel's death, he probably thought that his danger was greater than ever, for the prophet was more than friendly disposed toward him. He no doubt concluded that Saul's malice would be now more unrestrained than ever. Taking advantage of “all the Israelites” being gathered together, to mourn the death of Samuel, he left Engedi to sojourn for a while in other parts. But let us note well the ominous hint given in the words “and *went down* to the wilderness of Paran.”

We have next presented to our notice the one to whom David made his appeal (<0270> 1 Samuel 25:2, 3). From the character given to him by the Holy Spirit, not much good might be expected from him. His name was “Nabal” which signifies “a fool,” and none is a greater fool than he who thinks only of number one. He was a descendant of Caleb, which is mentioned here as an aggravation of his wickedness: that he should be the degenerate plant of so noble a vine. We are told that this man was “very great”: not in piety, but in material possessions, for he had very large flocks of sheep and goats. His wife was of a beautiful countenance “and of good understanding,” but her father could not have been so, or he would not *have* sacrificed her to a man who had nothing better to recommend him than earthly wealth. Poor woman! She was tied to one who was “churlish and evil in his doings”: greedy and grasping, sour and cross-tempered.

“And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep. And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name” (vv. 4, 5).

The season for shearing the sheep was a notable one, for wool was a leading commodity in Canaan. With such a very large flock, a considerable number of extra hands would have to be hired by Nabal, and a plentiful supply of provisions prepared. From <101323> 2 Samuel 13:23 it appears that it was the custom in those days to combine feasting and merriment with the shearing: compare also <013813> Genesis 38:13. It was a time when men were generally disposed to be hospitable and kind. As to how far David was justified in appealing to man, rather than spreading his need before God



alone, we undertake not to decide—it is certainly not safe to draw any inference from the sequel.

“And thus shall ye say to him that liveth, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. Ask thy young men, and they will show thee. Wherefore let the young men find favor in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David” (vv. 6-8).

The request to be presented before Nabal was one which the world would call respectful and tactful. The salutation of peace bespoke David’s friendly spirit. Reminder was given that, in the past, David had not only restrained his men from molesting Nabal’s flocks, but had also protected them from the depredations of invaders—compare verses 14-17. He might then have asked for a reward for his services, but instead he only supplicates a favor. Surely Nabal would not refuse his men a few victuals, for it was “a good day,” a time when there was plenty to hand. Finally David takes the place of a “son,” hoping to receive some fatherly kindness from him.

But as we examine this address more closely, we note the low ground which was taken: there was nothing spiritual in it! Moreover, we fully agree with Matthew Henry’s comments on the opening words of verse 6, “Thus shall ye say to him that liveth”... “as if those lived indeed that lived as Nabal did, with abundance of the wealth of this world about them; whereas, in truth, those that live in pleasure are dead while they live (<sup>5486</sup>1 Timothy 5:6). This was, methinks, too high a compliment to pass upon Nabal, to call him the man that liveth: David knew better things—that ‘in God’s favor is life,’ not in the world’s smiles; and, by the rough answer, he was well enough served for this too smooth address to such a muckworm.”

“And when David’s young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David and ceased” (v. 9).

This verse serves to illustrate another important principle: not only are God’s children more or less *revealed* by their reaction to and conduct under the varied experiences they encounter, but the presence of God’s

servants *tests* the character of those with whom they come into contact. It was so here. A golden opportunity was afforded Nabal of showing kindness to the Lord's "anointed," but he seized it not. Alas, how many there are who know not the day of their visitation. Nabal had no heart for David, and clearly was this now made manifest. So too the selfishness and carnality of professors frequently becomes apparent by their failure to befriend the servants of God, when chances to do so are brought right to their door. It is a grand and holy privilege when the Lord sends one of His prophets into your neighborhood, yet it may issue in a fearfully solemn sequel.

"And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh, that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?" (vv. 10, 11).

What an insulting answer to return unto so mild a request! To justify a refusal he stooped to heaping insults on the head of David. It was not a total stranger who had applied to him, for Nabal's calling him "the son of Jesse" showed he knew well who he was; but, absorbed with schemes of selfish acquisition he cared not for him. Let it be duly noted that in acting in such a heartless manner Nabal clearly disobeyed—<sup><6150></sup>Deuteronomy 15:7-11. Nabal's repeated use of the word "my" in verse 11 reminds us of the other rich "fool" in <sup><6218></sup>Luke 12:18-20.

"So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings" (v. 12).

Highly commendable was their conduct. "Young men" are often hot-blooded and hot-headed, and act impetuously and rashly; but they admirably restrained themselves. The language of Nabal had been highly offensive, but instead of returning railing for railing, they treated him with silent contempt and turned their backs upon him: such churls are not entitled to any reply. It is blessed to see they did not use force, and attempt to take what ought to have been freely given to them. Never are the children of God justified in so doing: we must ever seek grace to maintain a good conscience, "in all things willing to live honestly" (<sup><581318></sup>Hebrews 13:18). Ofttimes the best way for overcoming a temptation to make a wrathful reply, is to quietly turn away from those who have angered us.

“And came and told him all those sayings.” Here we are shown how the servants of Christ are to act when abused. Instead of indulging the spirit of revenge, they are to go and spread their case before their Master (~~2121~~ Luke 14:21). It was thus the perfect Servant acted: of Him it is written,

“Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed His cause to Him that judgeth righteously” (~~1023~~ 1 Peter 2:23).

Ofttimes God brings us into trying situations to reveal unto us whether we are “acknowledging Him in all our ways” (~~1016~~ Proverbs 3:6), or whether there is still a measure of self-sufficiency at work in our hearts—our response to the trial makes manifest which be the case.

And what was David’s response? How did *he* now react unto the disappointing tidings brought back by his men? Did he, as the *servant* of God, meekly bear Nabal’s taunts and cutting reproach? Did he cast his burden on the Lord, looking to Him for sustaining grace (~~1952~~ Psalm 55:22)? Alas, he acted in the energy of the flesh. “And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; And David also girded on his sword” (v. 13). David neither betook himself to prayer nor reflected upon the matter, but hurriedly prepared to avenge the insult he had received.

True, the ingratitude which Nabal had shown, and the provoking language he had used, were hard to endure —too hard for mere flesh and blood, for human nature ever wants to vindicate itself. His only recourse lay in God: to see *His* hand in the trial, and to seek grace to bear it. But momentarily David forgot that he had committed his cause unto the Lord, and took matters into his own hands. And why did God permit this breakdown? That no flesh should glory in His presence (~~4012~~ 1 Corinthians 1:29).

“This must be the reason why such-like episodes are found in the lives of all the Lord’s servants. They serve to demonstrate that these servants were not any better flesh than other men, and that it was not more richly endowed brains that gave them faith of devotedness, but simply the *supernatural* power of the Holy Spirit” (C. H. Bright).

# CHAPTER 18

## HIS CHECK FROM ABIGAIL

### ~~1025~~ 1 SAMUEL 25

In our last chapter we saw how that God submitted David unto a testing of quite another character and from a different quarter than those he had previously been tried by. Hitherto, the thorn in his side had been none other than the king of Israel, to which we may add the callous indifference toward him of the nation at large. But now he was unexpectedly rebuffed by an individual farmer, from whom he had sought some victuals for his men.

“His churlish soul, adding insult to injury, dismissed the messenger of David with contumely and scorn. It is a hard thing to endure. David had endured, and was enduring much. He was suffering from the active enmity of Saul, and from the dull apathy of Israel. But both were great, and so to speak, dignified enemies. Saul was Israel’s king; and Israel were God’s people. It seemed comparatively honorable to be persecuted by *them*: but it was a far different thing to endure the reproach of one so despicable as Nabal. ‘Surely in vain,’ said David, ‘have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness’” (B. W. Newton).

What made the trial more poignant to David’s soul, was the fact that he himself had acted honorably and kindly toward Nabal. When, on a previous occasion, he had sojourned in those parts, he had not only restrained his own men from preying upon Nabal’s flocks, but had been a defense to them from the wandering bands of the Philistines. It was, then, the least that this wealthy sheep owner could do, to now show his appreciation and make present of a little food to David’s men. Instead, he mocked them. Ingratitude is always trying to flesh and blood, but more so when it is coupled with gross injustice. Yet often God is pleased to try His people in this way, calling upon them to receive treatment which they feel is quite “uncalled for,” yea, positively “unjust.” And why does God permit this?

For various reasons: among others, to furnish us opportunities to act *out what we profess!*

The reaction of David unto this trial is recorded for our learning: for us to lay to heart, and turn into earnest prayer. And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword” (~~182513~~1 Samuel 25:13).

Well may we ask, Had he been so long in the school of affliction and not yet learned patience?

“He forgot that all suffering, all reproach, that is *for God’s sake*, is equally honorable, whether it come from a monarch, or from a churl. His proud spirit was roused, and he who had refused to lift up his hand against Saul, and had never unsheathed his sword against Israel: he who was called to fight, not for his *own sake*, against his *own* enemies, but for *the Lord’s sake* against the Lord’s enemies, he—David, forgot his calling, and swore that Nabal should expiate his offense in blood” (B. W. Newton).

And how are we to account for his lapse? Wherein, particularly, was it that David failed? In being unduly occupied with the second cause, the human instrument; his eyes were upon man, rather than upon God. When his men returned with their disappointing tidings he ought to have said with Job,

“Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” (~~18210~~Job 2:10).

Ah, it is easy for us to say what David *ought* to have said, but do we act any better when we are similarly tested? Alas, has not both writer and reader full reason to bow his head in shame! Far be it from us, who thoroughly deserve them ourselves, to throw stones at the beloved Psalmist. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit has faithfully recorded his failures, and the best way for us to profit from them is to trace them back to their source, and seek grace to avoid repeating them.

Above we asked the question, Had David been so long in the school of affliction and not yet learned patience? This leads us to enquire, *What is patience?* Negatively, it is meekly receiving *as from God* whatever enters our lives, a saying from the heart,

“The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”  
 (<B1811> John 18:11).

Positively, it is a persevering continuance in the path of duty, not being overcome by the difficulties of the way. Now to accept as from God whatever enters our lives requires us to cultivate the habit of seeing His hand in every thing: just so long as we are unduly occupied with secondary causes and subordinate agents, do we destroy our peace. There is only one real haven for the heart, and that is to “rest in the Lord,” to recognize and realize that “of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things” (<B1136> Romans 11:36): ever seeking to learn His lesson in each separate incident.

It is blessed to know that

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord,” and that  
 “though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth his hand” (<B8723> Psalm 37:23, 24).

Yes, and oftentimes though we trip, He keeps us from falling. Where it is the genuine desire of the heart to please the Lord in all things, He will not let us go far wrong; where the will is sincerely bent Godwards, He will not suffer Satan to prevail. Thus it was here with David. To answer the fool [Nabal] according to his folly (<B1864> Proverbs 26:4) was just what the devil desired, and momentarily he had gained an advantage over him. But the eyes of the Lord were upon His tempted servant, and graciously did He now move one to deter him from accomplishing his vindictive purpose. Let us admire His providential workings.

First, we are told that,

“But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal’s wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them. But the men were very good unto us, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields: They were a wall unto us both by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him” (vv. 14-17).

One of Nabal's servants acquainted his mistress with what had transpired, confirming, be it noted, what was said, by David's men in verse 7. He probably drew the logical inference that David would avenge his insult, and anxious for his own safety, as well as for the other members of the household, and yet not daring to voice his fears unto Nabal, he informed Abigail.

How wondrously God makes all things "work together" for the good of His own. How perfect are His ways: fulfilling His own secret and invincible designs, yet leaving quite free the instruments, who unconsciously, fulfill them. The providential machinery to restrain the impetuous David was now set in motion. A servant of Nabal's, moved by nothing higher than the instinct of self-preservation (so far as *his* consciousness went), warns his mistress of their impending danger. Now mark, secondly, her response: she did not laugh at the servant, and tell him his fears were groundless; nor was she suddenly paralyzed by feminine fright at the alarming tidings. No, a hidden Hand calmed her heart and directed her mind. Accepting the warning, she acted promptly, setting out at once with an elaborate present to placate the angry David; a present that would meet the immediate needs of his hungry men: see verses 18, 19.

There are some who have criticized this action of Abigail's, dwelling upon the last clause of verse 19: "But she told not her husband Nabal." Such a criticism is a very superficial conclusion. What Abigail did was necessary for the protection of the family. Perceiving that Nabal's stubbornness would ruin them all, the exigencies of the situation fully justified her conduct. It is true she owed allegiance to her husband, but her first and great duty was to take measures to protect their lives: inferior interests must always be sacrificed to secure the greater—our property to preserve our lives, our very lives to preserve our souls. As we shall see, verse 24, 28 make it clear that she acted from no disloyalty to Nabal. Nevertheless, it is an extraordinary case which is here before us, and so *not* to be used as an example.

And what of David at this time? Was he recovered from his outburst of anger? No, indeed, or there had been no need for Abigail's mission of conciliation. The words of Nabal were still rankling within his heart. Hear him as he petulantly declares, "Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good" (v. 21). He repented of the

kindness shown Nabal, feeling now that it had been wasted upon him, that he was devoid of gratitude and incapable of appreciating the good turn shown him. But God is “kind to the unthankful and to the evil,” and bids us “Be ye therefore merciful” (~~Q18~~ Luke 6:35, 36). Ah, to cultivate that attitude we must seek grace to *mortify* the spirit of pride which desires recognition, and that bitterness which rises when we are slighted.

Not only was David chafing under the ingratitude and taunts of Nabal, but he was still bent on revenge: as verse 23 shows, he had determined to slay every male in Nabal’s household. This was unjust and cruel in the extreme, and if God had suffered him to carry out such a design, would have greatly sullied his character and given his enemies an immense advantage against him. So determined was he, that he confirmed his intention with an oath, which was rash and savored of profanity. See here, dear reader, what even the child of God is capable of when grace is not active within him. The realization of this ought to make us walk softly, and work out our salvation with “fear and trembling.” It is for this reason that God so often withdraws from us the power of His Spirit: that we may know what is yet in our hearts (~~Q18~~ 2 Chronicles 32:3 1), and be humbled before Him.

How blessedly God *times* His mercies. Here was David premeditating evil, yea, on the point of carrying out his wicked purpose. But there was one, sent by the Lord, already on the way to deliver him from himself. Ah, dear reader, have not you and I often been the recipient of similar favors from Heaven? Were there not times, be they recalled to our deep shame, when *we* had determined upon a course dishonoring to our Lord; when, all praise unto Him, some one crossed our path, and we were delayed, hindered, deterred? That some one may not have spoken to us as definitely as Abigail did unto David: rather perhaps *their* errand was of quite another nature, which at the time we may have resented as a nuisance for interrupting us; but now, as we look back, do we not see the kind hand of God withholding us from carrying out an evil purpose!

Apparently David was already on his way to execute his evil intention when Abigail met him (v. 20). Blessed it is to see the place which she now took:

“When Abigail saw David, she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face and bowed herself to the ground; and fell at his feet” (vv. 23, 24).



This was not mere adulation, and it was something more than an oriental salutation: it was *faith's acknowledgment* of the "anointed of the Lord." Nabal had insulted him as a runaway slave, but his wife owns him as a superior, as her king in the purpose of God. Her address to him on this occasion (vv. 24-31) is deserving of close study, but we can only offer a few brief remarks upon it.

It is to be carefully noted that Abigail did not upbraid David for cherishing the spirit of revenge and tell him that it ill became his character and calling: that had not been seemly for *her* to do; rather did she leave it for his conscience to accuse him. She did not excuse her husband's conduct, nor did the present case allow her to hide his infirmity, but she sought to turn his well-known character for rashness and insolence (v. 25) into an argument with David, why he should lay aside his resentment. 'She intimated that Nabal (whose name means 'folly'), intended no peculiar affront to him, but only spoke in his usual way of treating those who applied to him; and it was beneath a person of David's reputation and eminence to notice the rudeness of such a man" (Thomas Scott).

Abigail's piety comes out clearly in verse 26. Possibly she perceived a change in David's countenance, or more probably she felt in her spirit that the object before her was now gained; but instead of attributing this unto her pleading, or the present she had brought, she ascribed it solely unto the restraining grace of God: "the Lord hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand." Thus alone is God honored and given His proper place, when we freely impute unto *His* working all that is good in and from our fellow-creatures. Beautiful too is it to behold how she shields her churlish husband: "upon me, my lord, upon me, let this iniquity be" (v. 24), "I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine hand maid" (v. 28). She took upon herself the blame for the illtreatment of his men, and says, If thou wilt be angry, be angry against *me*, rather than with my poor husband.

Next, we behold her strong faith: "the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house" (v. 28). She makes reference unto the future to draw his heart from the present. As another has said, "To the heir of a kingdom, a few sheep could have but little attraction; and one who knew that he had the anointing oil of the Lord upon his head, might easily bear to be called a runaway servant." Ah, it is ever the office of faith to look beyond present circumstances and difficulties, on to the time of deliverance; only thus do

we begin to judge things from *God's* viewpoint. Then she pointed out that David was fighting “the battles of the Lord” (v. 28), and therefore it was not for him to think of avenging an insult to himself.

Her closing words in verses 29-31 are very beautiful.

**First**, she makes reference to the relentless persecution of Saul, but in becoming loyalty to the throne speaks of him as “a man” rather than “the king,” and assures David in most striking language that his life should be preserved (v. 29).

**Second**, looking away from his abject condition, she confidently contemplated the time when the Lord would make him “ruler over Israel”: how heartening was this unto the tried servant of God! Thus too does God often send us a word of comfort when we are most sorely tried. Third, she pleaded with David that he would let his coming glory regulate his present actions, so that in that day, his conscience would not reproach him for previous follies. If we kept more before us the judgment-seat of Christ, surely our conduct would be more regulated thereby. Finally, she besought David to remember her, his “handmaid,” when he should ascend the throne.

“As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprove upon an obedient ear’ (<sup><20512></sup>Proverbs 25:12). Abigail was a wise reprove of David’s passion, and he gave an obedient ear to the reproof according to his own principle: ‘Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness’ (<sup><19E105></sup>Psalm 141:5): never was such an admonition either better given or better taken” (Matthew Henry).

Herein are the children of God made manifest; they are tractable, open to conviction, willing to be shown their faults; but the children of the devil (“sons of Belial”) are like Nabal—churlish, stubborn, proud, unbending. Ah, my reader, lay this to heart: if we will listen to faithful counselors now, we shall be delivered from much folly and spared bitter regrets in the future.

God blessed this word of Abigail’s to David, so that he was now able to view the whole transaction and his own bitter spirit and purpose, in a true light.

**First**, he praises God for sending him this check in a sinful course (v. 32): it is a true mark of spirituality when we discern and own the Lord's hand in such deliverances.

**Second**, he thanked Abigail for so kindly interposing between him and the sin he was about to commit (v. 33): ah, we must not only receive a reproof patiently, but *thank* the faithful giver of it. Note that instead of speaking lightly of the evil he premeditated, David emphasized its enormity.

**Third**, he dismissed her with a message of peace, and accepted her offering. The whole shows us wise men are open to sound advice, even though it comes from their inferiors; and that oaths must not bind us to do that which is evil.

Finally, let us point out for the benefit of preachers, that we have in the above incident a blessed picture of an elect soul being drawn to Christ.

1. Abigail was yoked to Nabal: so by nature we are wedded to the law as a covenant of works, and it is "against us" (~~51024~~ Colossians 2:14).
2. She was barren to Nabal (see ~~48001~~ Romans 7:1-4).
3. It was tidings of impending doom which caused her to seek David (v. 17).
4. She took her place in the dust before him (v, 23).
5. She came to him confessing "iniquity" (v. 24).
6. She sought "forgiveness" (v. 28).
7. She was persuaded of David's goodness (v. 28).
8. She owned his exaltation (v. 30).
9. She, like the dying thief, begs to be "remembered" (v. 31). David granted her request, accepted her person, and said, "Go in peace" (v. 35)!

# CHAPTER 19

## HIS MARRIAGE TO ABIGAIL

### 1 SAMUEL 25

“Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner” (<sup>20131</sup>Proverbs 11:31).

This is a most appropriate verse with which to introduce the passage that is to engage our attention, for each of its clauses receives striking illustration in what is now to be before us. The closing verses of <sup>192501</sup>1 Samuel 25 supply both a blessed and a solemn sequel to what is found earlier in the chapter. There we *saw* the wicked triumphing, and the righteous being oppressed. There we saw the godly wife of the churl, Nabal, graciously and faithfully befriending the outcast David. Here we behold the hand of God’s judgment falling heavily upon the wicked, and the hand of His grace rewarding the righteous.

“Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.” Of all the hundreds of Solomon’s inspired proverbs this is the only one which is prefaced by the word “Behold.” This at once intimates that a subject of great importance is here in view, bidding us fix the eyes of our mind upon the same with close and admiring attention. That subject is the *providential dealings* of God in human affairs, a subject which has fallen sadly into disfavor during the last two or three generations, and one concerning which much ignorance and error now widely prevails. Three things are clearly signified by <sup>20131</sup>Proverbs 11:31: first, that God disposes the affairs of all His creatures; second, that He pleads the cause of the innocent and vindicates His oppressed people; third, that He plagues and overthrows evildoers.

Practically all professing Christians believe that there is a *future* day of retribution, when God shall reward the righteous and punish the wicked; but comparatively few believe God *now* does so. Yet the verse with which we have opened expressly declares that “The righteous shall be recompensed *in the earth*.” It is impossible to read the Scriptures with an

unprejudiced mind and not see this truth exhibited in the history of individuals, families and nations. Cain murdered Abel: a mark was set upon him by God, and he cried, “my punishment is greater than I can bear.” Noah was a just man and walked with God: he and his family were preserved from the flood. Pharaoh persecuted the Hebrews, and was drowned at the Red Sea. Saul thirsted for David’s life, and was slain in battle. Of the Lord we must say, “Verily, He is a God that judgeth in the earth” (~~198811~~ Psalm 58:11).

And now comes one with this objection: All that you have said above obtained during the Old Testament dispensation, but in this Christian era it is not so; we are shut up to faith. How ridiculous. Has God vacated His throne? Is He no longer shaping human affairs? Is His governmental justice no longer operative? Why, the most signal example in all history of God’s “recompensing” the wicked and the sinner in the earth, has transpired in this *Christian* dispensation! It was in A.D. 70 that God publicly executed judgment upon Jerusalem for the Jews’ rejection and crucifixion of their Messiah, and the condition of that people throughout the earth ever since, has been a perpetual exemplification of this solemn truth. The same principle has been repeatedly manifested in the establishment of Christianity upon the ruins of its oppressors. As to Christians being “shut up to faith,” so were the Old Testament saints just as much as we are: ~~2001~~ Habakkuk 2:1-4.

But let us notice a more formidable objection. Have there not been many righteous souls who were falsely accused, fiercely persecuted, and who were not vindicated on earth by God? Have there not been many of the wicked who have prospered temporally, and received no retribution in this life? First, let it be pointed out that God does not always respond immediately. The writer has lived long enough to see more than one or two who traded on the Sabbath, oppressed widows, and despised all religion, brought to want. Second, there is a happy medium between denying (on the one hand) that God is not now acting at all in the capacity of Judge, and insisting (on the other hand) that *every* man fully reaps in this life what he has sown.

Here, as everywhere, the *truth* lies between two extremes. If God were to visibly reward every righteous act and punish every evil-doer in this life, much of the work pertaining to the great Day of Judgment would be forestalled. But if God never honors in this world those who honor Him, or

punishes those who openly defy Him, then we should be without any pre-intimations of that Great Assize, other than what is revealed in those Scriptures of Truth which very few so much as read. Therefore, in His providential government of the world, God wisely gives sufficiently clear manifestations of His love and righteousness and hatred of unrighteousness, as to leave all without excuse concerning what may be expected when we stand before Him to be fully and finally judged. While there are sufficient cases of godliness apparently passing unrewarded and examples of evil-doers prospering, as to leave full room for the exercise of faith that the righteousness of God shall yet be completely vindicated; nevertheless, there are also a sufficient number of clear demonstrations before our eyes of God's vengeance upon the wicked to awe us that *we sin not*.

“And Abigail came to Nabal; and behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more until the morning light” (v. 36).

Recall the circumstances. Only a little while previously Nabal had offered a gross insult to one who was in dire need, and who had several hundred men under his command. Measured by the standards of the world that insult called for retaliation, and so felt the one who had received it. David had sworn to revenge himself by slaying Nabal and every male member of his household, and verse 23 makes it plain that he was on his way to execute that purpose. But for the timely intervention of his wife, Nabal had been engaged in a hopeless fight to preserve his life; and here we see him feasting and drunken!

As Abigail furnishes a typical illustration of a needy sinner coming to Christ and being saved by Him (see close of last chapter), so Nabal affords us a solemn portrayal of one who despised Christ and perished in his sins. Let preachers develop the leading points which we here note down in passing. See the false security of sinners when in dire danger: <sup><21081></sup>Ecclesiastes 8:11. Observe how one who grudges to give to God for the relief of His poor, will lavishly spend money to satisfy his lusts or make a fair show in the flesh: <sup><21619></sup>Luke 16:19-21. O how many there are more concerned about having what they call “a good time,” than they are in making their peace with God: <sup><25512></sup>Isaiah 55:2. So sottish are some in the indulging of their appetites that they sink lower than the beasts of the field: <sup><21013></sup>Isaiah 1:3. It

is adding insult to injury when the sinner not only breaks God's laws but abuses His mercies: <sup><21418></sup>Luke 14:18-20. Remember people are intoxicated with other things besides "wine"—worldly fame, worldly riches, worldly pleasures.

Yes, the fool Nabal vividly portrays the case of multitudes all around us. The curse of God's broken law hanging over them, yet "feasting" as though all is well with their souls for eternity. The sword of divine justice already drawn to smite them down, yet their hearts "merry" with "the pleasures of sin for a season." The Water of Life neglected, but "drunken" with the intoxicating things of this perishing world. A grave awaiting them in a few days' time, but flirting with death during the brief and precious interval. In such a benumbed and giddy state, that it would be the casting of pearls before swine for the godly to speak seriously unto them. O how securely the devil holds his victims! O the beguiling and paralyzing effects of sin! O the utterly hopeless condition of the unbelieving, unless a sovereign God intervenes, works a miracle of grace, and snatches him as a brand from the burning!

"But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone" (v. 37).

The day of danger had been spent in reveling, the night in intoxicated stupefaction, and now he is called, as it were, to account. The sacred narrative records no reproaches that Abigail made: they were not necessary—the guilty conscience of Nabal would perform its own office. Instead, she merely told her husband of what had transpired. Her words at once dispelled his dreams, shattered his peace, and sank his spirits. Most probably, he was overcome with fright, that notwithstanding his wife's kindly overtures, David would swiftly take vengeance upon him. Filled with bitter remorse, now it was too late to repent, giving way to abject despair, Nabal's heart "became as stone." See here a picture of the poor worldling when facing death, and the terrors of the Almighty overwhelming him. See here the deceitfulness of carnal pleasures: overnight his heart merry with wine, now paralyzed with horror and terror. Yes, the "end of that mirth is heaviness" (<sup><21413></sup>Proverbs 14:13); how different the joys which God gives!

"And it came to pass about ten days after, that the Lord smote Nabal, that he died" (v. 38). What a fearfully solemn termination to a wasted life!

Nabal's course was one of folly, his end was that of "the fool." Here was a man "very great" (v. 2), who had boastfully spoken of "*my bread, my flesh, my shearers*" (v. 11); who had scorned David, and spent his time in excessive self-gratification now arrived at the close of his earthly journey, with nothing before him but "the blackness of darkness forever." He seems to have lain in a senseless stupor for ten days, induced either by the effects of his intoxication, or from the horror and anguish of his mind, and this was completed by the immediate stroke of the power and wrath of God, cutting him off out of the land of the living. Such is, my reader, the doom of every one who despises and rejects Christ as Lord and Savior.

"And it came to pass about ten days after, that the Lord smote Nabal, that he died." Not only is the case of Nabal a solemn example of a careless, giddy, reckless sinner, suddenly cut off by God whilst giving himself up to the indulgence of the flesh, when the sword of divine judgment was suspended over his head; but we also see in his death an exhibition of the faithfulness of God, an illustration of <sup><45129></sup>Romans 12:19:

"Dearly beloved, *avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*"

Not only is it sinful for the saint to avenge himself when unjustly insulted and ill treated, but it is quite unnecessary. In due time Another will do it far more effectually for him.

"And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed be the Lord, that has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the land of Nabal, and hath kept His servant from evil: for the Lord hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head" (v. 39).

It is not that David was guilty of unholy glee over the wretched end of one who had wronged him, but that he rejoiced in the display of *God's* glory, of the exercise of divine justice, and the triumphing of piety over iniquity. Therein lies the real key to a number of passages which many of our moderns suppose breathe only a vengeful spirit: as though God erected a lower standard of holiness in Old Testament times than is now given to us. Such was not the case: the law, equally with the Gospel, required *love* for the neighbor.

As this subject has been so sadly wrested by "Dispensationalists," let us add a few words here. Take for example <sup><195810></sup>Psalm 58:10,



“The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.”

Superficial people say, “But *that* is altogether contrary to the spirit of *this* dispensation!” But read on:

“So that a man shall say. Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth” (v. 11).

It was not the exercise of a spirit of malice, which took delight in seeing the destruction of *their* foes: no indeed: for in the Old Testament the divine command was, “*Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth*” (<sup><1247></sup>Proverbs 24:17). Instead, it was the heart bowing in worship before the governmental dealings of God, adoring that Justice which gave unto the wicked their due. And where the heart is not completely under the dominion of maudlin sentimentality, there will be rejoicing *today* when some notoriously wicked character is manifestly cut down by the holy hand of God: so it will be at the end of this era: see <sup><6183></sup>Revelation 18:20; 19:1, 2.

Ere passing on to the next verses, let us take notice of David’s thankful acknowledgment of God’s restraining grace:

“Blessed be the Lord, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath *kept* His servant from evil” (v. 39).

If we carefully reviewed the details of each day, we should frequently find occasion to admire the sin-preventing providences of God. We may well adopt the language of the Psalmist at the close of a beautiful illustration of the divine mercies:

“Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord” (<sup><1973></sup>Psalm 107:43).

Let us never miss an opportunity of praising God when He graciously keeps us from committing any evil we had premeditated.

“And David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife. And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel, they spake unto her, saying, David sent us unto thee, to take thee to him to wife” (vv. 39, 40).

The stroke of God's judgment had freed Abigail from a painful situation, and now the workings of His providence rewarded her righteousness. God gave her favor in the eyes of His anointed. David was charmed not only with the beauty of her person and the prudence of her character, but also with her evident piety—the most valuable quality of all in a wife. Abigail being now a widow, and David's own wife living in adultery, he sent messengers with a proposal of marriage to her. This line in the type is strikingly accurate: the Lord Jesus does not court His wife immediately, but employs the ministers of the Gospel, endued with the Holy Spirit, to woo and win sinners unto Himself.

“And she arose, and bowed herself on her face to the earth and said, Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord” (v. 41).

Very beautiful is it to see the great modesty and humility with which such a wealthy woman received the advances of David, deeming herself unworthy of such an honor, yea, having such respect for him that she would gladly be one of the meanest servants of his household. She accepted his proposal, and thereby added still another line to this typical picture of conversion: note how in the margin of ~~4308~~ 2 Chronicles 30:8 faith is represented as to “give the *hand* unto the Lord”!

“And Abigail hasted, and arose, and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers that went after her; and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife” (v. 42).

Most blessed is this. At the time, David was an homeless wanderer, outlawed; yet Abigail was willing not only to forsake her own house and comfortable position, but to share his trials and endure hardships for his sake. Nevertheless, she knew it would be only for a brief season: she married *in faith*, assured of the fulfillment of God's promises (v. 30) and confident that in due course she would “reign with him”! And this is what true conversion is: a turning of our back upon the old life, willing to suffer the loss of all things for Christ, with faith looking forward to the future.

“David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, and they were also both of them his wives. But (or “for”) Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti the son of Laish, which was of Gallim” (vv. 43, 44).

Polygamy, though not in accord with either the law of nature or the law of God, was a custom which prevailed in those degenerate days, which some good men gave in to, though they are not to be commended for it. In taking Ahinoam of Jezreel to wife (and later several others: ~~<1000>~~ 2 Samuel 3), David followed the corruption of the times, but from the beginning it was not so, nor is it permissible now since Christ has ushered in “the times of reformation” (~~<1000>~~ Matthew 19:4-6).

# CHAPTER 20

## HIS CHASTENING

### ~~<0201>~~ 1 SAMUEL 26

Some of our readers may wonder why we have given to the present chapter such a title, and what bearing it has upon the contents of ~~<0201>~~ 1 Samuel 26; if so, we would ask them to thoughtfully ponder the closing verses of the preceding chapter. Much is lost by many readers of the Bible through failing to observe the connection between the ending of one chapter and the beginning of another; even when incidents which are totally distinct and different follow each other, a spiritual eye may often discern an intimate moral relation between them, and therein many valuable lessons may be learned. Such is the case here. At first glance there appears to be no logical link uniting the further uncalled-for attack of Saul upon David, and his having taken unto himself a wife a little before; but the two things *are* related as is effect to cause, and here is to be found the key which opens to us the Divine significance of what is now to be before us.

“The way of transgressors is hard” (~~<0135>~~ Proverbs 13:15). No doubt the primary reference in these words is to the wicked, yet the principle of them unquestionably holds good in the case of the redeemed. In the keeping of God’s commandments there is “great reward” (~~<0191>~~ Psalm 19:11), in this life (~~<0408>~~ 1 Timothy 4:8) as well as in that which is to come; but in the breaking of God’s commandments bitter chastening is sure to follow. Wisdom’s ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace (~~<0117>~~ Proverbs 3:17), but he who departs from Wisdom’s ways and follows a course of self-will, must expect to smart for it. So it was now in the experience of David. It is true that in case of marital infidelity the Mosaic law permitted the innocent one to obtain a divorce and marry again; but it made no provision for a plurality of wives, and *that* was what David was now guilty of; and for his sin he was sorely chastised.

Ah, my reader, let this truth sink deep into thine heart: God is exercising a moral government over the believer as well as the unbeliever, and He will no more wink at the sins of the one than He will of the other. David was

saved by grace through faith apart from any good works as the meritorious cause, as truly as we are; but he was also called to be holy in all manner of conversation or behavior, as we are. Grace does not set aside the requirements of Divine holiness, instead, it reigns “through righteousness” (<sup><481621></sup>Romans 5:21). And when one who has been saved by grace fails to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts” (<sup><501212></sup>Titus 2:12), then the chastening rod of God falls upon him, that he may be a “partaker of His holiness” (<sup><581210></sup>Hebrews 12:10). And this, be it noted, is not only a part of the Father’s dealings with His *children*, but it is also a part of his ways with His *subjects* as the Moral Ruler of this world.

As we suggested in the seventh chapter of this hook, it was David’s being united in marriage to the unbelieving Michal which accounts for the painful experiences he passed through while a member of Saul’s household. Trials do not come upon us haphazardly; no, they come from the hand of God. Nor does He act capriciously, but according to the righteous principles of His government. In an earlier chapter we saw how that God graciously protected David when the devil-driven king sought his life, and how that He moved him to return home. Why, then, should His restraining hand be removed, and Saul allowed to go forth again on a blood-thirsty mission? Why should the brief respite David had enjoyed now be so rudely broken? The answer is that God was again using his enemy to chasten David for his recent sin, that he might, by painful experience, learn anew that the way of transgressors *is* hard.

“O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea” (<sup><244818></sup>Isaiah 48:18).

What a difference it makes whether the ways of a Christian please or displease the Ruler of this world: it is the difference of having God *for*, or having Him *against* us—not in the absolute sense, not in the eternal sense, but in His *governmental* dealings with us. When the heart be right with God, then He shows Himself strong on our behalf (<sup><141619></sup>2 Chronicles 16:9). When our ways please Him, then He makes even our enemies to be at peace with us (<sup><201617></sup>Proverbs 16:7). Then how diligently should we guard our hearts and ponder the path of our feet (<sup><201623></sup>Proverbs 4:23, 26). Carelessness invites disaster; disobedience ensures chastening; sinning will withhold good things from us (<sup><241625></sup>Jeremiah 5:25).

It is very important to see that while the penal and eternal consequences of the Christian's sins have been remitted by God, because atoned for by Christ, yet the disciplinary and temporal effects thereof are not cancelled—otherwise the saints would never be sick or die. It is not God in His absolute character, acting according to His ineffably holy nature, but God in His official character, acting according to the principles of His righteous government, which deals with the present conduct of His people, rewarding them for their obedience and chastening for disobedience. Hence, when God makes use of the devil and his agents to scourge His people, it is not unto their ultimate destruction, but unto their present plaguing and disciplining. And this is exactly what we see in our present lesson: Saul was allowed to disturb David's rest, but not to take his life. In like manner, the devil is often permitted to whip us, but never to devour us.

“And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hills of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon?” (<sup><0201></sup>1 Samuel 26:1).

The reader may remember that the Ziphites had shown themselves unfriendly towards David on a former occasion. Was it not then a hazardous thing for him to return unto those parts! How are we to account for his acting so injudiciously, and thus courting danger? Ah, let us recall what was pointed out under <sup><0210></sup>1 Samuel 21:1 in Chapter 8 of this book. When the soul is out of touch with God, when fellowship with Him has been broken by giving way to the lusts of the flesh, the judgment is dulled, and imprudent conduct is sure to be the effect. It is not without reason that godliness is so often designated “wisdom” (i.e. <sup><19012></sup>Psalms 90:12), and that a course of evil doing is termed “folly.”

David had acted imprudently in marrying Abigail; he had committed a grave sin in taking unto wife Ahinoam. We say he had acted “imprudently” in marrying Abigail. The *time* was not propitious for that. He was then a homeless wanderer, and in no condition to give unto a wife the care and devotion to which she is entitled. Holy Scripture declares, “to everything there is a season” (<sup><210301></sup>Ecclesiastes 3:1). While on this point, let it be said that, in the judgment of the writer, young men who are out of work and have no good prospects of soon obtaining any, are acting imprudently, yea, rashly, in getting married. Let them possess their souls in patience (<sup><02119></sup>Luke 21:19) and wait a more favorable season, and not tempt God.

“And the Ziphites came unto Saul of Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hills of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon?” If we venture upon the enemy’s territory we must expect to be harassed by him. It is probable these Ziphites were fearful that should David succeed Saul on the throne, then he would avenge himself upon them for their previous perfidy: if so, they were now the more anxious that he should be captured and slain. Afraid to tackle him themselves, they sent word to the king of David’s present whereabouts. Their message presented a temptation for Saul to return again unto that evil course which he had abandoned, temporarily at least: thus does one evil-doer encourage another in wickedness.

“Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph” (v. 2).

Poor Saul, his goodness was as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it vanished away. “How soon do unsanctified hearts lose the good impressions which their convictions have made upon them, and return with the dog to their vomit” (Matthew Henry). O what need has even the Christian to pray earnestly unto God, that since he still has so much of the tinder of corruption left within, the sparks of temptation may be kept far from him, lest when they come together they are “set on fire of hell” (<sup>3006</sup>James 3:6). The providential restraint of God in causing Saul to leave off pursuing David because the Philistines were invading his territory, had wrought no change *within* him: his evil disposition towards God’s anointed was the same as ever; and now that the favorable opportunity to seize David presented itself, he gladly made the most of it.

The action of Saul here provides a solemn illustration of a well known principle: if sin be not dethroned and mortified, it will soon recover its strength, and when a suitable temptation is presented, break out again with renewed force. How often do the servants of God witness souls under deep conviction, followed by a marked reformation, which leads them to believe that a genuine work of grace has taken place within them; only to see them, a little later, return to their sins and become worse than ever. So here: upon receiving word from the Ziphites, Saul’s enmity and malice revived, and, like Pharaoh of old, he again hardened his heart, and determined to make another effort to remove his rival. And thus it is with many a one who has been sobered and awed by the Word: after a brief season, Satan and his agents suggest such thoughts as tend to rekindle the smothered

flame, and then the lusts of the flesh are again allowed free play. O my reader, beg God to *deepen* your convictions and write His law on your heart.

“And Saul pitched in the hill Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon, by the way. But David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness. David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed” (vv. 3,4).

“David neither fled, nor went out to meet Saul, when he was fully certified that he was actually come forth to destroy him! Had a much greater army of uncircumcised Philistines marched against him, he would doubtless have forced them with his small company, and trusted in God for the event; but he would not fight against the ‘Lord’s anointed’” (Thomas Scott).

“David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed.” From the previous verse it would seem David had perceived that some large force was advancing into that part of the country where he and his men were now quartered. Though not certain as to who was at the head of the approaching army, he probably suspected that it was none other than Saul, and therefore did he now send out spies to make sure. He would not fully believe that the king had again dealt so basely with him, till he had the clearest proof of it: thereby does he set us an example not to believe the worst of our enemies till we are really forced to do so by incontestable evidence.

“And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched; and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Net, the captain of his hosts; and Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him” (v. 5).

Most likely it was in the dusk of the evening that David now went forward to reconnoiter, surveying from close range the order of Saul’s camp and the strength of its entrenchments. Though he knew the Lord was his Protector, yet he deemed it necessary to be upon his guard and make use of means for his safety. Well for us when we act as wisely as serpents, but as harmless as doves. It is to be noted that David did not entrust this critical task unto any of his underlings, but performed it in person. The leader ought always to take the lead in the most difficult and dangerous tasks.



“Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee” (v. 6).

David now addressed himself unto two of those who were, most likely, his closest attendants, asking who was bold enough to volunteer in accompanying him on an exceedingly dangerous enterprise—that of two men entering a camp of three thousand soldiers. There is little room for doubt that David was prompted by the Spirit to act thus, from whom he probably received assurance of divine protection: thereby he would be afforded another opportunity of demonstrating to Saul and Israel his innocency. Ahimelech was probably a proselyted Hittite, and not having that faith in the God of Israel which such a severe testing called for, held back, but Abishai, who was David’s own nephew (~~13215~~ 1 Chronicles 2:15, 16), readily agreed to accompany David.

“So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay around about him” (v. 7).

What an extraordinary situation now presented itself before the eyes of David and his lone companion? Where was the guard? Had the watchmen failed at their point of duty? There was none to sound an alarm: the entire camp was wrapped in slumber so profound that, though the two uninvited visitors walked and talked in their midst, none was aroused. Ah, how easily can *God* render impotent an entire host of enemies! All the forces of nature are under His immediate control: He can awaken from the sleep of death, and He can put the living into such a heavy sleep that none can awaken them. There was Saul and all his forces as helpless as though they were in fetters of iron.

“Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time” (v. 8).

In view of what had transpired in the cave (~~02404~~ 1 Samuel 24:4-6), no doubt Abishai thought that though David scrupled to kill Saul with his own hand, yet he would allow one of his officers to slay him: thus would an end be

put to the difficulties and dangers unto himself and his adherents, by cutting off at one blow their inveterate persecutor; the more so, since Providence had again placed Saul in their power, apparently for this very purpose. This illustrates the fact that often it requires as much godly resolution to restrain the excesses of zealous but unspiritual friends, as it does to stand firm against the rage of incensed enemies.

A powerful temptation was here set before David. Had their positions been reversed, would Saul hesitate to slay him? Why, then, should David allow sentiment to prevail? Moreover, did it not look as though God had arranged things to this very end? The previous opportunity was not nearly so strongly marked as this one: Saul had, as it were, accidentally wandered into the cave, but here was something extraordinary—the entire camp was wrapped in a supernatural slumber. Furthermore, his attendant urges upon him that it *was* the will of God to now take things into his own hand. But David was not to be moved from his loyalty to the throne. First, he told Abishai that it would be *sinful* to lay violent hands upon one whose person was sacred (v. 10), for Saul had been appointed by God and anointed for his office. Second, he declared it was *unnecessary*: God would, sooner or later, cut him off (vv. 10, 11). Remembering how the Lord had just before smitten Nabal, he left it to Him to avenge his cause.

“So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul’s bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked; for they were all asleep; because a deep sleep from the Lord was fallen upon them” (v. 12).

Here we see David as a type of Christ in His wonderful forbearance toward His enemies, and in His faith in God: ~~1023~~ 1 Peter 2:23. David’s procedure was an effective method of convincing Saul that he *could* have slain him. And what a proof to the king that the Lord had departed from him, and was protecting David!

“Thus do we lose our strength and comfort when we are careless and secure, and off our watch” (Matthew Henry),

gives the practical lesson for us in Saul’s losing his spear and cruse of water.

# CHAPTER 21

## HIS FINAL WORDS WITH SAUL

### ~~1~~ 1 SAMUEL 26

“There are few periods in the life of David in Which his patient endurance was displayed more conspicuously than in his last interview with Saul. Saul had once more fallen into his power; but David again refused to avail himself of the advantage. He would not deliver himself by means that God did not sanction, nor stretch out his hand against the Lord’s anointed. Recognition of the excellency of David, and confession of his own sin, was extorted, even from the lips of Saul” (B. W. Newton).

In the preceding chapter we followed David and his lone attendant as they entered the camp of Saul, and secured the king’s spear and the cruse of water which lay at his head. Having accomplished his purpose, David now retired from his sleeping enemies. Carrying with him clear evidence that he had been in their very midst, he determined to let them know what had transpired, for he was far from being ashamed of his conduct—when our actions are innocent, we care not who knows of them. David now stations himself within hailing distance, yet sufficiently removed that they could not come at him quickly or easily.

“Then David went over to the other side and stood on the top of an hill afar off; a great space being between them” (~~092613~~ 1 Samuel 26:13).

This was evidently on some high point facing the “hill of Hachilah” (v. 3), a wide valley lying between.

“And David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner?” (v. 14)

David now hailed the sleeping camp with a loud voice, addressing himself particularly unto Abner, who was the general of the army. Apparently he had to call more than once before Abner was fully aroused. “Then Abner

answered and said, Who art thou that criest to the king?" Probably those were words both of anger and contempt: annoyance at being so rudely disturbed from his rest, and scorn as he recognized the voice of the speaker. Abner had so lightly esteemed David and his men, that he had not considered it necessary to keep awake personally, nor even to appoint sentinels to watch the camp. The force of his question was, Whom do you think you are, that you should address the monarch of Israel! Let not the servants of God deem it a strange thing that those occupying high offices in the world consider them quite beneath their notice.

"And David said to Abner, art not thou a valiant man? and who is like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord" (v. 15).

David was not to be brow-beaten.

"The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion" (~~28:1~~ Proverbs 28:1).

Where the fear of God rules the heart, man cannot intimidate. Paul before Agrippa, Luther before the Diet of Worms, John Knox before the bloody Queen Mary, are cases in point. My reader, if you tremble before worms of the dust, it is because you do not tremble before God. David boldly charged Abner with his criminal neglect. First, he reminded him that he was a valiant "man," i.e. a man in office, and therefore duty bound to guard the person of the king. Second, he bantered him in view of the high position he held. Third, he informed him of how the king's life had been in danger that night as the result of his culpable carelessness. It was tantamount to telling him he was disgraced forever.

"This thing is not good that thou hast done. As the Lord liveth ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the Lord's anointed" (v. 16).

By martial law Abner and his officers had forfeited their lives. It should be duly noted that David was not here speaking as a private person to Saul's general, but as the servant and mouthpiece of God, as is evident from "as the Lord liveth." "And now, see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster." David continued to banter him: the force of his word was, Who is *really* the king's friend—you who neglected him and left him exposed, or I that spared him when he was at my mercy! You are

stirring up Saul against me, and pursuing me as one who is unfit to live; but *who*, now, is worthy to die? it was plainly a case of the biter being bit.

“And Saul knew David’s voice, and said, Is this thy voice, my son David?” (v. 17)

The king at once recognized the voice of him that was denouncing Abner, and addressed him in terms of cordial friendship. See here another illustration of the instability and fickleness of poor fallen man: one day thirsting after David’s blood, and the next day speaking to him in terms of affection! What reliance can be placed in such a creature? How it should make us the more revere and adore the One who declares, “I am the Lord, I change not” (~~3006~~ Malachi 3:6). “And David said, it is my voice, my lord, O king” (v. 17). Very beautiful is this. Though David could not admire the variableness and treachery of Saul’s character, yet he respected his office, and is here shown paying due deference to the throne: he not only owned Saul’s crown, but acknowledged that he was his sovereign. Tacitly, it was a plain denial that David was the rebellious insurrectionist Saul had supposed.

“And he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil is in mine hand?” (v. 18).

Once more (cf. ~~0241~~ 1 Samuel 24:11, etc.) David calmly remonstrated with the king: what ground was there for his being engaged in such a blood-thirsty mission? First, David was not an enemy, but ready to act as his “servant” and further the court’s interests; thus he suggested it was against Saul’s own good to persecute one who was ready to do his bidding and advance his kingdom. Equally unreasonable and foolish have been other rulers who hounded the servants of God: none are more loyal to the powers that be, none do as much to really strengthen their hands, as the true ministers of Christ; and therefore, they who oppose them are but forsaking their own mercies.

Second, by pursuing David, Saul was driving him from his master and lawful business, and compelling to flee the one who wished to follow him with respect. Oh, the exceeding sinfulness of sin: it is not only unreasonable and unjust (and therefore denominated “iniquity”), but cruel, both in its nature and in its effects. Third, he asked, “What have I done? or what evil is in mine hand?” Questions which a clear conscience (and that

only) is never afraid of asking. It was the height of wickedness for Saul to persecute him as a criminal, when he was unable to charge him with any crime. But let us observe how that by these honest questions David was a type of Him who challenged His enemies with “which of you convicteth Me of sin?” (~~41846~~ John 8:46), and again,

“If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou Me?” (~~41823~~ John 18:23).

“Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the Lord have stirred thee up against me, let Him accept an offering” (v. 19).

It is likely that David had paused and waited for Saul to make reply to his searching queries. Receiving no answer, he continued his address. David himself now suggested two possible explanations for the king’s heartless course, First, it might be that the Lord Himself was using him thus to righteously chastise His servant for some fault. It was *the divine side* of things which first engaged David’s mind: “If the Lord hath stirred thee up against me.” This is a likelihood which should always exercise the conscience of a saint, for the Lord “does not afflict willingly” (~~21833~~ Lamentations 3:33), but usually because *we* give Him occasion to use the rod upon us. Much of this would be spared, if we kept shorter accounts with God and more unsparingly judged ourselves (~~46113~~ 1 Corinthians 11:31). It is always a timely thing to say with Job, “Show me wherefore Thou contendest with me” (~~09102~~ 1 Samuel 10:2).

Should the Lord convict him of any offense, then “let him accept an offering”: David would then make his peace with God and present the required sin offering. For the Christian, this means that, having humbled himself before God, penitently confessed his sins, he now pleads afresh the merits of Christ’s blood, for the remission of their governmental consequences. But secondly, if God was not using Saul to chastise David (as indeed He was), then if evil men had incited Saul to use such violent measures, the divine vengeance would assuredly overtake them—they were accursed before God. It is blessed to note the mildness of David on this occasion: so far from reviling the king, and attributing his wickedness unto the evil of his own heart, every possible excuse was made for his conduct.

“But if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the Lord; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go, serve other gods” (v. 19).

This was what pained David the most: not the being deprived of an honorable position as servant to Saul, not the being driven from home, but being exiled from Canaan and cut off from the public means of grace. No longer could he worship in the tabernacle, but forced out into the deserts and mountains, he would soon be obliged to leave the Holy Land. By their actions, his enemies were saying in effect, “Go, serve other gods”: driving him into a foreign country, where he would be surrounded by temptations. It is blessed to see that it was the having to live among *idolaters*, and not merely among *strangers*, which worried him the more.

Ah, nought but the sufficiency of divine grace working in David’s heart could, under such circumstances, have kept him from becoming utterly disgusted with the religion which Saul, Abner, and his fellows professed. But for *that*, David had said, “If these be ‘Israelites,’ then let me become and die a Philistine!” Yes, and probably more than one or two readers of this chapter have, like the writer, passed through a similar situation. We expect unkind, unjust, treacherous, merciless, treatment at the hands of the world; but when they came from those whom we have regarded as true brethren and sisters in Christ, we were shaken to the very foundation, and but for the mighty power of the Spirit working within, would have said, “If *that* is Christianity, I will have no more to do with it!” But, blessed be His name, God’s grace *is* sufficient.

“Now therefore let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the Lord: for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains” (v. 20).

In these words David completed his address to Saul. First, he gave solemn warning that if he shed his blood, it would fall before the face of the Lord, and He would not hold him guiltless. Second, he argued that it was far beneath the dignity of the monarch of Israel to be chasing the son of Jesse, whom he here likens unto “a flea”—an insignificant and worthless thing. Third, he appeals again to the king’s conscience by resembling his case to men hunting a “partridge”—an innocent and harmless bird, which when attacked by men offers no resistance, but flies away; such had been David’s attitude. Now we are to see what effect all this had upon the king.

“Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David; for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day; behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly” (v. 21).

This is more than the wretched king had acknowledged on a former occasion, and yet it is greatly to be feared that he had no true sense of his wickedness or genuine repentance for it. Rather was it very similar to the remorseful cry of Judas, when he said,

“I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood”  
(~~1270~~ Matthew 27:4).

These words of Saul’s were the bitter lament of one who, too late, realized he had made shipwreck of his life. He owned that he had sinned—broken God’s law—by so relentlessly persecuting David. He besought his son to return, assuring him that he would do him no more injury; but he must have realized that his promises could not be relied upon. He intimated that David’s magnanimity had thoroughly melted his heart, which shows that even the worst characters are capable of recognizing the good deeds of God’s people.

“Behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.” O what a fool he had been: in opposing the man after God’s own heart, in alienating his own son, in so sorely troubling Israel, and in bringing madness and sorrow upon himself! And how exceedingly had he “erred”: by driving away from his court the one who would have been his best friend, by refusing to learn his lesson on the former occasion (~~1240~~ 1 Samuel 24), by vainly attempting to fight against the Most High! Unbelieving reader, suffer us to point out that these words, “I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly,” are the wail of the lost in Hell. Now it is too late they realize what fools they were in despising the day of their opportunity, in neglecting their souls’ eternal interests, in living and dying in sin. They realize they “erred exceedingly” in ignoring the claims of God, desecrating His holy Sabbaths, shunning His Word, and despising His Son. Will this yet be *your* cry?

“And David answered and said, Behold the king’s spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it” (v. 22).

This at once shows the estimate which David placed on the words of the king: he did not dare to trust him and return the spear in person, still less



accompany him home. Good impressions quickly pass from such characters. No good words or fair professions entitle those to our confidence who have long sinned against the light. Such people resemble those spoken of in ~~50123~~ James 1:23, 24, who hear the word and do it not, and are like unto a man “beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, goeth his way, *and straightway forgetteth* what manner of man he was.” Thus it was with Saul; he now said that he had sinned, played the fool and erred exceedingly, yet this deterred him not from seeking unto the witch of Endor!

“The Lord render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness: for the Lord delivered thee into my hand today, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the Lord’s anointed” (v. 23).

This was very solemn, David now appealed to God to be the Judge of the controversy between himself and Saul, as One who was inflexibly just to render unto every man according to his works. David’s conscience is quite dear in the matter, so he need not hesitate to ask the righteous One to decide the issue: good for us is it when we too are able to do likewise. In its final analysis, this verse was really a prayer: David asked for divine protection on the ground of the mercy which he had shown to Saul.

“And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the Lord, and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation” (v. 24).

It is to be noted that David made no direct reply to what Saul had said, but his language shows plainly that he placed no reliance on the king’s promises. He does not say, “As thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in *thine* eyes,” but rather, “in the eyes of the Lord.” His confidence was in God alone, and though further trials awaited him, he counted upon His power and goodness to bring him safely through them.

“Then Saul said to David, Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail” (v. 25).

Such were the final words of Saul unto David: patient faith had so far prevailed as to extort a blessing even from its adversary. Saul owned there was a glorious future before David, for he who humbleth himself shall be exalted. There was a clear conviction in the king’s mind that David was

avored by God, yet that conviction in nowise checked him in his own downward course: convictions which lead to no amendment only increase condemnation. "So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place" (v. 25). Thus they parted, to meet no more in this world. Saul went forward to his awful doom; David waited God's time to ascend the throne.

# CHAPTER 22

## HIS UNBELIEF

### ~~1020~~ 1 SAMUEL 27

After Saul's departure (~~1025~~ 1 Samuel 26:25), David took stock of his situation, but unfortunately he left God out of his calculations. During tedious and trying delays, and especially when outward things seem to be all going against us, there is grave danger of giving way to unbelief. Then it is we are very apt to forget former mercies, and fear the worst. And when faith staggers, obedience wavers, and self-expedients are frequently employed, which later, involve us in great difficulties. So it was now with the one whose varied life we are seeking to trace. As David considered the situation he was still in, remembered the inconstancy and treachery of Saul, things appeared very gloomy to him. Knowing full well the king's jealousy, and perhaps reasoning that he would now regard him with a still more evil eye, since God so favored him, David feared the worst.

“The moment in which faith attains any triumph, is often one of peculiar danger. Self-confidence may be engendered by success, and pride may spring out of honor that humility has won; or else, if faithfulness, after having achieved its victory, still finds itself left in the midst of danger and sorrow, the hour of triumph may be succeeded by one of undue depression and sorrowful disappointment. And thus it was with David. He had obtained this great moral victory; but his circumstances were still unchanged. Saul yet continued to be king of Israel: himself remained a persecuted outcast. As the period, when he had before spared the life of Saul, had been followed by days of lengthened sorrow, so he probably anticipated an indefinite prolongation of similar sufferings, and his heart quailed at the prospect” (B. W. Newton).

Solemn is it to mark the contrast between what is found at the close of ~~1030~~ 1 Samuel 26 and that which is recorded in the opening verses of the next chapter. To question the faithfulness and goodness of God is fearful wickedness, though there are some who regard it as a very trivial offense;

in fact, there are those who well-nigh exalt the doubts and fears of Christians into fruits and graces, and evidences of great advancement in spiritual experience. It is sad indeed to find a certain class of men petting and pampering people in unbelief and distrust of God, and being in this matter unfaithful both to their Master and to the souls of His saints. Not that we are an advocate for smiting the feeble of the flock, but their *sins* we must denounce. Any teaching which causes Christians to pity themselves for their failings and falls, is evil, and to deny that doubting the loving kindness of God is a very heinous offense, is highly reprehensible.

“And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines” (~~19270~~ 1 Samuel 27:1).

“And yet the hour of Saul’s fall and of his own deliverance was close at hand. The Lord was about to interfere, and to extricate His faithful servant from his long and sore afflictions. Almost the very last hour of his trial under Saul had come, yet at that last moment he failed: so hard is it for ‘patience to have her *perfect* work.’ David had just said, ‘Let *the Lord* deliver me out of all tribulation.’ It was a strong, and no doubt a sincere expression of confidence in God; but the feeling of the heart, as well as the expression of the lips, may often exceed the reality of our spiritual strength, and therefore, not unfrequently, when strong expressions have been used, they who have used them are tested by some peculiar trial; that so, if there be weakness, it may be detected, and no flesh glory in the presence of God” (B. W. Newton).

“And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul.” Such a conclusion was positively erroneous. There was *no evidence in proof* thereof: he had been placed in perilous positions before, but God had never deserted him. His trials had been many and varied, but God had always made for him “a way to escape” (~~46013~~ 1 Corinthians 10:13). It was therefore *contrary to* the evidence. Once he had said,

“thy servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them” (~~191736~~ 1 Samuel 17:36).

Why not reason like that now? and say “Thy servant slew Goliath, was delivered from the javelin of a madman, escaped the evil devices of Doeg, and so he shall continue to escape out of the hand of Saul!” Moreover,

David's rash conclusion was *contrary to promise*: Samuel had poured upon his head the anointing oil as God's earnest that he should be king—how then could he be slain by Saul?

How is David's unbelief to be accounted for?

“**First**, because he was a man. The best of men are men at the best, and man at his best is such a creature that well might David himself say, ‘Lord, what is man?’... If faith never gave place to unbelief, we might be tempted to lift up the believer into a demigod, and think him something more than mortal. That we might see that a man full of faith is still a man, that we might glory in infirmities, since by them the power of God is the more clearly proved, therefore God was pleased to let the feebleness of man grievously show itself. Ah, it was not David who achieved those former victories, but *God's grace* in David; and now, when that is removed for a moment, see what Israel's champion becomes!

“**Second**, David had been exposed to a very long trial; not for one week, but for month after month, he had been hunted like a partridge, upon the mountains. Now a man could bear one trial, but a perpetuity of tribulations is very hard to bear. Such was David's trial: always safe, but always harassed; always secure through God, but always hunted about by his foe. No place could give him any ease. If he went unto Keilah, then the citizens would deliver him up; if he went into the woods of Ziph, then the Ziphites betrayed him; if he went even to the priest of God, there was that dog of a Doeg to go to Saul, and accuse the priest; even in Engedi or in Adullam he was not secure; secure, I grant you, in God, but always persecuted by his foe. Now, this was enough to make the wise man mad, and to make the faithful man doubt. Do not judge too harshly of David; at least judge just as hardly of yourselves.

“**Third**, David had passed through some strong excitements of mind. Just a day or so before he had gone forth with Abishai in the moonlight to the field where Saul and his hosts lay sleeping. They passed the outer circle where the common soldiers lay, and quietly and stealthily the two heroes passed without awakening any. They came at last to the spot where the captains of the hundreds slept, and they trod over their slumbering bodies without arousing them. They reached the spot where Saul lay, and David had to hold back Abishai's hand from slaying him;

so he escaped from this temptation, as he had aforetime. Now, brethren, a man may do these great things helped by God, but do you know it is a sort of natural law with us, that after a strong excitement *there is a reaction!* It was thus with Elijah after his victory over the prophets of Baal: later, he ran from Jezebel, and cried ‘Let me die.’

“But there was another reason, for we are not to exculpate David. He sinned, and that not merely through infirmity, but through evil of heart. It seems to us that David had *restrained prayer*. In every other action of David you find some hint that he asked counsel of the Lord... But this time what did he talk with? Why, with the most deceitful thing that he could have found—with his own heart... Having restrained prayer, he did the fool’s act: he forgot his God, he looked only at his enemy, and it was no wonder that when he saw the strength of the cruel monarch, and the pertinacity of his persecution, he said ‘I shall one day fall before him.’ Brothers and sisters, would you wish to hatch the egg of unbelief till it turns into a scorpion? Restrain prayer! Would you see evils magnified and mercies diminish? Would you find your tribulations increased sevenfold and your faith diminished in proportion? Restrain prayer!” (Condensed from C. H. Spurgeon).

“I shall now perish one day.” Ah, has not this been the cry of many a Satan-harassed saint! He looks within and sees what God has done for him: that he has desires and aspirations which he never had before conversion, so that the things he once hated he now loves. He realizes there has been a radical change, such as mere nature could not possibly affect, and his spirit rejoices in the hope set before him. *But* he also sees so very much corruption within him, and finds so much weakness that aids and abets that corruption; he sees temptations and sore trials awaiting him, and cold despondency falls upon his heart, and doubts and questions vex his mind. He is tripped up and has a bad fall, and then Satan roars in his ear, “Now God has forsaken thee,” and he is almost ready to sink into despair.

“And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that were with him unto Achish, the son of Maoch king of Gath” (v. 2).

Under the pressure of trials, *relief* is what the flesh most desires, and unless the mind be stayed upon God, there is grave danger of seeking to take things into our own hands. Such was the case with David: having leaned

unto his own understanding, being occupied entirely with the things of sight and sense, he now sought relief in his own way, and followed a course which was the very opposite to that which the Lord had enjoined him (~~1923~~ 1 Samuel 22:5). There God had told him to depart from the land of Moab and go into the land of Judah, and there He had marvelously preserved him. How this shows us what poor weak creatures the best of us are, and how low our graces sink when the Spirit does not renew them!

In what is here before us (v. 2), we are shown the ill effects of David's unbelief.

**“First**, it made him do a foolish thing; the same foolish thing which he had rued once before. Now we say a burnt child always dreads the flame; but David had been burnt, and yet, in his unbelief, he puts his hand into the same fire again. He went once to Achish, king of Gath, and the Philistines identified him, and being greatly afraid, David feigned himself mad in their hands, and they drove him away. Now he goes to the same Achish again! Yes, and mark it, my brethren, although you and I know the bitterness of sin, yet if we are left to our own unbelief, we shall fall into the same sin again. I know we have said, ‘No; never, never; I know so much by experience what an awful thing this is.’ Your experience is not worth a rush to you apart from the continual restraints of grace. If your faith fail, everything else goes down with it; and you hoary-headed professor, will be as a big fool as a very boy, if God lets you alone.

**“Second**, he went over to the Lord's enemies. Would you have believed it: he that killed Goliath, sought a refuge in Goliath's land; he who smote the Philistines trusts in the Philistines; nay, more, he who was Israel's champion, becomes the chamberlain to Achish, for Achish said, ‘Therefore will I make thee keeper of my head forever,’ and David became thus the captain of the body-guard of the king of Philistia, and helped preserve the life of one who was the enemy of God's Israel. Ah, if we doubt God, we shall soon be numbered among God's foes. Inconsistency will win us over into the ranks of His enemies, and they will be saying, ‘What do these Hebrews here?’ ‘The just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him’—the two sentences are put together as if the failure of our faith would surely lead to a turning back to sin.

“**Third**, he was on the verge of still worse sin—of overt acts of warfare against the Lord’s people. David’s having become the friend of Achish, when Achish went to battle against Israel, he said to him, ‘Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go with me to battle, thou and thy men’; and David professed his willingness to go. We believe it was only a feigned willingness; but then, you see, we convict him again of falsehood. It is true that God interposed and prevented him fighting against Israel, but this was no credit to David, for you know, brethren, we are guilty of a sin, even if we do not commit it, if we are willing to commit it. The last effect of David’s sin was this: it brought him into great trial” (C. H. Spurgeon).

O my readers, what a solemn warning is all of this for our hearts! How it shows us the wickedness of unbelief and the fearful fruits which that evil root produces. It is true that David had no reason to trust Saul, but he had every reason to continue trusting God. But alas, unbelief is the sin of all others which doth so easily beset us. It is inherent in our very nature, and it is more impossible to root it out by any exertions of ours, than it is to change the features of our countenances. What need is there for us to cry daily, “Lord, I believe, help *Thou* mine unbelief” (~~41024~~ Mark 9:24). Let me see in David myself, my very nothingness. O to fully realize that in our best moments, we can never trust ourselves too little, nor God too much.

“And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that were with him unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath” (v. 2).

Here we see David not only forsaking the path of duty, but joining interests with the enemies of God: this we must never do; no, not even for self-preservation, or out of care for our family. As another has said, “It is in one sense, a very easy matter to get out of the place of trial; but then we get out of the place of blessing also.” Such is generally, if not always the case, with the children of God. No matter how sore the trial, how pressing our circumstances, or how acute our need, to “rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him” (~~195707~~ Psalm 37:7), is not only the course which most honors Him, but which, in the long run, spares us much great confusion and trouble which results when *we* seek to extricate ourselves.

“And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household” (v. 3).



David's circumstances upon entering into Gath this time were decidedly different from what they had been on a previous occasion (~~10210~~ 1 Samuel 21:10-15): then he entered secretly, now openly; then as a person unknown, now as the recognized enemy of Israel's king; then alone, now with six hundred men; then he was driven hence, now he probably had been invited thither. Apparently he met with a kindly reception—probably because the king of Gath now hoped to use him in his own service: either that he could employ David against Israel, or secure an advantageous alliance with him, if ever he came to the throne. Thus the plan of David appeared to meet with success: at least he found a quiet dwelling-place. Providence seemed to be smiling upon him, and none but an anointed eye could have discerned otherwise.

“And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, even David with his two wives: Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife” (v. 3).

Ah, has not the Holy Spirit supplied the key (in the second half of this verse) which explains to us David's sad lapse? It was his “two wives” which had displeased the Lord! We entitled the last chapter but one David's “chastening” and sought to point out the connection between what is found at the end of ~~10250~~ 1 Samuel 25 and that which is recorded in ~~10260~~ 1 Samuel 26, namely, the renewed attack of Saul upon him. That divine “chastening” was now continued, and may be discerned by the spiritual eye in a variety of details.

In this chapter we have sought to show the awfulness of unbelief, and the evil character of the fruits that issue from it; and how that the graces of the strongest Christian soon became feeble unless they are renewed by the Spirit. But let it be now pointed out that God does not act capriciously in this: if our graces be not renewed, the fault lies in ourselves. It is by working backward from effect to cause, that we may here learn the most important lesson of all.

- (1) David sinned grievously in seeking refuge among the enemies of the Lord.
- (2) He went to them without having sought divine guidance.
- (3) He leaned unto his own understanding, and reasoned that it was best for him to go to Gath.

- (4) He acted thus because he had given way to unbelief.
- (5) He gave way to unbelief because his faith was not divinely renewed and prayer in him had been choked.
- (6) His faith was not renewed because the Holy Spirit was grieved over his sin! Re-read these six points in their inverse order.

# CHAPTER 23

## HIS STAY AT ZIKLAG

### ~~<1020>~~ 1 SAMUEL 27

One of the chief differences between the Holy Spirit's description of Biblical characters and the delineations in human biographies is, that the former has faithfully presented their failures and falls, showing us that they were indeed men of "like passions with us"; whereas the latter (with very rare exceptions) record little else than the fair and favorable side of their subjects, leaving the impression they were more angelic than human. Biographies need to be read sparingly, especially modern ones, and then with due caution (remembering that there is much "between the lines" not related), lest a false estimate of the life of a Christian be formed, and the *honest* reader be driven to despair. But God has painted the features of Biblical characters in the colors of reality and truth, and thus we find that

"as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man"  
(~~<12719>~~ Proverbs 27:19).

The *practical* importance (and it is *that* which should ever be our first and chief quest as we read and ponder the Scriptures) of what has just been pointed out should preserve both preacher and hearer from a one-sided idea of Christian experience. A saint on earth is not a sinless being; nor, on the other hand, does sin have complete dominion over him. In consequence of both the "flesh" and the "spirit" still indwelling him, in "*many* things" he offends (~~<518D>~~ James 3:2), and in many things he pleases God. The "old man" is not only still alive (though the Christian is to "reckon" it as being *judicially* dead before God: ~~<60611>~~ Romans 6:11), but is constantly active; and though divine grace restrain it from breaking forth into much outward evil, yet it defiles all our inner being, and pollutes our best endeavors both Godward and manward (~~<60714>~~ Romans 7:14-25). Nevertheless, the "new man" is also active, producing that which is glorifying to God.

It is because of this *dual* experience of the Christian that we are ever in danger of concentrating too much on the one aspect, to the ignoring of the

other. Those with a pessimistic turn of mind, need to watch against dwelling too much on the gloomy side of the Christian life, and spending too much time in Job and the Lamentations, to the neglect of the later Psalms and the epistle to the Philippians. In the past, a certain class of writers occupied themselves almost exclusively with the contemplation of human depravity and its fearful workings in the saint, conveying the idea that a constant mourning over indwelling sin and groaning over its activities was the only mark of high spiritual experience. Such people are only happy when they are miserable. We counsel those who have been strongly influenced by such teaching, to turn frequently to John's Gospel, chapters 14 to 17, and turn each verse into prayer *and praise*.

On the other side, those with a buoyant temperament and optimistic turn of mind need to watch against the tendency to appropriate and meditate upon the promises to the almost total ignoring of the precepts of Scripture; to strive against lightness and superficiality, and to be careful they do not mistake exuberance of natural spirits for the steadier and deeper flow of spiritual joy. To be all the time dwelling upon the Christian's standing, his privileges and blessings, to the neglect of his state, obligations and failures, will beget pride and self-righteousness. Such people need to prayerfully ponder Romans 7, the first half of Hebrews 12, and much in 1 Peter. Sinful self and all its wretched failures should be sufficiently noticed so as to keep us in the dust before God. Christ and His great salvation should be contemplated so as to lift us above self and fill the soul with thanksgiving.

The above meditations have been suggested by that portion of David's life which is now to engage our attention. The more it be carefully pondered, the more should we be delivered from entertaining an erroneous conception of the experience and history of a saint. Not that we are to seize upon these sad blemishes in David to *excuse* our own faults—no indeed, that would be wickedness of the worst kind; but we are to be *humbled* by the realization that the same evil nature indwells *us*, and produces works in you and me equally vile. Those who are *surprised* that the Psalmist should act as he here did, must be woefully ignorant of the "plague" of their own hearts, and blind unto sins in their own lives which are just as abominable in the sight of the Holy One as were those of David's.

In our last chapter we saw that unbelief and fear so gained the upper hand over David, that he exclaimed,

“I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines” (<sup><192701></sup>1 Samuel 27:1).

And yet, probably only a short while before, this same David had declared,

“Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident” (<sup><192718></sup>Psalm 27:3).

Yes, and has not the reader, when in close communion with the Lord, and when the sails of faith were fully spread and filled with the breeze of the Spirit, said or felt the same? And, alas that it should be so, has not this confidence waned, and then disappeared before some fresh trial! How these sad lapses should show us *ourselves*, and produce real humility and self abasement. How often expressions from our own lips in the past condemn us in the present!

Then we pointed out that, “under the pressure of trial, *relief* is what the flesh most desires.” Perhaps the reader may ask, “but is not that natural?” Yes indeed, but is it *spiritual*? Our first desire in trial, as in everything else, should be that *God* may be honored, and for this, we should earnestly seek grace to so conduct ourselves that we may “glorify the Lord in the fires” (<sup><23415></sup>Isaiah 24:15). Our next concern should be that our *soul* may profit from the painful experience, and for this we should beg the Lord to graciously *sanctify it* unto our lasting good. But alas, when unbelief dominates us, *God* is forgotten, and deliverance, our own case, obsess the mind; and hence it is that—unless divine grace interpose—we seek relief in the wrong quarter and by unspiritual means. Thus it was here with David: he and his men passed over unto Achish, the king of Gath.

“And David dwelt with Achish, he and his men, every man with his household” (v. 3).

From these words it seems that Achish, the Philistine, made no demur against David and his men entering his territory; rather does it look as though he met with a friendly and kindly reception. Thus, from present appearances—the obtaining, at last, a quiet dwelling-place—it seemed that the fleshly plan of David was meeting with real success, that Providence was smiling upon him. Yes, it is often this way at *first* when a Christian takes things into his own hands: to carnal reason the sequel shows he did the right thing. Ah, but later on, he discovers otherwise. One false step is

followed by another, just as the telling of a lie is usually succeeded by other lies to cover it. So it was now with David: he went from bad to worse.

“And it was told Saul that David was fled to Gath: and he sought no more again for him” (v. 4).

This too would seem to confirm the thought that David had acted wisely, and that God was blessing his worldly scheme, for his family and people now rested safely from the approaches of their dreaded foe. But when everything is going smoothly with the Christian, and the enemy ceases to harass him, then is the time, generally speaking, when he needs to suspect that something is wrong with his testimony, and beg God to show him what it is. Nor was Saul’s cessation of hostility due to any improvement of character, but because he dared not to come where David now was.

“Thus many seem to leave their sins, but really their sins leave them; they would persist in them if they could” (Matthew Henry).

“And David said unto Achish, If I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee?” (v. 5).

David knew from experience how jealous were kings and their favorites, so to prevent the envy of Achish’s courtiers he deemed it well not to remain too near and receive too many favors at his hands. Probably the idolatry and corruption which abounded in the royal city made David desirous of getting his family and people removed therefrom. But in the light of the sequel, it seems that the principle motive which prompted him to make this request was, that he might have a better opportunity to fall upon some of the enemies of Israel without the king of Gath being aware of it. The practical lesson for us is, that when we forsake the path of God’s appointment a spirit of restlessness and discontent is sure to possess us.

David presented his request to Achish very modestly: “give me a place in *some* town in the country that I may dwell there, where they could enjoy greater privacy and more freedom from the idolatry of the land. Six hundred men and their families would crowd the royal city, and might prove quite a burden; while there was always the danger of the subjects of Achish regarding David as a *rival* in state and dignity. But to what a low level had God’s anointed descended when he speaks of himself as the “servant” of Achish! How far from communion with the Lord was he,

when one of the uncircumcised is to choose his dwelling-place for him! A child of God is “the Lord’s *free* man” (<sup><4372></sup>1 Corinthians 7:22): yes, but to maintain this in a practical way, he must walk in faith and obedience to Him; otherwise he will be brought in bondage to the creature, as David was.

“Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day:” (v. 6). Originally this city had been given to the tribe of Judah (<sup><0653></sup>Joshua 15:31), then to Simeon (<sup><4395></sup>John 19:5), though it seems that neither of them possessed it, but that it came into the hands of the Philistines. “Wherefore Ziklag pertained unto the kings of Judah unto this day.” Being given unto David, who shortly after became king, this section was annexed to the crown-lands, and ever after it was part of the portion of the kings of Judah: so that it was given to David not as a temporary possession, but, under God, as a permanent one for his descendants. Truly, the ways of the Lord are past finding out.

“And the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was a full year and four months” (v. 7).

“But rest reached by self-will or disobedience is anything rather than peace to the heart that fears God, and loves His service. David could not forget that Israel, whom he had forsaken, were God’s people; nor that the Philistines, whom he had joined, were God’s enemies. He could not but remember his own peculiar relation to God and to His people—for Samuel had anointed him, and even Saul had blessed him as the destined king of Israel. His conscience therefore, must have been ill at ease; and the stillness and rest of Ziklag would only cause him to be more sensible of its disquietude” (B. W. Newton).

“And David and his men went up, and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those nations were of old the inhabitants of the land” (v. 8).

“When the consciences of God’s servants tells them that their position is wrong, one of their devices not unfrequently is, to give themselves, with fresh energy, to the attainment of some right end; as if rightly directed, or successful energy, could atone for committed evil, and satisfy the misgivings of a disquieted heart. Accordingly, David, still retaining the self-gained rest of Ziklag, resolved that it should not be the rest of inactivity, but that he

would thence put forth fresh energies against the enemies of God and of His people. The Amalekites were nigh. The Amalekites were they of whom the Lord had sworn that He would have war with Amalek from generation to generation. David therefore went up against them, and triumphed” (B. W. Newton).

Those which David and his men invaded were some of the original tribes which inhabited Canaan, and were such as had escaped the sword of Saul, and had fled to more distant parts. His attack upon them was not an act of cruelty, for those people had long before been divinely sentenced to destruction. Yet though they were the enemies of the Lord and His people, David’s attack upon them was ill timed, and more likely than not the chief motive which prompted him was the obtaining of food and plunder for his forces.

“Nothing could be more complete than his success: ‘He smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive; and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel.’ Ziklag was enriched with spoil, and that the spoil of the enemies of the Lord. What prosperity then could be greater—what apparently more immediately from God?” (B. W. Newton)

A solemn warning, which we do well to take to heart, is pointed for us in verses 8, 9, namely, not to measure the right or wrong of a course of conduct by the *success* which appears to attend it. This principle is now being flagrantly disregarded, the scripturalness or unscripturalness of an action concerns few professing Christians today: so long as it seems to produce good results, this is all that matters. Worldly devices are brought into the “church,” fleshly and high-pressure methods are adopted by “evangelists,” and so long as crowds are drawn, the young people “held,” and “converts” made, it is argued that the end justifies the means. If “souls are being saved,” the great majority are prepared to wink at almost anything today, supposing that the “blessing of God” (?) is a sure proof that nothing serious is wrong. So the children of Israel might have reasoned when the waters flowed from the rock which Moses disobeyedly smote in his anger. So David might have concluded when such success attended his attack upon the Amalekites! To judge by visible results is walking by sight; to measure everything by Holy Writ and reject all that is out of harmony therewith, is walking by faith.



“And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned and came to Achish” (v. 9).

Mark well the closing words of this verse: one had thought that Achish was the last man whom David would wish to see at this time. It had been far more prudent had he returned quietly to Ziklag, but as we pointed out in a previous chapter, when a saint is out of communion with God, and controlled by unbelief, he no longer acts according to the dictates of common sense. A striking and solemn illustration of that fact is here before us. O that writer and reader may lay this well to heart: *faith and wisdom* are inseparably linked together. Nothing but folly can issue from an unbelieving heart, that is, from a heart which has not been won by divine grace.

“And Achish said, Whither have ye made a road today?” (v. 10).

No doubt the king of Gath was surprised, as he had reason to be, when he saw David and his men so heavily laden with their booty, and therefore does he inquire where they had been. Sad indeed is it to hear the reply given: “And David said, Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites.” Though not a downright lie, yet it was an equivocation, made with the design of deceiving, and therefore cannot be defended, nor is to be imitated by us. David was not willing that Achish should know the truth. He did not now play the part of a madman, as he had on a former occasion, but fearful of losing his self-chosen place of protection, he dissembled unto the king. The Amalekites were fellow-Canaanites with the Philistines, and if not in league with them, Achish and his people would probably be apprehensive of danger by harboring such a powerful foe in their midst, and would want to expel them. To avoid this, David resorted to deception. O what need has writer and reader to pray daily, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

# CHAPTER 24

## HIS SORE DILEMMA

### ~~<0270>~~ 1 SAMUEL 28

Following his local incursion upon and victory over the Amalekites, David, instead of quietly making for Ziklag, most imprudently “came to Achish” (~~<0270>~~ 1 Samuel 27:9). Seeing him so heavily laden with the spoils which had been taken, the king inquired where he had been. David feared to tell Achish that he had been destroying Israel’s enemies and the Philistines’ friends, and therefore returned a misleading answer. David had taken precaution to cover his tracks, for we are told that he

“saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring tidings to Gath, saying, Lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David, and so will be his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines” (~~<0271>~~ 1 Samuel 27:11).

Forgetful of God and the many tokens he had already received of His protecting care, David dissembled. Achish was thoroughly deceived, for we read,

“Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant forever” (~~<0272>~~ 1 Samuel 27:12).

Probably it was his persuading Jonathan to tell his father that he had gone about his business, telling Ahimelech an untruth, his prevarications before Achish, and some other instances, which caused David, when later he penitently reflected upon them, to pray “Remove from me the way of lying” (~~<0273>~~ Psalm 119:29). This seems to have been David’s “besetting sin,” or the particular inclination of his corrupt nature. Now when we are foiled by any sin, we should take careful pains lest we settle into a “way” or course of sinning; for as a brand which has once been in the flame is now more susceptible to fire, so the committing of any sin renders us more liable to form a habit of that evil.

Humiliating as may be the acknowledgment of it, the fact remains that every one of us needs to cry fervently unto God “Remove from me the way of lying.” Because we are descended from parents who, at the beginning, preferred the devil’s lie to God’s truth, we are strongly inclined unto lying; yea, it is so much a part of our fallen nature that none but God can remove it from us. How many indulge in exaggeration, which is a form of lying. How many deceive by gestures and actions, which is another form of it. How many make promises (in their letters, for example, vowing they will soon write again) which they never fulfill. Worse still, how many lie unto God by false appearances: going through the form of prayer, feigning to be very pious outwardly, when their hearts and minds are upon the things of the world. Of old God said,

“Ephraim compasseth Me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit” (<sup>28112</sup>Hosea 11:12):

God sees through all vain shows, and will not be mocked.

The consequences of David’s lie soon became apparent.

“And it came to pass in those days, that the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel. And Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men” (<sup>09201</sup>1 Samuel 28:1).

Probably this was about the last thing he expected. Poor David! He was indeed in a tight place now, so tight that it seemed impossible for him to turn either way. On the one hand, to refuse the king’s request would not only be to run the danger of angering him, with what that would most likely entail, but would appear the height of ingratitude in return for the kindness and protection which had been given to him and his people. On the other hand, to accept Achish’s proposal meant being a traitor to Israel.

This sore dilemma in which David found himself, is recorded for *our* learning. It is a solemn warning of what we may expect if we forsake the path of God’s precepts. If we enter upon a wrong position, then, trying and unpleasant situations are sure to arise—situations which our consciences will sharply condemn, but from which we can see no way of escape. When we deviate from the path of duty, in the slightest degree, each circumstance that follows will tend to draw us farther aside. Once a rock starts downhill, it gains momentum with every bound that it takes. Then how watchful we need to be against the first false step; yea, how earnestly should we pray,

“Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe” (~~199~~<sup>117</sup> Psalm 119:117)! Satan rests not satisfied for the Christian to yield one “little” point, and knows full well our doing so greatly lessens our resistance to his next temptations.

For the sake of younger readers, let us enlarge a little more upon this point. To go anywhere we ought not, will bring us into temptations that it will be almost impossible to resist. To seek the society of non-Christians is to play with fire, and to accept favors from them will almost certainly result in our getting burned. To compromise one point, will be followed by letting down the bars at others. For a young lady to accept the attentions of an undesirable young man, makes it far harder to reject his later advances. Once you accept a favor—even if it be but a “joy-ride” in an auto—you place yourself under an obligation, and though you be asked to pay a high price in return, yet if you demur, “ingratitude” is what you are likely to be charged with. Then go slow, we beg you, in accepting favors from any, especially from those who are likely to take an unfair advantage of you.

David had done wrong in seeking protection from Saul in the land of the Philistines, and now the king of Gath required service from him in return. War being determined against Israel, Achish asks the assistance of David and his men. Yes, when the Christian turns unto the world for help, he must expect to be asked to pay the world’s price for the same. Needless intimacies with the avowed enemies of godliness, and the receiving of favors from them, quickly causes us to be unfaithful to God or ungrateful to our benefactors. To what a strait had the false position of David reduced him: if he promised to fight against Israel, and then broke his word, he would be guilty of treachery; if he fought against Israel, he would alienate the affections of his own people, and expose himself to the reproach of having slain Saul. It seemed impossible that he should extricate himself from this dilemma with a good conscience and clear reputation.

“And David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do” (~~199~~<sup>28</sup> 1 Samuel 28:2).

Probably David was quite undecided how to act, and cherished a secret hope that the Lord would help him out of his great difficulty; yet this by no means excused him for returning an insincere and evasive answer. “And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head forever.” The king of Gath understood his reply as a promise of effectual assistance, and so determined to make him the captain of his bodyguard. At

the time David was too much swayed by the fear of man to refuse attendance upon flesh.

“Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city” (v. 3).

This seems to be brought in for the purpose of intimating why the Philistines should make an attack upon Israel at this time: the knowledge of the prophet’s death had probably emboldened them. When death has removed ministers of God, or persecution has banished them (as it had David), a land is deprived of its best defense.

“And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land” (v. 3).

This is mentioned as an introduction to what follows unto the end of the chapter: it serves to emphasize the inconstancy of Saul: it illustrates the worthlessness of the temporary reformation of professors, who ultimately return to their wallowing in the mire.

“And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa. And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled” (vv. 4, 5),

Had he been in communion with God, there would be no need for such a fear, but he had provoked the Holy One to forsake him. Saul’s excessive terror arose chiefly from a guilty conscience: his contempt of Samuel, his murdering the priests and their families, his malicious persecution of David. Probably he had a premonition that this attack of the Philistines foreboded his approaching doom.

“And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not” (v. 6).

Unspeakably solemn is this: the case of one abandoned by God. It was under urgent terror, and not as a preparation for repentance, that Saul now sought unto the Lord. He did not “inquire” of Him till his doom was sealed, till it was too late, for God will not be mocked. O unbelieving reader, heed that call,

“seek ye the Lord *while He may be found*, call ye upon Him *while He is near*” (<sup>2896</sup>Isaiah 55:6);

otherwise, God may yet say of thee, as of those of old,

“These men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all *by them*?” (~~2614B~~ Ezekiel 14:3).

“And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not” (v. 6).

Some see a contradiction between this statement and what is said in ~~131013~~ 1 Chronicles 10:13, 14,

“So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking of a familiar spirit, to enquire; and enquired not of the Lord.”

The “literalists” of the day, those who are incapable of seeing beneath the bare letter of the Word, may well be tripped up by a comparison of the two passages; but he who is taught the *spiritual* meaning of the Scriptures perceives no difficulty. There is much that passes for “prayer” among men (when they are in great physical distress) which unto God is no more than the “howling” of beasts: see ~~280714~~ Hosea 7:14. Saul “enquired” in a hypocritical manner, which the Lord would not regard at all. The ear of the Lord is open unto none save those of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

“Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor” (v. 7).

Here we behold the fearful wickedness of one who was righteously abandoned by God. Fearful presumption was it for Saul to deliberately and definitely resort unto one who practiced diabolical arts. Only a little before, he had banished from the land those who had “familiar spirits” (v. 3), known today as “mediums.” It illustrates the fact that apostates frequently commit those very sins which they once were most earnest in opposing. We shall not follow Saul through the remainder of this chapter, but pass on to the twenty-ninth, where the Holy Spirit continues the narrative about the Philistines and David.

“Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek; and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel. And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands; but David and his men passed on in the rereward with Achish” (~~10290~~ 1 Samuel 29:1, 2).

“If David had told the truth, Achish would never have dreamed of enrolling him amongst the hosts of the Philistines. It was his own contrivance that had brought him there. He, who so well knew how to discriminate between the Philistines and the armies of the living God; and who, on the ground of that distinction, had so often sought and obtained the assistance of the God of Israel, now found himself leagued with the enemies of God for the destruction of God’s people. He who had so distinctly refused to stretch out his hand against the Lord’s anointed, was now enrolled with those very hosts who were about to shed the blood of Saul, and of Jonathan too, upon the mountains of Gilboa. Such were the terrible circumstances in which David suddenly found himself. He seems to have looked upon them as hopeless, nor do we read of his attempting any remedy.

“But David had not ceased to be the subject of care to the great Shepherd of Israel. He had wandered, and was to be brought back. The secret providence of God again interfered, and separated him from the camp of the Philistines” (B. W. Newton).

Yes, man’s extremities are (so to speak) God’s opportunities, and from the dilemma out of which David could see no way of escape, He graciously extricated him; without his having to move a finger, a door was opened for his deliverance. The means which the Lord employed upon this occasion should cause us to bow in adoration before the High Sovereign over all, and deepen our trust in Him.

“Then said the princes of the Philistines, What do these Hebrews here? And Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, is not this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with me these days, or these years, and I have found no fault in him since he fell unto me unto this day?” (v. 3)

God has various ways of delivering His people from their difficulties. While the ungodly pursue their own purposes and follow out their own plans, God secretly influences them to such determinations as subserve the good of His saints.

The esteem and affection of the wicked often becomes snares mediate court of Achish, but lords of other principalities, who were confederates with him. These now opposed the design of Achish to use David and his men in the forthcoming battle.

“And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him: and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? should it not be with the heads of these men? Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?” (~~10:13~~ 1 Samuel 29:4, 5).

“Though God might justly have left David in his difficulty, to chasten him for his folly, yet because his heart was upright with Him. He would not suffer him to be tempted above what he was able, but with the temptation made a way for his escape (~~10:13~~ 1 Corinthians 10:13). A door was opened for his deliverance out of this strait. God inclined the hearts of the Philistine princes to oppose his being employed in this battle, and to insist upon him being dishonored; and thus their enmity befriended him, when no friend he had was capable of doing him such a kindness” (Matthew Henry).

The esteem and affection of the wicked often become snares to us; but reproaches, contempt, injurious suspicions, prove beneficial, and the ill-usage of the ungodly by which we are driven from them, is much better for us than their friendship which knits us to them.

“When worldly people have no evil to say to us, but will bear testimony to our uprightness, we need no more from them; and this we should aim to acquire by prudence, meekness, and a blameless life. But their *flattering* commendations are almost always purchased by improper compliances, or some measure of deception, and commonly cover us with confusion. It is seldom prudent to place great confidence in one who has changed sides, except as the fear of God influences a real convert to conscientious fidelity” (Thomas Scott).

It is striking to note the particular thing which God made use of to influence those Philistine lords against David: it was the song which the



women of Israel had sung in David's honor, and which now for the third time brought him into dishonor—so little are the flatteries of people worth! They stir up jealousy and hatred in others; yet in the hand of God it became the instrument of David's deliverance.

Achish now summoned David into his presence and said, Wherefore now return, and go in peace, that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines" (v. 7). No doubt David secretly rejoiced at this deliverance from his sore dilemma, yet he was unwilling that the king of Gath should know it; he prevaricated again, making an appearance of concern for being so summarily dismissed.

"And David said unto Achish, But what have I done? and what hast thou found in thy servant so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king" (v. 8).

Sad it is to see the anointed of God dissembling and speaking in such a manner of His people. But Achish was not to be moved, and said,

"Wherefore now rise up early in the morning with thy master's servants that are come with thee; and as soon as ye be up early in the morning and have light, depart" (v. 10).

Marvelous deliverance was this from his ensnaring service, yet without the slightest credit to David: it was nought but the sovereign grace of God which freed him from the snare of the fowler.

# CHAPTER 25

## HIS SORROW AT ZIKLAG

### ~~<0201>~~ 1 SAMUEL 29 AND 30

*“Preserve me, O God: for in Thee do I put my trust”*  
(~~<0100>~~ Psalm 16:1).

This is a prayer which, in substance at least, every child of God frequently puts up to his heavenly Father. He feels his own insufficiency, and calls upon One who is all-sufficient. He realizes how incompetent he is to defend and protect himself, and seeks the aid of Him whose arms are all-mighty. If he is in his right mind, before starting out on a journey, when any particular danger threatens him, and ere settling down For the night’s repose, he commits himself into the custody and care of Him who never slumbers or sleeps. Blessed privilege! Wise precaution! Happy duty! The Lord graciously keep us in a spirit of complete dependence upon Himself.

*“The Lord preserveth all them that love Him”* (~~<0150>~~ Psalm 145:20).

Most Christians are readier to perceive the fulfillment of this precious promise when they have been delivered from some physical danger, than when they were preserved from some moral evil; which shows how much more we are governed by the natural than the spiritual. We are quick to own the preserving hand of God when a disease epidemic avoids our home, when a heavy falling object just clears our path, or when a swiftly-moving auto just misses the car we are in; but we ought to be just as alert in discerning the miraculous hand of God when a powerful temptation is suddenly removed from us, or we are delivered from it.

*“But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil”* (~~<0100>~~ 2 Thessalonians 3:3).

The Lord’s people are surrounded with a variety of evils within and without. They have sin in them, and it is the cause and fountain of all the evil and misery which they at any time feel and experience. There is the evil one without, who endeavors at times to bring great evil upon them. But the

Lord “keepeth His people from evil,” not that they are exempted wholly and altogether from evil. Yet they are kept from being overcome by and engulfed in it. Though they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth them with His debt hand.

Wondrous are the ways in which God *preserves* His saints. Many a one has been withheld from that success in business on which he had fondly set his heart: it was God delivering him from those material riches which would have ruined his soul! Many a one was disappointed in a love affair: it was God delivering from an ungodly partner for life, who would have been a constant hindrance to your spiritual progress! Many a one was cruelly treated by trusted and cherished friends: it was God breaking what would have proved an unequal yoke! Many a parent was plunged into grief by the death of a dearly loved child: it was God, in His mercy, taking away what would have proved an idol. Now we see these things through a glass darkly, but the Day will come, dear reader, when we shall perceive clearly that it was the *preserving* hand of our gracious God thus dealing with us at those very times when all seemed to be working against us.

The above meditations have been suggested by what is recorded in <sup><0290></sup>1 Samuel 29. At the close of our last chapter we saw how mercifully God interposed to deliver His servant from the snare of the fowler. Through his unbelief and self-will, David found himself in a sore dilemma. Seeking help from the ungodly, he had placed himself under obligation to the king of Gath. Pretending to be the friend of the Philistines and the enemy of his own people, David was called upon by Achish to employ his men upon the attack which was planned against Israel. Then it was that the Lord interposed and *preserved* the object of His love from falling into much graver evil. He now graciously made “a way to escape” (<sup><6101></sup>1 Corinthians 10:13), lest His poor erring child should be tempted above that which he was able.

And *how* was that “way to escape” opened for him? Ah, *this* is the point to which we wish to particularly direct our attention. It was not by means of any visible or outward work, but through the inward and secret operations of His power. The Lord turned against David the hearts of the other “lords of the Philistines” (<sup><0291></sup>1 Samuel 29:3-5); and in consequence, Achish was obliged to part with his services. Ah, my reader, how often was the Lord secretly working *for* you, when He turned the heart of some worldling *against* you! If we were more spiritual, this would be perceived more

clearly and frequently by us, and we should then render unto our gracious Deliverer the praise which is His due. David's discharge from the service of Achish was just as much a miracle as was his deliverance from the enmity of Saul; it was as truly the working of God's *preserving* power to rouse the jealousy and enmity of the Philistine lords against David, as it was to shield him from the javelin which the demon possessed king hurled at him (<sup><0181></sup>1 Samuel 18:11).

“So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning to return into the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel” (<sup><0291></sup>1 Samuel 29:11).

Commanded by the king of Gath so to do (v. 10). there was no other prudent alternative. Thus the snare was broken, and David was now free to return unto his own city, not knowing (as yet) how urgently his presence was needed there. Stealing away amid the shadows of the dawn, the flight of David and his men was scarcely any less ignominious than was the banishment of backslidden Abraham from Egypt (<sup><0122></sup>Genesis 12:20). Though God often extricates His people from the dangerous situations which their unbelief brings them into, nevertheless, He makes them at least taste the bitterness of their folly. But, as we shall see, the shame which the Philistine lords put upon David, turned to his advantage in various ways. Thus does God. sometimes, graciously over-rule unto good even our failures and falls.

“So David and his men rose un early to depart in the morning to return into the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel.” Delivered from a sore dilemma, a heavy burden removed from his shoulders, we may well suppose it was with a light heart that David now led his men out of the camp of Achish. Blithely unconscious of the grievous disappointment awaiting them, David and his men retraced their steps to Ziklag, for it was there he had deposited all that was chiefly dear to him on earth: his wives and his children were there, it was there he had formed a rest for himself—but, apart from God! Ah, how little do any of us know what a day may bring forth: how often is a happy morning followed by a night of sadness: much cause have we while in this world to “rejoice with trembling” (<sup><0211></sup>Psalm 2:11).

Though David had now been delivered from his false position as an ally of Achish against Israel, not yet had he been brought back to God. Deep exercises of heart were required for this, and He who preserveth His

people from fatal backsliding saw to it that His erring servant should not escape. Though He is the God of all grace, yet His grace ever reigns “through righteousness,” and never at the expense of it. Though His mercy delivers His saints from the sad pitfalls into which their folly leads them, usually, He so orders His providences, that they are made to smart for their wrong-doing; and the Holy Spirit uses this to convict them of their sins, and they, in turn, *condemn themselves* for the same. The means employed by God on this occasion were drastic, yet surely not more so than the case called for.

“And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire” (~~1~~1 Samuel 30:1).

After a three days’ march from the camp of Achish, hoping to find rest in their homes and joy in the bosom of their families, here was the scene upon which the eyes of David and his men now fell! What a bitter moment must this have been for our hero! His little all had vanished: he returns to the place where his family and possessions were, only to find the city a mass of smoking ruins, and those whom he loved no longer there to welcome him. When we leave our families (though it be for only a few hours) we cannot foresee what may befall them, or ourselves, ere we return; we ought therefore to commit each other to the protection of God, and to render unto Him unfeigned thanks when we meet again in peace and safety.

“And had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way” (~~2~~1 Samuel 30:2).

Let us learn from this that it is the part of wisdom, on *all* occasions, to moderate our expectation of earthly comforts, lest we should by being over-sanguine, meet with the more distressing disappointment. Behold here the restraining power of the Lord, in preventing the Amalekites from slaying the women and children.

“Whether they spared them to lead them in triumph, or to sell them, or to use them for slaves, God’s hand must be acknowledged, who designed to make use of the Amalekites for the correction, but not for the destruction, of the house of David” (Matthew Henry).

Blessed is it to know that even in wrath God remembers “mercy”  
(~~3RD~~ Habakkuk 3:2).

“And had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way.” From this we may also see how sorely David was now being chastened for being so forward to go with the Philistines against the people of God. Hereby the Lord showed him he had far better have stayed at home and minded his own business. “When we go abroad, in the way of our duty, we may comfortably hope that God will take care of our families, in our absence, inst *not otherwise*” (Matthew Henry).

No, to count upon the Lord’s protection, either for ourselves or for our loved ones, when we enter forbidden territory, is wicked presumption and not faith. It was thus the devil sought to tempt Christ: Cast Thyself down from the pinnacle of the temple, and the angels shall safeguard Thee.

“So David and his men came to the city, and behold it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives. Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep”  
(vv. 3, 4).

Ah, now he was tasting the bitterness of being without the full protection of God. As a homeless wanderer, hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, despised by the Nabals who dwelt at ease in the land, yet never before had he known the like of this. But now, under the protection of the king of Gath, and with a city of his own, he learns that without *God’s shelter*, he is exposed indeed. Learn from this, dear reader, how much we lose when we enter the path of self-will. In the first shock of disappointment, David could only weep and wail; all appeared to be irrevocably lost.

“It was indeed no wonder that David’s heart was stricken. He had never before known what it was to be smitten like this by the chastening hand of God. Of late he had seemed even more than ordinarily to be the subject of His care: but now the relation of God seemed suddenly changed into one of severity and wrath. During the year that David had watched his father’s flock, during his residence in the courts of Saul, during the time of his sorrowful

sojourn in the wilderness, during his late eventful history in Ziklag, he had never experienced anything but kindness and preservation from the hand of God. He had become so long accustomed to receive sure protection from God's faithful care, that he seems to have calculated on its uninterrupted continuance. He had lately said. 'The Lord render unto every man his righteousness... and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation.' But now the Lord Himself seemed turned into an enemy, and to fight against him. Nor could the conscience of David have failed to discern the reason. It must have owned the justice of the blow. Thus, however, the bitterness of his agony would be aggravated, not lessened" (B. W. Newton).

**"And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite" (v. 5).**

Why did the historian, after specifically stating in verse 2 that the Amalekites had "taken the women captives," enter into this detail? Ah, is the answer far to seek? Is it not the Holy Spirit making known to us the prime cause of the Lord's displeasure against David? His "*two wives*" was the occasion of the severing of his communion with the Lord, which, as we have seen, was at once followed by Saul's renewed attack (see <sup><0254></sup>1 Samuel 25:43, 44 and <sup><0270></sup>1 Samuel 26:1, 2), his unbelieving fear (<sup><0270></sup>1 Samuel 27:1), and his seeking help from the ungodly (<sup><0272></sup>1 Samuel 27:2, 3). We mention this because it supplies *the key to* all that follows from <sup><0254></sup>1 Samuel 25:44, and so far as we know no other writer has pointed it out.

**"And David was greatly distressed: for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved (bitter), every man for his sons and for his daughters" (v. 6).**

Poor David! one trouble was added to another. Heartbroken over the loss of his family, and the burning of his city, additional distress was occasioned by the murmuring and mutiny of his men. They considered the entire blame rested upon their leader, for having journeyed to Achish and left the city of Ziklag defenseless, and because he had provoked the Amalekites and their allies (<sup><0273></sup>1 Samuel 27:8, 9) by his inroad upon them, who had now availed themselves of the opportunity to avenge the wrong.

"Thus apt are we, when in trouble, to fly into a rage against those who are in any way the occasion of our troubles, when we overlook

the Divine providence and have no due regard to *God's hand* in it" (Matthew Henry).

"On all past occasions he had ever found some to sympathize with, and to console him in his afflictions. In the house of Saul, he had had the affection of Jonathan, and the favor of many beside: even in the wilderness, six hundred out of Israel had joined him, and had faithfully struggled with him through many a day of difficulty and danger: but now, they too abandon him. Enraged at the sudden calamity (for they also were bereaved of everything)—stung to the quick by a sense of its bitter consequences—imputing all to David (for it was he who had guided them to Ziklag)—even they who shrunk not from the sorrows of the cave of Adullam, and who had braved all the dangers of the wilderness, forsook him now. They all turned fiercely upon him as the author of their woe, and spake of stoning him. Thus stricken of God, execrated by his friends, bereaved of all that he loved, David drank of a cup which he never tasted before. He had earned it for himself. It was the fruit of his self-chosen Ziklag" (B. W. Newton).

And what was the Lord's purpose in these sore trials which now came upon David? It was not to crush him and sink him into despair. No, rather was it with the design of moving him to "humble himself beneath His mighty hand" (~~1086~~ 1 Peter 5:6), confess his wrong-doing, and be restored to happy fellowship. God's heaviest chastenings of "His own" are sent in love and for the benefit of their subjects. But to enter into the good of them, to afterward enjoy

"the peaceable fruit of righteousness" therefrom, the recipient of those chastenings *must be* "exercised thereby" (~~881211~~ Hebrews 12:11):

he must bow beneath the rod, yea, "hear" and "kiss" it, before he will be the spiritual gainer. Thus it was with the subject of these chapters, as will appear in the immediate sequel.



# CHAPTER 26

## HIS RECOURSE IN SORROW

### ~~1801~~ 1 SAMUEL 30

In our last we directed attention to the gracious manner in which the Lord put forth His interposing hand to deliver David from that snare of the fowler into Which his unbelief and folly had brought him. Ere passing on to the immediate sequel, let us pause and admire the blessed way in which God *timed* His intervention.

“To everything there is a season... He hath made everything beautiful in *His time*” (~~2100~~ Ecclesiastes 3:1, 11):

equally so in the spiritual realm as in the natural. Probably every Christian can look back to certain experiences in life when his circumstances were suddenly and unexpectedly changed. At the time, he understood not the meaning of it, but later was able to perceive the wisdom and goodness of Him who shaped his affairs. There have been occasions when our situation was swiftly altered, by factors over which we had no control, which called for us to move on: but the sequel showed it was God opening our way to go to the help of others who sorely needed us. So it was now with David.

“My times are in Thy hand” (~~19115~~ Psalm 31:15). Yes, my “times” of tarrying and my “times” of journeying; my “times” of prosperity and my “times” of adversity; my “times” of fellowship with the saints and my “times” of isolation and loneliness; each and all are ordered by God. It is blessed to know this, and more blessed still when the heart is permitted to rest thereon. Nothing is more quieting and stabilizing to the soul than the realization that everything was ordained by omniscience and is now ordered by infinite love: that He who eternally decreed the hour of my birth has fixed the day of my departure from this world; that my “times” of youth and health and my “times” of infirmity and sickness are equally in *God’s* hands. He knows *when* it is best to bring me out of a distressing situation, and His mercy opens the way when it is His time for me to make a move.

While David and his men were in the camp of Achish, the Amalekites took advantage of their absence, fell upon the unprotected Ziklag, burned it, and carried away captive all the women and children. Their husbands and fathers knew nothing of this: no, *but God did*, and He had designs of mercy toward them. Their sad case seemed a hopeless one indeed, but appearances are deceptive. Though they were unaware of the fact, God had already set moving the means for their deliverance. Unlike us, God is never too early, and He is never too late. Had David and his men been discharged by Achish a week sooner, they had been on hand to defend Ziklag, and a needed chastisement and a great blessing from it had been missed! Had they returned home a week later, they had probably been too late to recover their loved ones. Admire, then, the *timeliness of God's* freeing David from the yoke of the Philistines.

“So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives. Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep”  
 (1 Samuel 30:3,4),

Observe, there was no turning unto God, or seeking to cast their care upon Him! They were completely overwhelmed by shock and grief. Perhaps the reader knows something of such a state from painful experience. A heavy financial reverse which plunged the soul into dark gloom; or a sudden bereavement came, and in the bitterness of grief all seemed to be against you and even the voice of prayer was silenced. Ah, David and his men are not the only ones who have been overwhelmed by trouble and anguish.

“And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons, and every man for his daughters” (v. 6).

The turning against him of his faithful followers was the final ingredient in the bitter cup which David was now called on to drink. But even this was of God: if one stroke of His chastening rod avails not, it must be followed by another; and if necessary, yet others, for our holy Father will not suffer His wayward children to remain impenitent indefinitely. So it was here: the sight of Ziklag in ruins and the loss of his family did not bring David to his knees; so yet other measures are employed. The anger of his men aroused him from his lethargy, the menacing of his own life by intimate friends was the way God took to bring him back unto Himself.

“But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God” (v. 6). Here is where light broke into this dark scene, yet care needs to be taken lest we make a wrong use of the same. No one sentence in God’s Word is to be interpreted as an isolated unit, but scripture must be compared with scripture. Much is included in the words now before us, far more than any human writer is capable of fully revealing. Attention needs to be directed unto three things: first, what is pre-supposed in David’s “encouraging himself in the Lord”; second, what is signified thereby; third, what followed the same. If we take into consideration the *real* character of David as “the man after God’s own heart,” if we bear in mind the whole context recounting his sad lapses, and, above all, if we view our present verse in the light of the Analogy of faith, little difficulty should be experienced in “reading between the lines.”

“But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.” Ah, much is implied here. David could not *truly* “encourage himself in the Lord” until there had been *previous* exercises of heart: conviction, contrition, confession, necessarily preceded comfort and consolation.

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (~~1813~~ Proverbs 28:13):

that enunciates an unchanging principle in God’s governmental dealings, with unconverted and converted alike. Had there been no repentance on David’s part, no unsparing condemnation of himself, no broken-hearted acknowledgment unto God of his failures, he would have been “encouraging himself” in *sin* and that would be “turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness.” Not only has Christ died to save His people from the penalty of their sins, but He has also procured the Holy Spirit to work in them a hatred for the vileness of their sins! And as there is no forgiveness and cleansing for the saint without confession (~~1809~~ 1 John 1:9), so there is no acceptable “confession” save that which issues from a contrite heart.

There is great need today for the above principles to be explained unto and impressed upon professing Christians. Neither God’s glory will be maintained nor the good of His people promoted, if we conceal and are silent about the requirements of His righteousness. God’s mercy is exercised in a way of holiness: where there is no repentance, there is no forgiveness; where there is no turning away from sin, there is no blotting out of sins. Something more is required than simply asking God to be

gracious unto us for Christ's sake. There are many who quote "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (~~60107~~ 1 John 1:7), but there are few indeed who faithfully point out that that precious promise is specifically qualified with, "IF *we walk in the light* as He is in the light." If we avoid the searching light of God's holiness, if we hide, excuse, repent not of and refuse to make daily confession of our sins, then the blood of Christ certainly *does not* "cleanse" us from all sin. To insist on the contrary is grossly dishonoring to the Blood, and is to make Christ the Condoner of evil!

Weigh well the following:

"If they pray toward this place, and confess Thy name, *and turn from their sin*, when Thou afflictest them: *then* hear Thou in Heaven, and forgive the sin of Thy servants... If Thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever Thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the Lord toward the city which Thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for Thy name: Then hear Thou in Heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause. If they sin against Thee (for there is no man that sinneth not), and Thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near; Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, *and repent*, and make supplication unto Thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; and so *return* unto Thee *with all their heart*, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto Thee... *Then hear Thou their prayer* and their supplication in heaven Thy dwelling-place, and maintain their cause, *and forgive* Thy people that have sinned against Thee" (~~11085~~ 1 Kings 8:35, 36, 44-50).

And God is still the same. No change of "dispensation" effects any alteration in His character, or in anywise modifies His holy requirements: with Him there is "no variableness neither shadow of turning" (~~50127~~ James 1:27).

"But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." Having sought to indicate what is *pre-supposed* by those words, let us now briefly consider what is *signified* by them. The same *Holy Spirit* who convicts the

backslidden saint of his sins, works in him a sincere repentance, and moves him to frankly and freely confess them to God, *also* gives him a renewed sense of the abounding mercy of God, strengthens faith in His blessed promises, and reminds him of His unchanging faithfulness (~~6019~~ 1 John 1:9): and thus the contrite heart is enabled to rest in the infinite grace of God; and being now restored to communion with Him, the soul “encourages” itself in His perfections. Thus, just as the Holy Spirit delivers the saint from heeding Satan’s counsel to hide his sins, so also does He rescue him from Satan’s attempts to sink him in despair after he is convicted of his sins.

“But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.” This means that he reviewed afresh the everlasting covenant which God had made with him in Christ, that covenant “ordered in all things and sure.” It means that he recalled God’s past goodness and mercy towards him, which reassured his heart for the present and the future. It means that he contemplated the omnipotency of the Lord, and realized that nothing is too hard for Him, no situation is hopeless unto His mighty power, for *He* is able to overrule evil unto good, and bring a clean thing out of an unclean. It means that he remembered God’s promises to bring him safely to the throne, and though he knew not how his immediate trouble would disappear, without doubting, *he hoped in God*, and confidently counted upon His undertaking for him. O Christian reader, when we are at our wit’s end, we should not be at faith’s end. See to it that all is right between your soul and God, and then trust in His sufficiency.

When all things were against him, David’s faith was stirred into exercise: he turned unto the One who had never failed him, and from whom he had so sadly departed. Ah, blessed is the trial, no matter how heavy; precious is the disappointment, no matter how bitter, that issues thus. To penitently return unto God means to be back again in the place of blessing. Better, far better, to be in the midst of the black ruins of Ziklag, surrounded by a threatening mob, than to be in the ranks of the Philistines fighting against His people. Have we, in any way, known what bitter disappointment means? And have we in the midst of it turned unto Him who has smitten us, and “encouraged” ourselves in Him? If so, then like David, we may say,

“Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept Thy Word” (~~19867~~ Psalm 119:67).

O that it may please the Lord to bless this chapter to some sorely distressed soul, who is no longer enjoying the light of His countenance, but who is

beneath His chastening frowns. You may be borne down by sorrow and despondency, but no trouble is too great for you to find relief in God: in the One who has, in righteousness, sent this sorrow upon you. Humble yourself beneath His mighty hand, acknowledge to Him your sins, count upon the multitude of His mercies, and seek grace to rest upon His comforting promises. When faith springs up amidst the ruins of blighted hopes, it is a blessed thing. What has just been before us marked a turning-point in David's life; may it be so in yours.

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee”  
(~~19572~~ Psalm 55:22).

O my reader, be you a believer, or an unbeliever, none but God can do you good, relieve your distress, remove the load From your heart, and bring blessing into your life. If you refuse to humble yourself before Him, lament the course of self-will which you followed, and turn from the same, you are your own worst enemy and are forsaking your own mercies. But if you will, take your place before Him in the dust, repent of your wickedness, and seek grace to live henceforth in subjection to His will, then pardon, peace, joy, awaits you. No matter how sadly you have failed in the past, nor what light and favors you sinned against, if you will own it all in brokenness of heart unto the Lord, He is ready to forgive.

“And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David. And David enquired at the Lord, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? Shall I overtake them?” (vv. 7,8).

Here we see the first *result* which followed David's turning back unto God. It is blessed to observe that the Holy Spirit has thrown a veil of silence over what took place in secret between David and the Lord, as He has over Christ's private interview with Peter (~~41576~~ 1 Corinthians 15:5). But after telling us of David's encouraging himself in the Lord, He now reveals the reformation which took place in his conduct. Nothing was said of David's seeking counsel from God when he journeyed to Achish (~~49270~~ 1 Samuel 27:2), but now that he is restored to happy fellowship, he will not think of taking a step without asking for divine guidance.

Very blessed indeed is what is recorded in verses 7 and 8. Moses had laid it down as a law that the leader of Israel should “stand before” (Eleazar) the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the

Lord: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in” (~~42721~~ Numbers 27:21), and in compliance therewith, David turned to the priest, and bade him seek the mind of the Lord as to how he should now act in this dire emergency. Learn from this that *obedience* to the revealed will of God is the best evidence of having been restored to communion with Him. Of course it is, for it is the very nature of love to seek *to please* its object. Let us test, then, *our* practical relation to God, not by our feelings nor by our words, but by the extent to which we are in actual subjection to Him, and walking in a spirit of dependency upon Him.

Notice here how indwelling grace triumphed over the promptings of the flesh. Mere nature would urge that David’s only possible course was to rush after the Amalekites and seek to rescue any of the women and children who might yet be alive. But David was now delivered from his impetuous self-confidence; his soul was again “like a weaned child.” God was now to order all the details of his life. Alas, most of us have to receive many hard knocks in the by-paths of folly, before we are brought to this place. It is indeed much to be thankful for when the feverish restlessness of the flesh is subdued, and the soul truly desires God to *lead us* step by step: progress may not *seem* so swift, but it certainly will be more sure. The Lord graciously lay His quieting hand upon each of us, and cause us to look unto and rest in Himself alone.

# CHAPTER 27

## HIS PURSUIT OF THE AMALEKITES

### ~~1810~~ 1 SAMUEL 30

We are now to be engaged with *the blessed sequel* to David's putting matters right between his soul and God, and his encouraging himself in the Lord. At the close of the preceding chapter we saw that the first result of his returning to God was that he summoned the high priest with his ephod, and "enquired of the Lord" whether or not he should pursue after those who had burned Ziklag and carried away his wives captive. This exemplifies a principle which is ever operative when there has been a true reformation of heart: our own wisdom and strength are disowned, and divine help and guidance are earnestly sought. Herein are we able to check up the state of our souls and discover whether or not we are really walking with the Lord. Backsliding and a spirit of independency ever go together; contrariwise, communion with God and dependence upon Him are never separated.

As we pointed out in our last, the Mosaic law required that Israel's ruler should stand before the priest, who would ask counsel for him as to whether he should go out or no (~~1427B~~ Numbers 27:31). In like manner, the saint today is bidden to

"Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass" (~~1957B~~ Psalm 37:5).

No step in life should be taken, be it great or small, without first waiting upon God for direction:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him"  
(~~5006B~~ James 1:5).

To seek not wisdom from above, is to act in self-sufficiency and self-will; to honestly and earnestly apply for that wisdom, betokens a heart in subjection to God, desirous of doing that which is pleasing to Him.



“In all thy ways acknowledge Him”: if this be faithfully done, then we may be fully assured that “and He shall direct thy paths” (~~2016~~ Proverbs 3:6).

The serious trouble into which David fell when he sought refuge in the land of Gath, had arisen immediately from failure *to enquire of the Lord*; but now he consulted Him through the high priest:

“Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them?” (~~0818~~ 1 Samuel 30:8).

Blessed indeed is this. Would that we might learn to imitate him, for our fleshly efforts to undo the consequences of our unbelief and folly only cause us to continue going on in the same path which brought God’s chastening upon us; and this is certain to end in further disappointment. “Be still, and know that I am God” is the word we need to heed at such a time: to unsparingly judge ourselves, and suffer the hand that has smitten to now lead in *His* path, is the only way to recovery. Only then do we give evidence that disappointment and sorrow have been *blest* to our souls.

Unspeakably precious is it to note the Lord’s response to David’s inquiry:

“And He answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all” (v. 8).

“See the goodness and perfectness of the grace of God. There was no delay in this answer—no reserve—no ambiguity; more even was told than David had asked. He was told not only that he might pursue, but that he should surely recover all. In a moment the black cloud of sorrow that had hung so darkly over David’s soul was gone: agony gave place to joy: and he whom his companions had been dooming to death, stood suddenly before them as the honored servant of the Lord his God, commissioned to pursue and to conquer. He did pursue, and all was as God had said” (B. W. Newton).

“So David went, he and the six hundred men that were with him” (~~0819~~ 1 Samuel 30:9).

The force of this can only be perceived and appreciated by recalling what was before us in verse 6: “David was greatly distressed, for the people spake of stoning him”! What a change we behold now! The enmity of his

men has been stilled, and they are again ready to follow their leader. Herein we see the third consequence of David's spiritual return and encouraging himself in the Lord. First, he had submitted to the divine order, and sought guidance from God. Second, he had promptly received a gracious response, the Lord granting the assurance he so much desired. And now the power of God fell upon the hearts of his men, entirely subduing their mutiny, and making them willing, weary and worn as they were, to follow David in a hurried march after the Amalekites. O how much do we lose, dear reader, when we fail to right matters with God!

"So David went, he and six hundred men that were with him." Here is David's response to the word he had received from God through the high priest. Without taking rest or refreshment, he at once set out in pursuit of the ravagers. Tired and weak as he well might be, David was now nerved to fresh endeavors. Ah, is it not written,

"They that wait upon the Lord shall *renew their strength*; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary: they shall walk, and not faint" (~~240B1~~ Isaiah 40:31)?

So it ever is. If we truly desire spiritual guidance of the Lord, and humbly and trustfully seek it from Him, our inner man will be renewed, and we shall be empowered to follow the path of His ordering.

"And came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed" (v. 9).

This teaches us that when we *are* in the current of the revealed will of God, all will not, necessarily, be plain sailing. We must be prepared to meet with difficulties and obstacles even in the path of obedience. It was *by faith* in the word that he had received from Jehovah that David turned from the ruins of Ziklag, and faith must be *tested*. A severe trial now confronted David: fatigued from their former journey and their spirits further depressed by the sad scene they had gazed upon, many of his men, though willing, were unable to proceed farther; and he left no less than two hundred behind at the brook of Besor.

"But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor" (v. 10).

Considerate of the state of his men, David would not drive or force those who were faint to accompany him. Further proof was this that our hero was now again in communion with God, for

*“He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust”*  
 (19A314) Psalm 103:14)

—alas, how often do those who profess His name seem to forget this. But though his company was now reduced by one third, and, as verse 17 plainly intimates, was far inferior to the Forces of the Amalekites, yet David relied implicitly on the Word of the Lord, and continued to push forward.

*“And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water. And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins; and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights. And David said unto him, To whom belondest thou? and whence art thou? And he said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick. We made an invasion upon the south of the Cherethites, and upon the coast which belongeth to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire. And David said to him, Canst thou bring me down to this company? And he said, Sware unto me by God, that thou wilt neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring thee down to this company” (vv. 11-15).*

We shall consider these verses from two angles: as they add to what has been before us above; as they contain a lovely gospel picture.

In the verses just quoted we may perceive the seventh consequence which followed David’s righting things with God.

**First**, he encouraged himself in the Lord: verse 6.

**Second**, he submitted to the divine order and sought guidance from God: verse 7 and 8.

**Third**, he obtained light for his path and assurance of God’s help: verse 8.

**Fourth**, the power of God fell upon the hearts of his men, subduing their mutiny: verse 6 and making them willing to follow him on a difficult and daring enterprise: verse 9.

**Fifth**, the renewing of David's strength, so that he was able to start out on a forced and swift march: verse 9.

**Sixth**, grace granted him to overcome a sore trial of faith: verse 10. And now we are to observe how the Lord showed Himself strong on their behalf by ordering His providences to work in David's favor. Such are some of the divine mercies which we may confidently expect when the channel of blessing between our souls and God is no longer choked by unjudged and unconfessed sins.

A most remarkable intervention of divine providence is here before us. David was pursuing the Amalekites, and from this incident we gather that he knew not in which direction they had gone, nor how far ahead they were. God did not work a miracle for them, but by natural means provided him with a needed guide. The men of David came across one, who was sick and famished, in a field. He turned out to be an Egyptian slave, whom his master had barbarously abandoned. Upon being brought to David, he furnished full particulars, and after receiving assurance that his life should be spared, agreed to conduct David and his men to the place where the Amalekites were encamped. Let us admire the various details in this wondrous secret provision which God now made for David, and the combined factors which entered into it.

**First**, stand in awe of the high sovereignty of God which suffered this Egyptian slave to fall sick: verse 13.

**Second**, in permitting his master to act so inhumanly, by leaving him to perish by the wayside: verse 13.

**Third**, in moving David's men to spare his life: verse 11, when they had every reason to believe he had taken part in the burning of Ziklag.

**Fourth**, in the fact that he was himself an Egyptian and not an Amalekite: verse 11— had he been the latter, they were bound to kill him (Deuteronomy 25:19).

**Fifth**, in moving David to show him kindness: verse 11.

**Sixth**, in causing the food given to so quickly revive him: verse 12.

**Seventh**, in inclining him to freely answer David's inquiries and be willing to lead him to the camp of the Amalekites. Each of these seven factors had to combine, or the result had never been reached: God made "all things *work together*" for David's good. So He does for us: His providences, day by day, work just as wondrously on our behalf.

Approaching these verses (11-15) now from another angle, let us see portrayed in them a beautiful type of a lost sinner being saved by Christ. There are so many distinct lines in this lovely gospel picture that we can here do little more than point out each one separately.

- 1. His citizenship:** "And they found an Egyptian in the field" (v. 11). In Scripture Egypt is a symbol of the world: the moral world to which the unregenerate belong and in which they seek their satisfaction. As another has said, "It had its beginning in Cain's day, when he 'went out from the presence of the Lord,' and he and his descendants builded cities, sought out witty inventions of brass and iron, manufactured musical instruments, and went in for a good time generally, in forgetfulness of God. And that continues to this day. The land of Egypt figures this. There Pharaoh, type of Satan, ruled and tyrannized."
- 2. His woeful condition:** "I fell sick" (v. 13). Such is the state of every descendant of fallen Adam. An awful disease is at work in the unregenerate: that disease is *sin*, and "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (~~SO115~~ James 1:15). It is sin which has robbed the soul of its original beauty: darkening the understanding, corrupting the heart, perverting the will, and paralyzing all our faculties so far as their exercise Godward is concerned. But not only was this Egyptian desperately sick, he was *starving*: he had had nothing to eat or drink for three days. Well might he cry, "I perish with hunger" (~~Q1517~~ Luke 15:17).
- 3. His sad plight:** "my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick" (v; 13). He was a slave, and now that his master thought he would be of no further use to him, he heartlessly abandoned him and left him to perish.

"And that is the way the devil treats his servants. he uses them as his tools as long as he can. Then, when he cannot use them any more, he leaves them to their folly. Thus he treated Judas, and hosts of others before and since" (C. Knapp).

**4. His deliverance:** “And brought him to David” (v. 11). No doubt he was too weak and ill to come of himself; and even had he the ability, he had never used it thus, for David was an utter stranger to him! Thus it is with the unregenerate sinner and that blessed One whom David foreshadowed. Therefore did Christ say,

“No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him” (~~4064~~ John 6:44).

Each of God’s elect is “brought” to Christ by the Holy Spirit.

**5. His deliverer:** No doubt this half-dead Egyptian presented a woe-begone spectacle, as he was led or carried into the presence of the man after God’s own heart. But his very ruin and wretchedness drew out the compassion of David toward him. Thus it is with the Savior: no matter what ravages sin has wrought, nor how morally repulsive it has made its victim, Christ never refuses to receive and befriend one whom the Father draws to Him.

**6. His entertainment:**

“And gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water. And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins” (vv. 11, 12).

Precious line in our picture is this of the divine grace which is stored up in Christ. None brought to Him by the Spirit are ever sent empty away. How this reminds us of the royal welcome which the prodigal received and the rich fare that was set before him.

**7. His confession:** When David asked him to whom he belonged and whence he came, he gave an honest and straightforward reply:

“He said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite” (v. 13).

Strikingly did this adumbrate the fact that when an elect sinner has been brought to Christ, and been given the bread and water of life, he takes his proper place, and candidly acknowledges what he was and is by nature.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us” (~~6009~~ 1 John 1:9).

**8. His obligation:** “And David said, Canst thou bring me down to this company?” (v. 15). In this we may see how David pressed his claims upon the one whom he had befriended, though it is blessed to mark that it was more in the form of an appeal than a direct command. In like manner, the word to the believer is,

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (~~<45120>~~ Romans 12:1).

**9. His desire for assurance:**

“And he said, Sware unto me by God, that thou wilt neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring thee down to this company” (v. 15).

There could be no joy in the service of his new master until assured that he should not be returned unto the power of his old one. Blessed is it to know that Christ delivers His people not only from the wrath to come, but also from the dominion of sin.

**10. His gratitude:** “And when he had brought him down” (v. 16). He was now devoted to the interests of David, and did as he requested. So Christians are told,

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*” (~~<4210>~~ Ephesians 2:10).

O for grace to serve Christ as ardently as we did sin and Satan in our unregenerate days.

# CHAPTER 28

## HIS RECOVERY OF HIS WIVES

### ~~1801~~ 1 SAMUEL 30

“And when he had brought him down, behold, they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines and out of the land of Judah. And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and *fled*” (~~1806~~ 1 Samuel 30:16, 17).

We resume at the point where we left off in our last chapter. These verses form a solemn sequel to those previously pondered, and set before us the other side of the picture which was then considered.

The Amalekites, in all probability, knew that the Israelites and Philistines were engaged in fighting each other a considerable distance away, and supposed that David and his men were assisting the king of Gath. Deeming themselves secure, they imprudently began to riot and make merry over the abundance of spoils they had captured, without so much as placing guards to give notice of an enemy's approach. They lay not in any regular order, much less in any military formation, but were scattered in groups, here and there. Consequently, David and his little force came upon them quite unawares, and made a dreadful slaughter of them. How often when men say,

“Peace and safety, sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape” (~~1818~~ 1 Thessalonians 5:3).

Just as the sick and abandoned Egyptian who was befriended by David typified one of God's elect being saved by Christ, so these flesh-indulging Amalekites portray careless sinners who will yet be destroyed by Him. Solemnly is this announced in ~~30107~~ 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9,



“The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.”

And again,

“Behold, the Lord cometh, with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds, which they had ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him” (~~Col 14~~ Jude 14, 15).

Yet, such unspeakably solemn warnings as those which God has given in His Word have no restraining effect upon the unconcerned and Satan-drugged world. The vast majority of our fellows live as though there were no eternity to come, no judgment day when they must appear before God, give an account of the deeds they have done in the body, and be sentenced according to their works. They know full well how brief and uncertain this life is: at short intervals their companions are cut down by the hand of death, but no lasting serious impressions are made upon them. Instead, they continue in their pleasure-loving whirl, impervious to the divine threatenings, deaf to the voice of conscience, disregarding any entreaties or admonitions which they may receive from Christian friends or the servants of God.

O how tragically true to the present-day life of the world is the gay scene presented to us in the verses we are now pondering. Those care-free Amalekites were “eating and drinking and dancing.” In their fancied security they were having what the young people of this degenerate age call “a good time.” There was an abundance of food to hand, why then should they deny those lusts of the flesh which war against the soul? They had been successful in spoiling their neighbors, why then should they not “celebrate” and make merry? All were in high spirits, why then should they not fill the air with music and laughter? Yes, similar is the fatal reasoning of multitudes today. But mark well the fearful sequel: “And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day.” Alas, what was their carnal security worth!

David was just as truly a type of Christ in his slaying of the Amalekites as he was in befriending the poor Egyptian. Ah, dear reader, he who saves those who submit to Him as their Lord and trust in Him as their Redeemer, shall as surely judge and destroy them who despise and reject Him. He will yet say,

“But those Mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay before Me” (~~21927~~ Luke 19:27).

How will it fare with *you* in that day? The answer to this question will be determined by whether or not you have truly received Him as Prophet to instruct you, as Priest to atone for your sins, as King to regulate and reign over your heart and life. If you have not already done so, seek grace from above to throw down the weapons of your warfare against Him and surrender yourself wholly to Him.

“The young man of Egypt was with David when he came upon the Amalekites. He once belonged to their company and was one of them. Had he not been separated from them he would have surely shared their fate. If unconverted, you are of that world of sinners ‘whose judgment now for a long time lingereth not.’ Turn from it now ere the vengeance of God destroys you with it. God has borne with it long. The sins of Christendom reach up to heaven, and cry for vengeance. Christ is your only refuge. Come to Him now, and, like Noah in the ark and Lot in the mountain, you will be safe from the sweeping storm. Like the young man of Egypt, you will be taken out of the world and away from this scene before the stroke descends. You will appear with Christ, along with those ten thousand holy ones who accompany Him when He comes to earth to war and judge” (C. Knapp).

Let us now return to our narrative and seek its practical teaching for the Christian today.

“And when he had brought him down, behold, they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah” (v. 16).

How many miles it was that the befriended Egyptian led David and his men we do not know, but probably some considerable distance: that they were supernaturally strengthened for their strenuous exertions after their

previous fatigue, we cannot doubt. Justly did God make use of this poor Egyptian, basely abandoned, as an instrument of death to the Amalekites.


“And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels and fled. And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives. And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil nor anything that they had taken to them: David recovered all” (vv. 17-19).

Here is the blessed sequel to all that has occupied us in the preceding verses of this chapter. What a proof that David’s heart was now perfect toward the Lord, for most manifestly did He here show Himself strong on his behalf, by granting such signal success to his endeavors. Ah, when our sins are forsaken and forgiven, and we act by the Lord’s directions, we are just as likely to recover what we lost by our previous folly.

“And David took all the flocks and the herds, which they drave before those other cattle, and said, This is David’s spoil” (v. 20).

The seeming ambiguity of this language is removed if we refer back to what is said in verse 16: the Amalekites had successfully raided other places before they fell upon Ziklag. The spoil they had captured was kept separate, and the cattle which they had taken in the territory of Philistia and Judah David claimed for his own portion: the noble use which he made of the same we shall see in a moment.

“And David came to the two hundred men which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that were with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them” (v. 21).

The expression “whom they had *made* to abide by the brook Besor” shows plainly that those fatigued men earnestly desired to follow David further, and had to be constrained not to do so. Typically, it tells us that all Christians are not equally strong in the Lord: compare  1 John 2:13. The Hebrew word for “saluted” signifies “he asked them of peace,” which means, he inquired how they did, being solicitous of their welfare. Though

all Christians are not alike spiritually robust, all are equally dear unto Christ.

“Then answered all the wicked men and men of Belial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them ought of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away, and depart” (v. 22).

In the most favored company there will be found selfish men, who being ungrateful to God for His kindness and favors will desire to enrich and pamper themselves, leaving their fellows to starve, for all they care. Even amid David’s band, were certain sons of Belial, wicked men, of a covetous and grasping disposition. No doubt they were the ones who took the lead in suggesting that David be “stoned” (v. 6). Their real character was here made quite evident: in their evil suggestion we may see how the heart of David was tested.

“Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand” (v. 23).

David’s reply to the selfish suggestion of some of his grasping followers was meek, pious and righteous, and it prevailed unto their silencing. Note how gently he replied even to the sons of Belial, addressing them as “my brethren”; but observe that he, at the same time, maintained his dignity as the general-in-chief, by directly denying their request. Yet it was not a mere arbitrary assertion of his authority: he followed his “Ye shall not do so” with powerful reasonings.

**First**, he reminded these selfish followers that the spoil which had been taken from the Amalekites was *not theirs* absolutely, but that “which the Lord hath given us.” Therein David inculcated an important principle which is to regulate us in the discharge of our Christian stewardship: freely we have received from God, and therefore freely we should give unto others. Miserliness in a child of God is a practical denial of how deeply he is indebted unto divine grace.

**Second**, he reminded them of how mercifully the Lord had “preserved” them when they attacked a people who greatly outnumbered them, and how He had also “delivered” the Amalekites into their hands. They must not ascribe the victory unto their own prowess, and therefore they could

not claim the booty as wholly belonging unto themselves. It is not a time to give way to a spirit of greed when the Lord has particularly manifested His kindness to us.

**Third**, he pointed out that their evil suggestion most certainly would not commend itself unto any wise, just and right-thinking people: “For who will hearken unto you in this matter?” (v. 24). When the people of God are in the majority, they will vote down the propositions of the covetous; but when the unregenerate are allowed to outnumber them in their assemblies, woe unto them. Fourth, David reminded them that those who tarried at Besor did so out of no disloyalty or unwillingness: they had fought valiantly in the past, and now they had faithfully done their part in guarding the “stuff” or baggage, and so were entitled to a share of the spoils:

“But as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike” (v. 24).

The whole of the above illustrates the fact that when a backsliding believer has been restored to communion with God, he is now in a state of soul to enjoy his recovered possessions: they will no longer be a snare unto him. When God takes something from us to teach us a needed lesson, He can, after we have learned that lesson, restore it to us again. Often, though not always, He does so. Faith is now dominant again, and receives the recovered blessings from the hand of God. One who has been truly restored, like David, who knew what his own failure has been, will permit of no such selfishness as the sons of Belial advocate. Those who had stayed at home, as it were, should share in the victory. That was true *largeness of heart*, which ever marks one who has learned in God’s school.

But there are always some who would wish to stint those possessing less faith and energy, yet he who realizes something of his own deep indebtedness to divine grace rejoices to give out to others what he has gained. When the Lord is pleased to open up some part of His precious Word unto one of His servants he, with enlarged heart, welcomes every opportunity to pass on the same to others. But how often are those who seek to pour cold water on his zeal, urging that it is not “wise” or “timely,” yea, that such teaching may prove “dangerous.” While it is not fitting that we should take the children’s bread and cast it to the dogs, on the other hand it is sinful to withhold any portion of the Bread of Life from hungry souls. If God has restored to us any portion of His truth, we owe it to the whole Household of Faith to impart it unto as many as will receive it.

“And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, even to his friends, saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the Lord” (v. 26).

“David not only distributed of the spoil to all who had followed him in the wilderness, and shared his dangers there—he also remembered that there were some, who, though they had refused to quit their position in Israel, and had shrunk (as well they might) from the cave of Adullam, did nevertheless love and favor him. Yet though they had drawn back from following him, and had declined to partake of his cup of sorrow, David, in the hour of his triumph, refused not to them participation in his joy. Such is the liberality of a heart that has sought and found its portion in *grace*” (B. W. Newton).

Very blessed is what we find recorded in these closing verses of ~~1~~ Samuel 30. Those who view God as the Giver of their abundance will dispense of it with equity and liberality: they will seek to restrain injustice in others (v. 23), establish useful precedents (v. 25), and share with friends (vv. 26-31). The Amalekites had spoiled some of those parts of Judah mentioned in verses 26-31 (see vv. 14, 16), and therefore did David now send relief to those sufferers: it was the part of justice to restore what had been taken from them. Moreover, he had a grateful remembrance of those friends who secretly favored him during the time of Saul’s persecution, and who had sheltered and relieved his men in the time of this distress (v. 31). Instead of selfishly enriching himself, he generously befriended others, and gave them proof that the Lord was with him.

Fearfully divergent may be the effects produced on different persons who pass under the same trials and blessings. The “sons of Belial” companied with David during the night of his sorrow (as Judas did with Christ), and were also made the recipients of his mercies; yet they now evidenced a state of soul which marked them in God’s sight as “wicked men” (v. 22). What more abhorrent to God than that which would narrow the expansiveness of grace: what more hateful in His sight than a selfishness which sought to extract out of His free favors an excuse for enriching itself by despising others—cf. ~~John~~ John 12:4-6. But how different with David: from the ruins of Ziklag he rose, step by step, to a higher faith: manifesting dependency upon God, seeking His guidance, obtaining energy to pursue the enemy, and exercising largeness of heart in sharing the spoils with all.

Thereby did he furnish an eminent foreshadowing of Him who ‘took the prey from the mighty’ (~~23924~~ Isaiah 49:24), “led captivity captive, and gave *gifts unto men*” (~~4948~~ Ephesians 4:8).

# CHAPTER 29

## HIS LAMENTATIONS FOR SAUL

### ~~1~~1 SAMUEL 31 AND ~~2~~2 SAMUEL 1

The final chapter of 1 Samuel presents to us an unspeakably solemn and terrible scene, being concerned not with David, but with the termination of Saul's earthly life. In these chapters we have said little about him, but here one or two paragraphs concerning his tragic career and its terrible close seem in place. A solemn summary of this, from the *divine* side, is found in ~~28~~31 Hosea 13:11, when at a later date, God reminded rebellious Israel, "I gave them a king in Mine anger, *and took him away in My wrath*": the reference being to Saul.

The history of Saul properly begins at the eighth chapter. There we behold the revolted heart of Israel, which had departed further and further from Jehovah, desiring a human king in His stead. Though Samuel the prophet faithfully remonstrated, and space was given them to repent of their rash decision, it was in vain: they were determined to have their own way.

"Nevertheless the people... said, Nay, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles" (~~9~~1 Samuel 8:19, 20).

Accordingly, God, "in His anger," delivered them up to their own hearts' lusts and suffered them to be plagued by one who proved a disappointment and curse to them, until, by his godless incompetency, he brought the kingdom of Israel to the very verge of destruction.

From the *human* side of things, Saul was a man splendidly endowed, given a wonderful opportunity, and had a most promising prospect. Concerning his physique we are told,

"Saul was a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his



shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people” (~~9102~~ 1 Samuel 9:2).

Regarding his acceptability unto his subjects, we read that when Samuel set him before them, that “all the people shouted, and said, God save the king” (~~9104~~ 1 Samuel 10:24): more, “there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched” (~~9106~~ 1 Samuel 10:26), giving the young king favor in their eyes. Not only so, but “the Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul” (~~9106~~ 1 Samuel 11:6), equipping him for his office, and giving proof that God was ready to act if he would submit to His yoke.

Yet notwithstanding these high privileges, Saul, in his spiritual madness, played fast and loose with them, mined his life, and by disobeying and defying God, lost his soul. In the thirteenth chapter of 1 Samuel we find Saul tried and found wanting. The prophet left him for a little while, bidding him go to Gilgal and wait for him there, till he should come and offer the sacrifices. Accordingly we are told “he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed.” And then we read, “but Samuel came not to Gilgal, and the people were scattered from him”—having lost their confidence in the king to lead them against the Philistines to victory. Petulant at the delay, Saul presumptuously invaded the prophet’s prerogative and said,

“Bring hither a burnt offering to *me*, and peace offerings, And *he* offered the burnt offering” (~~9130~~ 1 Samuel 13:9).

Thus did he forsake the word of the Lord and break the first command he received from Him.

In the 15th chapter we see him tested again by a command from the Lord:

“Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not: but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass” (vv. 2, 3).

But again he disobeyed:

“But Saul and the people *spared* Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and *would not* utterly destroy them” (v. 9).

Then it was that the prophet announced,

“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king” (vv. 22,23).

From that point Saul rapidly went from bad to worse: turning against David and relentlessly seeking his life, shedding the blood of God’s priests (~~02218~~ 1 Samuel 22:18, 19), till at last he scrupled not to seek the aid of the devil himself (~~02807~~ 1 Samuel 28:7,8).

And now the day of recompense had come, when he who had advanced steadily from one degree of impiety to another, should miserably perish by his own hand. The divine account of this is given in ~~03101~~ 1 Samuel 31. The Philistines had joined themselves against Israel in battle. First, Saul’s own army was defeated (v. 1); next, his sons, the hopes of his family, were slain before his eyes (v. 2); and then the king himself was sorely wounded by the archers (v. 3). Fearful indeed is what follows: no longer able to resist his enemies, nor yet flee from them, the God-abandoned Saul expressed no concern for his soul, but desired only that his life might be dispatched speedily, so that the Philistines might not gloat over him and torture his body.

First, he called upon his armor-bearer to put an end to his wretched life, but though his servant neither feared God nor death, he had too much respect for the person of his sovereign to lift up his hand against him (v. 4). Whereupon Saul became his own murderer: Saul took a sword and fell upon it”; and his armor-bearer, in a mad expression of fealty to his royal master, imitated his fearful example. Saul was therefore the occasion of his servant being guilty of fearful wickedness, and “perished not alone in his iniquity.” As he had lived, so he died: proud and jealous, a terror to himself and all about him, having neither the fear of God nor hope in God. What a solemn warning for each of us! What need is there for both writer and reader to heed that exhortation,

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living of God” (~~30813~~ Hebrews 3:13).

The cases of Ahithophel (~~01773~~ 2 Samuel 17:23), Zimri (~~11618~~ 1 Kings 16:18) and Judas the traitor (~~41205~~ Matthew 27:5) are the only other instances recorded in Scripture of those who murdered themselves. The awful sin of

suicide seems to have occurred very rarely in Israel, and not one of the above cases is extenuated by ascribing the deed unto insanity! When the character of those men be examined, we may perceive not only the enormity of the crime by which they put an end to their wretched lives, but the unspeakably fearful consequences which must follow the fatal deed. How can it be otherwise, when men either madly presume on the mercy of God or despair of it. in order to escape temporal suffering or disgrace, despise His gift of life, and rush headlong, uncalled, unto His tribunal? By an act of direct rebellion against God's authority (<sup><02013></sup>Exodus 20:13), and in daring defiance of His justice, suicides fling themselves on the bosses of Jehovah's buckler, with the guilt of unrepented sin on their hands.

“And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa. And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armor, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the house of their idols, and among the people. And they put his armor in the house of Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body to the wall of Bethshan” (<sup><03108></sup>1 Samuel 31:8-10).

Though Saul had escaped torture at their hands, his body was signally abused—adumbrating, we doubt not, the awful suffering which his soul was now enduring, and would continue to endure forever. Saul's self-inflicted death points a most solemn warning for us to earnestly watch and pray that we may be preserved from both presumption and despair, and divinely enabled to bear up under the trials of life, and quietly to hope for the salvation of the Lord (<sup><2026></sup>Lamentations 3:26), that Satan may not tempt us to the horrible sin of self-murder for which the Scriptures hold out *no* hope of forgiveness.

“Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abode two days in Ziklag” (<sup><0010></sup>2 Samuel 1:1).

David had returned to Ziklag, where he was engaged with dividing the spoil he had captured and in sending presents to his friends (<sup><0016></sup>1 Samuel 30:26-31). “It was strange he did not leave some spies about the camps to bring him early notice of the issue of the engagement (between the Philistines and the army of Saul): a sign he desired not Saul's woeful day, nor was impatient to come to the throne, but willing to wait till those tidings were brought to him, which many a one would have sent more than

half way to meet. He that believeth does not make haste, takes good news when it comes, and is not weary while it is in the coming” (Matthew Henry).

“It came even to pass on the third day, that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes rent and earth upon his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance. And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped. And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee, tell me. And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also” (~~100102~~ 2 Samuel 1:2-4).

This Amalekite presented himself as a mourner for the dead king, and as a loyal subject to the one who should succeed Saul. No doubt he prided himself that he was the first to pay homage to the sovereign-elect, expecting to be rewarded for bringing such good news (~~090410~~ 1 Samuel 4:10); whereas he was the first to receive sentence of death from David’s hands.

“And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan be dead? And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, Here am I. And he said unto me, Who art thou? And I answered him, I am an Amalekite. And he said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me, for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me. So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord” (vv. 5-10).

This is one of the passages seized by atheists and infidels to show that “the Bible is full of contradictions,” for the account here given of Saul’s death by no means tallies with what is recorded in the previous chapter. But the seeming difficulty is easily solved: ~~093101~~ 1 Samuel 31 contains God’s description of Saul’s death; ~~10010102~~ 2 Samuel 1 gives man’s fabrication. Holy

Writ records the lies of God's enemies (~~01004~~Genesis 3:4) as well as the true statements of his servants.

From ~~08104~~1 Samuel 31:4 it is definitely established that Saul murdered himself, and *was dead* before his armor-bearer committed suicide. That is the unerring record of the Holy Spirit Himself, and must not be questioned for a moment. In view of this, it is quite evident that the Amalekite who now communicated to David the tidings of Saul's death, lied in a number of details. Finding Saul's body with the insignia of royalty upon it—which evidenced both the conceit and rashness of the infatuated king: going into battle with the crown upon his head, and thus making himself a mark for the Philistine archers—he seized them (v. 10), and then formed his story in such a way as he hoped to ingratiate himself with David. Thus did this miserable creature seek to turn the death of Saul to his own personal advantage, and scrupled not to depart from the truth in so doing; concluding, from the wickedness of his own heart, that David would be delighted with the news he communicated.

By the death of Saul and Jonathan the way was now opened for David to the throne.

“If a large proportion of Israel stood up for the rights of Ishbosheth, who was a very insignificant person (~~01000~~2 Samuel 2-4), doubtless far more would have been strenuous for Jonathan. And though *he* would readily have given place, yet his brethren and the people in general would no doubt have made much more opposition to David's accession to the kingdom” (Thomas Scott).

Yet so far was David from falling into a transport of joy, as the poor Amalekite expected, that he mourned and wept; and so strong was his passion that all about him were similarly affected:

“Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that were with him: And they mourned and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the Lord, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword” (vv. 11, 12).

“Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth; and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth” (~~01047~~Proverbs 24:17).

There are many who secretly wish for the death of those who have injured them, or who keep them from honors and estates, and who inwardly rejoice even when they pretend to mourn outwardly. But the grace of God subdues this base disposition, and forms the mind to a more liberal temper. Nor will the spiritual soul exult in the prospect of worldly advancement, for he realizes that such will increase his responsibilities, that he will be surrounded by greater temptations and called to additional duties and cares. David mourned for Saul out of good will, without constraint: out of compassion, without malice; because of the melancholy circumstances attending his death and the terrible consequences which must follow, as well as for Israel's being triumphed over by the enemies of God.

“And David said unto the young man that told him, Whence art thou? And he answered, I am the son of a stranger, an Amalekite. And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the Lord's anointed? And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, and fall upon him. And he smote him that he died. And David said unto him, Thy blood be upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the Lord's anointed” (vv. 13-16).

As an Amalekite, he was devoted to destruction (<sup><062517></sup>Deuteronomy 25:17-19), and as the elect-king, David was now required to put the sentence into execution.

The last nine verses of our chapter record the “lamentation” or elegy which David made over Saul and Jonathan. Not only did David rend his clothes, weep, and fast over the decease of his arch-enemy, but he also composed a poem in his honor: <sup><00117></sup>2 Samuel 1:17-27. Nor was it mere sentiment which prompted him: it was also because he looked upon Saul as Israel's “king,” the “anointed” of God (v. 16). This elegy was a noble tribute of respect unto Saul and of tender affection for Jonathan.

**First**, he expressed sorrow over the fall of the mighty (v. 19).

**Second**, he deprecated the exultations of the enemies of God in the cities of the Philistines (v. 20).

**Third**, he celebrated Saul's valor and military renown (vv. 21,22).

**Fourth**, he touchingly mentioned the fatal devotion of Jonathan to his father (v. 23).

**Fifth**, he called upon the daughters of Israel, who had once sung Saul's praises, to now weep over their fallen leader (v. 24).

**Sixth**, his faults are charitably veiled!

**Seventh**, nothing could truthfully be said of Saul's piety, so David would not utter lies—how this puts to shame the untruthful adulations found in many a funeral oration!

**Eighth**, he ended by memorializing the fervent love of Jonathan for himself.

# CHAPTER 30

## HIS SOJOURN AT HEBRON

### 2 SAMUEL 2

The news of Saul's death had been received by the exiled David in characteristic fashion. He first flamed out in fierce anger against the lying Amalekite, who had hurried with the tidings, hoping to curry favor with him by pretending that he had killed Saul on the field of battle. A short shrift and a bloody end were his, and then the wrath gave place to mourning. Forgetting the mad hatred and relentless persecution of his late enemy, thinking only of the friendship of his earlier days and his official status as the anointed of the Lord, our hero cast over the mangled corpses of Saul and Jonathan the mantle of his noble elegy, in which he sings the praise of the one and celebrates the love of the other. Not until those offices of justice and affection had been performed, did he think of himself and the change which had been affected in his own fortunes.

It seems clear that David had never regarded Saul as standing between himself and the kingdom. The first reaction from his death was not, as it would have been with a less devout and less generous heart, a flush of gladness at the thought of the empty throne; but instead, a sharp pang of grief from the sense of an empty heart. And even when he began to contemplate his immediate future and changed fortunes he carried himself with commendable self-restraint. At the time David was still a fugitive in the midst of the ruins of Ziklag, but instead of rushing ahead, "making the most of his opportunity," and seizing the empty throne, he sought directions from the Lord. Ah, we not only need to turn unto God in times of deep distress, but equally so when His outward providences appear to be working decidedly in our favor.

David would do nothing in this important crisis of his life—when all which had for so long appeared a distant hope, now seemed to be rapidly becoming a present fact—until his Shepherd should lead him. Impatient and impetuous as he was by nature, schooled to swift decisions, followed by still swifter actions, knowing that a blow struck speedily while all was



chaos and despair in the kingdom, might at once set him on the throne; nevertheless, he held the flesh, carnal policy, and the impatience of his followers in check, to hear what God would say. To a man of David's experience it must have appeared that now was the opportune moment to subdue the remaining adherents of the fallen Saul, rally around himself his loyal friends, grasp the crown and the scepter, vanquish the gloating Philistines, and secure unto himself the kingdom of Israel. Instead, he refused to take a single step until Jehovah had signified *His will* in the matter.

The manner in which David conducted himself on this occasion presents an example which we do well to take to heart and punctually emulate. The important principle of action which was here exemplified has been well expressed by another:

“If we would possess temporal things with a blessing, we must not eagerly seize upon them, nor be determined by favorable events or carnal counsel: but we must observe the rules of God's Word, and pray for His direction; using those means, and those only, which He has appointed or allowed, and avoid all evil, or ‘appearance of evil,’ in our pursuit of them: and then whatever else we fail in, we shall be directed in the way to the kingdom of heaven” (Thomas Scott).

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and *He shall direct thy paths*” (<sup>1186</sup>Proverbs 3:5,6).

To “acknowledge” the Lord in all our ways means that instead of acting in self-sufficiency and self-will, we seek wisdom from *above* in every undertaking of our earthly affairs, beg God to grant us light from His Word on our path, and seek His honor and glory in all that we attempt. Thus it was now with David:

“And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?” (<sup>1001</sup>2 Samuel 2:1).

This is very blessed, and should be linked with all that was before us in <sup>9306</sup>1 Samuel 30:6-31. What is here recorded of David supplies further proof of his having been restored from backsliding. Previously he had *left* the cities of Judah “inquiring” of his own heart (<sup>9270</sup>1 Samuel 27:1), but now he would only think of *returning* thither as God might conduct him.

Alas, that most of us have to pass through many painful and humiliating experiences ere we learn this lesson.

“David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?” Though the Lord had promised him the kingdom, though he had already been anointed by Samuel unto the same, and though Saul was now dead, David was not hasty to take matters into his own hands, but desired to submit himself unto God’s directions and act only according to His revealed will. This evidenced the fact that he really trusted in Him who had promised him the kingdom, to give it to him in His own due time and manner; and thus he would possess it with a clear conscience, and at the same time avoid all those appearances of evil with which he might know the remaining adherents of Saul would be ready to charge him. So fully did he fulfill the word of his early Psalm: “my Strength! upon Thee will I wait” (~~19819~~ Psalm 59:9). We never lose anything by believing and patiently waiting upon God; but we are always made to suffer when we take things into our own hands and rush blindly ahead.

“Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?” David was prepared to go where the Lord bade him. His particular inquiry about “the cities of *Judah*” was because that was his own tribe and the one to which most of his friends belonged. “And the Lord said, Go up”: that is, from Ziklag into the territory of Judah, though He did not specify any particular city. This is usually the Lord’s method: to first give us a *general* intimation of His will for us, and later more specific details little by little. He does not make known to us the whole path at once, but keeps us dependent upon Himself for light and strength, step by step. This is for our good, for our training, though it be a trying of our patience. Patience is a grace of great price in the sight of God, and it is only developed by discipline. May grace be diligently sought and divinely bestowed so that we shall heed that exhortation, “let patience have her perfect work” (~~30104~~ James 1:4).

“And the Lord said unto him, Go up”: the absence of anything more definite was a *testing* of David. Had the flesh been dominant in him at this time, he would have eagerly jumped to the conclusion that he was fully justified in leaving Ziklag immediately and taking prompt measures to obtain the kingdom. Blessed is it to see how he responded to the test: instead of rushing ahead, he continued to wait on the Lord for more explicit instructions, and asked, “*Whither* shall I go up?” (v. 1)—to which part of Judah, Jerusalem or where? He had paid dearly in the past for

taking journeys which the Lord had not ordered, and for residing in places which He had not named for him; and now he desired to move only as God should appoint. Reader, have you yet reached this point in your spiritual experience: have you truly surrendered unto the lordship of Christ, so that you have turned over to Him the entire government and disposing of your life? If not, you know not how much peace, joy and blessing you are missing.

“And He said, Unto Hebron” (v. 1). This is recorded for our encouragement. The Lord is never wearied by our asking! Nay, the more childlike we are, the better for us; the more we cast *all* our care upon Him (~~<0187>~~ 1 Peter 5:7), the more we seek counsel of Him, the more He is honored and pleased. Has He not told us,

“in *everything* by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (~~<0906>~~ Philippians 4:6)?

That means just what it says, and we are greatly the losers, and God is dishonored, just in proportion to our disregard of that privilege and duty. The old hymn is true when it says, “O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry, Everything to God in prayer.” The readiness of Jehovah to respond unto David’s inquiry, is a sure intimation of His willingness to hear us; for He is “the same, yesterday, and today, and forever.”

“And He said, Unto Hebron.” There is a spiritual beauty in this word which can only be perceived as we compare scripture with scripture. In the Old Testament “Hebron” stands typically, for *communion*. This may be seen from the first mention of the word:

“Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there *an altar* unto the Lord” (~~<0135>~~ Genesis 13:15).

Again,

“So he (Jacob) sent him (Joseph, on an errand of mercy to his brethren) out of the vale of Hebron” (~~<01374>~~ Genesis 37:14)

—figure of the Father sending the Son on a mission of grace unto His elect. “And they gave Hebron unto Caleb” (~~<07020>~~ Judges 1:20): the place of fellowship became the portion of the man who followed the Lord “Fully”

(~~04424~~ Numbers 14:24). How fitting, then, that the restored David should be sent back to “Hebron”—it is ever back unto *communion* the Lord calls His wandering child. O how thankful we should be when the Holy Spirit restores us to communion with God, even though it be at the cost of disappointment and sorrow (Ziklag) to the flesh.

“So David went up to Hebron” (~~0002~~ 2 Samuel 2:2). God had graciously granted him the needed word of guidance, and he hollowed out the same. O that all his actions had been controlled by the same rule: how much trouble and grief he had then escaped. But they were not; and this makes the more solemn the contrast presented in the next statement: “And his two wives also, Abinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail, Nabal’s wife the Carmelite” (v. 2). Here was the one blot on the otherwise fair picture: the lusts of the flesh obtruded themselves; yes, immediately after his having sought guidance from God!—what a warning for us: we are never safe a single moment unless upheld by the arm of Omnipotence. As we have seen in earlier chapters, Divine chastisement was the sequel to what we read of in (~~02544~~ 1 Samuel 25:44, so now we may be assured that his retention of “two wives” omened ill for the future.

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

Those who had been David’s companions in tribulation were not forgotten now that he was moving forward toward the kingdom. Blessed foreshadowment was this of

“If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him” (~~00012~~ 2 Timothy 2:12).

“And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah” (v. 4).

David had been *privately* anointed as Saul’s successor (~~091612~~ 1 Samuel 16:12,13), now the principal princes in the tribe of Judah *publicly* owned him as their king. They did not take it upon themselves to make him king over all Israel, but left the other tribes to act for themselves. No doubt in this they acted according to the mind of David, who had no desire to force himself on the whole nation at once, preferring to obtain government over them by degrees, as Providence should open his way.

“See how David rose gradually: he was first appointed king in reversion, then in possession of one tribe only, and at last over all

the tribes. Thus the kingdom of the Messiah, the Son of David, is set up by degrees: He is Lord of all by divine designation, but ‘we see not yet all things put under Him’: ~~818~~ Hebrews 2:8” (Matthew Henry).

“And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-Gilead, and said unto them, Blessed be ye of the Lord, that ye have showed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him” (v. 5).

David expressed his appreciation of what the men of Jabesh had done in rescuing the bodies of Saul and his sons from the Philistines, and for the kindly care they had taken of them. He pronounced the blessing of the Lord upon them, which probably means that he asked Him to reward them. By thus honoring the memory of his predecessor he gave evidence that he was not aiming at the crown from any principles of carnal ambition, or from any enmity to Saul, but only because he was called of God to it.

“And now the Lord show kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing” (v. 6).

David not only prayed God’s blessing upon those who honored the remains of Saul, but he promised to remember them himself when opportunity afforded. Finally, he bade them fear not the Philistines, who might resent their action and seek revenge—especially as they no longer had a head over them; but *he*, as king of Judah, would take their part and assist them:

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

Thus did he continue to show his regard for the late king. By sending a deputation to Jabesh, David instituted a conciliatory measure toward the remaining adherents of Saul.

“But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul’s host, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim” (v. 8).

This is a solemn “But,” traceable, we believe, to the “two wives” of verse 2! David was not to come to the throne of all Israel without further opposition. Abner was general of the army, and no doubt desired to keep

his position. He took Ishbosheth, apparently the only son of Saul now left, to Mahanaim, a city on the other side of the Jordan, in the territory of Gath (~~16324~~ Joshua 13:24-26): partly to keep the men of Jabesh-Gilead in awe and prevent their joining with David, and partly that he might be at some distance both from the Philistines and from David, where he might mature his plans. "Ishbosheth" signifies "a man of shame": he was not considered fit to accompany his father to battle, yet was now deemed qualified to occupy the throne to the exclusion of David.

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

The nation in general had rejected the "Judges" whom God had raised up for them, and had demanded a king; and now in the same rebellious spirit, they refused the prince which the Lord had selected for them. In type it was Israel preferring Barabbas to Jesus Christ. Abner prevailed till he got all the tribes of Israel, save Judah, to own Ishbosheth as their king. All this time David was quiet, offering no resistance: thus keeping his oath in ~~16221~~1 Samuel 24:21 and 22!

"The believer's progress must be gradual: his faith and his graces must be proved, and his pride subdued, before he can properly endure any kind of prosperity: and for these purposes the Lord often employs the perverseness of his brethren, without their knowledge or contrary to their intention. In the professing Church few honor those whom the Lord will honor: before Jesus came, and in each succeeding generation, the very builders have rejected such as Heaven intended for eminent situations; and His servants must be conformed to Him. Ambition, jealousy, envy, and other evil passions, cause men to rebel against the Word of God, but they generally attempt to conceal their real motives under plausible pretenses. The believer's wisdom, however, consists in waiting quietly and silently under injuries, and in leaving God to plead his cause, except it be evidently his duty to be active" (Thomas Scott).

# CHAPTER 31

## HIS TESTING

### ~~1001~~ 2 SAMUEL 2

It is a wonderful thing when a wayward believer is brought back to his place of fellowship with God, as David had been, though it necessarily involves added obligations. It is *sin* which causes us to leave that place, and though at first sin be a sweet morsel unto the flesh, yet it soon turns bitter, and ultimately becomes as wormwood and gall unto him who has yielded to it. “The way of transgressors is hard” (~~201314~~ Proverbs 13:14): the wicked prove the full truth of that fact in the next world, where they discover that “the wages of sin is death”—a death agonizing in its nature and eternal in its duration. But even in this life the transgressor is usually made to feel the hardness of that way which his own mad self-will has chosen, and especially is this the case with the believer, for the harvest of *his* ill sowings is reaped—mainly, at least—in this world. The Christian, equally with the non-Christian, is a subject under the government of God, and *doubly* is *he* made to realize that God cannot be mocked with impunity.

Strikingly and solemnly was this fact exemplified in the history of Israel during Old Testament times, *this* principle supplies the key to all God’s governmental dealings with them. The history of no nation has been nearly so checkered as *theirs*: no people was ever so sorely and so frequently afflicted as the favored descendants of Jacob. From the death of Joshua unto the days of Malachi we find one judgment after another sent from God upon them. Famines, pestilence, earthquakes, internal dissensions and external assaults from the surrounding nations, followed each other in rapid succession, and were *repeated* again and again. There were brief respites, short seasons of peace and prosperity, but for the most part it was one sore trouble after another. God did not deal *thus* with any other nation during the Mosaic economy. It is true that heathen empires suffered, and ultimately collapsed under the weight of their lasciviousness, but in the

main God “suffered all nations to walk in their own ways” (<sup><4416></sup>Acts 14:16), and “the times of this ignorance God winked at” (<sup><4473></sup>Acts 17:30).

Far otherwise was it with His own covenant people. This has surprised many; yet it should not. Unto Israel God said, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.” Yes, and that has been commonly recognized by readers of the Old Testament, but what immediately follows has very largely been lost sight of—

“*therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities*” (<sup><3082></sup>Amos 3:2).

Ah, it was *not* “You only have I known of all the families of the earth, *therefore* will I *wink at* your sins, excuse *your* faults, and pass over your transgressions.” No, no; far from it. It was unto Israel that God had revealed Himself, it was “in Judah He was known,” and therefore would He manifest before their hearts and eyes His ineffable holiness and inflexible justice. Where they were loose and lax, despising God’s authority, and recklessly and brazenly breaking His laws, He would *vindicate His* honor by making it appear how much He hated sin, and hates it most of all in those who are *nearest* to Him! See <sup><3086></sup>Ezekiel 9:6!

That is why another of Israel’s prophets announced unto those who had, under a temporal covenant, been taken into a bridal relation to Jehovah,

“*she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins*” (<sup><2402></sup>Isaiah 40:2).

Does that strike the reader as strange? But why should it? Are not the sins of the professing people of God *doubly heinous* to those committed by them who make no profession at all? What comparison was there between the sins of the nation of Israel and the sins of the heathen who were without the knowledge of the true God? The sins of the former were sins *against light*, against an open and written revelation from Heaven, against the abounding goodness and amazing grace of God toward them; and therefore must He, in His holiness and righteousness, make the severest example *of them*. Make no mistake upon that point: God will either be sanctified *by* or *upon* those who have been taken into a place of (even outward) nearness to Himself: see <sup><3083></sup>Leviticus 10:3.

Thus, <sup><3083></sup>Amos 3:3 becomes a *prophecy* of God’s dealings with Christendom. The great difference which existed between the nations of Israel and the Gentiles, finds its parallel in this era between Christendom



(the sphere where Christianity is professedly acknowledged) and the heathen world. But with this additional most solemn consideration: increased privileges necessarily entail increased responsibilities. Under this Christian era a far higher and grander revelation of God has been made in and through and by the Lord Jesus Christ, than ever the *nation* of Israel had in Old Testament times. If then Israel's *despising* of God in His inferior revelation was followed by such awful consequences to the temporal welfare of their people under the old covenant, what *must be* the consequences of the *despising* of God in His highest revelation under the new covenant?

“See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, *much more* shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven”  
(~~38125~~ Hebrews 12:25).

But what has all the above to do with the life of David? Much every way. God dealt with individual saints, who had been taken into spiritual nearness to Himself on the same principles, governmentally (that is, in the ordering of their temporal affairs), as He treated with the nation as a whole, which enjoyed only outward nearness to Himself. Hence, *as* David sowed in his conduct so he reaped in his circumstances. As *we* have seen in the last few chapters, God had acted in marvelous grace with the son of Jesse, and following his repentance and putting things right with the Lord, had unmistakably shown Himself strong on his behalf, ending by bringing him to “Hebron” which speaks of *fellowship*. Thus, David had now reached the point, where God said to him, as it were, “sin no more, *lest a worse thing came upon thee*” (~~43514~~ John 5:14).

Should it be asked, “But what has all of this to do with us? *We* are living in the ‘Dispensation of Grace,’ and God deals with people now—both nations collectively, and saints individually—very differently from what He did in Old Testament times.” That is a great mistake: a glaring and a horrible one. Glaring it certainly is, for ~~45194~~ Romans 15:4 expressly states, “Whatsoever things were written  *aforetime* were written for our learning”: but what *could* we “learn” from the ways of God with His people of old if He is now acting from entirely different principles? Nothing whatever; in fact, in that case, the less we read the Old Testament, the less we are likely to be confused. Ah, my reader, in the New Testament also we read that

“judgment must begin at *the house of God*” (~~10417~~ 1 Peter 4:17). *Christians* are also warned,

“Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (~~8007~~ Galatians 6:7).

Horrible too is such teaching, for it represents the immutable God *changing* the principles of His government.

What has been pointed out in the above paragraphs is something more than an interesting and instructive item of historical information, explaining much that is to be met with in the Old Testament Scriptures, throwing light upon God’s dealings with the nation of Israel collectively and with its prominent men individually; it is also of vital moment *for Christians today*.

“Righteousness and judgment are the habitation” of God’s “throne” (~~1970~~ Psalm 97:2), and *our* temporal affairs are regulated and determined according to the same principles of God’s moral government as were those of His people in by gone ages. If the distinguishing favors of God do not restrain from sin, they most certainly will not exempt us from divine chastisement. Nay, the greater the divine privileges enjoyed by us, the nearer we are brought unto God in a way of profession and favor, the more quickly will He notice our inconsistencies and the more severely will He deal with our sins.

“He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much *sorer punishment*, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” (~~5808~~ Hebrews 10:28,29).

Here is a statement of the broad principle which we have been seeking to explicate and illustrate. True, in this particular passage the application of it is made unto apostates, but the fact is plainly enough revealed that the greater the privileges enjoyed the greater the obligations entailed, and the greater the guilt incurred when those obligations are ignored. The same principle applies (though the consequences are different) in the contrast between the sins of the Christian and the non-Christian. The sins of the former are more heinous than those of the latter. How so? Because God is far more dishonored by the sins of those who bear His name than by those who make no profession at all.

The same principle, as it applies to gradation by contrast, holds good of the individual Christian in different stages of his own life. The more light God gives him, the more practical godliness He requires from him; the more favors he receives and privileges he enjoys, the more responsible is he to bear increased fruit. So too a sin committed by him may receive comparatively light chastisement; but let it be repeated and he may expect the rod to fall more heavily upon him. In like manner, God may bear long with one of his backslidden children, and though the path of recovery be a thorny one, yet will he exclaim "I richly deserved far severer treatment." But when the backslider has been restored and brought back into communion with God, another departure from Him is likely to be attended with far worse consequences than the former one was.

*"But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared"*  
 (1900b Psalm 130:4).

Yes, "feared," not trifled with, not that we may the more confidently give free rein to our lusts. A true apprehension of the divine mercy will not embolden unto sin, but will deepen our hatred of it, and make us more earnest in striving to abstain from it. A spiritual apprehension of God's abounding grace toward us, so far from begetting carelessness, produces increased carefulness, lest we displease One so kind and good. It is just because the Christian has been sealed by the Spirit unto the day of redemption, that he is exhorted to watchfulness lest he "grieve" Him. The more the heart truly appreciates the infinitude of God's wondrous love unto us, the more will its language be, "How can I do this great wickedness against Him!"

"But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." Not a slavish and servile fear, but the fear of the Lord which is "the beginning of wisdom": that fear which reverences, loves, worships, serves and obeys Him. Genuine gratitude for God's pardoning grace will move the soul unto suitable filial conduct: it works a fear of being carried away from the heavens of His conscious presence by the insidious current of worldliness. It is jealous lest anything be allowed that would mar our communion with the Lover of our souls. Where the pardoning mercy of God is thankfully esteemed by the soul, it calls to mind the fearful price which was paid by Christ so that God could righteously forgive His erring people. and *that* consideration melts the heart and moves to loving obedience.

“But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared.” Yes, once more we say “feared,” and not “trifled with.” The word unto backsliders, who have been pardoned and graciously restored to fellowship with God, is “Let them not *turn again* to folly” (~~19878~~ Psalm 85:8): that is, let them beware of any cooling of their affections, and slipping back into their old ways; let them pray earnestly and strive resolutely against a sinful trading with God’s mercy and a turning of His grace into lasciviousness. We serve a jealous God, and must needs therefore be incessantly vigilant against sin. If we are not, if we do “return again to folly,” then most surely will His rod fall more heavily upon us; and not only will our inward peace be disturbed, but our outward circumstances will be made to sorely trouble us.

That principle was plainly enunciated in the threatening which the Lord made unto Israel of old:

“And if ye will not be reformed by Me by *these* things, but will walk contrary unto Me; then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you *yet seven times* for your sins” (~~18673~~ Leviticus 26:23,24).

If the first sensible tokens of God’s displeasure do not attain their end in the humbling of ourselves beneath His mighty hand and the reforming of our ways, if His lesser judgments do not lead to this, then He will surely send sorer judgments upon us. Ezra recognized this principle when, after the remnant had come out of Babylon, he said,

“After all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that Thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserved, and hast given us such deliverance as this; should we *again* break Thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldst not Thou be angry with us till Thou hast consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?” (~~18913~~ Ezra 9:13, 14).

Then let *us* beware of trifling with God, particularly so after He has recovered us from a season of backsliding.

Instead of taking up the details of ~~10009~~ 2 Samuel 2:9-32 (the passage which immediately follows the verses considered in the preceding chapter), we felt this topical one would prove much more helpful in paving the way for those which are to follow. Those verses record an encounter between the

rival factions, The gauntlet was thrown down by Abner, the general of the followers of Ishbosheth (Saul's son), and the challenge was accepted by Joab, who headed the military forces of David. Neither side brought their full army into the field, and the slaughter was but small (v. 30). The men of Abner, the aggressor, were routed, and at the close of the day their captain begged for peace (v. 26). Knowing the pacific intentions of David, and his loathness to make war upon the house of Saul, Joab generously called a halt (v. 28); and each side made their way homeward (vv. 29-32).

And now a word upon the title we have given to this chapter, and we must close. David was now located at Hebron, which signifies communion or fellowship. The men of Judah had made him their king (~~1000~~ 2 Samuel 2:4), which though a step toward it, was by no means the complete fulfillment of the promise that he should be king "over *Israel*" (~~0900~~ 1 Samuel 16:1, 13). David made kindly overtures unto "the men of Jabesh-Gilead," the followers of the late Saul (v. 5), expressing the hope they would now show fealty to him (v. 7). Would the Lord continue showing Himself strong on his behalf, by turning the hearts of the rival faction toward him? The need for this was evident (vv. 7-10), yet it was easy for God to heal that breach and give David favor in the eyes of all. Would He do so? How far will the present conduct of David warrant this? for God will not place a premium on sin. David is now *put to the test*: how he acquitted himself we must leave for the next chapter.

# CHAPTER 32

## HIS FAILURE

### ~~1011~~ 2 SAMUEL 3 AND 4

In our last chapter (so far as the application of the principles enunciated therein related to him who is the principal subject of this book) we endeavored to show that very much hinged on the manner in which David now conducted himself. A most important crisis had been reached in his life. The time which he spent at Hebron constituted the dividing line in his career. On the one side of it was what we may designate as the period of his rejection, when the great majority of the people clave unto Saul, who hounded him from pillar to post; on the other side of it, was the period of his exaltation when he reigned over the nation. When pondering the different events which happened in the first stage of his career, we sought to point out the moral connection between them, seeking to trace the relation between the personal conduct of David and the various circumstances which the governmental dealings of God brought about as the sequel. We propose, by divine aid, to follow a similar procedure in taking up the details under the second stage of his career.

In chapter twenty we saw how David displeased the Lord by his taking unto himself two wives (~~10253~~ 1 Samuel 25:43, 44), and in chapter twenty-two we noticed how one sin led to another; while in chapter twenty-four we observed the divine chastisement which followed. In chapter twenty-six we dwelt upon David's putting things right with God and encouraging himself in the Lord, following which we traced out the blessed results which ensued (chapters 27, 28), terminating in his being restored to full fellowship with the Lord, as was typified by God's directing him to "Hebron." There he received a "token for good" (~~19867~~ Psalm 86:17) in the reception which he met with from the men of his own tribe, who came and "anointed David over the house of Judah" (~~10034~~ 2 Samuel 2:4): that was indeed a promising intimation that if his ways continued to please the Lord, He would make "even his enemies to be at peace with him" (~~20607~~ Proverbs

16:7). On the other hand, that “token for good” only becomes the more solemn in the light of all that follows.

How much there is in the later chapters of 2 Samuel which makes such pathetic and tragic reading. Few men have experienced such sore social and domestic trials as David did. Not only was he caused much trouble by political traitors in his kingdom, but, what was far more painful, the members of his own family brought down heavy grief upon him. His favorite wife turned against him (<sup><09063></sup>1 Samuel 6:20-22), his daughter Tamar was raped by her half brother (<sup><09134></sup>1 Samuel 13:14), his son Ammon was murdered (<sup><09138></sup>1 Samuel 13:28, 29). His favorite son Absalom sought to wrest the kingdom from him, and then he was murdered (<sup><09184></sup>1 Samuel 18:14). Before his death, another of his sons, Adonijah, sought to obtain the throne (<sup><11005></sup>1 Kings 1:5), and he too was murdered (<sup><11024></sup>1 Kings 2:24,25). Inasmuch as the Lord never afflicts willingly (<sup><20133></sup>Lamentations 3:33), but only as our sins occasion it, how are these most painful family afflictions to be accounted for?

If the Holy Spirit has been pleased to furnish us with any explanation of the sore trials which David encountered in his later life, or if He has supplied us with materials that serve to throw light upon what is recorded in the second half of 2 Samuel, then that explanation must be sought for or that illuminating material must be inquired after, in the *early* chapters of that book. This is a principle of great importance in order to a right understanding of the Scriptures. As a general rule, God hangs the key for us right on the door itself: in other words, the opening chapters (often the first verses) contain a clear intimation or forecast of what follows. True, in some cases, this is more apparent than in others, yet concerning each one of the sixty-six books of the Bible, it will be found that the closer be the attention given unto its introduction, the easier will it be to follow the development of its theme. Such is obviously the case here in 2 Samuel.

“Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker” (<sup><10030></sup>2 Samuel 3:1).

The battle referred to at the end of the previous chapter, though it went so greatly in favor of David, did not put an end to the warfare between him and Ishbosheth. Though Saul himself was no more, yet his son and subjects refused to submit quietly to David’s scepter. For another five years they continued to manifest their defiance, and many were the skirmishes which

took place between his men and the loyal subjects of David. The latter was loath to employ harsh measures against them, and probably his magnanimity and mildness were mistaken for weakness or fear, and encouraged his opponents to renew their efforts for his overthrow. But little by little they were weakened, until Ishbosheth was willing to make a league with David.

“Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.” The contents of this verse may well be taken as a type of the conflict which is experienced in the heart of the Christian. David, exalted to be king over Judah, may be regarded as a figure of one of God’s elect when he has been lifted out of the miry clay (into which the fall of Adam plunged him) and his feet set upon the Rock of ages. As ~~<BB>~~1 Samuel 2:8 declares,

“He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.”

But is all now henceforth peace and joy? Far from it. Inward corruption is there, and is ever assailing the principle of grace which was imparted at regeneration:

“the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh” (~~<BB>~~Galatians 5:17).

What is the outcome? Is the flesh victorious? No, it may annoy, it may win minor skirmishes, but little by little the flesh is weakened and the spirit strengthened, until at the last sin is completely destroyed.

“Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David.” Thus the kingdom of Israel was rent asunder by civil war. That it should last so long, when David was clearly in the right, has presented quite a problem to the commentators. Personally, we regard the contents of this verse as a plain intimation *that David was missing God’s best*. This is an expression we use rather frequently in these pages, so perhaps a definition of it here will not be amiss. Let it be pointed out here that it is by no means equivalent to affirming that God’s counsels may be thwarted by us. No indeed, puny man can no more defeat the eternal purpose of the Almighty than he can cause the sun to cease from shining or the ocean from rolling.



“But our God is in the heavens: He hath done *whatsoever* He hath pleased” (~~1953B~~ Psalm 115:3).

There is a vast difference between the *promises* of God and His eternal *decrees*: many of the former are conditional, whereas the latter are immutable, dependent upon nothing for their fulfillment save the omnipotence of God. In saying that many of the divine promises recorded in Holy Writ are “conditional” we do not mean they are uncertain and unreliable, no; we mean that they are infallible declarations of what God will do or give *providing* we follow a certain course of conduct: just as the divine threatenings recorded in Scripture are a declaration of what God will do or inflict *if* a certain course be pursued. For example, God has declared “Them that honor Me, I will honor” (~~1923~~ 1 Samuel 2:30). But suppose we *fail* to “honor” God, suppose we do not obtain that enabling grace which He is ever ready to give unto those who earnestly seek it in a right way—what then? The same verse tells us: “And they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.”

Take for instance the declaration made in ~~1910B~~ Joshua 1:8,

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for *then* thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and *then* thou shalt have good success.”

First, let it be pointed out that that verse has nothing whatever to do with the eternal destiny of the soul; instead, it relates only to the present life of the saint. In it God tells us that *if* we give His Holy Word the first place in our thoughts and affections, and regulate both our inner and outer life by its teaching, *then* He will make our way “prosperous” and we shall have “good success.” This does not mean that we shall become millionaires, but that by heeding the rules of His Word, we shall escape those rocks upon which the vast majority of our fellows make shipwreck, and that the *blessing of God* will rest upon our lives in all their varied aspects and relations; an all-wise and sovereign God determining both the kind and measure of the “success” which will be most for His glory and our highest good.

Nor are the principles enunciated in ~~1910B~~ Joshua 1:8 to be restricted in their application to those who lived under the old covenant: inasmuch as the governmental ways of God remain the same in all ages, those principles

hold good in all dispensations. From the beginning of human history it has always been true, and to the end of history it will continue so to be, that

“no good thing will He withhold from *them that walk uprightly*”  
(~~19811~~ Psalm 84:11).

On the other hand, it is equally a fact that those who are not subject to God’s Word, who follow instead the devices of their own hearts and give way to the lusts of the flesh, suffer adversity and come under the rod of divine chastisement; of them it has to be said,

“Your sins have withholden good things from you”  
(~~20625~~ Jeremiah 5:25).

In other words, they have missed God’s best: not that they have failed to obtain any blessing which He had eternally decreed should be theirs, but they have not entered into the good of what God’s Word promises should be the *present* portion of those who walk in obedience thereto.

“O that My people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in My ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned My hand against their adversaries. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto Him: but their time should have endured forever. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat; and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee” (~~19813~~ Psalm 81:13-16).

What could be plainer than that! This passage is not treating of the eternal counsels of God, but of His governmental dealings with men in this life.

The key to the above verses is found in their immediate context:

“But My people would not hearken to My voice; and Israel would none of Me. So I gave them unto their own hearts’ lust; and they walked in their own counsels” (~~19811~~ Psalm 81:11, 12).

The children of Israel walked contrary—not to the eternal purpose of Jehovah, but—to His revealed will. They would not submit to the rules laid down in God’s Word, but in their self-will and self-pleading determined to have their own way; in consequence, *they missed God’s best for them in this life*, instead of His subduing their enemies, He allowed those enemies to subdue them; instead of providing abundant harvests, He sent them

famines; instead of giving them pastors after His own heart, He suffered false prophets to deceive.

Many more are the passages which might be quoted from the Old and New Testaments alike, which set forth the same great fact, warning us that if we walk contrary to the Scriptures we shall certainly suffer for it, both in soul and body, both in our estate and circumstances, in this life failing to enter into those blessings—spiritual and temporal—which the Word promises to those who are in subjection to it. That is as true today as it was under the old economy, and it supplies the key to many a problem, and explains much in God’s governmental dealings with us. It certainly supplies the key to David’s life, and explains why the chastening rod of God fell so heavily upon himself and his family. Bear in mind carefully what has been said above, read the passage which now follows, and then there is no reason why we should be surprised at all that is found unto the end of 2 Samuel.

“And unto David were sons born in Hebron: and his first born was Ammon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess. And his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom, the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur. And the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital. And the sixth, Ithream, by Eglah David’s wife. These were born to David in Hebron” (~~1032~~ 2 Samuel 3:2-5).

In the light of all that has been said in the preceding chapter and in this, there is little need for us to attempt any lengthy comments upon these unpleasant verses. Here we see David giving way to the lusts of the flesh, and practicing polygamy; and as he sowed to the flesh in his family life, so in the flesh he reaped corruption in his family. Three of the above-mentioned sons were murdered!

The subject of polygamy as a whole is too large a one for us to deal with here, nor can we discuss it at length as it bore upon the lives of the different patriarchs. God’s original creation of only one man and one woman indicates from the beginning that monogamy was the Divine order for man to heed (~~0190~~ Matthew 19:4, 5). The first of whom we read in Scripture that had more wives than one, was Lamech (~~010419~~ Genesis 4:19), who was of the evil line of Cain. And while Moses, because of the hardness of Israel’s heart (~~0198~~ Matthew 19:8) introduced the statute of divorce, yet nowhere did the Mosaic law sanction a plurality of wives. The limitation of

one wife only is plainly suggested by such scriptures as <sup><10518></sup>Proverbs 5:18 and 18:22.

Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose; one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.

*But he shall not multiply horses to himself... neither shall he multiply wives of himself, that his heart turn not away"*  
(<sup><10175></sup>Deuteronomy 17:15-17).

Here was a definite and express law which the *kings* of Israel were required to obey, and thereby set before their subjects an example of sobriety and marital fidelity. And this was the commandment which David so flagrantly disobeyed, for no sooner was he anointed "king over the house of Judah" (<sup><10004></sup>2 Samuel 2:4), than he began to *multiply* "wives" unto himself (<sup><10082></sup>2 Samuel 3:2-5). Not only so, but when Abner sought to make a league with him, David laid it down as a condition that his first wife, Michal, who had been given to another man (<sup><10254></sup>1 Samuel 25:44) must be restored to him (<sup><10083></sup>2 Samuel 3:13), which was an open violation of <sup><10240></sup>Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

A little later on we read,

*"And David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron"* (<sup><10513></sup>2 Samuel 5:13).

Here, then, was David's besetting sin, to which he yielded so freely—little wonder that his son Solomon followed in his footsteps! And a Holy God will not tolerate evil, least of all in those whom He has made leaders over His people. Though in the main David's life was pleasing to God, and spiritual excellencies were found in him, yet there was this one sad weakness. His giving way to it brought down long and severe chastenings, and the record of it as a whole—the sowing and the consequent reaping—is for our learning and warning. Learn, then, dear reader, that even when restored from backsliding and brought back to fellowship with God, your only safety lies in earnestly crying to Him daily "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe" (Psalm 119-117).

# CHAPTER 33

## HIS CORONATION

### 2 SAMUEL 5

Inasmuch as it is not our design to write a verse-by-verse commentary on the books of Samuel, but rather to study the life of David, we pass over what is found in the remainder of <sup><1080></sup>2 Samuel 3 and 4 and come to the opening verses of chapter five. In the interval between what was before us in our last chapter and the incident we are now to contemplate, the providence of God has been working on David's behalf. His principal opponents had met with a summary and tragic end, and the way was now cleared for the purpose of God concerning our hero, to receive its accomplishment. Viewing him typically, it is indeed striking to observe how that David's path to the throne was marked by *bloodshedding*. From the human side, Saul, Jonathan, and later, Ishbosheth, stood in the way, and none of them died a natural death; by the hand of violence was each one removed!

We cannot regard as accidental, or as a trivial detail, what has just been pointed out above. There is nothing trivial in the imperishable Word of God: everything recorded therein has a profound significance, if only we have eyes to see it. Here, the deeper meaning of these details is not hard to discern: David, in all the essential features of his history (his failures excepted), foreshadowed the Lord Jesus, and, as we know, *His* path to the throne was along one of bloodshedding. True, the Lord Jesus was "born King of the Jews," as David also had been born into the royal tribe of Judah. True, Christ had been "anointed" (<sup><1080></sup>Matthew 3; <sup><4108></sup>Acts 10:38), prophet, priest, and king, years before His coronation; as David also had been "anointed" to the royal office (<sup><0163></sup>1 Samuel 16:13). Yet, it was not until after His precious blood was shed at Calvary, that God exalted Christ to be a "Prince" unto the *spiritual* "Israel" (<sup><4026></sup>Acts 2:36; 5:31): as it was not until after the blood-shedding of Saul, Jonathan and Ishbosheth, that David became king.

Upon the death of Abner and Ishbosheth the tribes of Israel were left without a leader. Having had more than sufficient of the rule of Saul and Ishbosheth over them, they had no inclination to make a further experiment by setting another of Saul's family on the throne, and having observed the prosperous state of Judah under the wise and benign government of David, they began to entertain higher and more honorable thoughts of the "man after God's own heart." That illustrates an important principle in God's dealings with those whom He has marked out for salvation. There has to be a turning from Satan unto God, from the service of sin unto subjection to Christ. That is what true conversion is: it is a change of masters: it is a saying from the heart,

"O Lord our God, other lords besides Thee have had dominion over us; but by *Thee only* will we make mention of Thy name"  
(<sup>23613</sup>Isaiah 26:13).

But conversion is preceded by conviction. There is wrought in the soul a dissatisfaction with the old master, before there is begotten desires towards the new Master. Sin is made to be realized as a bitter thing, before there is an hungering and thirsting after righteousness. The cruel bonds of Satan must be felt, before there is any longing to be made free by Christ. The prodigal son was made to feel the wretchedness of the far country, before he had any thought of journeying toward the Father's house. Clearly is this principle exemplified and illustrated in the case of these men who now sought unto David, desiring that he should be king over them. They had had more than enough of what the prophet Samuel had faithfully warned them (<sup>090811</sup>1 Samuel 8:11-18)! They had no desire for any other of the house of Saul to reign over them, but were now desirous of submitting themselves to *David's* scepter.

Unspeakably blessed, then, is the typical picture here presented to our view. In the voluntary coming unto David of those men of the different tribes, following their unhappy lot under the reigns of Saul and Ishbosheth, we have adumbrated the outcome of the Holy Spirit's operations in the hearts of God's elect when He draws them to Christ. He first makes them discontented with their present lot. He gives them to realize there is no real and lasting satisfaction to be found in the service of sin and in continuing to follow a course of opposition to God and His Christ. He creates within the soul an aching void, before He reveals the One who alone can fill it. In short, He makes us thoroughly discontented with our present portion

before He moves us to seek the true riches. The Hebrews must be made to groan under their merciless taskmasters in Egypt, before they were ready to start out for the promised land.

“Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the Lord said to thee, Thou shalt feed My people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel. So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord: and they anointed David king over Israel” (~~180~~ 2 Samuel 5:1-3).

Ah, note well the opening word, “Then”: after a period of no less than seven and a half years since the death of Saul (v. 5).

After the death of the apostate king, and following David’s recognition by the royal tribe, “It might have been expected that all Israel would have been ready to welcome him. Had it not long ago been declared by the lips of Samuel, that God had forsaken the house of Saul? Had not this been acknowledged by Saul himself? Had not God by the destruction on Gilboa, finally set His seal to the truth of His denunciations? And was it not evident, that the strength and blessing that had departed from Saul, had accompanied the dishonored sojourn of David in the wilderness? The might of Israel was there. There were they who were able to break through the host of the Philistines, and to draw from the well of Bethlehem, when Bethlehem and its waters were in the grasp of the enemy. There too, was the Psalmody of Israel. And yet, despite every indication that God had given—careless alike of the tokens of His favor toward David, and of His displeasure toward themselves—the tribes of Israel continued to reject the chosen servant of God; and Judah only welcomed him.

“The son of Saul, though feeble and unknown, was preferred to David; and David left the wilderness, only to be engaged in a long and destructive struggle with those who should have welcomed him as the gift of God for their blessing. So slowly does the hand of God effectuate its purposes—so resolute are men in refusing to recognize any thing save that which gratifies the tendencies of their nature, or approves itself to the calculation of their self-interest. For seven years and six months, Abner and all the tribes of Israel fiercely assailed David: and yet afterwards, they were not ashamed to confess, that they knew that David was he whom God had destined to be

the deliverer of Israel. They knew this, and yet for seven years they sought to destroy him; and no doubt, all the while, spoke of themselves, and were spoken of by others, as conscientious men fulfilling an apprehended duty in adhering to the house of Saul. So easy is it to speak well of evil, and to encourage iniquity by smooth words of falsehood.

“At last, however, God accomplished the long cherished desire of His servant’s heart—the desire that He had Himself implanted—and David became the head and governor of Israel” (B. W. Newton).

Yes, at last the hearts of these rebels were subdued; at last they were willing to submit themselves unto David’s scepter. Ah, note well *the particular character* in which David was owned by them: “thou shalt be a *captain over Israel*.” As we have pointed out in the introductory paragraphs, the surrender of the men of the eleven tribes unto David, was a type of the sinner’s *conversion*. This presents to us a vital and fundamental aspect of salvation which has wellnigh disappeared from modern “evangelism.” What is conversion? True and saving conversion, we mean. It is far, far more than a believing that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God, and that He made an atonement for our sins. Thousands believe that who are yet dead in trespasses and sins!

Conversion consists not in believing certain facts or truths made known in Holy Writ, but lies in the complete surrender of the heart and life to a divine Person. It consists in a throwing down of the weapons of our rebellion against Him. It is the total disowning of allegiance to the old master—Satan, sin, self, and a declaring “we *will* have this Man to reign over us” (~~2914~~ Luke 19:14). It is owning the claims of Christ and bowing to His rights of absolute dominion over us. It is taking His yoke upon us, submitting unto His scepter, yielding to His blessed will. In a word, it is “receiving Christ Jesus *the Lord*” (~~5106~~ Colossians 2:6), giving Him the throne of our hearts, turning over to Him the control and regulation of our lives. And, my reader, nothing short of this is a Scriptural *conversion*: anything else is make-believe, a lying substitute, a fatal deception.

In the passage now before us, these Israelites, who had for so long resisted the claims of David, serving under the banner of his adversary instead, now desired the king of Judah to be *their* king. It is evident that a great change had been *wrought in them*—wrought in them by God, though He was pleased to use circumstances to incline toward or prepare for that change:



we purposely qualify our terms, for it should be quite obvious that no mere “circumstances” could have wrought *such* a change in their attitude toward the ruler of God’s appointment, unless He had *so* “used” or influenced them by the same. So it is in connection with conversion: the distressing “circumstances” of a sinner may be used of the Spirit to convict him of the vanity of everything beneath the sun, and to teach him that no real heart satisfaction is to be found in mere *things*—even though those “things” may be an earthly mansion, with every thing in it that the flesh craves; but He must perform a miracle of grace within the soul before any descendant of Adam is willing to pay full allegiance to Christ as *King*!

“Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh” (v. 1). What a precious line in our typical picture is this! After conviction and conversion follows spiritual illumination. The Holy Spirit is given to glorify Christ: to take of the things concerning Him and reveal them to those whom He draws to the Savior (<sup><B1416></sup> John 14:16). After a soul has been brought from death unto life by His mighty and sovereign operations, the Spirit of God *instructs* him; shows him the marvelous relation which divine grace has given him to the Redeemer. He discovers to him the glorious fact of his *spiritual union* with Christ, for “he that is *joined to the Lord* is one spirit” (<sup><B617></sup> 1 Corinthians 6:17). He reveals to the quickened children of God’s family the amazing truth that they are members of that mystical Body of which Christ is the Head, and thus we are “members of His body, of His flesh, and *of His bones*” (<sup><B53></sup> Ephesians 5:30).

It is precious to see that these words of all the tribes of Israel, “we are thy bone and thy flesh,” were used by them *as a plea*. They had long ignored his rights and resisted his claims. They had been in open revolt against him, and deserved nought but judgment at his hands. But now they humbled themselves before him, and pleaded their near relation to him as a reason why he should forgive their ill-usage of him. They were his brethren, and on that ground they sought his clemency. And *this* is the very ground on which the Spirit-instructed believer sues for mercy from God in Christ.

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same... Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest” (<sup><B214></sup> Hebrews 2:14, 17).

What confidence does the apprehension of this impart to the penitent heart of the Satan-harassed and sin-distressed saint!

O dear Christian reader, beg God to make this transcendent and precious fact more real and moving to thy heart. The Savior is not one who, like the cherubim and seraphim, is far removed from thee in the scale of being. True, He *is* very God of very God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the King of kings and Lord of lords, but He is *also* one who was “born of a woman,” who became Man, who is bone of thy bone and flesh of thy flesh, and therefore “He is not ashamed to call us *brethren*” (<sup>8021</sup>Hebrews 2:11). And for the same reason He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (<sup>8045</sup>Hebrews 4:15), and

“in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted” (<sup>80218</sup>Hebrews 2:18).

Then hesitate not to approach Him with the utmost freedom and pour out thy heart unreservedly before Him. He will not reprove thee any more than David did his erring brethren. Take full encouragement from this endearing relation: we are the *brethren* of Christ; He is our *kinsman* Redeemed!

“Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel; and the Lord said to thee, Thou shalt feed My people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel” (v. 2).

This too is very blessed when we look through the type to the antitype. These humbled revolvers now praised David for his *former* services, which before they had overlooked; and now acknowledged the Lord’s appointment of him, which before they had resisted. So it is in the experience of the converted. While in the service of Saul (Satan) we have no appreciation of the work Christ has done and no apprehension of the position of honor to which God has elevated Him: the depths of humiliation into which the Beloved of the Father entered and the unspeakable suffering which He endured on behalf of His people, melted not our hearts; nor did the scepter which He now wields bring us into loving subjection to Him. But conversion alters all this!

But more: “the Lord said to thee, Thou shalt feed My people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel.” They not only praised David for his former services, but recognizing him as the divinely appointed *shepherd* of Israel they determined to put themselves under his protection, desiring that

he would rule over them in tenderness and righteousness, for their safety and comfort, and that he would lead them forth to victory over his enemies. This too finds its counterpart in the history of those who are truly converted: they realize they have many foes, both within and without, which are far too powerful for them to conquer, and therefore do they “commit the keeping of their souls *to Him*” (<sup><1049></sup>1 Peter 4:19), assured that “He is able to keep... against that Day” (<sup><8012></sup>2 Timothy 1:12). Yes, He who is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh is “*mighty to save*,” “able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him” (<sup><8075></sup>Hebrews 7:25).

<sup><13123></sup>1 Chronicles 12:23-40 supplies fuller light upon the opening verses of <sup><10501></sup>2 Samuel 5. There we are shown not only the numbers which came unto David from each tribe, and with what zeal and sincerity they came, but also *the gracious reception they met with*. The one whom they had so grievously wronged did not refuse to accept them, but instead gave them a hearty and royal welcome: “And there they were with David three days (typically, now on *resurrection* ground), eating and drinking” (v. 39)—at perfect ease in his presence; “for there was *joy* in Israel” (v. 40). Blessed be God, the Savior of sinners has declared,

“All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (<sup><8067></sup>John 6:37).  
Hallelujah!

# CHAPTER 34

## HIS CORONATION (CONTINUED)

### ~~1081~~ 2 SAMUEL 5

The long-hunted exile has now been elevated to the throne: his principal enemies are in their graves, and David is exalted over the kingdom of Israel. There is not a little in the opening chapters of 2 Samuel which we have passed over, as being outside the scope of this series; yet they record several details that present some lovely traits in the character of our hero. As we have previously pointed out, the news of the death of Saul and Jonathan was received by David with no carnal joy, but instead with magnanimous grief (~~100117~~ 2 Samuel 1:17). He had never regarded the apostate king and his favorite son as standing between him and the kingdom, and his first feeling on their fall was not—as it had been in a less generous heart—a flush of gladness at the thought of the empty throne, but instead a sharp pang of pain that the anointed of God had been grievously dishonored and degraded by the enemies of Israel (~~100120~~ 2 Samuel 1:20).

Even when he began to contemplate his new prospects, there was no hurried taking of matters into his own hands, but instead, a calm and reverent inquiring of the Lord (~~100201~~ 2 Samuel 2:1). He would do nothing in this crisis of his fortunes, when all which had been so long a hope seemed to be nearing its realization, until his Shepherd should lead him. Curbing his naturally impetuous disposition, refusing to take swift action and subdue his remaining opponents, holding in check the impatient ambitions of his own loyal followers, he waited to hear what *God* had to say. Few men have exercised such admirable self-restraint as David did under the circumstances which confronted him when his long-persecuting oppressor was no longer there to contest the field with him. Blessedly did he fulfill the vow of earlier years: “my Strength! upon Thee will I wait” (~~19509~~ Psalm 59:9).

Even before the death of Saul, the strength of David’s forces had been rapidly increased by a constant stream of fugitives from the confusion and misery into which the kingdom had fallen. Even Benjamin, Saul’s own

tribe, sent him some of its famous archers—a sure token of the king's waning fortunes. The hardy men of Manasseh and Gad, “whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as roes upon the mountains” (~~13128~~ 1 Chronicles 12:8) sought his standard; while from his own tribe recruits “day by day came to David to help him, until it was a great host like the host of God” (~~13122~~ 1 Chronicles 12:22). With such forces, it is evident that he could easily and quickly have subdued any scattered troops of the former dynasty. But he made no such attempt, and took no measures whatever to advance any claims to the crown. He preferred God to work out things *for* him, instead of *by* him!

When he was settled at Hebron he followed the same trustful and patient policy, not merely for a few days or weeks, but for a period of upwards of seven years. The language of the history seems to denote a disbanding of his army, or at least to their settling down to domestic life in the villages around Hebron, without any thought of winning the kingdom by force of arms. His elevation to the partial monarchy which he at first possessed was not from his own initiative, but was from the spontaneous act of “the men of Judah” who came to him and anointed him “king over the house of Judah” (~~10004~~ 1 Samuel 2:4). Then followed a feeble but lingering opposition to David, headed by Saul's cousin Abner, rallying around the late king's incompetent son Ishbosheth, whose name significantly means man of shame.

The brief narrative which we have of the seven years spent by the still youthful David at Hebron, presents him in a very lovable light. The same gracious temper which had marked his first acts after Saul's death is strikingly brought out in ~~10002~~ 2 Samuel 2:2-4. “He seems to have left the conducting of the (defensive) war altogether to Joab, as though he shrank from striking any personal blow for his own advancement. When he did interfere, it was on the side of peace, to curb and chastise ferocious vengeance and dastardly assassination. The incidents recorded all go to make up a picture of rare generosity, of patiently waiting for God to fulfill His purposes, of longing that the miserable strife between the tribes of God's inheritance should end. He sends grateful messages to Jabesh-Gilead; he will not begin the conflict with the insurgents. The only actual fight recorded is provoked by Abner, and managed with unwonted mildness by Joab.

“The generosity of his nature shines out again in his indignation at Joab’s murder of Abner, though he was too meek to avenge it. There is no more beautiful picture in his life than that of his following the bier where lay the bloody corpse of the man who had been his enemy ever since he had known him, and sealing the reconciliation which Death even makes in noble souls, by the pathetic dirge he chanted over Abner’s grave (~~0031~~ 1 Samuel 3:31). We have a glimpse of his people’s unbounded confidence in him, given incidentally when we are told that his sorrow pleased them, ‘as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people’ (~~0036~~ 1 Samuel 3:36). We have a glimpse of the feebleness of his new monarchy as against the fierce soldier who had done so much to make it, in his acknowledgment that he was yet weak (~~0039~~ 1 Samuel 3:39)” (Alexander Maclaren).

The final incident of David’s reign over Judah in Hebron was his execution of summary justice upon the murderers of the poor puppet-king Ishbosheth (~~0042~~ 1 Samuel 4:12), upon whose death the whole resistance to David’s power collapsed. Immediately after, the elders of all the tribes came up to Hebron, with the tender of the crown (~~0051~~ 1 Samuel 5:1-3). They offered it upon the triple grounds of kingship, of his military service in Saul’s reign, and of the divine promise of the throne. A solemn pact was made, and David was “anointed” in Hebron “king over Israel”: a king not only by divine right, but also a constitutional monarch, chosen by popular election, and limited in his powers. The *evangelical* significance of this event we considered in the preceding chapter; other points of interest connected therewith are now to engage our attention.

This crowning of David king over all Israel was, first, the fulfillment of one of the great prophecies of Scripture.

“Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father’s children shall bow down before thee” (~~0408~~ Genesis 49:8).

Let it be carefully noted that the clause “thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies” is placed *between* “thy brethren shall praise thee” and “thy father’s children shall bow down before thee”; and that immediately following this, Judah’s victories over the enemies of God’s people is again pointed out: “Judah is a lion’s whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up” (v. 9).

The above prophecy intimated the exalted position which Judah, when compared with the other tribes, was to occupy: Judah was to be the fore-champion in Israel's warfare against their enemies, God having empowered him with conquering power over the foes of his kingdom. The commencement of this in the life of David is plainly intimated in <sup><0100></sup>2 Samuel 5:1-3. David's hand had been "in the neck of Israel's enemies": seen in his memorable victory over Goliath, the Philistine giant; following which we observe the begun-fulfillment of "thy brethren shall praise thee" in the song of the women, "Saul hath slain his thousands and David his ten thousands" (<sup><0180></sup>1 Samuel 18:6). So also here in <sup><0100></sup>2 Samuel 5 the elders of the eleven tribes "bowed down before him" when they nominated him their king, and that, specifically, in view of the fact that he had triumphantly led out and brought in Israel's army in times past (v. 2)!

This leads us, in the second place, to contemplate the coronation of David as a blessed foreshadowment of the exaltation of his greater Son and Lord. This is so obvious that there is little need for us to amplify it at much length—though the interested reader would find it profitable to prayerfully trace out for himself other details in it. The life and activities of David are plainly divided into two main parts, though the second part was of much longer duration than the first: thus it is also in the mediatorial work of Him to whom he pointed. In the first section of his career, he who was born at Bethlehem (<sup><0160></sup>1 Samuel 16:1) and "anointed" of God (<sup><0163></sup>1 Samuel 16:13), wrought some mighty works (<sup><0173></sup>1 Samuel 17:34-36,49) which clearly demonstrated that the Lord was with him (for the antitype see <sup><0211></sup>Luke 2:11; <sup><0408></sup>Acts 10:38). The fame of David was sung by many, which stirred up the jealousy and enmity of the ruling power (<sup><0187></sup>1 Samuel 18:7, 8): for the antitype see <sup><0215></sup>Matthew 21:15!

The enmity of Saul against David was exceeding bitter, so that he thirsted for his blood (<sup><0189></sup>1 Samuel 18:29): compare <sup><0124></sup>Matthew 12:14. From that time forth David became a homeless wanderer (<sup><0221></sup>1 Samuel 22:1): compare <sup><0181></sup>Matthew 8:20. A little company of devoted souls gathered around him (<sup><0221></sup>1 Samuel 22:2), but the nation as a whole despised and rejected him: compare <sup><0311></sup>John 1:11, 12. This was the period of his *humiliation*, when the anointed of God suffered privation and persecution at the hands of his enemies. True, he could (as we have seen above) have taken matters into his own hands, and grasped the kingdom by force of arms; but he steadily refused to do so, preferring to meekly and patiently wait *God's* time for him to ascend the throne: compare <sup><0152></sup>Matthew

26:52. In these and many other respects, our hero blessedly foreshadowed the character and career of his suffering but greater Son and Lord.

But the time had now arrived when the season of David's humiliation was over, and when he entered into that position of *honor and glory* which God had long before ordained for him: "they anointed David king over Israel" (~~1018B~~ 2 Samuel 5:3). In his coronation we have a precious adumbration of the ascension of Christ, and His exaltation unto "the right hand of the Majesty on high" (~~8010B~~ Hebrews 1:3), when He "took upon Him the form of a servant" and "made Himself of no reputation" was "highly exalted" and given "a Name which is above every name" (~~50107~~ Philippians 2:7-10). As we are told in ~~40151~~ Acts 5:31, "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a *Prince* and a Savior, for to give repentance to (the spiritual) Israel." The recorded deeds of David after he came to the throne, which will come before us in the chapters to follow, also strikingly prefigured the work and triumphs of our exalted and glorified Redeemer.

And now, in the third place, let us inquire, How did the fugitive bear this sudden change of fortune? What were the thoughts of David, what the exercises of his heart, now that this great dignity, which he never sought, became his? The answer to our question is supplied by Psalm 18 which (see the superscription) he "spoke in the day that the Lord delivered him from all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul," that is, when the Lord brought to an end the opposition of Saul's house and followers. In this Psalm the Holy Spirit has recorded the breathings of David's spirit and graciously permits us to learn of the first freshness of thankfulness and praise which filled the soul of the young king upon his accession to the throne. Here we are shown the bright spiritual beginnings of the new monarchy, and are given to see how faithfully the king remembered the vows which as an exile had been mingled with his tears.

"It is one long outpouring of rapturous thankfulness and triumphant adoration, which streams from a full heart in buoyant waves of song. Nowhere else, even in the Psalms—and if not there, certainly nowhere else—is there such a continuous tide of unmingled praise, such magnificence of imagery, such passion of love to the delivering God, such joyous energy of conquering trust. It throbs throughout with the life-blood of devotion. All the terror, and pains, and dangers of the weary years—the black fuel for the ruddy



glow—melt into warmth too great for smoke, too equable to blaze. The plaintive notes that had so often wailed from his heart, sad as if the night wind had been wandering among its chords, have all led up to this rushing burst of full-toned gladness. The very blessedness of heaven is anticipated, when sorrows gone by are understood and seen in their connection with the joy to which they have led, and are felt to be the theme for deepest thankfulness” (Alexander Maclaren).

It is blessed to note that this eighteenth Psalm is entitled, “A Psalm of David, the *servant* of the Lord,” upon which C. H. Spurgeon remarked,

“David, although at this time a king, calls himself ‘the servant of the Lord,’ but makes no mention of his royalty: hence we gather that he counted it a higher honor to be the Lord’s servant than to be Judah’s king. Right wisely did he judge. Being possessed of poetical genius, he *served* the Lord by composing this Psalm for the use of the Lord’s house.”

We cannot here attempt a full analysis of its contents, but must glance at one or two of its more prominent features.

The first clause strikes the keynote: “I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength.”

“That personal attachment to God, which is so characteristic of David’s religion, can no longer be pent up in silence, but gushes forth like some imprisoned stream, broad and full even from its well-head” (Alexander Maclaren).

Scholars have pointed out that the intensity of David’s adoration on this occasion moved him to employ a word which is never used elsewhere to express man’s emotions toward God, a word so strong that its force is but freely expressed if we render it “*from my heart* do I love Thee.” The same exalted spiritual fervor is seen again in the loving accumulation of divine names which follow—no less than eight are used in verse 21—as if he would heap together in a great pile all the rich experiences of that *God* (which all names utterly fail to express) which he had garnered up in his distresses and deliverances.

In verses 3 and 4 David recalls pathetically the past experiences when, like an animal caught in the nets, those who hunted him so relentlessly were

ready to close in upon and seize their prey. “In his distress,” he says, “I called upon the Lord and cried unto my God” (v. 4). Though it was but the call of one weak solitary voice, unheard on earth, it reached Heaven, and the answer shook all creation: “He heard my voice out of His temple... Then the earth shook and trembled” (vv. 6, 7, etc.). One saint in his extremity put in motion the mighty powers of Omnipotence: overwhelming is the contrast between cause and effect. Wonderful as the greatness, equally marvelous is the swiftness of the answer: “*Then* the earth shook.”

It is blessed to note how David ascribes all to the power and grace of the Lord.

“For *by Thee* I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall... It is *God* that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect... Thou hast also given me the shield of Thy salvation: and Thy right hand hath holden me up, and Thy gentleness hath made me great... It is *God* that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me... Therefore will I give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and sing praises unto Thy name. Great deliverance giveth He to His king; and showeth mercy to His anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore” (vv. 29, 32, 35, 47, 49, 50).

# CHAPTER 35

## CAPTURING ZION

### ~~1086~~ 2 SAMUEL 5

In ~~1086~~ 2 Samuel 5:6-9 a brief record is given of David wresting the stronghold of Zion out of the hands of the Canaanites, and of his making it the capital of his kingdom. This, it is to be noted, is the first thing recorded of our hero after all the tribes of Israel had made him their king. By noting that order we pointed out that the coronation of David, after the season which is now to be considered by us. In the previous chapter, we pointed out that the coronation of David, after the season of his humiliation, was a beautiful foreshadowing of the exaltation of His Son and Lord, the enthronement on High of that blessed One who had been, in the main, despised and rejected by men on earth. It therefore follows that the noble exploits of David after he came to the throne, strikingly prefigured the work and triumphs of our ascended and glorified Redeemer. It is thus, by looking beneath the mere historical upon the pages of the Old Testament that we discover “in the volume of the Book” it is written of *Christ*.

The long-cherished desire of David’s heart—implanted there by God Himself—had been accomplished, and he was now the head and governor of Israel. His real work had only just commenced, his most glorious achievements were still to be accomplished. His being crowned king over all Israel was but preparatory unto the royal conquests he was to make. His previous exploits only served to manifest his qualifications for the honored position and the important work which God had appointed him. So it was with the Antitype. The enthronement of the Mediator at the right hand of the Majesty on high was but the introduction to the stupendous undertaking which God had assigned Him, for “He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet” (~~461525~~ 1 Corinthians 15:25)—a very plain intimation that His “reign” has already commenced. The life-work, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, simply laid the foundation upon which His royal conquests are now being achieved.

It is a great and serious mistake made by many to suppose that the Lord Jesus is now *inactive*, and to regard His being “seated” as denoting a state of inertia—such Scriptures as <sup><4075></sup>Acts 7:55 and <sup><4101></sup>Revelation 2:1 ought at once to correct such an idea. The word “sat” in Scripture marks an *end and a beginning*: the process of preparation is ended, and established order is begun (cf. <sup><0102></sup>Genesis 2:2; <sup><4103></sup>Acts 2:3). We say again that the real work of Christ (His atonement but laying the foundation thereof) began only after He was invested with “all power (i.e. ‘authority’) in heaven and in earth” (<sup><0218></sup>Matthew 28:18). This was plainly announced in the Messianic Psalms: after God has set His king upon His holy hill of Zion, He was to ask of Him and the heathen would be given Him for His inheritance, and He would reign over them with a “rod of iron” (Psalm 2). “*Rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies,*” was the Father’s word to Him (Psalm 110).

To His chosen servants the Lord Jesus declared “Lo, I am with you alway, unto the end of the world” (<sup><0230></sup>Matthew 28:20). On the day of Pentecost Peter declared,

“Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, *He* (Jesus) hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (<sup><4123></sup>Acts 2:33).

Later, we are told,

“they went forth, and preached everywhere, *the Lord working with them*, and confirming the Word with signs following” (<sup><4163></sup>Mark 16:20).

There is much in the book of Revelation which makes known to us the various activities in which the ascended Savior is engaged, into which we cannot enter. But sufficient has here been produced to show that the King of saints is now wielding His mighty scepter to good effect.

Most blessedly was that which has been before us above typed out by the crowned David. Upon his ascension to the throne he was far from indulging in ease or self-luxuriation. It was now that his best achievements were accomplished. In that section of 2 Samuel which we are entering we behold David capturing the stronghold of Zion, vanquishing the Philistines, providing a resting-place for the holy ark, and being concerned in building a temple for the worship of Jehovah. So blessed is each of these incidents, so rich is their typical and spiritual import, that we purpose, the Lord enabling, to devote a chapter unto the separate consideration of each of

them. May the Spirit of Truth graciously undertake for both writer and reader, giving us eyes to see and hearts to appreciate the “wondrous things” hidden away in this portion of God’s Holy Word.

“And the king and his men went to Jerusalem, unto the Jebusites” (v. 6.).

“If Salem, the place which Melchizedek was king of, was Jerusalem (as seems probable from <sup><19762></sup>Psalm 76:2), it was famous in Abraham’s time; Joshua in his times found it the chief city of the south part of Canaan: <sup><06101></sup>Joshua 10:1, 3. it fell to Benjamin’s lot (<sup><06188></sup>Joshua 18:28), but joined close to Judah’s (<sup><06158></sup>Joshua 15:8). The children of Judah had taken it (<sup><07018></sup>Judges 1:8), but the children of Benjamin suffered the Jebusites to dwell among them (<sup><07021></sup>Judges 1:21); and they grew so upon them that it became a city of Jebusites (<sup><071921></sup>Judges 19:21). Now the very first exploit David did after he was anointed king over all Israel, was to gain Jerusalem out of the hands of the Jebusites; which, because it belonged to Benjamin, he could not well attempt till that tribe, which long adhered to Saul’s house, submitted to him” (Matthew Henry).

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

The wording of the second half of this verse appears rather ambiguous, and we believe the translation given in the “Companion Bible” is to be preferred, “thou shalt not come in hither, for the blind and the lame shall drive thee away.” It was the language of utter contempt. The Jebusites were so assured of the impregnability of their stronghold that they considered the feeblest of their men would be quite sufficient to defend it against any attack of David and his army.

The “Jebusites” were Canaanites who inhabited the country surrounding Jerusalem, and who occupied the fortress of Zion. The tribe of Judah had once failed to drive them out (<sup><06156></sup>Joshua 15:63), and later the children of Benjamin met with no more success (<sup><07021></sup>Judges 1:21). So secure did they now deem themselves that when David purposed its capture, they met him with insulting ridicule. In this we have an illustration of the fact that the

enemies of God are often most confident of their strength when the day of their fall is most imminent. Thus also it frequently appears in the history of the salvation of God's elect: their case seems to be the most hopeless immediately before the hand of divine mercy snatches them as brands from the burning. Thus it was with the dying thief, delivered at the eleventh hour; with Saul of Tarsus, as he was persecuting the church; with the Philippian jailor, as he was on the point of committing suicide. Man's extremity is God's opportunity.

**“Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion: the same is the city of David” (v. 7).**

The literal or material “Zion” was a steep hill which lay just outside Jerusalem, to the south west, on which had been built a fortress to protect the city. It had two heads or peaks: Moriah, on which the temple was afterwards erected, and the other on which was built the future residence of the kings of Israel. So steep and inaccessible was Zion that, like a smaller Gibraltar, it had remained in the hands of Israel's foes. But undeterred by the natural difficulties and unmoved by the contemptuous confidence of the Jebusites, David succeeded in wresting it from the enemy, and became the founder of that Jerusalem which existed from that time onwards.

“Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion: the same is the city of David.” Previously, he had reigned for seven years over Judah “in Hebron” (v. 5), but now that he had been anointed king over all Israel he cast his eyes toward Jerusalem, as a preferable metropolis, and a more suitable seat of his extending empire. But as long as the hill of Zion was occupied by the military Jebusites, they would retain the command of the lower city. His first step, therefore, was, by the help of God, to dispossess the enemy of their stronghold. There David henceforth dwelt, as a conqueror, as in a castle (<sup><13107></sup>1 Chronicles 11:7); there he fixed his royal abode, and there he swayed his scepter over the whole land of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba.

**“So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward” (v. 9),**

Millo seems to have been the townhall, or statehouse, a place of public convention (compare <sup><12121></sup>2 Kings 12:20, 1 Chronicles 32:5). Around Millo David erected such buildings as became his capital or seat of government, for the reception of the court which he kept.

“And David went on and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him” (v. 10).

The tide of fortune had turned, and the once despised fugitive now waxed great in power and reputation, in wealth and honor, subduing his enemies, and enlarging his dominion. But all his success and prosperity was entirely owing to Jehovah showing Himself strong on his behalf: without His enablement, none of us can accomplish anything good (~~<B156>~~ John 15:5).

Now there would be little or no difficulty in our perceiving the typical significance of the above were it not that so many of our minds have been blinded by the errors of modern “dispensationalism.” A careful study of the connections in which “Zion” is found in the Psalms and Prophets, makes it clear that “Zion” was the name by which the Old Testament Church was usually called.

“For the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for Mine Anointed” (~~<D213>~~ Psalm 132:13-17).

Let the dubious (and also the interested) reader ponder such verses as ~~<D74D>~~ Psalms 74:2; 87:5; 102:13; 128:5; 133:3; ~~<D5116>~~ Isaiah 51:16.

The Old Testament Church was designated “Zion” after the mount on which the Temple was built, whither the tribes of Israel went up to worship Jehovah, who dwelt between the cherubim. This name was duly transferred to the New Testament Church, which is grafted into the Old, as the teaching upon the “olive” tree in Romans 11 shows, and as the Holy Spirit in ~~<D219>~~ Ephesians 2:19-22 and 3:6 expressly states. Such passages as ~~<D51125>~~ Romans 11:26 (note carefully it is “out of Sion” and *not* “unto Sion”); ~~<D8122>~~ Hebrews 12:22; ~~<D1116>~~ 1 Peter 2:6; ~~<D6401>~~ Revelation 14:1, make it plain that the New Testament Church is denominated “Sion,” for the Church is now God’s abode upon earth, His “temple” (~~<D70316>~~ 2 Corinthians 6:16), His “city” (~~<D219>~~ Ephesians 2:19), His “Jerusalem” (~~<D4026>~~ Galatians 4:26—“which is above” is not to be understood astronomically, but means “which excels”). Thus, all that is spoken of “Zion,” of “the city of God,” of

“Jerusalem” in the Old Testament in a *spiritual* way belongs unto Christians now, and is for their faith to appropriate and enjoy.

The history of Jerusalem and Zion (for they are inseparably connected) accurately foreshadowed what is found spiritually in the antitype. The first reference to the same in Scripture presents that city as being under the benign scepter of Melchizedek (<sup><01418></sup>Genesis 14:18): so, originally, the Church was blest with all spiritual blessings in Christ (<sup><0008></sup>Ephesians 1:3). But, next, we see this city no longer in subjection to the servant of God, but fallen into the hands of the heathen: so the Church apostatized in Adam, God’s elect sinking to the natural level of the non-elect. Zion now became inhabited by a race who were under the curse of God (<sup><00925></sup>Genesis 9:25): so, in consequence of the Fall, God’s elect were by nature “the children of wrath even as others” (<sup><0008></sup>Ephesians 2:3). For centuries Zion refused to be subject unto the people of God (<sup><01563></sup>Joshua 15:63, <sup><00121></sup>Judges 1:21); so the Gentiles were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel” etc. (<sup><0021></sup>Ephesians 2:11, 12).

But, eventually, Zion was subdued and captured by David, and made his royal residence, the Temple also being erected upon one of its mounts. Thus the stronghold of the enemy was converted into a habitation of God, and became the throne of His government upon earth. Wondrous figure was this of Christ’s conquest of the *Gentile Church* (<sup><04154></sup>Acts 15:14) unto Himself, wresting it out of the hand of the enemy, bringing it into subjection unto Himself, and setting up His throne in the hearts of its individual members. Announcement to this effect was made by the Savior when He declared, in view of His immediate death (v. 32), “Now shall the Prince of this world be cast out” (<sup><01231></sup>John 12:31). Satan was to be dethroned and driven from his dominion, so that Christ would “draw” unto Himself many of those over whom the devil had reigned (<sup><0002></sup>Ephesians 2:2). It is to be noted that the tense of the verb there denotes that the “casting out” of Satan would be as *gradual* as the “drawing” (Alford).

At the Cross the Lord Jesus “spoiled principalities and powers,” and at His ascension He “made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (<sup><01015></sup>Colossians 2:15 and cf. <sup><0008></sup>Ephesians 4:8). At Calvary Satan’s hold over the world was broken: “the Prince of this world is judged” (<sup><01611></sup>John 16:11). Then it was that the “strong man” (the devil) was “overcome” by One stronger than himself, his armor being taken from him, and his “spoils” (captives) divided (<sup><01121></sup>Luke 11:21, 22). And a *manifestation* of this fact is



made every time an elect soul is “delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son” (<sup><51013></sup>Colossians 1:13). Christ’s frequent casting out of demons. from the bodies of men during the days of His flesh presaged His delivering the souls of His redeemed from the dominion of Satan during this Gospel era.

That which our present type sets forth is not the Lord Jesus paying the ransom-price for the purchase of His people (particularly, those among the *Gentiles*), but His actual redeeming or delivering them from the power of the enemy. As David’s capture of Zion *followed* his coronation, so that work his conquest prefigured pointed to the victorious activities of Christ *after* His ascension. It is that which was foretold in <sup><19300></sup>Psalms 110:1-3.

**First**, “Sit Thou at My right hand.”

**Second**, “The Lord shall send the rod of Thy strength (the Gospel in the power of the Spirit) out of Zion.”

**Third**, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power.” One by one those whom the Father gave to Christ are subdued by His grace, made willing to throw down the weapons of their warfare against His Son, and His throne is set up in their hearts (<sup><47105></sup>2 Corinthians 10:5).

It is beautiful to note that the meaning of the word Zion is “sunny” or “shone upon,” as facing the south, basking in the rays of the warm sun. So the spiritual Zion, delivered by Christ (through His post-ascension activities) from the dominion of Satan, has been brought into the unclouded favor of God. The type is completed by what we read of in <sup><10511></sup>2 Samuel 5:11,

“And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David a house.”

In the sending of those messengers to David by *Hiram*, proffering to build him a house, we have the foreshadowment of Christ’s being acknowledged by the *Gentiles* (cf. <sup><28118></sup>Isaiah 60:3), and their being built into His spiritual house (<sup><4122></sup>Ephesians 2:22; <sup><11115></sup>1 Peter 2:5).

# CHAPTER 36

## HIS VICTORY OVER THE PHILISTINES

### ~~1081~~ 2 SAMUEL 5

“But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David” (~~10517~~ 2 Samuel 5:17).

The civil war in Israel, which had continued for several years, having been brought to an end, and the whole nation being now united under the government of David, he had thereby become much more powerful. Probably hearing, too, of David’s capture of Jerusalem (v. 7) and of the friendship shown him by Hiram, king of Tyre (v. 11), the Philistines now thought it was high time to bestir themselves and put an end to his prowess. Accordingly they assembled a great army against him, but were overthrown, though not annihilated.

The typical significance of the above (by which we mean its prophetic and dispensational foreshadowings) points to much that is recorded in the book of Acts, which, in turn, presages that which was to obtain more or less throughout the whole of this Christian era. As soon as the kingdom of Christ had been set up in the world, it was vigorously attacked by the powers of darkness, which, by the combined forces of Jews and Gentiles, sought to overthrow it. Definite proof of this is found in Acts 4, where we read of the arrest of Peter and John, their being summoned before the Sanhedrin, being threatened by them, and subsequently released. On returning to their own company and reporting their experiences, they all “with one accord” quoted from the second Psalm, which some—probably with good reason—conclude was written by David just after his victory over the Philistines.

That part quoted from the second Psalm was,

“Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?  
The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered

together against the Lord, and against His Christ” (<sup><4025></sup>Acts 4:25, 26).

This is a clear intimation from the Spirit Himself that the substance of these verses is by no means to be restricted unto the opposition made by the powers of evil (through their human emissaries) against Christ personally during the days of his flesh, but include also Christ mystical, His Church, and is a prophetic intimation of the continuous enmity of the Serpent against the woman’s Seed, i.e., Christ and His people. But as the remainder of the second Psalm shows, all such opposition will prove futile, for

“He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet”  
(<sup><4152></sup>1 Corinthians 15:25).

In this chapter, however, we do not propose to develop at length the prophetic application of David’s victories over the Philistines, but rather shall we endeavor to concentrate upon the spiritual and practical bearings of the same. Surely *this* is what our poor hearts stand most in need of in this “cloudy and dark day”—that which, under God’s blessing, will better equip us to fight the good fight of faith; that which will instruct and encourage for running the race that is set before *us*. There is a “time” and “season” for everything. While it is our happy privilege to admire and study the handiwork of God in creation, yet neither the pleasure of beholding the beautiful flowers nor investigating the mystery of the planets would be in order if an enemy were at our doors, and we were called upon to defend our lives. The same principle applies to concentrating upon one or more of the many different departments of Scripture study.

It was to carry forward the conquest of Canaan—begun by Joshua, but long interrupted (see <sup><0012></sup>Judges 1:21-36) that God had raised up David.

“And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you: now then do it; for the Lord hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of My servant David I will save My people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies” (<sup><1017></sup>2 Samuel 3:17, 18).

Chief among Israel’s enemies were the Philistines. They had long been a serious menace to God’s people, and eventually succeeded in slaying Saul and his sons (<sup><0310></sup>1 Samuel 31:1-6). But now the time had come for God to stain their pride, fight against them, and overthrow their forces. “The

triumphing of the wicked is short” (~~<18005>~~ Job 20:5); so discovered Pharaoh, Haman, Rabshakeh, Nero; and so shall it be with those who now oppose the Lord and His people.

“But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David” (~~<10517>~~ 2 Samuel 5:17).

First of all, let us behold and admire here the providential dealings of God:

“For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things” (~~<51136>~~ Romans 11:36).

Nothing happens by chance in this world, and the actions of the wicked are just as truly controlled, yea, and directed, by the Governor of this world, as are those of the righteous. It was of the Lord that these Philistines threatened Israel at this time, and therein we may perceive His grace toward His servant. They were the enemies of Jehovah, and belonged to the people He had commanded Israel to destroy. But to take the initiative against them, David might feel was the height of ingratitude, for on two occasions the Philistines had given him protection when sorely persecuted by Saul (~~<192701>~~ 1 Samuel 27:1-3; 28:1,2). By God’s moving the Philistines to take the initiative, David’s scruples were subdued.

Though David had ascended the throne of Israel, this did not deter his former enemies; rather did it excite their jealousy and stirred them up to come against him. Therein we may find an illustration of Satan’s ways against the saints. Whenever an advance step is taken for God, or whenever honor is put upon the true King and Christ is given His proper place in our arrangements, the enemy is on hand to oppose. Let Abraham return unto “the place of the altar” and at once there is strife between his herdsmen and those of Lot (~~<011304>~~ Genesis 13:4-7). Let Joseph receive a divine revelation in a dream, and immediately the cruel envy of his brethren is stirred against him (Genesis 37). Let Elijah triumph over the false prophets upon Carmel, and Jezebel threatens his life. Many such cases are also found in the book of Acts. These are recorded for our instruction. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

Let, then, the attack of the Philistines upon David right after his coronation *warn* us against finding security in any spiritual prosperity with which we may have been blessed. High altitudes are apt to make the head dizzy. No sooner had David made Zion his own city, and that to the glory of the

Lord, than the Philistines came up against him. The very next words after the boastful “Lord, by Thy favor Thou hast made *my* mountain to stand *strong*,” are, “Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled” (<sup><19307></sup> Psalm 30:7). Our “strength” is to maintain a conscious *weakness* (<sup><471210></sup> 2 Corinthians 12:10). Every spiritual advance needs to be accompanied by watchfulness and prayer. “Let not him that girdeth on his armor boast himself as he that putteth it off” (<sup><112011></sup> 1 Kings 20:11)!

“The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim” (v. 18).

The valley of Rephaim was but a short distance from Jerusalem: no doubt the Philistines expected to make themselves masters of that strategic city before David had time to complete the fortification of it. In the words “spread themselves” indication is given that their force was a large one: “*all* the Philistines” (v. 17) probably denotes that their five principalities (<sup><9036></sup> 1 Samuel 6:16,18) were here combined together. Little did they realize that they were rushing onward to their destruction, for they knew not the might of David’s scepter nor the power of Jehovah who had exalted him. The Philistines were unaware of the fact that the living God was *for* David, as He had not been for Saul.

Let us now consider David’s response unto the threatening presence of the Philistine hosts.

“And David enquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? Wilt Thou deliver them into mine hand?” (v. 19).

This is very blessed, accentuated by the final clause in verse 17, which is in marked contrast to what is recorded in verse 18: in the one we read “and David heard of it, and *went down* to the hold”; in the other we are told that the Philistines “came and spread *themselves* in the valley of Rephaim.” In sharp antithesis from the self-confident Pharisees, David took a lowly place and evidenced his dependence upon God. Instead of accepting their challenge and immediately engaging them in battle, David turned to the Lord and inquired *His* will for him. O that writer and reader may cultivate this spirit more and more: it is written “In all thy ways *acknowledge Him*,” and the promise is, “and he shall direct thy paths” (<sup><1086></sup> Proverbs 3:6).

“And David enquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt Thou deliver them into mine hand”? Not as the mighty man of valor did he impetuously rush ahead, but as the man submissive to his God did

the king here act: most probably it was through Abiathar, by means of the urim and thummim in his ephod, that the Lord's mind was sought. His inquiry was twofold: concerning his duty and concerning his success: "his conscience asked the former, his prudence the latter" (Matthew Henry). His first concern was to make sure he had a divine commission against the Philistines. In view of <sup><1018></sup>2 Samuel 3:18 his duty seemed clear, but the question was, Is it *God's* time for me to act *now*! His second concern was whether the Lord would prosper his efforts, for he realized that victory was entirely dependent upon God—unless He delivered the Philistines into his hand, all would be in vain.

“And the Lord said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand” (v. 19).

He who has said, “Seek ye My face” will not mock that soul who sincerely and trustfully responds with, “my *heart* said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek” (<sup><192708></sup>Psalm 27:8). Gods of wood and stone, the idols of earthly fame and material wealth, will fail their devotees in the hour of need, but the living God will not disappoint those who are subject unto Him and seek His aid in the time of emergency. The Lord is ever “a very *present* help in trouble” (<sup><19401></sup>Psalm 46:1), and the sure promise is “Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you” (<sup><5008></sup>James 4:8). The divine ordering of our ways, the directing of our steps, is urgently needed by all of us, nor will it be withheld if sought after the appointed order.

“And the Lord said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand.” This also is recorded for *our* instruction and comfort; then let us earnestly seek faith to appropriate the same and make it *our own*. Those words were graciously spoken by the Lord to encourage and nerve David for the battle. We too are called upon to *fight*—“fight the good fight of faith.” Yes, and it is only as *faith* is in exercise, only as the divine promises are actually *laid hold of* (expectantly *pleaded* before God), that we shall fight with good success. Has not God said *to us* He will “bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (<sup><45160></sup>Romans 16:20): how *that* ought to animate us for the conflict! If we lay hold of that promise we shall be able to exclaim,

“I therefore so run, *not as uncertainly*; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air” (<sup><41926></sup>1 Corinthians 9:26).

“And David came to Baalperazim, and David smote them there, and said, The Lord hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters” (v. 20).

Here, too, David has left a noble example for us to follow, and the more closely we do so, the more will God be honored, and the more will further successes be assured for us. Having obtained mercy to be dependent, David found grace to be humble, and ascribed the victory unto its true Author: “*The Lord hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me*”—as when a swollen river bursts its banks and carries all before it. In every forward step, in every resistance to temptation, in every success in service, learn to acknowledge “yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (~~<461510>~~ 1 Corinthians 15:10). May writer and reader be delivered from the self-praising, boastful, Laodicean spirit of this evil age, saying,

“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory” (~~<198501>~~ Psalm 115:1).

“And there they left their images, and David and his men burned them” (v. 21).

No doubt the Philistines had expected both protection and help from their idols, but they failed them in the hour of need: equally vain and impotent will prove any visible or material thing in which we put our trust. Now they were unwilling to preserve such gods as were unable to preserve them:

“God can make men sick of those things that they have been most fond of, and compel them to desert what they doted upon, and cast even the idols of silver and gold to the moles and bats (~~<21021>~~ Isaiah 2:20)” (Matthew Henry).

In *burning* the idols of the Philistines, David not only made clean work of his victory, but *obeyed* God’s order in ~~<08075>~~ Deuteronomy 7:5: “thou shalt... burn their graven images with fire.”

“And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim” (v. 22).

Yes, even though we have the promise “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (~~<50407>~~ James 4:7), there is no assurance given that he will not return. He departed from the Savior only “for a season” (~~<04113>~~ Luke 4:13), and thus it is with His followers. Yet let not his return to the attack

discourage us: it is but a summons to renewed waiting upon God, seeking *fresh* strength from Him daily, hourly. “And when David enquired of the Lord, He said” (v. 23). On this second occasion also David sought Divine guidance: even though he had been successful in the first battle, he realized that further victory depended entirely upon the Lord, and for that he must be completely subject to Him.

“Thou shalt not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the Lord go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines” (vv. 23, 24).

This is striking: here was the same enemies to be met, in the same place, and under the same Lord of hosts, and yet God’s answer now is the very opposite of the previous one: then it was, “Go up”; now it is “Go not up,” but make for their rear—circumstances may seem identical to human sight, yet on each occasion God is to be sought unto, trusted and obeyed, or victory cannot be insured. A real test of obedience was this for David, but he did not argue or decline to respond; instead, he meekly bowed to the Lord’s will. *Here* is the man “after God’s own heart”—who waited upon the Lord, and acted by His answer when it was given. Nor did he lose by it: “The Lord shall go before thee to smite the hosts of the Philistines”: God is ready to do still greater things when we own what He has already done for us!

“And David did so, as the Lord had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer” (v. 25).

“David observed his orders, waited God’s motions, and stirred then, and not till then” (Matthew Henry).

Complete success was granted him: God performed His promise and routed all the enemy’s forces. How that should encourage us!

“When the kingdom of the Messiah was to be set up, the apostles, who were to beat down the devil’s kingdom, must not attempt anything till they receive the promise of the Spirit, who ‘came with a sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind’ (~~AND~~ Acts 2:2), which was typified by this ‘sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees’; and when they heard that, they must bestir



themselves, and did so: they went forth conquering and to conquer”  
(Matthew Henry).

# CHAPTER 37

## BRINGING UP THE ARK

### ~~1081~~ 2 SAMUEL 5 AND 6

For lack of space we were obliged to omit from the preceding chapter a number of important points upon the closing verses of ~~1080~~ 2 Samuel 5; so we will use them here as the introduction for this one. We saw how that when the Philistines came up against David (~~1058~~ 2 Samuel 5:18), he “enquired of the Lord” what he should do (v. 19), and God responded with the gracious assurance that the enemy should be delivered into his hands; which was accordingly accomplished. Then we saw that other Philistines came up against him again (v. 22). Taking nothing for granted, David once more sought unto the Lord for divine instructions. Therein we are taught the duty of acknowledging God in *all* our ways (~~1086~~ Proverbs 3:6), and His gracious readiness to grant needed light for our path, for “whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for *our* learning” (~~6504~~ Romans 15:4). The whole of that blessed incident reveals some valuable and precious lessons on the intensely practical subject of *divine guidance*.

David did not act mechanically when the Philistines came against him the second time, and do according as God had instructed him on the first occasion; instead, he definitely inquired of Him *again!* Circumstances may *seem identical* to our dim vision, nevertheless, it is our duty and wisdom to wait upon the Lord on *all* occasions, trustfully seeking His instructions, implicitly obeying when His will is made clear to us through His Word. In no other way can victory over the lusts of the flesh and the subtle wiles of the devil, be insured. As we saw in our last, the Lord *did not* give David the same answer on the second occasion as He had given him in the first. His response was quite different: the first time He said, “Go up” (v. 21); the second time He said, “thou shalt not go up, but fetch a compass behind them,” etc. It is at *that* point, particularly, that there is important instruction for us.

On the first occasion the Lord said unto David, “Go up, for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand” (v. 19). But on the second, He said,

Thou shalt not go up, but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the Lord go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines” (vv. 23, 24). That made a *greater demand* upon David’s faith, patience and submission, than the former order did. It was humbling to the pride of the flesh not to make an open and frontal attack. It called for quite a march to circle around and get to their rear. And when he got there, he must *wait* until he heard a movement in the boughs of the mulberry trees; and waiting is much harder than rushing ahead. The lesson here is, that as we grow in grace and progress in practical godliness, the Lord requires fuller and fuller submission to Himself.

“And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.” This was the equivalent of the word that was given to Israel at the Red Sea, as they saw the Egyptians bearing down upon them: “Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.” The mulberry trees could not move of themselves: David was to tarry till a breath from the Lord stirred them: he was to wait till he heard the wind (emblem of the Spirit) stirring their leaves. He was not to go to sleep, but to remain alert for the Lord’s signal. The lesson here is, that while we are waiting for the Lord, we must diligently observe the providential motions of God: “Continue in prayer, *and watch* in the same” (<sup>51042</sup>Colossians 4:2).

“When thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that *then* thou shalt bestir thyself”: that is, David was to *respond* to the intimation which God had graciously given him. The practical lesson for us is obvious; when the Lord has made known His will, prompt action is required. There is a time to stand still, and a time to move. “Go forward” was the second word to Israel at the Red Sea. Strange as it may seem, there are many who fail at this very point. They arrive at some crisis in life: they seek unto the Lord for directions: His providential “pillar of cloud” goes before them, but they do not “bestir” themselves and follow it. It is only mocking God to ask Him for light when we respond not to what He *has* given. Listen attentively for *His* “sound of a going” and when you have heard it, act.

Observe the blessed and assuring promise which accompanied the directions to David at that time,

“For then shall the Lord go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines” (v. 24).

if we carefully compare that with what is said in verse 20, it will be seen that the Lord wrought *more manifestly* on this second occasion than He did on we first. There we are simply told “and *David* smote them,” though he promptly ascribed his victory unto God. But here the Lord promised that *He* would smite the Philistines. The comforting lesson for us is, that if we duly wait upon God, implicitly obey His instructions—no matter how “unreasonable” they seem, nor how distasteful; if we diligently watch every movement of His providence, and “bestir” ourselves when His will is clear, then we may assuredly count upon Him showing Himself strong on our behalf.

There is a blessed sequel to the above incident recorded in <sup><13446></sup>1 Chronicles 14:16, 17, which is not mentioned in 2 Samuel, “David therefore did as God commanded him; and they smote the host of the Philistines from Gibeon even to Gezer. And the fame of David went out into all lands; and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations.” God will be no man’s debtor: He always rewards those who keep His commandments. He not only enabled David to vanquish the Philistines, but He also honored the one who had honored Him, by causing his fame to go abroad, so that all nations were afraid to attack him. And is it not equally the case now, that where there is a soul who is fully subject to Himself, He causes even Satan to feel he is but wasting his time to assail such an one! Compare <sup><2147></sup>Proverbs 16:7.

The next thing we are told of David after his triumph over the Philistines, is the godly concern he now evidenced for the ark. This is exceedingly beautiful, manifesting as it does the deep spirituality of our hero, and showing again the propriety of his being designated “the man after Gods own heart.” David’s first thought after he was firmly seated as king over all Israel, was the enthronement in Jerusalem of the long-forgotten ark, that sacred coffer which held supreme place among the holy vessels of the tabernacle; that ark concerning which the Lord had said to Moses,

“Thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And *there* I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the testimony” (<sup><1252></sup>Exodus 25:21, 22).

That ancient symbol of the presence of the true King, had passed through many vicissitudes since the days when it had been carried around the walls of Jericho. In the degenerate times of the Judges, it had been superstitiously carried into battle, as though it were merely a magical mascot, and righteously did God mock their impious expectations: “the ark of God” fell into the hands of the uncircumcised. The Philistines carried it in triumph through their cities, and then housed it in the temple of Dagon. But again Jehovah vindicated His honor, and the ark was sent back to Israel in dismay. it had been joyfully welcomed by the inhabitants of Bethshemesh: then, alas, unholy curiosity moved them to look within the sacred chest, and the Lord smote them “with a great slaughter” (~~19069~~ 1 Samuel 6:19).

The ark was then removed to the forest seclusion of Kerjathjearim (the city or village of the woods) and placed in the house of Abinadab, where it lay neglected and forgotten for over fifty years. During the days of Saul, they “enquired not at it” (~~13138~~ 1 Chronicles 13:3). But from his days as a youth, David was deeply exercised over the dishonor done to the Lord’s throne:

“Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions: How he swore unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, a *habitation for* the mighty God of Jacob. Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood” (~~19201~~ Psalm 132:1-6).

He had resolved to establish a place where Jehovah’s worship could be celebrated, a house where the symbol of His presence should be fixed and communion with His people established.

Now that he was established over the kingdom of Israel, David did not forget his early vows, but forthwith proceeded to put them into execution.

“Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the Lord of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubim” (~~10001~~ 2 Samuel 6:1, 2).

No doubt it was with a full heart that David now acted, with deep longings after God, with fervent rejoicings in Him (see verse 5). No doubt he

painted a bright picture, as he anticipated the blessings which would follow the ark being rightfully honored. Alas, how his hopes were dashed to the ground! Sad indeed was the immediate sequel.

“And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the cart. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was in Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark. And David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on comets, and on cymbals. And when they came to Nachon’s threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. And David was displeased, because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place the breach of Uzzah to this day” (vv. 3-8).

Some exceedingly solemn lessons are pointed in this passage, and they are recorded for *our* warning; alas that they are so widely disregarded in Christendom today.

“To bring back therefore the Ark from the place of its dishonor; to bring it again into the bosom of Israel; to make it once more that which Israel should seek unto and enquire at: and above all establish it in the citadel of Zion, the place of sovereign supremacy and strength, these were the immediate objects of David’s desires. Herein he was fulfilling his office of king, in giving supremacy to God and to His truth. But the servants of God have not unfrequently to learn, that the pursuit of a right end, does not necessarily imply the employment of right means” (B. W. Newton).

This is the first thing here to take to heart.

“And they set the ark of God upon a new cart.” By so doing they were guilty of a serious error. In the fervency of his zeal, David ignored the precepts of God. The Lord had given very definite instructions as to the order which must be followed when the ark was to be moved. Through Moses Jehovah had said,

“When the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering veil, and *cover the ark of testimony* with it: and shall put thereon the covering of the badgers’ skins, and shall spread over it a cloth wholly of blue, and shall *put in the staves thereof*” (~~0005~~ Numbers 4:5, 6).

The sacred ark was to be duly hidden from the gaze of the curious, but it does not appear that this detail was attended to by David! Nor was that all:

“And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward: after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it” (~~0045~~ Numbers 4:15);

“they should bear *upon their shoulders*” (~~0070~~ Numbers 7:9).

The will of God was plainly revealed: the ark was to be covered, staves were to be inserted in the rings in its ends, and it was to be carried on the shoulders of the Kohathites. Nothing had been said about placing it on “a new cart”: *that* was a human invention, and *contrary to* the instructions of the Lord. David’s desire was holy, his motive was pure, but *he went about things in a wrong way*, and dire were the consequences. Now there are two ways of doing the work of the Lord, two ways of acquitting ourselves when engaged in His service: strictly following what is prescribed for us in the written Word of God, or following *our own* ideas and inclinations—or following the example of other men, which amounts to the same thing. Alas, how much the latter is now in evidence; how often are right things being done in a wrong way!

The due order for the removing of the ark had been plainly made known by God in His written Word. Jehovah had given express command that the ark should be covered with the sacred curtains, committed to the charge of a divinely selected set of men, and it *must* be carried on their “shoulders,” and in no other way. That was *God’s* way: to move it on a cart drawn by cattle was *man’s* way. Some might think the latter was to be preferred. Some might consider it was such a “little” matter as to be of no consequence. Some might conclude that as their object was right and their motive pure, that even though they ignored *the prescribed mode* of performing the duty, they might surely count upon the divine blessing. *What the Lord thought* of their procedure is evidenced in the tragic sequel.

But how are we to account for David’s serious failure to heed the commands of God? What is the explanation of the “confusion” which here

attended his well-meant and praiseworthy effort? Let us go back again to the beginning of ~~<1006>~~ 2 Samuel 6, and read carefully its first three verses. Notice, dear reader, a very significant *omission*; observe closely the solemn contrast between his conduct in ~~<100519>~~ 2 Samuel 5:19 and 5:23, and what is said of him here. Each time the Philistines came up against him, David “inquired of the Lord,” but nothing is said of *that* now he purposed to conduct the ark unto a suitable habitation for it! Need we wonder, then, at what follows? If, *God’s* blessing be not definitely sought, how can it be rightfully expected? If *prayer* does not precede and accompany our very best actions, what are they likely to amount to! If in *any* of our ways God be not “acknowledged,” be not surprised if they lead to disaster.

“And David *consulted with the captains* of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader. And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If it seem good *unto you*, and that it be of the Lard our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren everywhere, that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us. And let us bring again the ark of our God to us” (~~<13130>~~ 1 Chronicles 13:1-3)

Instead of “inquiring of the Lord,” David had conferred with his officers. There was *no need whatever* for him to “consult” with any human being, for the *will of the Lord* was already upon record! And what was the policy suggested by the “leaders”? Why, to imitate the ways of the religious world around them! The Philistine “priests” had counseled that the ark be returned to Israel upon “a new cart” (~~<0002>~~ 1 Samuel 5:2-11), and now David—under the advice of his officers—“set the ark of God upon a *new cart*” (~~<10063>~~ 2 Samuel 6:3)!



# CHAPTER 38

## BRING UP THE ARK (CONTINUED)

### ~~1000~~ 2 SAMUEL 6

Our principal design in this series of chapters is to emphasize the fact that the Old Testament is far, far more than a historical record of events which happened thousands of years ago, and to make it manifest that every part of God's Word is full of important truth which is urgently needed by us today. The business of a Bible teacher is twofold: to give an accurate *interpretation* of the meaning of Holy Writ, and to make *application* of its contents to the hearts and lives of his hearers or readers. By "making application," we mean the pointing out and the pressing upon ourselves of the practical lessons which each passage contains, seeking to heed its warnings, appropriate its encouragements, obey its precepts, and put in a claim to its promises. Only thus does it become a living and profitable Word *to us*.

The first verses of ~~1000~~ 2 Samuel 6 record an incident which needs to be prayerfully laid to heart by every one whom God has separated unto His service. It chronicles a most blessed action on the part of David, who had in view naught but the honor and glory of the Lord. But alas, that action was sadly marred by permitting the fervency of his zeal to ignore the precepts of God. He was anxious that the long-neglected and dishonored Ark should be suitably housed in Zion. His desire was good and his motive was pure, but his execution of the same met with the open displeasure of the Lord. It is not sufficient to have a worthy purpose and a proper spirit: God's work must be performed *in the right way*: that is, according to the rules of His prescribing; anything other than that is but a species of self-will.

There seem to be a great many in Christendom today who are desirous of doing good, but they are exceedingly lax and careless in the mode and manner in which their desires are carried out. They act as though the means used and the methods employed mattered little or nothing, so long as their aim and end is right. They are creatures of impulse, following the dictates

of mere whim and sentiment, or imitating the example of others. They seem to have no concern for *God's standards* study not His Word diligently to discover what laws and rules the Lord has given for the regulation of our conduct in His "service." Consequently, they are governed by the flesh, rather than the Spirit, so that it frequently happens that they do good things *in a wrong way*; yea, in a manner directly opposed to *God's way* as revealed in His Word.

There are many who are anxious to see the pews occupied and their treasury well filled, and so, "socials," "ice-cream suppers," and other worldly attractions are employed to draw the crowd. There are many preachers who are anxious to hold the young people, and so "athletic clubs," social entertainments, are introduced to secure that end. There are many evangelists who are anxious to "make a good show," secure "results," and be able to herald so many hundreds of "converts" at the close of their "campaigns," and so fleshly means are used, high pressure methods are employed to bring this about: "decision cards," the "sawdust trail," the "penitent form" are called in to their aid. There are many Sunday school teachers who are anxious to hold the interest of their class, and so "prizes" are given, "picnics" are arranged, and other devices are resorted to.

Apparently it does not occur to these "leaders" to *challenge* their own actions, to weigh them in "the balances of the sanctuary," to inquire how near or how far they measure up to the divine standard: so long as such means and methods seem right *to them*, or are in general vogue in other "churches," and so long as they appear to "succeed," nothing else matters. But in a coming day, GOD is going to ask of them "who hath required *this* at your hand?" (<sup><23012></sup>Isaiah 1:12)! None of the devices mentioned by us above have one particle of scriptural authority to warrant their use; and it is *by the Scriptures* that each of us will yet be *judged*! All things must be done "according to the pattern" (<sup><8085></sup>Hebrews 8:5; <sup><02540></sup>Exodus 25:40) which God has furnished us; and woe will it yet be unto us if we have disregarded *His* "pattern" and substituted another of our own.

The terrible confusion which now prevails so extensively in Christendom is no excuse whatever for us falling into line with it: "*Thou shalt not* follow a multitude to do evil" (<sup><02301></sup>Exodus 23:1). No matter how "peculiar" he may be thought, no matter how "unpopular" he may be because of it, *faithfulness* is what God requires from each of His servants (<sup><4042></sup>1

Corinthians 4:2). And “faithfulness” means doing the work which God has appointed *in the way which He has prescribed*. Expediency may have grasped the helm; compromise may be the order of the day; principles may be valued because of their “practicability” rather than because of their *scripturalness*; but that alters not one whit the strict discharge of duty which the Lord requires from each of His servants. Unless that fact be clearly realized, we read in vain the solemn incident recorded in ~~<1001>~~2 Samuel 6.

The laxity which now obtains in so many professedly “Christian” circles is indeed appalling. Unconverted men are allowed to occupy positions which none but Christ’s true servants have any title to stand in. Human convenience is consulted when the Lord’s death is to be remembered, and His “supper” is changed into the *morning* “breaking of bread.” Leavened bread, rather than “*this* bread” (~~<6126>~~1 Corinthians 11:26), is used to set forth the immaculate person of the Redeemer. And if one dares to raise a voice in protest against these innovations—no matter how gently and lovingly—he is called “legalistic” and a “troubler in Israel.” But even that must not move the one who covets his *Master’s* “Well done.”

“And they set the ark of God upon a new cart” (~~<1008>~~2 Samuel 6:3). In so doing, David and his counselors (~~<13101>~~1 Chronicles 13:1) committed a serious fault: they ignored the divinely appointed order and substituted their own arrangements. The Lord had given express commands in ~~<0005>~~Numbers 4:5, 6, 15; 7:9 as to *how* the sacred ark was to be carried when it should be moved from one place to another; and He requires unquestioning obedience to all His regulations. It is true that David was moved on this occasion with a deep concern for Jehovah’s honor and glory. It is true that it was the urgings of *love for Him* which prompted his noble action; but He has said, “If ye love Me, keep My commandments” (~~<8145>~~John 14:15)—love must flow in the *appointed* channels; it must be *directed by* the divine precepts, if it is to please its Object.

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit  
and in truth” (~~<8042>~~John 4:24):

among other things that means, God must be worshiped according to *the pattern* He has given us in His Word. There are many Protestants who can see clearly the human inventions, superstitious innovations and unscriptural practices of the Romanists, in their “elevation of the mass,” the vestments of their “priests,” the burning of incense, the worship of images, and the

adoration of the mother of our Savior. The unwarrantable introduction of such devices are patent to multitudes of Protestants, yet they are blind *to their own* unscriptural and antiscritptural ways! Listen, my reader: anything we introduce into “the service of the sanctuary,” into the worship of God, for which we have no “thus saith the Lord,” is nothing but a species of “will worship” (<sup>1023</sup>Colossians 2:23) and must be abandoned by us.

As we pointed out in our last chapter, the counsel given to David by the “leaders” in Israel was patterned after the invention of the heathen. The “priests” of the Philistines had sent back the ark on “a new cart” drawn by oxen (<sup>1000</sup>1 Samuel 6). And history has repeated itself. If many of the means and methods which are now used in much so-called “divine worship” and “Christian work” were challenged, if a *reason* were demanded for their employment, the best that could be given would be, “*Others* are using them.” But no Scriptural authority could be cited, The “leaders” in Israel might have argued that the device used by the Philistines “succeeded” and that God “blessed” their arrangements. Ah, but the Philistines had not God’s Word in their hands; but Israel had! In like manner, many now argue “God blesses” many things for which we have no “thus saith the Lord.” But, as we shall see, God *cursed* Israel’s flagrant violation of His commands!

The outstanding fact which concerns us as we seek to ponder and *profit from* this solemn incident in David’s life is, that *he acted without divine orders*: he introduced something into the divine worship for which he had *no* “thus saith the Lord.” And the lesson to be learned therefrom is to scrutinize rigidly our own actions—the things we do, *the way in which* we do them, the means we employ—and ask, Are these *appointed by God*? There is much apparent reverence and devotion among the Papists, but is it acceptable to the Lord? Ah, my readers, if very much to the “Christian service” of earnest, zealous, enthusiastic Protestants was weighed in the balances of Holy Writ, it would be “found wanting”: nor am I guiltless if found in association and fellowship with the same—no, no matter how much I protest against it all. Individual loyalty to Christ, personal obedience to His commands, is what is demanded of each one of us.

It may be thought that David was ignorant of what was recorded in Numbers 4 and 7, and so was not so seriously to blame; but the validity of such a conclusion is more than doubtful as we shall show in the next chapter. Again; it may be supposed that David considered the regulations

given in the days of Moses pertained only to Israel while they were on the march in the wilderness, and did not apply to his own case; but this defense of David also breaks down before a passage we hope to consider in our next chapter. Even were the case as just supposed, his bounden duty would have been to first “ask counsel of the Lord,” and inquire “*Whereon* shall the ark be placed?” Instead he conferred with flesh and blood (<sup><1313></sup>1 Chronicles 13:1) and followed their advice.

David’s efforts proved a failure. And sooner or later all effort on the part of the “church,” or of the individual Christian, which is not strictly according to the Word of the Lord will prove a failure: it will be but “wood, hay, stubble” (<sup><1181></sup>1 Corinthians 3:12) in the day of divine testing and reward. God has magnified His Word above all His name (<sup><1980></sup>Psalms 138:2), and He demands that His servants shall do all things according to the plan and manner which He has prescribed. When he commanded Moses to build the tabernacle, He bade him do so according to the “pattern” which He showed him in the mount (<sup><1254></sup>Exodus 25:40): there was no room for human opinion or preference. And if we would serve Him *acceptably*, then we must go according to *His* way, not ours. The right attitude for us was expressed by Peter when he said, “Nevertheless, at Thy word, I will let down the net” (<sup><1185></sup>Luke 5:5): he acted according to Christ’s instruction, and was blessed!

“And when they came to Nachon’s threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it” (<sup><1086></sup>2 Samuel 6:6).

Yes, as the marginal rendering tells us, “the oxen *stumbled*.” And do you suppose that was an accident? No indeed, there are *no* “accidents” in a world which is presided over by the living God. Not even a hair can fall from our head till the moment He *decreed* for it to happen. But not only is everything directed by God, but there is also a significance, a meaning, a message, in the smallest occurrences, had we but eyes to see and hearts to understand. “The oxen stumbled”: of course they did; what else could be expected! There can be naught but “confusion” when the divine order is departed from. In the stumbling of those oxen the Lord was *making manifest* David’s disorder.

“Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it.” He feared it would be overthrown, and so he wished to avert such a disaster. Like David’s design in seeking an honorable habitation for the ark, Uzzah’s

purpose was good, and his motive pure; but like David, he also *disregarded God's written law*. See here one sin leading to another! See how David's conferring with flesh and blood, Following the counsel of the "leaders," and emulating the way of the heathen, was now succeeded by the priest's son committing an act of sacrilege. Alas, alas, how much will the present-day "leaders" in Christendom yet have to answer for, because of their setting such an evil example before others, and thus encouraging the "young people" to lightly esteem the holy and authoritative precepts of God.

*"And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God" (v. 7),*

The Lord God will not be mocked. Plainly had He declared that, even the Kohathites, who were appointed to carry the ark by staves on their shoulders, "shall *not touch* any holy thing, *lest they die*" (~~OHIS~~ Numbers 4:15). God not only keeps His promises, but He also *fulfills His threats!* So Uzzah found, and so will every other disregarder of His commandments yet discover.

"He, whose name is *Jealous*, was greatly offended. The sincere, the well-meaning man, having no command, nor any example for what he did, fell under Jehovah's anger, and lost his life, as the reward of his officiousness. And as the Holy Spirit has recorded the fact so circumstantially, we have reason to consider it *as a warning to all*, of the danger there is in tampering with positive ordinances; and as a standing evidence that God will have His cause supported, and His appointments administered, *in His own way*. The case of Saul, and the language of Samuel to that disobedient monarch, inculcate the same thing: 'the people,' said Saul to the venerable prophet, 'took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal. And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as *in obeying the voice* of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams': ~~DISC~~ 1 Samuel 15:21-23" (A. Booth, 1813).

It is solemn to recall that no divine judgment fell upon the Philistines when *they* placed the holy ark upon a cart and sent it back to Israel: but "the anger of the Lord *was* kindled against Uzzah"! How plainly this shows us that God will suffer from the world what *He will not tolerate* in His

professing people, who bear His Holy name. That is why it will be “more tolerable” for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment, than it will be for divinely-enlightened, highly-favored, and loud-boasting Capernaum. The same principle will obtain when Christendom comes to be judged. Better to have lived and died in the ignorance of darkest Africa, than to have had God’s Word in our hands and set at naught its laws!

# CHAPTER 39

## BRINGING UP THE ARK (CONTINUED)

### ~~1001~~ 2 SAMUEL 6

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, after his coming to the throne of Israel and his victories over the Philistines, David evidenced a godly concern for the holy ark, which had been so grievously and so long neglected. Zealous of the divine glory, he had resolved to establish a place where Jehovah's worship should be celebrated and where the symbol of His presence should be securely housed. Accordingly, he gathered all the leaders of Israel together to bring the sacred coffer to Jerusalem (~~1001~~ 2 Samuel 6:1). But, alas, instead of heeding the divinely given instructions for such an occasion and placing the ark upon the shoulders of the Levites, he followed the evil example of the heathen and placed it upon a new cart. In so doing he ignored the plainly revealed will of God, and substituted a human device. The work which David undertook was indeed a good one, his motive was pure, and his design was praiseworthy, but it was executed in a wrong way. He introduced into the divine worship that for which he had no "Thus saith the Lord."

David did not inquire whether *God* had any will in the matter and ask, Whereon shall the holy ark be placed? Rather did he confer with flesh and blood. It was at *that* point he made his fatal mistake, and it is this which we need to take carefully to heart. Instead of consulting the Holy Scriptures, he sought counsel of men. It is true that he

"consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds and with every leader" (~~1310~~ 1 Chronicles 13:1),

but as ~~1831~~ Job 32:9 tells us "great men are not always wise," and so it proved on this occasion. Instead of reminding David of the instructions which the Lord had given through Moses (~~0405~~ Numbers 4:5, 6; 15:7, 9), they apparently advised him to follow the way of the uncircumcised (~~0807~~ 1 Samuel 6:7, 8). By so doing, David spoiled his fair enterprise, and incurred



the displeasure of God. A good beginning had a bad ending because of departure from the divinely prescribed rules of procedure.

The above incident has been recorded for our learning, especially for those of us who are engaged in the Lord's service. It points a solemn warning. It shows the imperative need for zeal to be rightly directed, for there is "a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge" (~~45112~~ Romans 10:2); this is a zeal to further the cause of God and bring glory unto His name, which is not regulated by that knowledge which His Word supplies. In our fervency to extend the kingdom of Christ, to spread His Gospel, to point souls unto Him, we are apt to forget His precepts, and do *His* work in *our* way. The danger is very real, and in this restless age of great activity not a few are being ensnared by this very evil. Many are so eager about the quantity of their service, they pay too little attention to the quality of it: they are anxious to be active in the Master's vineyard, but they do not sufficiently consult His guide-book as to *how* their activities must be conducted.

David's well-meant effort turned out a failure. The Lord manifested His displeasure. David, accompanied by a large number of musicians, went before the ark, playing "on all manner of instruments" (~~41015~~ 2 Samuel 6:5). But when Nachon's threshingfloor was reached, the oxen drawing the cart on which the sacred chest reposed, stumbled, and Uzzah put forth his hand to steady it.

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

A tragic check was this unto the joyous procession—one which should have produced deep heart-searchings and penitential confession of failure. Has not God said,

"Provoke Me not, and I will do you no harm" (~~42516~~ Jeremiah 25:6)?

Therefore, when He *does* afflict, ought we not to inquire as to wherein we have "provoked" Him!

Though the displeasure of God was plainly manifested, yet it did not at first produce the proper effect.

"And David was displeased, because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah" (v. 8).

Apparently a measure of self-complacency was at work in David's heart over the important service he was engaged in—for honoring the ark which had been neglected for so long. Now that things had gone contrary to *his* expectations, he was disconcerted, peeved, “displeased,” or as the Hebrew word really signifies, “angry.” His anger was not a righteous indignation against Uzzah for his affronting God, but because his own plans had gone awry. His own pride was wounded: the drastic cutting off of Uzzah by divine judgment would not advance *him* in the eyes of his subjects; rather was he now humiliated before them. But the fault was his own, and he ought to have manfully shouldered the blame, and not acted like a peeved child.

“And David was displeased (angry) because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah” (v. 8).

When the rod of God descends upon us, we are but adding sin to sin if we become enraged thereby: this is “despising” the chastening of the Lord, which is expressly forbidden (<sup>38126</sup> Hebrews 12:5). “And he called the name of the place Perezuzzah to this day” (v. 8), which, as the margin tells us, signifies “the *breach* of Uzzah.” Thus did David memorialize the stroke of God as a warning for posterity to beware of rashness and irreverence. A solemn contrast may be seen here from what is recorded in <sup>10531</sup>2 Samuel 5:20, where David changed the name of “the valley of Rephaim” unto “Baalperazim”—“the place of *breaches*”—because “the Lord hath broken forth upon mine enemies.” In the one he was celebrating God's goodness, in the other he was solemnizing God's judgment.

The conduct of David on this occasion was deplorable, for it is highly reprehensible to be angered by any of the Lord's dealings. But in the light of such warnings, *our* petulancy is far worse. David ought to have humbled himself beneath the mighty hand of God (<sup>1086</sup> 1 Peter 5:6), confessed his failure and corrected his fault (<sup>1283</sup> Proverbs 28:13), and owned God's righteousness in thus taking vengeance on his inventions (<sup>1998</sup> Psalm 99:8). By so doing he would have put the blame where it belonged, have set a good example before others, and vindicated the Lord. Instead, his pride was hurt, his temper was inflamed, and blessing was missed. Alas, how often has writer and reader failed in a similar manner. How rarely have we heeded that injunction, “Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires” (<sup>23415</sup> Isaiah 24:15): one way of doing which is to judge ourselves unsparingly and own the need of the flames to purge away our dross.

“And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me?” (v. 9).

The transition is very easy from sudden zeal and joy to fretfulness and dejection. We are, naturally, creatures of extremes, and the pendulum quickly swings from earnestness to indolence, from jubilation to commiseration. He who dares one day to face singlehanded the four hundred prophets of Baal, next day flees from the threat of Jezebel. He who feared not to draw his sword in the presence of armed soldiers, trembled before a maid. They who sang so heartily at the Red Sea, murmured a little later when their food supplies gave out. Few maintain an even keel amid the varying tides of life. A measure of servile fear now possessed David, and he would not venture to bring the ark any nearer his own immediate residence, lest he too should be destroyed. That holy vessel of the tabernacle which had been the object of his veneration, now became an occasion of dread.

With the death of Uzzah a fear came upon David. This exemplifies an important principle: fear always follows where faith is not in exercise. Said the prophet, “I will trust and not be afraid” (~~2312D~~ Isaiah 12:2). When the timorous disciples awoke the Savior because of their storm-tossed ship, He said, “Why are ye fearful? O ye of *little faith*” (~~40836~~ Matthew 8:26). When a spirit of trembling seizes the heart it is a sure sign that faith is at a low ebb. The promise is,

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, *because he trusteth in Thee*” (~~2331B~~ Isaiah 26:3).

Thus, the fear of David on this occasion is easily accounted for: his faith was eclipsed. Learn this valuable lesson, dear reader: as soon as you are conscious of sinking of heart, uneasiness, or alarm, cry unto the Lord for a strengthening of your faith. Say with the Psalmist, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee” (~~1950B~~ Psalm 56:3).

There is another important principle exemplified by David’s attitude on this occasion: his faith was inoperative because his *walk* was not according to the revealed will of the Lord. It is true that faith is the gift of God, and that, unaided, we cannot call it into operation after it is received. Every exercise of faith, every increase thereof, is to be ascribed unto the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit. But let it not be forgotten that *He* is the *Holy* Spirit, and will not put a premium upon wrong-doing. When our ways are

contrary to the Rule which we are to walk by, the Spirit is grieved. When we act in self-will, and then refuse to judge ourselves under the mark of God's displeasure, His blessed operations are withheld. Fearfulness is a sign that faith is inactive, and inactive faith is an evidence that the Spirit is grieved; and that, in turn, denotes that our walk is displeasing to God. Learn, then, dear reader, to "Consider your ways" (<sup><37016></sup>Haggai 1:5) when conscious that faith is at a low ebb: clean out the choked channel and the waters will flow freely again.

"And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me?" Does it not seem strange that David should ask such a question when the Lord had given dear and definite instructions as to *how* the ark should be conducted from place to place? Stranger still, sadder far, that he would not make right the wrong which he had committed. But alas, it is not easy to condemn ourselves when we have departed from God's ways: even though the providential smile of the Lord be changed into a frown, we are loath to humble ourselves before Him. How this reveals the "desperate wickedness" which still remains in our hearts, and how the realization of this ought to remove pride far from us, cause us to marvel increasingly at God's longsuffering with us, and make us more patient toward our erring brethren.

"So David would not remove the ark of the Lord unto him, into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obededom, the Gittite" (v. 10).

Instead of correcting his fault, we now see David forsaking his own mercy (<sup><31018></sup>Jonah 2:8). The ark was the symbol of the Lord's manifest presence, and *that* should be the one thing above all others desired and cherished by the saint. Moses was deeply conscious of this when he said,

"If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence" (<sup><12315></sup>Exodus 33:15).

Ah, but to enjoy the manifest presence of God we must be in the path of obedience:

"he that hath My commandments, and *keepeth* them, he it is that loveth Me, and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will *manifest* Myself to him" (<sup><31421></sup>John 14:21).

Was it not because he felt he was out of the way of subjection to God's revealed will that caused David to now abandon his purpose of bringing up the ark to Jerusalem? It was a guilty conscience which made him "afraid of the Lord."

There is a fear of God which is becoming, spiritual, excellent; but there is also a fear of God which is hurtful, carnal, worthless: the one is servile, the other filial. There is a slavish fear which springs from hard thoughts of God, and there is a holy and laudable fear which issues from lofty thoughts of His majesty. The one is a terror produced in the mind by apprehensions of evil, the other is a reverential awe of God which proceeds from right views of His infinite perfections. The one is the fear of wrath, such as Adam had in Eden, when he was afraid and hid himself; and such as the demons have, who "believe and tremble" (~~91219~~ James 2:19). The other is a fear of displeasing One who is gracious, like children have to dear parents. The one is our treasure, the other our torment; the one drives from God, the other draws to God; the one leads to despair, the other to godly activities (~~81107~~ Hebrews 11:7). The one is the product of a guilty conscience, the other is the fruit of an enlightened understanding.

There is a natural fear and there is a spiritual fear of God. The one hates Him, like a slave his cruel master; the other loves God, as a child respects and reveres his father. The one dreads God because of His power and wrath; the other venerates God because of His holiness and sovereignty. The one engenders to bondage; the other conduces to worship. Perfect love casts out the former (~~61118~~ 1 John 4:18); appropriating God's promises leads to the furtherance of the latter (~~47001~~ 2 Corinthians 7:1). When we are walking with God in the light of His Word, a filial fear directs our ways; but when we depart from His statutes and a guilty conscience torments us, then a servile fear possesses our hearts. Hard thoughts are entertained of God, and we dread His anger. The soul is no longer at ease in His presence, and instead of viewing Him as our loving Father, we shrink from Him and regard Him as a hard Master. Such was the condition of David at this time. Alarmed by the divine judgment upon Uzzah, he was afraid to have anything more to do with the ark.

"But David carried it aside into the house of Obedom the Gittite." That was David's loss; but, as we shall see, it was Obedom's gain. The ark was both the symbol of God's manifested presence in the midst of Israel, and a notable type of the person of the Lord Jesus. In the placing of the ark

in the house of Obededom, following the unbelief of David, there was a prophetic hint given of the Gentiles receiving what Israel failed to appreciate—so marvelously does God overrule even the failures of His people. Obededom was a Gittite, and the “Gittites” were *Philistines* (<sup><06138></sup>Joshua 13:3), the inhabitants of Gath (<sup><13005></sup>1 Chronicles 20:5), yet many of them were devoted to the person and interests of David (<sup><10518></sup>2 Samuel 5:18-21). Thus it was dispensationally:

“It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you (Jews): but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (<sup><44346></sup>Acts 13:46).

“And the ark of the Lord continued in the house of Obededom the Gittite three months” (v. 11).

After the awful death of Uzzah, and the fear of David to have anything further to do with the ark, it had scarcely been surprising had this Gittite refused to shelter the sacred coffer. As a Philistine, it is likely that he was acquainted with the trouble it had caused in the temple of Dagon (<sup><09002></sup>1 Samuel 5:2-4) and of the plague it brought upon the Ashdodites (<sup><09006></sup>1 Samuel 5:6). Anxious enough were they to get rid of the ark (<sup><10000></sup>1 Samuel 6), yet now we find one of their countrymen providing a home for it in his own house. Doubtless he had been truly converted unto the Lord, and therefore esteemed whatever pertained to His worship. It is beautifully significant that his name “Obed” means *servant*, and here we find him rendering a true service unto God.

“And the Lord blessed Obededom, and all his household” (v. 11). Need we be surprised at this? God will be no man’s debtor: as He declared, “Them that honor Me, I will honor” (<sup><09020></sup>1 Samuel 2:30). It is ever so. After Laban had received the fugitive Jacob into his family, he acknowledged,

“I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake” (<sup><01327></sup>Genesis 30:27).

When His servant was befriended by Potiphar, we read,

“The Lord blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake” (<sup><01305></sup>Genesis 39:5).

Through giving shelter unto God's prophet the widow of Zarephath was rewarded by having her son restored to life (~~<111723>~~ 1 Kings 17:23). How much more may we be sure of receiving God's rich blessing when His dear Son—to whom the ark pointed—is given the throne of our hearts.

“And the Lord blessed Obededom, and all his household.” By the indwelling Spirit the Lord has promised to manifest Himself to the believer. The presence of the Lord in our lives and in our homes is the limitless source, if we will, of divine blessing. The blessing will depend upon our *servant* attitude to that Presence or Spirit. If we take the place of a true “Obed,” surrendering ourselves to His sway, the Lord will make our way prosperous. If in all things we give Christ the pre-eminence, so far from being the losers thereby, we shall be immeasurably the gainers, both now and hereafter. O may He who moved Obed to take in the ark, open our hearts to receive Christ in all His fullness.

# CHAPTER 40

## BRINGING UP THE ARK (CONTINUED)

### ~~1001~~ 2 SAMUEL 6

“And it was told king David, saying, The Lord hath blessed the house of Obbedom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obbedom into the city of David with gladness (~~1006~~ 2 Samuel 6:12). There are five things to be observed here. First, the Lord’s blessing of a man is a very real and evident thing. Second, it is so patent that others take notice thereof. Third, they perceive *why* it is that the blessing of God is bestowed. Fourth; so impressed are they therewith, they mention it to others. Fifth, the effect which the evident blessing of the Lord of Obbedom had upon David. Let us briefly ponder each of these points, and pray that their distinct messages may find lodgment in our hearts.

**First**, the Lord’s blessing of a man is a very real and evident thing.

“All these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God... Blessed shall be thy basket, and thy store; blessing of God is bestowed. Fourth, so impressed are they thou be when thou goest out” etc.

(~~1531~~ Deuteronomy 28:2, 5, 6).

*God’s governmental ways* are the same in all dispensations.

“The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He added no sorrow with it” (~~2002~~ Proverbs 10:22):

for the meaning of the word “rich” see verse 4—in the former the means is in view, in the latter the Source; in neither verse does spiritual “riches” exclude material ones.

“No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly” (~~1981~~ Psalm 84:11).



**Second**, God's blessing of a person is so obvious that others are obliged to take notice thereof. So much so was this the case with Isaac, that Abimelech and two of his chief men went to him and said, "We certainly saw that the Lord was with thee" (<sup><01268></sup>Genesis 26:28)—what a testimony was that! Of the one who purchased Joseph it is recorded,

"And his master *saw* that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand" (<sup><01303></sup>Genesis 39:3)

—do people now see this is the case *with us*? "And Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David" (<sup><09188></sup>1 Samuel 18:28). The wicked may not read God's Word, but they do read the lives of His people, and are quick to perceive when His blessing is upon them; and the recognition of *that* has far more weight than anything they say!

**Third**, nor are men ignorant of *the reason why* the Lord prospers those with whom He is pleased. This is evident from the case now before us: "And it was told king David, saying, The Lord hath blessed the house of Obededom and all that pertaineth unto him, *because of* the ark of God." This is very striking: they traced the effect back to the cause: they recognized that God had honored the one who had honored Him. The same principle is illustrated again in <sup><40413></sup>Acts 4:13,

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and *they took knowledge* of them that they had been with Jesus."

The men who drew this deduction were not regenerate, but the most notorious enemies of Christ; nevertheless they were right in attributing the spiritual graces of the apostles unto their fellowship with the Savior.

**Fourth**, the recognition of God's evident blessing upon those whose ways are pleasing in His sight is voiced by men unto their fellows. It was so in the incident now before us. When it was so apparent that Obededom was being blessed in all his affairs, some went and informed the king thereof. Ah, my readers, we little know what impression is being made upon our neighbors by God's governmental dealings with us, nor how they speak one to another when it is manifest that His smile is upon us. How we should plead this before God in prayer, that He would enable us so to walk that we may not miss His best, and this that *His* name may be glorified through those around us taking note of the fact that "godliness with contentment (Greek "a sufficiency") *is great gain*" (<sup><54016></sup>1 Timothy 6:6).

**Fifth**, the effect which this news had upon David. As he had perceived God's frown in His stroke upon Uzzah, so now he discerned God's smile in Obededom's prosperity. It was clear to him that the ark was not a burdensome object, For so far from being the loser, he who had provided a home for it had been noticeably blest of the Lord. This encouraged David to resume his original design of bringing the sacred coffer to Jerusalem: his fears were now stilled, his zeal was rekindled. "The experience which others have of the gains of godliness, should encourage us to be religious. Is the ark a blessing to other's homes? let us bid it welcome to ours" (Matthew Henry). Do we perceive that those who are most yielded to the Lord make the best progress spiritually? Then let that be an incentive to fuller consecration on our part.

"He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness  
For His name's sake" (~~19234~~ Psalm 23:4).

In restoring the souls of His erring people, God does not act uniformly: according to His lovingkindness, unerring wisdom, and sovereign pleasure, He is pleased to use and bless a variety of means. Sometimes it is by a process of disappointment, withering the gourd under which we luxuriated, blowing upon that in which we had promised ourselves satisfaction. Sometimes it is by the application of a verse of Scripture, searching our conscience or melting our heart. Sometimes it is by a sore calamity, like the death of a loved one, which casts us back more closely upon the Lord for strength and comfort. In the case now before us it was the words of friends, who reported to David the blessing which the presence of the ark had brought to the family of Obededom.

The effect of David's restoration of soul is seen very blessedly in ~~13192~~ 1 Chronicles 15:2, 3, 12, 13.

"Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites; for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto Him forever. And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the Lord unto his place, which he had prepared for it. And said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because ye did it not at the first the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought Him not after the due order."

There are several things in these verses which we do well to note.

**First**, David now gave the Lord His proper place in his plans and submitted to the regulations which He had given. He learned from painful experience that God's work must be done in God's prescribed way, if His approval and blessing was to rest upon the same. None but those whom God had specifically appointed must carry the sacred ark: this was one of the duties assigned the Levites, who had been definitely set apart unto the Lord's service. The application of this to our own day is obvious. The ark was a type of Christ: the carrying of the ark from place to place prefigured the making known of Christ through the preaching of the Gospel. Only those are to preach the Gospel whom God has specially called, separated and qualified for His holy service. For others to invade this sacred office is but to introduce confusion and incur God's displeasure.

**Second**, David now realized that suitable preparation must precede holy activities: "Sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it": let the reader compare <sup><121910></sup>Exodus 19:10-15 and <sup><142305></sup>2 Chronicles 29:5. Those who carried the ark must cleanse themselves from all ceremonial pollution and compose themselves for the solemn service of the Lord: only thus would they strike reverence upon the people. The same principle holds good in this Christian dispensation:

"The Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations... *be ye clean*, that bear the vessels of the Lord" (<sup><235210></sup>Isaiah 52:10, 11).

Those whom God has separated unto the sacred ministry of the Gospel must be "an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (<sup><54412></sup>1 Timothy 4:12 and cf. <sup><58121></sup>2 Timothy 2:21, 22)—God's servants today are to "sanctify" themselves for the discharge of their honorable duties by repentance, confession, faith, prayer and meditation, availing themselves constantly of that precious Fountain which has been opened for sin and uncleanness.

**Third**, David owned his previous failures: "The Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought Him not after the due order." In like manner, Daniel acknowledged,

"O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants

of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are afar off, through all the countries whither Thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against Thee” (~~<10907>~~1 Samuel 9:7).

“The life of faith is little more than a series of falls and restorations, errors and corrections displaying, on the one hand, the sad weakness of man, and on the other, the grace and power of God” (C. H. M.).

“So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel. And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the Lord” (~~<131514>~~1 Chronicles 15:14, 15).

All was now carried out “after the due order.” God requires obedience in small things as well as great. And due notice is taken and record made by Him of all our actions. Blessed is it to behold these Levites now being governed, in every detail, by the revealed will of the Lord.

“*Then* we make a good use of the judgments of God on ourselves and others, when we are awakened by them to reform and amend whatever has been amiss” (Matthew Henry).

O that each of us may have more and more occasion for saying

“Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I *kept Thy law*” (~~<109967>~~Psalm 119:67).

“So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the house of Obededom *with joy*” (~~<131525>~~1 Chronicles 15:25).

That is no small part of the present reward which God bestows upon His obedient people. Satan would feign seek to persuade us that a strict compliance with all the statutes of Holy Writ would be irksome. One of his favorite dogmas is, Law-keeping brings one into bondage. That is one of his lies. The Psalmist was better instructed: said he, “And I will walk at *liberty*, for I seek Thy precepts” (~~<109945>~~Psalm 119:45): the more we practice the precepts of Scripture, the more are we delivered from the dominion of sin. God fills the heart of the obedient with gladness; hence, the reason why

there is so much gloom and unhappiness among Christians today is that their obedience is so half-hearted and spasmodic.

“And it came to pass when God *helped* the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams” (~~13156~~ 1 Chronicles 15:26).

God is honored when we acknowledge His assistance—for without Him we can do nothing—even in those things which fall within the compass of our natural powers. But more especially should we own His aid in all our spiritual exercises:

“Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing” (~~4062~~ Acts 26:22).

These Levites were in need of special help, for remembering the fate of Uzzah, they were likely to tremble when they took up the ark: but God calmed their fears and strengthened their faith. God enabled them to discharge their duty decently and in order, without any mishap.

“And it came to pass when God *helped* the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams.” This is wonderful. Everything was changed now: there was no stumbling, no thrusting forth of presumptuous hands to steady a shaking ark, no judgment from God; instead, His evident smile was upon them. It is ever thus: when God’s work is done in God’s way, we may confidently count upon His help. Go against the Word of God, and He is against us, as we shall discover sooner or later; but go according to the Word and God will bless us.

“And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord *working with them*, and confirming the Word with signs following” (~~41161~~ Mark 16:20).

“And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings” (~~10613~~ 2 Samuel 6:13).

Probably David offered this sacrifice unto God with a twofold design: to make an atonement for his former errors, and as a thank-offering for present mercies. Great must have been his gratitude and joy when he perceived that all was now well.

*“Then we are likely to speed (prosper) in our enterprises when we begin with God, and give diligence to make our peace with Him. When we attend upon God in holy ordinances, our eye must be to the great Sacrifice, to which we owe it that we are taken into covenant and communion with God” (Matthew Henry).*

*“And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod” (~~10614~~ 2 Samuel 6:14).*

The ordinances of God are to be performed with joy as well as reverence. In seeking to preserve a becoming decorum and sobriety, we need to be on our guard against lapsing into a cold and stilted perfunctoriness. No doubt there are certain occasions when higher expressions of joy are more suited than at others. It was so here. After his previous disappointment David was now transported with delight. His exultation of mind was manifested in his leaping for gladness, which he did “with all his might.”

“We ought to serve the Lord with our whole body and soul, and with every endowment or capacity we possess; our religious affections cannot be too intense, if properly directed; nor our expressions of them too strong, provided ‘all be done decently and in order,’ according to the spirit of the dispensation under which we live” (Thomas Scott).

“And David was girded with a linen ephod.” On this auspicious occasion, David laid aside his royal robes, and as taking the lead in the worship of God he wore a linen ephod. This was the ordinary garb of the priests when officiating, yet it was also used in religious exercises by those who were not priests, as the case of Samuel shows: ~~10218~~ 1 Samuel 2:18. The Spirit of God has here duly noted the fact that, though king over all Israel, David deemed it no disparagement to appear in the clothing of a minister of the ark; yet let it not be supposed that he was making any attempt to encroach upon the priestly office. The practical lesson for us in this detail is, that instead of decking ourselves out in worldly finery, we should be garbed plainly when we attend the public worship of God.

In conclusion it should be pointed out that the best expositors, ancient and modern, have regarded Psalm twenty-four as a sacred song composed by David on the glad occasion of the ark being brought to Jerusalem. The joy and triumph, the awe and the memories of victory which clustered around the dread symbol of the presence of the Lord, are wonderfully expressed in

that choral piece. It is divided into two parts. The first replies to the question, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place?”—an evident echo of the terror-stricken exclamation of the Bethshemites (~~1003~~ 1 Samuel 6:20). The answer is given in a description of the men who dwell with God. The second half deals with the correlative inquiry “Who is the King of glory?” And the answer is, The God who comes to dwell with men.

Inexpressibly blessed is verse 7. As the procession reached the walls of Jerusalem, and ere the ark—type of Christ—entered, the cry was made “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.” It was as though their towering portals were too low. How clearly David recognized his own derived power, and the real Monarch of whom he was but the shadowy representative! The newly conquered city was summoned to admit its true Conqueror, whose throne was the ark, which was expressly named “the glory” (~~1002~~ 1 Samuel 4:21), and in whose train the earthly king followed as a subject and a worshiper.

# CHAPTER 41

## HIS CONDEMNATION BY MICHAL

### ~~1001~~ 2 SAMUEL 6

In the closing verses of ~~1001~~ 2 Samuel 6 there is to be seen a mingling of the lights and shadows; the blessed fruits of the Spirit appear, but the evil works of Satan are also evident. As it often is in the natural world, we find it in the moral realm conflicting Forces clash with each other: sunshine and rain, calm and storm, summer and winter, constantly alternate. That which is spread before our senses in nature, is but an external adumbration of what exists in the invisible: two mighty beings, diametrically opposed to each other, the Lord God and the devil, are ever at work. Such too is the life of the individual Christian, for he is a miniature replica of the world: in him

“The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (~~80517~~ Galatians 5:17),

and consequently in his experience there is ever a mingling of the lights and shadows.

Before it ended, the joyful day of David's bringing up of the ark to Jerusalem was overcast by a domestic cloud. There was one in his own household who was incapable of entering into the fervor of his heart toward God, who was irritated by his devotion, and who bitterly condemned his zeal: one who was near and dear to him railed upon the king for his earnestness in Jehovah's cause and service. The enmity of the Serpent was stirred by the honor accorded the holy ark, the procession of the Levites, the jubilation of Israel's ruler, and the offerings which had been presented before the Lord. The anointed eye has no difficulty in discerning behind Michal him who is the inveterate enemy of God and His people, and in her biting denunciation of David, the Christian of today may learn what to expect from those who are not one with him in the Lord.



Our last chapter closed at the verse

“So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet” (~~10616~~ 2 Samuel 6:16).

Our present lesson opens with

“and as the ark of the Lord came into the City of David, Michal, Saul’s daughter, looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord, and she despised him in her heart” (v. 16),

and, as we shall see from the sequel, that secret hatred of David was shortly after vented in open opposition. Let not those who are engaged in the happy service of the Lord be surprised when they encounter antagonism; when, so far from their efforts being appreciated by all, there will be some who decry and denounce them. It was so with the prophets; it was so with Christ’s fore-runner; it was so with the Lord of glory Himself; it was so with His apostles; and it will continue to be so with all His faithful servants unto the end of time. It cannot be otherwise while Satan is out of the Pit.

“And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal, Saul’s daughter, looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart” (~~10616~~ 2 Samuel 6:16).

Saul himself had grievously neglected the public worship of Jehovah, and his daughter appears to have had no sense of the importance and value of heavenly things. It could hardly be expected that a woman who had idols, “teraphim,” in her house (~~0913~~ 1 Samuel 19:13), cared anything for the holy ark, and hence she regarded her husband with scorn as she beheld his gratitude and joy.

Yes, not only is the natural man (the unregenerate) unable to apprehend the things of the Spirit, but that of which He is the Author appears as “foolishness” unto him. When the Lord Jesus was so occupied in ministering unto the needy multitude that He and His disciples “could not so much as eat bread,” we are told that His kinsmen “went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is *beside Himself*” (~~41021~~ Mark 3:21). When the apostles began to “speak with other tongues,” the wondrous works of

God, some mocked and said, “These men are full of new wine” (Acts 2). When Paul reasoned so earnestly with Agrippa, he answered “thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad” (~~4034~~ Acts 26:24). And, my reader, there is something seriously lacking in you and me if similar charges are not made against us today!

The world will tolerate religion so long as its carnal repose is not disturbed; yea, while it provides a garb to hide its shame, the world approves. But let the high claims of God be pressed, let it be insisted on that *He* demands the first place in our affections, thoughts, and lives, and such a message is at once distasteful. The professing Christian who attends the church on Sunday and the theater during the week, who contributes occasionally to missionary societies but underpays his servants and overcharges his customers, is commended for his broad-mindedness and shrewdness. But the real Christian who lives in the fear of the Lord all the day long, and who conducts himself as a stranger and pilgrim in this scene, is condemned as a bigot and puritan. Let the saint weep over the dishonoring of his Lord by many that bear His name, or leap for joy in his service as David did, and like David he will be dubbed a fanatic and his whole-heartedness will be similarly censured.

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

The word “tabernacle” does not signify a building made of wood or stone, but rather a tent. Joshua had erected such an one centuries before, but doubtless that had decayed and perished long ago. It is to be noted that David did not bring the ark into his own residence, but into a separate curtained canopy, which he had provided for it. in the days of Solomon a more stately temple was built to house the sacred coffer. As the ark was so manifestly a figure of Christ, its abiding first in a lowly tent and then in a magnificent edifice, no doubt foreshadowed the twofold state of the Savior: first in humiliation, and then in glory.

“And David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord.” Now that his noble design had been completely effected, David presented suitable sacrifices unto the Lord. His object in so doing was probably twofold: to express his deep gratitude unto God for the success of his undertaking, and to supplicate a continuance of His favors. An important

lesson for us is therein inculcated: praises are to mingle with our prayers: God is to be recognized and owned amid our joys, as well as sought unto under our sorrows.

“Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms” (<sup><513></sup>James 5:13):

the first is easily remembered, but the latter is often forgotten. God has appointed “feasts” as well as “fasts,” for He is to be given the first place by us at all times.

“And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord. of Hosts” (v. 18).

This seems to have been an official act, consonant with the position to which God had instated him. The expression occurs first in <sup><1149></sup>Genesis 14:19, where we find that Melchizedek, priest of the Most High, “blessed” Abraham. At a later date, Moses (<sup><294></sup>Exodus 39:43), Joshua (<sup><216></sup>Joshua 22:6), and Solomon (<sup><1084></sup>1 Kings 8:14) “blessed the people”: in each case it was their leaders who did so. The added words that David “blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts” signifies that he, formally and authoritatively, pronounced His blessing upon those who had been committed to his care.

As a prophet of God, and as king over the people, it was both David’s privilege and duty to do so, “without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better” (<sup><807></sup>Hebrews 7:7). In this act we may see David prefiguring his greater Son and Lord. Of Him it is recorded,

“And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and *blessed* them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven” (<sup><2451></sup>Luke 24:50, 51).

There we behold Christ as the Prophet unto and the King over the Church, officially blessing its ministers: that was His final act ere He left this earth and took His place on high, to administer all the blessings which He had purchased for His people; and unto the end of the age the efficacy of His benediction abides. If by grace the writer and reader be among those whom *He* has blest, then are we blessed indeed.

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

Those who accompanied David on his joyous undertaking were now bounteously feasted: having presented his thank offerings unto the Lord, presents were now made to the people.

“When the heart is engaged in cheerfulness, that should open the hand in liberality: as they to whom God is merciful, ought to exercise bounty in giving” (Matthew Henry).

Compare ~~1AB2~~ Esther 9:22: the feast of Purim, celebrating the Jews’ deliverance from the plot of Haman, was observed with “sending portions one to another, and gifts to the people.” By this act David confirmed his interest in the people, and would endear himself to them, so that they would be encouraged to attend him again should he have occasion to call them. The typical significance is obvious.

“Then David returned to bless his household” (v. 20). In attending to his official duties, David did not overlook his domestic responsibilities.

“Ministers must not think that their public performances will excuse them from their family worship: but when they have, with their instructions and prayers, blessed the solemn assemblies, they must return in the same manner to bless their households, for with them they are in a particular manner charged” (Matthew Henry).

Nor must they be deterred from the discharge of this obligation and privilege should there be those under their roof whose hearts do not accompany them in such holy exercises: God must be honored by the head of the house and the family altar maintained, no matter how much Satan may oppose the same.

“And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!” (v. 20).

Being a total stranger to the zeal for God which filled David, incapable of appreciating his elevation of heart over the bringing home of the ark, she

regarded his joyous dancing as unbecoming a king, and imagined he was demeaning himself in the eyes of his subjects. Having no heart herself for God, she despised the exuberance of one who had. Being obsessed with thoughts of temporal dignity and glory, she looked upon David's transports of religious fervor in the midst of his people, as degrading to his high office. "David *the brave captain*, leading forth the people to battle and returning with them in triumph, she admired; but David *the saint*, leading the people in the ordinances of God, and setting before them the example of fervency of spirit in His service, she despised" (Thomas Scott).

Base ingratitude was this for Michal to thus revile the very one who had been so devoted to her that he had declined to accept a crown unless she was restored to him (~~JOEL~~ 2 Samuel 3:13). Fearful sin was this to insult and denounce her lord, whom God required her to reverence. Having secretly scorned him in her heart, she now openly chides with her lips, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." She was highly displeased with his deep veneration for the holy ark, and basely misrepresented his conduct by charging him with indecent dancing before it. There can be no doubt that her charge was a false one, for it is a common thing for those who have no piety themselves to paint others in false colors and hold them up as the most odious characters.

But the wicked conduct of Michal is not difficult to account for: at heart she was a partisan of the fallen house of Saul, and a despiser of Jehovah and His worship. As she grew older, her character had hardened in its lines and became more and more like her father's in its insatiable pride, and in its half dread and half hatred of David. Now she poured forth her venom in these mocking jibes. Because David had laid aside his royal robes, and had girded himself in a plain "linen ephod" (v. 14), she vilely charged him with immodesty. O how empty professors hate the true pilgrim spirit! Nothing riles them more than to see the children of God refusing to conform to the extravagant and flesh-pleasing fashions of the world, and instead, dress and act as becometh the followers of Him, who, when here, "had not where to lay His head."

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

David now vindicated himself. He had no reason to be ashamed of his conduct, for what he had done was only for the glory of God. No matter through what distorted lens the evil eyes of Michal might view it, his conscience was clear. If our own hearts condemn us not, we need not be troubled over the censures of the ungodly. Moreover, had not God recently elevated him to the throne? Then it was but fitting that he should show his jubilant gratitude.

“And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight; and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honor” (v. 22).

David replies to Michal’s evil charge in the language of irony, which was suitably “answering a fool according to her folly” (~~2015~~ Proverbs 26:5). The force of his words is, If because of my setting aside the showy robes of imperial majesty and clothing myself in plain linen, and dancing before the Ark of God’s glory, I am regarded by you as mean, then I, who am but “dust and ashes” in the sight of the Almighty, will humble myself yet more before Him; and so far from the common people despising me for the same, they will esteem one who takes a lowly place before the Lord. The more we be condemned for well-doing, the more resolute should we be in it.

“Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death” (v. 23).

Thus did God punish David’s wife for her sin.

“She unjustly reproached David for his devotion, and therefore God justly put her under the perpetual reproach of barrenness. They that honor God, He will honor; but those that despise Him, and His servants and service, shall be lightly esteemed” (Matthew Henry).

There is a searching application of this verse which holds good today. We often hear quoted the first half of ~~1023~~ 1 Samuel 2:30, but the second half is not so frequently cited. It is just as true that they who “despise” the Lord shall be “lightly esteemed” by Him as those who “honor” Him shall be “honored” by Him. A solemn example of this is found here: in mocking David, Michal insulted his Master! Beware how you slight or speak evil against God’s servants, lest spiritual “barrenness” be your portion!

# CHAPTER 42

## HIS CONCERN FOR GOD'S HOUSE

### ~~1000~~ 2 SAMUEL 7

How often has “success” been the ruination of those who have experienced it! How often has worldly advancement been followed by the deterioration of spirituality! It is good to see that such was far from being the case with David. In the thirty-fifth chapter of this book we called attention to the blessed manner in which David conducted himself after coming to the throne. So far from indulging in ease and self-luxuriation, it was now that his best achievements were accomplished. First, he captured the stronghold of Zion; next he vanquished the Philistines; then he provided a resting place for the holy ark; and now he evidenced his deep concern to build a temple for the worship of Jehovah. So blessed is each of these incidents, so rich are they in their spiritual and typical import, we proposed to devote a chapter unto the separate consideration of each of them. By the Lord's gracious enabling we have accomplished our purpose concerning the first three, and now we turn to the fourth.

“And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies” (~~1000~~ 2 Samuel 7:1).

This brings before us a restful interlude in the strenuous and eventful life of our hero. As we have seen in earlier chapters, David had been called upon to gird on the sword again and again; and as we shall see in what follows, considerable fighting yet lay before him. Moreover, little opportunity had been given him in previous years for quietness and repose: during Saul's life and also under the reign of Ishbosheth, David was much harried, and forced to move from place to place; so too in the future, disquieting and distressing experiences lay before him. But here in ~~1000~~ 2 Samuel 7 a very different picture is set before us: for a brief season the Lord granted His servant rest.

What has been pointed out above finds its counterpart, more or less, in the lives of all Christians. For the most part, their experience both outward and inward closely resembles that of David's. Christians are called upon to wage a warfare against the flesh, the world, and the devil, to "Fight the good fight of faith." Those inveterate enemies of the new man give him little rest, and often when he has been enabled by divine grace to achieve a notable victory, he quickly discovers that fresh conflicts await him. Yet, amid his outward troubles and inward strifes, he is occasionally granted a little breathing-spell, and as he sits in his house it can be said of him, "The Lord hath given him rest round about from all his enemies."

As it is in nature, so it is in grace: after the storm comes a peaceful calm. The Lord is merciful and tender in His dealings with His own. Amid many disheartenings, He grants encouragements along the way.

"There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (~~43013~~ 1 Corinthians 10:13).

After the toil of trying service, He says,

"Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and *rest awhile*" (~~44061~~ Mark 6:31).

After a long stretch of the dreary sands of the wilderness, He brings us to some Elim

"where are twelve wells of water, and three score and ten palm trees" (~~42157~~ Exodus 15:27).

After some unusually fierce conflict with Satan, the Lord grants a season of peace, and then, as in David's case, we have rest from all our enemies.

And with what was David's mind employed during the hour of repose? Not upon worldly trifles or fleshly indulgences, but with the honor of God:

"That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See, now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains" (~~49072~~ 1 Samuel 7:2).

This is very blessed and furnishes a true insight to the character of him whom the Lord Himself declared to be "a man after His own heart." There



are few things which afford a surer index to our spirituality—Or the lack of it—than how we are engaged in our hours of *leisure*. When the conflict is over, and the sword is laid down, we are very apt to relax and become careless about spiritual concerns. And then it is, while off our guard, that Satan so often succeeds in gaining an advantage over us. Far different was it with him whose history we are here pondering.

“The king said unto Nathan the prophet, See, now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.” Observe, first, that in this season of rest David’s companion was “the prophet.” Let that speak loudly to us! A godly companion is an invaluable aid to the preserving of spirituality when we are enjoying a little rest. Hours of recreation would prove hours of *re-creation* indeed, if they were spent in godly converse with someone who lives near to the Lord. David here supplied proof of his own assertion,

“I am a companion of all that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts” (~~1936~~ Psalm 119:63).

A person is not only *known* by the company he or she keeps, but is *molded* thereby:

“He that walketh with wise men, shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (~~2033~~ Proverbs 13:20).

Seek as your friends, dear reader, those who are most Christ-like in their character and conversation.

Next, observe what it was which occupied David’s heart while he sat in his palace in the company of Nathan the prophet: “See, now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.” How this, too, reveals the beatings of David’s heart! One cannot but contrast what we have here with the haughty words of Nebuchadnezzar:

“Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, for the honor of *my* majesty?” (~~2080~~ Daniel 4:30).

Instead of being occupied with his achievements and self-satisfied with the position which he now occupied, David was concerned about the lowly abode of God’s ark. Very beautiful indeed is it to see the recently crowned

monarch solicitous, not for the honor of his own majesty, but, for the glory of Him whom he served.

It is not often that those in high places manifest such interest in spiritual things: would that more of the Lord's people who are entrusted with a considerable amount of this world's goods were more exercised in heart over the prospering of His cause. There are not many who make conscience over spending far more upon themselves than they do for furthering the service of God. In this generation, when the pilgrim character of the saints is well-nigh obliterated, when separation from the world is so largely a thing of the past, when self-indulgence and the gratification of every whim is the order of the day, few find their rest disturbed in the conviction that the worship is languishing. Thousands of professing Christians think more about the welfare of their pet dogs than they do in seeing that the needs of God's servants and impoverished believers are met, and spend more on the upkeep of their motorcars than they do in the support of missionaries. Little wonder that the Holy Spirit is quenched in so many places.

“And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the Lord is with thee” (v. 3).

A certain class of writers who delight in criticizing almost everyone and everything, and who pretend unto a deeper insight of spiritual things than all who went before them, condemn both David and Nathan on this occasion, which seems to us close akin to the complaint of Judas when Mary lavished her costly ointment upon the Savior. Nothing is said in the record here that David actually purposed to build Jehovah a temple, but only that he was troubled because one was not yet erected. Whatever conclusion Nathan may have drawn therefrom, he was careful to say nothing to modify David's godly concern, but rather sought to encourage his spiritual aspirations. Alas, how many today are ready to snub earnestness, quench zeal, and hinder those who have more love for perishing souls than they have.

Nathan was better taught in divine things than some of those who have traduced him. He was quick to perceive that such unselfishness and godly concern as the king manifested was good evidence that the Lord was with him, for such spiritual exercises of heart proceed not from mere nature. Had David been actuated by a “legalistic” spirit as one of his foolish detractors supposed—deploring it with an “alas, alas!”—God's faithful

servant had promptly rebuked, or at least corrected him. But instead of so doing, he says? “Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the Lord is with thee.” O that more of this so-called “legality” were in evidence today—a heart melted by the Lord’s abounding mercies, anxious to express its gratitude by furthering His cause and service. But it is hardly to be expected that those who so strenuously oppose the Law’s being a rule of life for the Christian, should have any clear ideas on either grace or what constitutes “legality.”

“And it came to pass that night, that the word of the Lord came unto Nathan” (v. 4).

In the brief notes on this verse found in “The Companion Bible” it is there stated that, “After these words (‘that night’) all the MSS. (manuscripts) have a hiatus, marking a solemn pause.” The design of the ancient Hebrews may have been to connect this passage with <sup><01512></sup>Genesis 15:12-17, which is another *night* scene. In both a wondrous revelation was made by the Lord: in both His great purpose concerning the Messiah and Mediator received an unfolding: in both a remarkable adumbration was made respecting the contents of the Everlasting Covenant.

“Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the Lord, Shalt thou build Me an house for Me to dwell in?” (v. 5),

or, as it is said in <sup><1370></sup>1 Chronicles 17:4, “Thou shalt not build Me an house to dwell in.” Some may suppose that these words make it quite clear that David *had* definitely determined to erect a temple unto Jehovah. But we rather regard these statements as the gracious construction which God placed upon the holy concern of His servant, just as the Savior sweetly interpreted the loving devotion of Mary’s anointing as “against the day of My burying hath she kept this” (<sup><1217></sup>John 12:7); and, as in a coming day He will yet say unto those on His right hand,

“I was an hungered, and ye gave *Me* meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave *Me* drink: I was a stranger, and ye took *Me* in” (<sup><1255></sup>Matthew 25:35, etc.).

“For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man bath, not according to that he bath not” (<sup><10812></sup>2 Corinthians 8:12).

It is the disposition and desire of the heart which God regards, and sincere intentions to do good are approved by Him, even though His providences do not permit the execution of them. Thus it was in David's case. He was concerned that the sacred ark should be under curtains, while he dwelt in a ceiled house. That holy concern was tantamount unto a willingness on his part to honor the Lord's worship by a stately temple, and *this* is the construction which God graciously placed upon it, accepting the will for the deed. Though David had not formally planned to build the temple, God so *interpreted* the exercises of his mind; just as when a man looks lustfully upon a woman, Christ *interprets* this as "adultery" itself (~~<1628>~~ Matthew 5:28).

We have dwelt the longer upon this point because the commentators have quite missed the force of it. Not only so, but some teachers, who are looked upon in certain circles as well nigh infallible in their expositions, have falsely charged David with "legality." Now that the Lord had elevated him from the sheepcote to the throne, and had given him rest from all his enemies, David's concern for the dwelling place of the ark is twisted into his desire to do something *for* the Lord as payment of all He had done for him. Such men err "not knowing the scriptures." One verse of the Word is sufficient to refute their childish misconceptions, and establish what we have said above: "And the Lord said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto My name, thou *didst well* [not "thou was moved by a legalistic spirit"] that it was in thine heart" (~~<10818>~~ 1 Kings 8:18).

We do not propose to comment in detail upon the remainder of the Lord's message through Nathan, but rather will we generalize our remarks upon the same.

**First**, the Lord made touching mention of His own infinite condescension in graciously accommodating Himself unto the stranger and pilgrim character of His people (v. 6). The great Jehovah had deigned to "*walk with the children of Israel.*" What an amazing and heart-melting word is that in ~~<182523>~~ Leviticus 25:23

*"The land shall not be sold forever: for the land is Mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with Me."*

David himself had laid hold of that word, as his statement in ~~<189912>~~ Psalm 39:12 clearly shows,

“Hold not Thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger *with Thee*, and a sojourner as all my fathers were.”

Until Israel were settled in their inheritance an humble tent had sewed the Lord’s requirements. In this He has left *us* an example to follow: pomp and parade, extravagance and luxury, ill become those who have here “no continuing city.”

**Second**, as yet the Lord had given no definite instruction for the erection of an imposing edifice for His worship (v. 7), and until He did, a *tent* of His appointing, was better than a *temple* of man’s devising. Our desires, even of usefulness, must be governed by His precepts. Whatever be our spiritual aspirations, they must be regulated by the revealed will of God. He assigns unto every one his own work, and each of us should thankfully and faithfully attend to our own proper business. O to be satisfied with the place which God has allotted *us*, to discharge earnestly the duty which He has appointed us, and leave to other whom He has chosen, the more honorable work. The temple was to bear the name of Solomon, and not that of David.

**Third**, David was reminded of the wondrous things which God had already wrought for him, so that while he was not called unto the building of the temple, nevertheless, he was one of the favorites of Heaven (v. 8). Moreover, God had made him signally victorious over all his foes, and had advanced him unto high honor among the nations (v. 9). Let us be thankful for the mercies which God *has* bestowed, and not repine for any which He sees fit to withhold. Fourth, the happy future of his people was assured him (v. 10), from which he might well conclude that, when *they* were more securely established, then would be the time for the erection of a permanent house of worship. Finally, God announces rich blessings as being entailed upon David’s family, for from *his* seed should issue, according to the flesh, the promised Messiah and Mediator (vv. 11-16). Thus, instead of David’s building for the Lord a material and temporal house, the Lord would build for *him* a spiritual house which would abide “for ever.” Thus we see that a “willing mind” (~~4082~~ 2 Corinthians 8:12) is not only accepted, but richly *rewarded*.

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church, by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” (~~4083~~ Ephesians 3:20, 21).

# CHAPTER 43

## HIS DEEP HUMILITY

### ~~1000~~ 2 SAMUEL 7

In the preceding chapter we looked upon David while he was permitted to enjoy a brief season of repose, following the trying experiences through which he had passed ere he came to the throne. He might well have found in the many trials and vicissitudes of his past life an excuse for luxurious repose now. But devout souls will consecrate their leisure as well as their toil to God, and will serve with thank-offerings in peace, Him whom they invoked with earnest supplication in battle. As another has said, “Prosperity is harmless only when it is accepted as an opportunity for fresh forms of devotion, and not as an occasion for idle self-indulgence.” Thus it was with our hero. He was not spoiled by success; his head was not made giddy by the height he now occupied; the Lord was not forgotten when prosperity smiled upon him. Instead, he was deeply concerned about the honor of God, especially at there being no suitable place for His public worship.

As David sat alone in his palace, meditating, there can be little doubt that one so conversant with the Scriptures as he was would turn in thought to the ancient promise,

“When He giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety, then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause His name to dwell there”

(~~15120~~ Deuteronomy 12:10, 11).

It was *that* word, we believe, which caused our hero to say unto Nathan,

“See, now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains” (~~1000~~ 2 Samuel 7:2).

Israel’s king felt more or less rebuked by his own ease and comfort, and regarded his tranquility not as a season for selfish indolence, but rather as a call to serious reflection upon the interests of God’s cause or kingdom. He

could not bear the thought of lavishing more upon self than upon the service of Him to whom he owed everything.

The response made by the Lord unto the spiritual exercises of His servant was indeed blessed. Through the prophet He gave David a much fuller revelation of what was in *His* heart toward him:

“I will set up thy seed after thee... I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever... thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever” (vv. 10-12).

God made known His purpose to confer upon the posterity of David a special favor, which He had not granted even to Abraham, Moses, or Joshua, namely, establish them upon the throne of Israel. Moreover, it was declared of his seed who should be set up after him, “He shall build an house for My name” (v. 13). This will be considered in more detail under “The Divine Covenants” (when we reach the “Davidic”): suffice it now to say, the ultimate reference was a *spiritual* one in the person and kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

While there was much in the revelation now granted to David which was well calculated to evoke gratitude and praise, yet there was one omission from it that presented a real test of his submission, humility and patience. While there was abundant cause for thanksgiving, that *his* posterity should continue to occupy the throne, and his own son build an house for Jehovah’s name (and fame), yet that *he* was denied this honor, had been resented by one who was proud and filled with a sense of his own importance. David’s longings were not to be realized during his own lifetime, and though he should be permitted to gather together much of the material for the future temple, yet *he* would not be permitted to see the finished product itself. Here, then, was a real trying of his character, and it is blessed to see how he endured and met the same.

How often it falls out that one sows and another reaps: one set of men labor, and another generation is permitted to enter into the benefits of their toil. Nor should we complain at this, seeing that our sovereign and all-wise God has so ordered it. David did not complain, nor did he manifest any petulant disappointment at the crowning of his hopes being deferred to a future time. Instead, as we shall see, he sweetly bowed to God’s pleasure and adored Him for the same. Ah, my readers, our prayers may yet move God to send a gracious revival, yet that happy event may not come during

our lifetime. The faithful labors of God's servants today may not immediately transform the present "wilderness" state of Zion into a fruitful garden, yet if they be the means of plowing and harrowing the ground as a necessary preliminary thereto, ought we not to gladly acquiesce?

In the passage which is now to be before us, we behold the effects which God's wondrous revelation through Nathan had upon the soul of David.

"Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord; and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto?" (~~10718~~ 2 Samuel 7:18).

Inexpressibly blessed is this. Such tidings as had just fallen on his ears would have puffed up many a man, filled him with a sense of his own importance, and caused him to act arrogantly toward his fellows. Far otherwise was it with "the man after God's own heart." Filled with joyful amazement at Jehovah's infinite condescension, David at once left the royal palace and betook himself to the humble tent which housed that sacred ark, there to pour out his heart in adoration and praise. There is nothing like a keeling sense of God's sovereign, free and rich *grace*, to melt the soul, humble the heart, and stir unto true and acceptable worship.

"Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord" (~~10718~~ 2 Samuel 7:18). This is in designed contrast from verse 1: there the king "sat in his house"; here he is seen in the tabernacle, before Jehovah. The word "*sat* before the Lord," probably refers to his *continuance* in the tabernacle, rather than to the posture in which he prayed.

"And he said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto?" (v. 18).

How few kings there are who have such a realization of their lowliness as this! All sense of personal greatness vanished when David came into the presence of the great Jehovah. Ah, my reader, when *the Lord* is truly before us, "I" sinks into utter insignificance! But it is only as we are absorbed with His perfections—His infinitude, His majesty, His omnipotency—that self will be lost sight of.

"Who am I? O Lord God? and what is my house?" How these words bring before us the deep humility of David! Truthfully could he say, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty" (~~19101~~ Psalm 131:1). A number of illustrations of this lovely grace may be cited from the record of David's



life. His being content to follow his mean vocation as a shepherd, till God called him to a higher office. He never affected the royal diadem, neither would it have been any grief of heart to him had God passed him by, and made another king. His words to Abishai concerning Saul,

“Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord’s anointed, and be guiltless?” (~~0219~~ 1 Samuel 26:9),

show plainly that he was not coveting the crown, and was quite content for the son of Kish to continue occupying the throne of Israel.

It is beautiful to see how often this spirit of lowliness and self-abnegation appears in “the man after God’s own heart.” When he went forth to engage Goliath, it was not in the confidence of his own skill, but with the holy assurance

“This day will *the Lord* deliver thee into mine hand” (~~01746~~ 1 Samuel 17:46).

When Saul lay helpless before him, he took no credit unto himself, but said to the king, “*the Lord* had delivered thee today into mine hand” (~~02410~~ 1 Samuel 24:10). When Abigail was used to quiet his passionate spirit, he exclaimed,

“blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me” (~~02532~~ 1 Samuel 25:32);

and when Nabal was dead, “Blessed be the Lord, that bath pleaded the cause of my reproach... and hath kept His servant from evil” (v. 39). After his notable victory over the Amalekites he said,

“Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which *the Lord* hath given us, who bath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand” (~~03123~~ 1 Samuel 30:23).

humility is that grace which gives the Lord His proper place.

Distrusting his own wisdom, we find David “enquiring of the Lord” again and again (~~02712~~ 1 Samuel 23:2, 4; 30:8; ~~0000~~ 2 Samuel 2:1; 5:19; etc.). This is another sure mark of genuine humility: that spirit which is afraid to trust in our own knowledge, experience and powers, and seeks counsel and direction from above. When for his prowess Saul called him to court and promised to give him Michal to wife, he answered,

“Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king’s son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed?” (<sup>191823</sup>1 Samuel 18:23).

Note the love he bore to those who admonished him for his sins:

“Let the righteous smite me: it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head” (<sup>19105</sup>Psalms 141:5):

far meaner people do not take it so kindly! In all his heroical acts he sought not his own honor, but God’s:

“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory” (<sup>19330</sup>Psalms 115:1).

Mark his submission to God under chastisement:

“And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again, and show me both it, and His habitation: But if He thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let Him *do to me as seemeth good unto Him*” (<sup>101525</sup>2 Samuel 15:25, 26).

In all his dealings with God, he dared not trust in his own righteousness, but wholly took refuge in the covenant of grace:

“If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” (<sup>19108</sup>Psalms 130:3).

“Enter not into judgment with Thy servant: for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified” (<sup>19312</sup>Psalms 143:2).

When a man can find all this in himself, he may honestly say,

“Lord, *my heart is not haughty*” (<sup>19101</sup>Psalms 131:1).

Yet, David was not perfect, and the remains of pride still indwelt him, as they do each of us—till we get rid of the flesh, we shall never be completely rid of pride. <sup>19306</sup>Psalms 30:6 and <sup>10242</sup>2 Samuel 24:2 show his vainglory creeping out.

We have dwelt the more largely upon David’s *humility*, because in this day of Laodicean conceit and boasting, it needs to be emphasized that, as a general rule, those whom God has used most mightily have not been men who were distinguished for abnormal natural powers or gifts, but instead

by deep humility. See this admirable trait in Abraham: “I am but dust and ashes” (~~01827~~ Genesis 18:27); in Moses,

“Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” (~~01811~~ Exodus 3:11);

in Christ’s forerunner,

“He must increase, but I must decrease” (~~01833~~ John 3:30);

in Paul,

“I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (~~01650~~ 1 Corinthians 15:9).

O that Divine grace may make us “little in our own eyes.”

But again we would notice it was while David was “before the Lord” that he said, “Who am I?” So too it was while he was in the immediate presence of the Lord that Abraham confessed himself to be “but dust and ashes.” In like manner, it was when the great I Am revealed Himself at the burning bush that Moses asked, “Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh?”! It was when Job could say, “Now mine eye seeth Thee”—in all Thine awful sovereignty (see context)—that he cried, “wherefore I abhor myself” (~~01846~~ Job 42:6).

“And what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto?”

David continued in the same lowly strain. His “house” pertained to the royal tribe; he was the immediate descendant of the prince of Judah, so that he was connected with the most honorable family in Israel; yet such fleshly distinctions were held lightly by him. The “Thou hast brought me hitherto”—to the throne, to rest from all his enemies—gave to God the rightful glory. “It intimates that he could not have reached this himself by his own management, if God had not brought him to it. All our attainments must be looked upon as God’s vouchsafements” (Matthew Henry).

“And this was yet a small thing in Thy sight, O Lord God; but Thou hast spoken also of Thy servant’s house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?” (v. 19).

Having owned the goodness of the Lord upon him “hitherto,” David now turns to comment upon the glorious things which God had promised for the future. The latter so immeasurably outweighed the former, that he sums up his own establishment over the kingdom as “this was yet a small thing in Thy sight, O Lord God.” We believe this throws light upon the word “sat” in the previous verse, which has presented a difficulty unto the commentators—who point out that this is the only place in Scripture where a saint is represented as being seated while engaged in prayer. But are we not rather to regard the term as denoting that David was in an attitude of most carefully surveying the wonderful riches of divine grace toward him, instead of defining his posture while engaged in his devotions?

The whole of ~~<1070>~~ 2 Samuel 7 is to be viewed as the blessed and instructive sequel to what is presented to us in the opening verse. God had tenderly given His servant a season of rest that he might receive a fuller revelation of what was in *His* heart toward him. And now he is in the sacred tabernacle, pondering over what he had heard through Nathan. As he meditated, divine light and understanding broke in upon him, so that he was enabled, in measure at least, to penetrate the mysterious depths of that wonderful prophecy. The golden future was now opened to him, shining with more than earthly glory and bliss.

“He beheld in spirit another Son than Solomon, another Temple than that built of stones and cedar, another Kingdom than the earthly one on whose throne he sat. He beholds a scepter and a crown, of which his own on Mount Zion were only feeble types—dim and shadowy images” (Krummacher’s *David and the God man*).

Beautifully does this come out in his next words:

“And is this the manner of man, O Lord God? And what can David say more unto Thee? for Thou, Lord God, knowest Thy servant. For Thy word’s sake, and according to Thine own heart, hast Thou done all these great things, to make Thy servant know them”  
(vv. 19-21)

—in the light of which knowledge, he no doubt penned the fortieth, forty-fifth and one hundred tenth Psalms. The last clause of verse 19 should be translated, more literally, “This is the law of *the* Man, the Lord God,” namely, “The Man” of ~~<1908>~~ Psalm 8:5, 6 and of ~~<19017>~~ Psalm 80:17! David

was now given to realize that the blessed promises which had been given to him through the prophet would be made good in the person of the Messiah, who should yet issue from his own loins, who would be “The Man,” yet none other than “the Lord God” incarnate. Yes, God reveals His secrets to the lowly, but hides them from those who are wise and prudent in their own esteem.

# CHAPTER 44

## HIS EXEMPLARY PRAYER

### ~~1000~~ 2 SAMUEL 7

The latter part of ~~1000~~ 2 Samuel 7 contains the prayer made by David in the tabernacle, following the gracious revelation which he had received from the Lord through Nathan (vv. 5-16). This prayer is among the “whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning” (~~5150~~ Romans 15:4). it contains valuable instruction which we do well to take to heart. It makes known that which is a valuable preliminary aid unto stimulating the spirit of prayer. It shows us the attitude of soul which most becomes the creature when desirous of drawing nigh unto the great Creator. It reveals some of the elements which are found in those supplications that gain the ear of God and which “availeth much.” If the Christian of today paid more attention unto the prayers of *Scripture*, both of the Old and New Testaments alike, and sought to pattern his invocations after theirs, there is little doubt they would be more acceptable and effectual.

We pointed out in our last that David’s *sitting* before the Lord denoted his earnest attention unto the message he had received from Him, his careful pondering of it, his devout surveying of the riches of Divine grace which were then spread before his mind’s eye. This preceded his prayer, and supplies a valuable hint for us to heed. Meditation upon the discoveries which God has made to us of His goodness, of His bounty, of the glorious things contained in His covenant, is a wondrous stimulant to the spirit of devotion and a suitable preparative for an approach unto the Mercy-seat. To review God’s past dealings with us, and to mix faith with His promises for the future, kindle the fires of gratitude and love. As we attend upon what God has spoken to us, when our consciences are pricked or our affections stirred, then is the best time to retire to our closets and pour out our hearts before Him.

Generally it is but an idle excuse—if not something worse—when the Christian complains that his heart is cold and the spirit of prayer is quite inactive within him. Where this be the case, it must be shamefacedly

confessed to God, accompanied by the request that He may be pleased to heal our malady and bring us back again into communion with Himself. But better still, the *cause* of the complaint should be corrected: nine times out of ten it is because the Word has been neglected—if read at all, mechanically, without holy reflection and personal appropriation. The soul is likely to be in a sickly state if it be not regularly fed and nourished by the Bread of life. There is nothing like *meditating* upon God's promises for warming the heart:

“While I was *mus*ing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue”  
(~~1991B~~ Psalm 39:3).

We commented in our last upon the deep humility manifested by David on this occasion. This too is recorded for our learning. If we are becomingly to approach the Most High, there must be the taking of a lowly place before Him. This is the chief design of prayer, the prime reason why God has appointed this holy ordinance: for the *humbling* of the soul—to take our proper place in the dust, to kneel before the Lord as beggars, dependent upon His bounty; to stretch forth empty hands, that He may fill them. Alas that so often man, in his pride and perverseness, turns the footstool of mercy into the bench of presumption, and instead of supplicating becomes guilty of dictating unto the Almighty. Ah, my readers, take careful note that He who prayed, “Not as I will, but as Thou wilt,” was *on His face* before the Father (~~1991B~~ Matthew 26:39).

Now in seeking to ponder David's pattern prayer—having duly noted above what preceded it, let us seek to profit from the various features found in it.

**First**, observe that *all is ascribed to free grace*.

“And what can David say more unto Thee? for Thou, Lord God, knowest Thy servant. For Thy word's sake, and according to Thine own heart, hast Thou done all these great things, to make Thy servant know them” (vv. 20, 21).

David's heart was deeply moved by a sense of God's sovereign benignity; that such blessings should be bestowed upon him and his posterity was more than he could understand. He was lost in wonderment: words utterly failed him, as his “what can David say more unto Thee?” evidences. And is it not thus, at times, with every true believer? As he contemplates the

abounding of God's mercies, the richness of His gifts, the supernal future promised him, is he not moved to exclaim,

“What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?”  
(~~198612~~ Psalm 116:12).

Realizing his own nothingness and unworthiness (v. 18), viewing the future glories assured him (v. 19), knowing there was nothing in himself which merited any such blessings, David traces them to their true causes: “For Thy Word’s sake, and according to Thine own heart, hast Thou done all these great things” (v. 21). It is the *personal* “Word” which he had in mind, Him of whom it is declared,

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (~~201010~~ John 1:1).

It was an acknowledgement—“for *Christ’s* sake” Thou hast so honored me! “And according to Thine own heart” signifies, according to His gracious counsels, out of His own mere good pleasure. Yes, those, and those alone, are the springs of all God’s dealings with us: He blesses His people for the sake of His beloved Son, “according to the riches of His grace” and

“according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself” (~~201017~~ Ephesians 1:7, 9).

**Second**, *the greatness of God is apprehended and extolled.*

“Wherefore Thou art great, O Lord God: for there is none like Thee, neither is there any God beside Thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears” (v. 22).

It is blessed to observe that David’s sense of God’s goodness in nowise abated his awesome veneration of the divine majesty. There is ever a danger at this point: we may be so occupied with God’s love as to forget His holiness, so appreciative of His tenderness as to ignore His omnipotency. It is most needful that we should hold the balance here, as everywhere else; hence did the Savior instruct us to say, “Our Father, who art in Heaven”—the latter words reminding us of the exalted dignity of the One who has deigned to adopt us into His family. Apprehensions of God’s amazing grace toward us must not crowd out the realization of His infinite exaltation above us.



God's greatness should be duly acknowledged by us when we seek an audience with the Majesty on high: it is but ascribing to Him the glory which is His due. Prayer is reduced to a low level if it is to be confined unto the presenting of requests. The soul needs to be so absorbed with the divine perfections that the worshiper will exclaim,

“Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” (~~12151~~ Exodus 15:11).

God's supreme excellency is to be reverently and freely owned by us. It was owned by Solomon,

“Lord God of Israel, there is no God like Thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath” (~~110823~~ 1 Kings 8:23).

It was owned by Jehoshaphat,

“O Lord God of our fathers, art not Thou God in heaven? and rulest not Thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in Thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand Thee?” (~~142106~~ 2 Chronicles 20:6).

It was by Jeremiah,

“Forasmuch as there is none like unto Thee, O Lord; Thou art great, and Thy name is great in might. Who would not fear Thee, O King of nations?” (~~24106~~ Jeremiah 10:6, 7).

What examples are these for us to take to heart. The more we heartily acknowledge God's greatness, the more likely is He to answer our requests.

**Third**, *The special goodness of God to His people is owned.*

“And what one nation in the earth is like Thy people, like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to Himself, and to make Him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible?” (v. 23).

As none of the “gods” of the heathen could be compared to Jehovah, so none among the people's of the earth have been so highly favored and so richly blest as His privileged “Nation” (~~12143~~ Matthew 21:43, ~~11019~~ 1 Peter 2:9). O what praise is due unto God for His distinguishing mercy and discriminating grace unto His elect.

“We are bound to give thanks *always* to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation” (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

The special blessings of God call for special acknowledgment: the “redemption” which we have in and by Christ Jesus demands our loudest hosannas. There is far too little praise in our prayers today: its absence denotes a low state of spirituality—occupation with self, instead of with the Lord. It is written “whoso offereth praise, glorifieth Me” (~~18723~~ Psalm 50:23).

**Fourth**, the *Covenant of Grace* is celebrated.

“For Thou hast confirmed to Thyself Thy people Israel to be a people unto Thee forever; and Thou, Lord art become their God” (v. 24).

In the light of the whole context, it is evident that the *spiritual* “Israel” is here in view, contemplated as being taken into covenant relationship with the triune Jehovah. For, whenever a people is said to be *God’s* people, and He avows Himself as their God, it is the covenant relationship which is in view. Thus it was in the promise to Abraham:

“And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, *to be a God* unto thee, and to thy seed after thee” (ⲁⲓⲧⲱⲟⲩ Genesis 17:7).

Thus it is under the new covenant,

“I will be to them *a God*, and they shall be to Me *a people*”  
(~~50810~~ Hebrews 8:10).

It greatly encourages and emboldens the praying soul to bear this in mind.

**Fifth**, a believing pleading of the promises.

“And now, O Lord God, the word that Thou hast spoken concerning Thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it forever, and *do as Thou hast said*” (v.25).

This is blessed, and most important for us to emulate. In these words the faith of David was expressed in two ways: in *believing* God's word, in *pleading* its accomplishment. That should be the very heart of our

petitionary prayers: laying hold of the divine promise, and pleading for its fulfillment. God is not only a Speaker, but a Doer as well:

“God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, *and shall He not do it?* or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?” (<sup><02319></sup>Numbers 23:19).

Ah, but it is one thing to assent mentally to such a declaration, but it is quite another for the heart to be really influenced thereby, and for the praying soul to appropriate that fact.

True faith looks to a *promising* God, and expects Him to be a *performing* God too:

“Faithful is He that calleth you, who *also will do it*” (<sup><01804></sup>1 Thessalonians 5:4).

The business of faith in prayer is to appropriate God’s Word to our own case and beg for it to be made good unto us. Jacob did this:

“*And Thou saidest, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea*” (<sup><01310></sup>Genesis 32:10).

David is another notable example:

“Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope” (<sup><01949></sup>Psalms 119:49)

—“hope” in Scripture signifies *far* more than a vague and uncertain longing: it denotes a confident expectation. That confident expectation was his because his faith rested upon the sure promise of Jehovah, that promise of which he here reverently reminds God. Glance through this Psalm, dear reader, and observe how frequently David requested God to act “according to Thy Word”—(<sup><01925></sup>Psalms 119:25, 28, 41, 58, etc.

“Do as Thou hast said.” Faith has no other foundation to rest upon but the Word of God. One of God’s chief ends in giving us His Word was that His people might appropriate the same unto themselves (<sup><01311></sup>John 20:31, <sup><01313></sup>1 John 5:13). Nothing honors Him more than for us to count upon His making it good to us (<sup><01404></sup>Romans 4:20). Now whatever may be our case, there is something in the Word exactly suited thereto, and it is our privilege to lay hold of the same *and plead it* before God. Are we groaning under sin’s defilement? then plead (<sup><02018></sup>Isaiah 1:18. Are we bowed down with a

sense of our backslidings? then plead <sup><2482></sup>Jeremiah 3:22. Do we feel so weak as to have no strength for the performance of duty? then plead <sup><2412></sup>Isaiah 40:29-31. Are we perplexed as to our path and in urgent need of divine guidance? then plead <sup><2186></sup>Proverbs 3:6 or <sup><5016></sup>James 1:5. Are you sorely harassed with temptation? then plead <sup><6103></sup>1 Corinthians 10:13. Are you destitute and fearful of starving to death? then plead <sup><3049></sup>Philippians 4:19. Reverently urge that promise and plead “Do as Thou hast said.”

**Sixth**, *the supreme desire: that God might be glorified.*

“And let Thy name be magnified forever, saying, The Lord of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of Thy servant David be established before Thee. For Thou, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to Thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hast Thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto Thee” (vv. 26, 27).

This must be the supreme desire and the chief end in all our praying:

“Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God”  
(<sup><6181></sup>1 Corinthians 10:31).

The prayer which Christ has given for our pattern begins with “Hallowed be Thy name,” and ends with “Thine is the glory.” The Lord Jesus ever practiced what He preached:

“Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say?... Father, *glorify Thy name*” (<sup><3127></sup>John 12:27);

so too at the beginning of His high priestly prayer,

“Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee” (<sup><3170></sup>John 17:1).

O that more of His spirit may possess us: that the honor of God may be our great concern, His glory our constant aim.

**Seventh**, *a final pleading for God to make good His Word.*

“And now, O Lord God, Thou art that God, and Thy words be true, and Thou hast promised this goodness unto Thy servant: therefore now let it please Thee to bless the house of Thy servant, that it may continue forever before Thee: for Thou, O Lord God,

hast spoken it; and with Thy blessing let the house of Thy servant be blessed forever” (vv. 28, 29).

David built his hopes upon the fidelity of God:

“I entreated Thy favor with my whole heart: be merciful unto me *according to Thy Word*” (~~Psalm~~ Psalm 119:58)

—I desire no more, I expect no less. We may be bold to ask for all God has engaged to give. As Matthew Henry said, “It is by turning God’s promises into petitions that they are turned into performances.” Flow necessary it is then that we should diligently acquaint ourselves with the Scriptures, so that we ask not “amiss” (~~James~~ James 4:3). How necessary that the Word dwell in us richly, that we may act in faith, nothing doubting.

Our space is exhausted. Ponder carefully, dear reader, these seven features or elements in David’s God-honoring prayer, and seek the help of the holy Spirit to pattern your supplications after his.

# CHAPTER 45

## HIS CONQUESTS

### ~~1081~~ 2 SAMUEL 8

~~1080~~ 2 Samuel 8 opens with,

“And after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Methegammah out of the hand of the Philistines. And he smote Moab... David smote also Hadadezer” (vv. 1-3).

The thoughtful reader may well ask, What is there here for me? Why are such matters as these recorded in God’s Word, to be read by His people in all generations? Are they merely a bare account of incidents which happened thousands of years ago? If so, they can hardly hold for me anything more than what is of historical interest. But such a conclusion will be far from satisfactory to a devout inquirer, who is assured there is something of profit for his soul in *every* portion of his Father’s Word. But how to ascertain the spiritual value and practical lessons of such verses is that which sorely puzzles not a few: may it please the Lord now to enable us to render them some help at this point.

Whilst it be true that none but the One who inspired the Holy Scriptures can open to any of us their hidden depths and rich treasures, yet it is also true that He places no premium upon sloth. It is the prayerful and meditative reader who is rewarded by the Holy Spirit’s illumination of the mind, giving him to behold wondrous things out of God’s Law.

“The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the *diligent* shall be made fat” (~~2130~~ Proverbs 13:4).

If, then, any verse of Scripture is really to speak to our hearts, there has to be not only a crying unto God for the hearing ear, but there must be a girding up the loins of our minds and a careful pondering of each word in the verse.

“And after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines and subdued them: and David took Methegammah out of the hand of the Philistines. And he smote Moab David smote also Hadadezer.” As he carefully weighs these statements, the spiritually-minded can hardly fail to discern One more eminent than David, even his greater Son and Lord. Here we may clearly behold in type the Lion of the tribe of Judah (to which tribe the son of Jesse belonged!), springing upon and overcoming His enemies. In figure, it is the Lord as “a man of war” (~~1215B~~ Exodus 15:3), going forth “conquering and to conquer” (~~668D~~ Revelation 6:2), of whom it is written

“For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet”  
(~~46155~~ 1 Corinthians 15:25).

Yet, precious as this is, it fails to direct us to the practical application of the passage unto our own particular case.

The question, then, returns upon us, What direct message is there in these verses for the Christian today? Not simply what curious signification may be found to amuse him during a few minutes’ recreation, but what practical lessons are here inculcated which can be turned to useful account in his struggle to live the Christian life? Nothing short of *that* should be before the Satan-harassed, sin-afflicted, temptation-tried soul, when he turns to the Word of God for help, instruction, strength and comfort. Nor will God fail him if he seeks in the right spirit—confessing his deep need, pleading the all-prevailing Name of Christ, asking God to grant him for the Redeemer’s sake that wisdom, understanding and faith he sorely craves. Yet, let us add, prayer is not designed to encourage laziness, for it is not a substitute for diligent effort: the Scriptures must be “searched” (~~435B~~ John 5:39) and “studied” if they are to yield food to the soul.

But *how* is the devout and anxious reader to get at the spiritual meaning and practical value of the verses quoted above? Well, the first thing to observe is that the central thing in them is, *David overcoming his enemies*. Put in *that* form, the application to ourselves is obvious. David is here to be viewed as a type of the Christian who is menaced by powerful foes both within and without. These are not to be suffered to lord it over the believer, but are to be engaged in mortal combat. Second, we note that David is not said to have exterminated or annihilated those enemies, but to have “subdued” them (v. 11), which is true to the type, and supplies a key to its practical interpretation. Third, we must pay due attention unto the

time-mark which is given in the opening verse—“And *after this* it came to pass that David smote the Philistines”—for this is another key which unlocks for us its meaning. It is by attending carefully unto such details that we are enabled to burrow beneath the surface of a verse.

“And *after this* it came to pass that David smote the Philistines.” These words look back to what was before us in <sup><0701></sup>1 Samuel 7:1,

“And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies.”

May we not apply these words to the first coming of a sinner to Christ, heavily laden with a conscious load of guilt, sorely pressed by the malicious foes of his soul, now finding *spiritual* rest in the only One in whom and from whom it is to be obtained. Hitherto David had been assailed again and again by the surrounding heathen, but now the Lord granted him a season of repose. That season had been spent in sweet communion with God, in the Word (<sup><0704></sup>2 Samuel 7:4-17) and prayer (<sup><0718></sup>2 Samuel 7:18-29). Blessed indeed is that, but let it be duly noted that communion with God is intended to animate us for the discharge of duty. It is not upon flowery beds of ease that the believer is conducted to Heaven. Being led beside the still waters and being made to lie down in green pastures is a blissful experience, yet let it not be forgotten that it is a means to an end—to supply strength for the carrying out of our obligations.

“And after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines and subdued them.” We may observe a very noticeable change here: previously the Philistines had been the aggressors. In <sup><0701></sup>2 Samuel 5 we read,

“But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David... the Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim... And the Philistines came up yet again” (vv. 17, 18, 22).

“From their assaults God had graciously given His servant rest” (<sup><0701></sup>2 Samuel 7:1).

But now he evidently received a commission from the Lord to make war upon them. Thus it is in the initial experience of the Christian. It is a sense of sin—its vileness, its filthiness, its guilt, its condemnation—which drives him to Christ, and coming to Christ, he finds “rest.” But having obtained forgiveness of sins and peace of conscience, he now learns that he must



“strive against sin” (~~81204~~ Hebrews 12:4) and fight the good fight of faith. Now that the young believer has been delivered from the wrath to come, he discovers that he must “endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (~~8018~~ 2 Timothy 2:3), and spare not anything within him which opposes God.

“And after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them.” While these words may be legitimately applied to the *initial* experience of the believer, they are by no means to be restricted thereunto. They contain a principle which pertains to the Christian life as a whole, and to every stage thereof. That principle is that before we are fitted to engage our spiritual enemies we must first spend a season in communion with God: only thus and only then can strength be obtained for the conflict which lies before us. Renewed efforts to subdue our persistent foes can only be made (with any degree of success) as we are renewed by the Spirit in the inner man, and that is only to be obtained by feeding on the Word (~~100704~~ 2 Samuel 7:4-17) and by prayer (~~100718~~ 2 Samuel 7:18-29)—the two chief means of communion with God.

“And David took Methegammah out of the hand of the Philistines.” Here our passage passes from the general to the particular, and a most important practical truth is here inculcated. This is another case when Scripture has to be compared with Scripture in order to understand its terms. ~~131801~~ 1 Chronicles 18 is parallel with ~~100801~~ 2 Samuel 8, and by comparing the language of the opening verse of the former we are enabled to arrive at the meaning of our text: “Now after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them, and took *Gath and her towns* out of the hand of the Philistines.” Thus “Methegammah” has reference to “Gath and her towns.” Now Gath (with its suburbs) was the metropolis of Philistia, being a fortified city on a high hill (~~100224~~ 2 Samuel 2:24). In our text it is called “Methegammah” which means “the bridle of the mother city.” It had long acted as a “bridle” or curb upon Israel, serving as a barrier to their further occupation of Canaan. So much, then, for the etymological and historical meaning: now for the typical.

What was denoted spiritually by “Gath and her towns”? In seeking the answer to this question let us carefully bear in mind the three details mentioned above: Gath occupied a powerful eminence, it was the metropolis or mother-city, it had served as a “bridle” upon Israel. Surely the practical application of this to ourselves is not difficult: is it not some

*master* lust in our souls or *dominant* sin in our lives which is here represented?

It is not the eyelashes which require trimming, but the “eye” itself which must be plucked out; it is not the fingernails which need paring, but the “right hand” which must be cut off (<sup><4062></sup>Matthew 5:29, 30), if the Christian would make any headway in overcoming his inward corruptions. It is to his special “besetting sin” he must direct his attention. No truce is to be made with *it*, no excuses offered for it. No matter how firmly entrenched it may be, nor how long it has held sway, grace must be diligently and persistently sought to conquer it. That darling sin which has so long been cherished by an evil heart must be slain: if it be “spared,” as Saul spared Agag, it will slay us. The work of mortification is to begin at the place where sin has its strongest hold upon us.

The subduing of the Philistines, and particularly the capture of Gath, was vitally essential if Israel was to gain their rights, for as yet they were not in full possession of the land to which, by the divine promise, they were entitled. Canaan had been given to them by God as their heritage, but valiant effort, hard fighting, was called for, in order to bring about their occupation of the same. This is a point which has sorely puzzled many. It is clear from Scripture that the land of Canaan was a figure of Heaven, but there is no *fighting* in Heaven! True, but the believer is not yet in Heaven; nevertheless, Heaven ought to be in him, by which we mean that even now the believer should be walking in the daily enjoyment of that wondrous portion which is now his by having been made a joint heir with Christ. Alas, how little is this fact appreciated by the majority of God’s dear people today, and how little are they experimentally *possessing* “their possessions” (Obadiah 17).

It is greatly to be regretted that so many of the saints relegate to *the future* the time of their victory, joy and bliss; and seem content to live in the present as though they were spiritual paupers. For example, how generally are the words

“For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”  
(<sup><4011></sup>2 Peter 1:11)

regarded as referring to the time of the believer’s glorification. But there is nothing whatever in the context to warrant such a view, nothing required in

it to understand that “abundant entrance” as belonging to a day to come, nothing to justify us postponing it at all in our thoughts. Instead, there is much against it. In the preceding verses the apostle is exhorting the believer to make his calling and election “sure,” and this by adding to his faith “virtue” etc. (vv. 5-7), assuring him that by so doing he shall “never fall,” and adding “for *so* an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly.”

Legally, the believer has already been

“delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of Gods dear Son” (<sup>51013</sup>Colossians 1:13),

but experimentally an “abundant entrance” thereinto is dependent upon his spiritual growth and the cultivation of his graces. The believer has already been begotten unto “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven” for him (<sup>61014</sup>1 Peter 1:4), but his practical *enjoyment* thereof turns upon the exercise of faith. “Abraham,” said Christ, “rejoiced to see My day” (<sup>40856</sup>John 8:56): and *how* did the patriarch “see” it? Why, *by faith*, for there was no other way in which he could see it: by the exercise of faith in the sure promises of God. And what was the effect upon Abraham of this entrancing vision which faith brought to him? This, “And he saw it and *was glad*.” In like manner, the believer now is to use the long distance lens of faith and view his promised inheritance, and *rejoice* therein; then will “the joy of the Lord” be his “strength” (<sup>16810</sup>Nehemiah 8:10).

Israel had a valid title to the land of Canaan: it was theirs by the gift of God. But enemies sought to prevent their occupation of it: and enemies seek to hinder the Christian from faith’s appropriation and enjoyment of *his* “inheritance.” And what are those enemies? Chiefly, the lusts of the flesh, sinful habits, evil ways. *Faith cannot be in healthy exercise while we yield to the lusts of the flesh*. How many a saint is sighing because his faith is so feeble, so spasmodic, so fruitless. Here is the cause: allowed sin! Faith and sin are opposites, opponents, and the one cannot flourish until the other be subdued. It is vain to pray for more faith until we start in earnest to mortify our lusts, crucify our Christ-dishonoring corruptions, and wrestle with and overcome our besetting sins; and that can only be accomplished by fervently and untiringly seeking enabling grace from on High.

“David *smote* the Philistines, and *subdued* them.” In figure that represents the believer waging unsparing warfare upon all within him that is opposed to God, “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts” in order that he may “live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world” (<sup><5012></sup>Titus 2:12). It represents the believer doing what the apostle speaks of in <sup><4027></sup>1 Corinthians 9:27, “But I *keep under* my body, and bring it into subjection:” his “body” there referring not so much to the physical, as to the “old man” within, the “body of sin” (<sup><4016></sup>Romans 6:6), “this body of death” (<sup><4024></sup>Romans 7:24 margin); or as it is spoken of elsewhere as “the body of the sins of the flesh” (<sup><5021></sup>Colossians 2:11), Indwelling sin is spoken of in these passages as a “body” because it has, as it were, a complete set of members or faculties of its own; and these must be *subdued* by the Christian:

“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (<sup><4715></sup>2 Corinthians 10:5),

“And David took Methegammah out of the land of the Philistines,” Typically this turns, as we have previously said, from the general unto the particular—from the work of mortification as a whole to the crucifying of a special sin which prevails against the saint. In figure it represents the believer concentrating his attention upon and conquering his master lust or chief besetting sin, that “mother” evil which is the prolific source of so many iniquities, that “bridle” which has for so long hindered his entering into God’s best for him. But our space is exhausted: as the subject is of such vital moment we will continue it in our next chapter.

# CHAPTER 46

## HIS CONQUESTS (CONTINUED)

### ~~1080~~2 SAMUEL 8

In the preceding chapter we pointed out that the central thing in ~~1080~~2 Samuel 8 is David overcoming his enemies, and this, in order that Israel might enter their rightful portion—occupy and enjoy the inheritance which God has given them. In order to do this, hard fighting was entailed. We also called attention to the fact that ~~1080~~2 Samuel 8 opens with the word “And,” which requires us to observe what immediately goes before. In ~~1080~~2 Samuel 7 we find God giving David “rest round about from all his enemies” (v. 1), and that he spent this season of repose in communion with the Lord—over His Word (vv. 4-17) and in prayer (vv. 18-29). Following which he evidently received a commission from on high to attack and conquer his most formidable foes, for we are next told “And after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them” (v. 1).

The spiritual, application unto the believer of the above is striking and blessed. The “rest” given to David from those who had assailed him typifies, first, the initial coming to Christ of a convicted and sin-weary soul, and finding rest in Him; and second, it typifies the restraining hand of God laid upon the sinful lusts of the Christian, granting him a little respite from their assaults. This is necessary if there is to be sweet and profitable communion with the thrice holy God, for the soul is in no condition to rejoice in His perfections while sin is raging within him; therefore does the Lord, in His mercy, frequently lay His powerful hand upon us, subduing our iniquities (~~33719~~Micah 7:19). Then it is we should improve the opportunity by feeding upon the Word of promise and by pouring out our hearts before God in thanksgiving, praise and adoring worship. “Thus David used his “rest,” and so should We; for by so doing new strength will be obtained for further conflicts.

David’s smiting of the Philistines and subduing them is a figure of the work of mortification to which God calls the Christian:

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence and covetousness” (~~51016~~ Colossians 3:5).

The clear call of God to His people is,

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (~~48612~~ Romans 6:12).

The Christian must not suffer his fleshly lusts to lord it over, him, but is to engage them in mortal combat, refusing to spare anything in him which is opposed to God. David’s taking of “*Methegammah*” (which means “the bridle of the mother”) out of the hands of the Philistines, speaks of the believer devoting his special attention unto his master lust or besetting sin, for until *that* be (by grace) conquered there can be no real experimental progress in spiritual things;

“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth to his neighbor Let him that stole, steal no more... Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth” (~~40425~~ Ephesians 4:25, 28, 29).

Now David’s subduing of the Philistines and his capture of *Methegammah*, their chief stronghold, was imperatively necessary if Israel was to gain possession and occupy their inheritance, and it is *this* fact which we desire to press most upon the reader. The Christian has been begotten unto a blessed and eternal inheritance in Heaven: from his eventual entrance into it Satan cannot keep him, but from his present possession and enjoyment thereof he seeks by might and main to rob him; and unless the believer be duly instructed and steadfastly resists him, then the enemy will prove only too successful. Alas that so few of the Lord’s people realize *what* their present privileges are; alas that so many of them relegate unto the future what is theirs *now* in title; alas that they are so ignorant of Satan’s devices and so dilatory in seeking to resist the great robber of their souls.

The believer has, *even now*, a rich and wondrous portion in Christ; a portion which is available and accessible unto *faith*:

“For all things *are* yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; *all* are yours; and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s” (~~44121~~ 1 Corinthians 3:21-23).

But O how little are we impressed by such glorious declarations as these; how little do we enter into them in a practical way; how little do we *appropriate* them. We are much like the man who died in poverty, knowing not that a valuable estate had been left to him. Instead of setting our affections upon things above, we act as though there was nothing there for us until we pass through the portals of the grave.

“In Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (<sup>191611</sup> Psalm 16:11)

—*now* as well as in the future!

O what a tremendous difference it makes whether or not the Christian be living in the present enjoyment of his eternal inheritance. What power could the attractions of this world have for one whose heart is on high? None at all. Instead, they would appear to him in their true light, as worthless baubles. How little would he be affected by the loss of a few temporal things: not making them his “treasure” or chief good, the loss of them could neither destroy his peace nor kill his joy—

“And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing *in yourselves* that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance” (<sup>8106</sup> Hebrews 10:64).

How little would tribulation and suffering move us from a steady pressing forward along the path of duty:

“who for the joy *that was set before Him* (by faith) endured the cross, despising the shame” (<sup>8122</sup> Hebrews 12:2).

But for the present enjoyment of our eternal inheritance *faith* must be in exercise, for

“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (<sup>81101</sup> Hebrews 11:1).

Faith is that which gives visibility and tangibility to that which is invisible to sight. Faith is that which gives *reality* to the things which hope is set upon. Faith brings near what is far off. Faith lifts the heart above the things of time and sense:

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction

with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: *for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward*" (<sup><38124></sup>Hebrews 11:24-26).

Ah, the “recompense of the reward” was a living reality unto Moses, and under the elevating power thereof the flesh-inviting offer of Egypt’s princess was powerless to drag him down. And, my reader, if “our citizenship is in heaven” (<sup><30830></sup>Philippians 3:20) *in a practical way*, so far from the baits of Satan tempting us, they will repel.

But, as we pointed out in the preceding chapter, faith cannot be in healthy operation while the work of mortification be neglected. If we yield to the solicitations of our fleshly and worldly lusts, if we fail to crucify our besetting sins, if any evil be “allowed” by us, then faith will be suffocated and rendered inactive. Just as both the Canaanites and the Israelites could not possess the promised land at one and the same time—one being compelled to yield occupancy to the other—so neither can faith and sin rule the heart at one and the same time. The idolatrous Canaanites already had possession of the promised land when God gave it to them, and *only by hard fighting* could the Israelites secure it for themselves. in like manner sinful lusts originally possess the heart of the Christian, and it is only by hard fighting that they can be dispossessed and the heart be filled with heaven.

As the Canaanites were vanquished, the Israelites occupied their places. Thus it must be spiritually. The mortification of sin is in order to the vivification of spirituality. The garden plot must first be clear of weeds and rubbish before it is ready for the vegetables and flowers to be planted therein. Hence the oft-repeated word is, “Cease to do evil, Learn to do well” (<sup><230116></sup>Isaiah 1:16,17), “depart from evil and do good” (<sup><193414></sup>Psalms 34:14), “hate the evil and love the good” (<sup><30515></sup>Amos 5:15)—the second cannot be attended to until the first be accomplished.

“Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts... Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (<sup><4042></sup>Ephesians 4:22, 24).



That is God's unchanging order throughout: we must "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit," if we would know "perfect holiness in His fear."

How instructive and how striking is the order in <sup><31017></sup>Obadiah 17, "But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." First, there is deliverance upon "mount Zion," which is where *Christ* is, for in <sup><19016></sup>Psalm 2:6 God declares, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." Only by Christ can the sin-harassed believer obtain "deliverance" from those enemies which are ever threatening to destroy his peace, joy and usefulness. Second, following the "deliverance" is the promise of "holiness," which is a positive thing, a moral quality of purity, with the added signification of devotedness unto God. But note this cannot be before the "deliverance"! Third, there is then the assurance that God's people shall "*possess* their possessions," that is, actually enjoy them, live in the power thereof.

"And he smote Moab" (v. 2). In order to get at the practical application of this unto ourselves it will be necessary to go back to earlier scriptures. From <sup><01936></sup>Genesis 19:36, 37 we learn that Moab was the incestuous son of backslidden Lot. Their territory was adjacent to the land of Canaan, the Jordan dividing them (<sup><02211></sup>Numbers 22:1; 31:12). It was Balak the king of the Moabites who hired Balaam to curse Israel (<sup><02204></sup>Numbers 22:4, 5). Her daughters were a snare to the sons of Israel (<sup><02501></sup>Numbers 25:1). Her land also proved to be a snare unto Naomi and her family (<sup><01001></sup>Ruth 1:1). God used the Moabites as one of His scourges upon His wayward people in the days of the Judges (<sup><00812></sup>Judges 3:12-14). No Moabite was suffered to enter into the congregation of the Lord unto the tenth generation (<sup><02318></sup>Deuteronomy 23:3). It was foretold that Christ would "smite" them (<sup><02417></sup>Numbers 24:17). In the last reference to them in Scripture we read, "Surely Moab shall be as Sodom" (<sup><31019></sup>Zephaniah 2:9).

From the above facts it is clear that the Moabites were a menace unto Israel, and that there should be no fellowship between them. But the particular point which we need to define is, exactly what do the Moabites symbolize? The answer to this question is not difficult to discover: they figured the world away from God, but more particularly, the world bordering on the domain of faith. It is not the world-bordering church, but the church-bordering *world*, ever inviting the people of God to leave their

own heritage and come down to their level. The Moabites were *near* to Israel both by birth and locality. There was a long and a strong border-line between them, namely, the Jordan, the river of death, and that had to be crossed before the people of God could enter their domain. Moab, then, typifies the world *near* the church; in other words, Moab stands for a mere *worldly profession* of the things of God.

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (~~40614~~ Galatians 6:14).

The Cross of Christ is the antitype of the Jordan. It is by the Cross the Christian is separated from the world. While the principle of the Cross—the principle of self-sacrifice, death to sin—rules the Christian, he is preserved from the blandishments of the world. But as soon as the principle of the Cross—mortification, the denying of self—ceases to dominate, we fall victims to the fair “daughters of Moab,” and commit spiritual adultery with them (~~042501~~ Numbers 25:1); in other words, our testimony degenerates into a mere profession; we cease to be heavenly pilgrims, and vital godliness becomes a thing of the past.

“Every fair attractive worldly delight that makes us forget our true Home is a ‘daughter of Moab’” (F. C. Jennings).

“And he smote Moab.” The spiritual application of this to us today is, we must be uncompromising in our separation from an apostate Christendom, and unsparingly mortify every desire within us to flirt with worldly churches and an empty profession. For a child of God to come under the power of “Moab” is to have his usefulness, power and joy, replaced with wretchedness, impotency and dishonor. Hence our urgent need of *obeying* that emphatic command,

“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: *from such turn away*” (~~51815~~ 2 Timothy 3:5).

It is not that we are called upon to *fight against* the modern “Moabites” (as Israel did under the Old Testament dispensation) but to mortify that within us which lusts after their attractions. In sparing one third of the Moabites and in receiving “gifts” from them, David temporized—the sad sequel is found in ~~12801~~ 2 Kings 3:4, 5 and what follows.

We do not have sufficient light and discernment to follow out all the details of <sup><1089></sup>2 Samuel 8 and give the spiritual application of them unto ourselves, but several other obvious points in the chapter claim our attention. “David smote also Hadadezer” (v. 3); “David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men” (v. 5). How *numerous* are the (spiritual) enemies which the people of God are called upon to engage! It is to be carefully noted that David did not quit when he had subdued the Philistines and the Moabites, but continued to assail other foes! So the Christian must not become weary in well doing: no furloughs are granted to the soldiers of Jesus Christ: they are called on to be

“stedfast, unmovable, *always* abounding in the work of the Lord”  
(<sup><6158></sup>1 Corinthians 15:58),

i.e. the work or task which the Lord has assigned them, which, as the immediate context shows, is to gain the victory over *sin*.

Let us now anticipate a criticism which some of the Lord’s people may feel ready to make against what we have said in this and the previous chapter: Have you not been arguing in favor of self-sufficiency and creature-ability? No, indeed; yet, on the other hand, we are no advocate for Christian impotency, for there is a vital difference between the regenerate and unregenerate as to spiritual helplessness. The way to get more faith and more strength is to *use* what we already have. But we are far from affirming that the Christian is able to overcome his spiritual foes in his own might. So with David. Considering the vast numbers which composed the ranks of his numerous enemies, David and his small force could never have won such great victories had not *the* Lord undertaken for him.

“And the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went” (v. 6): note the exact repetition of these words in verse 14. Here is the explanation of David’s success: he fought not in his own strength. So the Christian, fighting the good fight of faith, though weak in himself, is energized by divine grace. David’s onslaught upon the Philistines and the Moabites was in line with the promises of God in <sup><01518></sup>Genesis 15:18 and <sup><02417></sup>Numbers 24:17, and most probably they nerved him for the battle. Thus it should be with the Christian. It is his privilege and duty to remind God of His promises and *plead* them before Him: such promises as “I will subdue all thine enemies” (<sup><13170></sup>1 Chronicles 17:10), and “sin shall not have dominion over you” (<sup><61614></sup>Romans 6:14), O to be able to say

“Thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me” (~~19189~~ Psalm 18:39).

We have space to consider only one point: “Which also king David did dedicate unto the Lord, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued” (v. 11). While David destroyed the idols, he dedicated to God all the vessels of silver and gold which he took from his enemies. So while the Christian strives to mortify every lust, he must consecrate unto the Lord all his natural and spiritual endowments. Whatever stands in opposition to God must be crucified, but that which may glorify Him must be dedicated to His service. This point is a blessed one: David entirely *changed the destination* of this silver and gold: what had previously adorned the idolaters, was afterwards used in the building of the temple. The spiritual application of this is found in

“as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (~~19189~~ Romans 6:19).

May the Lord graciously add His blessing unto all that has been before us.

# CHAPTER 47

## HIS KINDNESS TO MEPHIBOSHETH

### 2 SAMUEL 9

2 Samuel 9 presents to us one of the loveliest scenes in the life of David. To appreciate it properly we need to recall his earlier experiences, particularly the unkind treatment he received from the hands of Saul. We will only refer briefly now to the jealousy which was awakened in that king's heart when he heard the women celebrating in song the victory of Jesse's youthful son over Goliath. How that later he sought to kill David again and again by throwing a javelin at him. Finally, how that David had to flee for his life and how relentlessly the king pursued him, determining to kill him. But things had been completely altered. Saul and his sons were slain in battle, and David had ascended the throne of Israel. A most admirable spirit did our hero now display: instead of using his royal power tyrannically or maliciously, he put it to a most noble use: to return good for evil, to extend pity to the descendant of his foe, to befriend one who might well have feared death at his hands, was David's next act.

“And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?” (2 Samuel 9:1).

First of all let us observe the pathos of such a question. 1 Chronicles 8:33 furnishes a list of Saul's sons, but now his family had been so reduced by the judgments of God that inquiry has to be made “is there yet *any* that is left of the house of Saul?” How true it is that “the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children”—O that more parents would take this to heart. But, second, let us note the benevolent design of David: he sought any possible survivor of Saul's family, not that he might imprison or slay, but that he might show him “kindness.” It was no passing whim which had actuated him. “Jonathan” was before his heart, and for *his* “sake” he was determined to show clemency and display his magnanimity. At length they brought to David an old retainer of Saul's family, who knew well the sad state into which it was fallen; and to him also David said,

“Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him?” (v. 3).

But beautiful as was David’s conduct on this occasion, something yet more blessed was shadowed forth by it, and upon that we would particularly concentrate our attention. As other writers on this sweet incident have pointed out, David as monarch over Israel suggests to us God upon His throne in heaven: David showing kindness to the family of his archenemy, foreshadowed God’s dealing in grace with sinners. The name of the one whom David befriended, the place he had hitherto occupied, the condition he was then in, the wondrous portion he received, all typified the case of those upon whom God bestows saving mercy. The picture here presented is perfect in its accuracy in every detail, and the more closely it be examined, the more clearly will its evangelical character appear. O that our hearts may be melted by its exquisite light and shade.

“And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?” Let us first observe that *David* was the one who here took *the initiative*. No overtures were made unto him by the one remaining descendant of Saul; the king himself was the one to make the advance. So it is in the antitype: it is not the sinner, but God, who makes the first move. Through the Gospel He makes overtures of mercy, and in each instance of salvation He is found of them that seek Him not. “All we *like sheep* have gone astray” (~~2836~~ Isaiah 53:6), and it is the nature of a lost sheep to wander farther and farther afield. The shepherd must do the seeking, for sheep astray never go after the shepherd—true alike both naturally and spiritually. It was God who sought out Abraham in Ur, Jacob at Bethel, Moses in Midian, Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, and not they who sought unto Him.

Next, we may notice *the object* of David’s quest. It was not one who had befriended him during the days of his own dire need. Nor was it one whom men of the world would call “a deserving case.” Nor was it one from whom David could expect anything again in return. Instead, it was one immediately descended from his most merciless and implacable foe; it was one who was hiding away from him; it was one who had nothing of his own, having lost his heritage. How accurate the picture The Gospel of God’s grace is not seeking those who have something of their own to commend them unto the Lord, nor does it offer salvation in return for service to be rendered afterwards. Its inestimable riches are for worthless

wretches, spiritual paupers, lost and undone sinners; and those riches are freely proffered “without money and without price.”

But let us pay attention to *the motive which actuated David*. Very beautiful is this line in our typical picture. “And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness *for Jonathan’s sake*.” Here was what moved the king to make overtures of mercy toward the house of his sworn enemy. Though there was nothing whatever in Saul’s survivor to commend him unto the royal favor, David found a reason *outside* of him, in that bond of love and friendship which existed between his own heart and Jonathan. And thus it is too in the antitype:

“For we ourselves also *were* sometime Foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But after that *the kindness* and pity of God our Savior toward man appeared, *not by works of righteousness which we have done*, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which He shed on us abundantly *through Jesus Christ our Savior*” (~~scrib~~ Titus 3:3-6).

It is because of Another that God is gracious to His people: “God *for Christ’s sake* hath forgiven you” (~~scrib~~ Ephesians 4:32).

One more item completes this point, and a very striking one it is. When Zeba, Saul’s servant, had been found and brought to David, the king asked,

“Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show *the kindness of God* unto him?” (v. 3).

This language goes further than his words in the first verse. It takes us back to ~~scrib~~ 1 Samuel 20. There we find Jonathan acted the part of a *mediator* between Saul and David (vv. 27-34). There too we read of a solemn “covenant” (vv. 16, 17, 42) between Jonathan and David, in which the latter swore to show kindness unto the house of the former forever:

“Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul” (v. 17).

It was to *that* incident the words of David “that I may show the kindness of God unto him” looked back: it was that kindness of which God Himself

had been the witness; it was *covenant* “kindness” which he had promised to exercise.

Thus, the one who here obtained kindness at the hands of the king, received favor not because of anything *he* had done, nor because of any personal worthiness he possessed, but wholly on account of a covenant promise which had been made *before he was born*. So it is with those toward whom God now acts in free and sovereign grace. It is not because of any personal claims they have upon Him, but because of the love He bears toward the Mediator, that He shows “kindness.” Nor is that all: long, long before they first saw the light, God entered into a covenant with Christ, promising to extend mercy unto all who belonged to His “house”:

“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it *by an oath*: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (<sup>3817</sup>Hebrews 6:17, 18)

It is “through the blood of *the everlasting covenant*” that God makes His people “perfect in every good work to do His will” (<sup>3813D</sup>Hebrews 13:20, 21).

Next, let us look more closely at this one to whom David showed “the kindness of God”—covenant-kindness.

**First**, his name, for no detail here is meaningless. The son of Jonathan was called “Mephibosheth” (v. 6), which signifies “a *shameful thing*.” How accurately does that appellation describe the natural man! “We are all as an unclean thing” (<sup>2646</sup>Isaiah 64:6) says God’s Word—polluted by sin. We are by birth and practice thoroughly depraved and corrupt. Our understanding is darkened so that we cannot apprehend spiritual things, our will are opposed to God’s, our hearts are desperately wicked, our consciences are seared, our strength spent in the service of Satan; and in the sight of the Holy One our very righteousnesses are “as filthy rags.” “A shameful thing,” then, we truly are: “from the sole of the foot even unto the crown of the head there is no soundness” in us by nature, but instead “wounds and bruises and putrefying sores” (<sup>2306</sup>Isaiah 1:6). O what cause have we to cry with the leper “Unclean! unclean!” and say with Job “I am vile.”



**Second**, Mephibosheth was a *fugitive from David*. When news reached the survivors of his family that Saul and his sons had been slain in battle, and David had ascended the throne, Mephibosheth and his nurse fled in terror:

“he was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, *and fled*” (~~1004~~ 2 Samuel 4:4).

They were anxious to keep out of David’s way. So it is with the sinner, he is afraid of God, and seeks to banish Him from his thoughts. The knowledge of God’s holiness, power and omniscience fills him with dismay, and he seeks to have nothing to do with Him. “The wicked flee when no man pursueth.”

**Third**, Mephibosheth was a *cripple*. He was “lame of his feet” (~~1004~~ 2 Samuel 4:4): as the closing words of our chapter states, he “was lame on *both* his feet” (v. 13). How accurately that portrays the condition of those who are out of Christ! The natural man is *unable* to run in the path of God’s commandments, or tread the narrow way which leadeth unto Life. He is a spiritual cripple; “without strength” (~~586~~ Romans 5:6). The utter inability of the unregenerate to meet God’s requirements and walk acceptably before him, is a truth written plain across the Scriptures, though it is given little place indeed in much modern preaching. The greatness of man, the freedom of his will, his ability to accept Christ any time, is now the sweet opiate which is chloroforming millions.

“No man *can come to Me except* the Father which hath sent Me draw him” (~~4064~~ John 6:44):

how those words of Christ’s attest the solemn fact that the sinner is “lame of *both* his feet”!

**Fourth**, Mephibosheth became a cripple *through a fall*:

“and his nurse took him up and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee that he fell, and *became lame*” (~~1004~~ 2 Samuel 4:4).

What a truly marvellous book the Bible is! Yet how it needs eyes anointed by the Divine Inspirer to perceive its wonders and beauties! How obvious it is to those favored with spiritual discernment that we have here far more than an historical account pertaining to a single individual: that it is rather a

*typical* picture having a *universal* application. Man was not originally created in the condition he is now in. Man was far from being “lame on both his feet” when his Maker proclaimed him “very good.” The faculties of mans soul have become spiritually crippled as the result of *the fall*—our fall in Adam. In consequence of that fall, “they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God” (~~688~~ Romans 8:8).

**Fifth**, *the place where Mephibosheth resided*. It was not at Jerusalem, no, indeed; none out of Christ live there. Jerusalem signifies “the foundation of peace” and as Holy Writ truly declares, “There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked” (~~23422~~ Isaiah 48:22): how can there be while they despise Him in whom alone peace is to be found?

“But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest”  
(~~25720~~ Isaiah 57:20)

—discontented, dissatisfied. No, it was not at Jerusalem that poor Mephibosheth resided. Instead, he dwelt at “Lodebar” (~~10004~~ 2 Samuel 9:4), which means, “the place of *no pasture*.” What a significant line in our picture is this, so obviously drawn by more than a human artist. How aptly does it portray the world in which we live, the world which is away from God, which lieth in the wicked one. It is a world which provides no food for the soul: it is a great “howling wilderness” so far as spiritual provisions are concerned. Yet how little is that fact realized by those who are in it and of it.

“Lodebar” is written across all the varied fields of this world, though the great masses of people realize it not. Multitudes are seeking to find something to fill that void in the heart which God should occupy. They seek satisfaction in sport, in novel reading, in an endless round of pleasure, in making money, in fame; but soul satisfaction is not to be found in such *things*—things which perish with the using of them. Despising Him who is “the true Bread,” the “Bread of life,” no food is to be found here but “the *husks* that the swine” feed upon. The prodigal son discovered that when he left his patrimony and went into the far country: “I perish with hunger” was his plaintive cry. Life, peace, joy, satisfaction, are to be found only in the Lord.

One other point and we must conclude this chapter: *the provision* David made for Mephibosheth. There was this poor creature, belonging to a family that was in rebellion against David, lame in both feet, and dwelling

in the place of no pasture. And here was the king upon his throne, with purpose of heart to show him kindness for the sake of another. What, then, was the next move? Did David send a message of welcome, inviting him to come to Jerusalem? Did he notify Mephibosheth that if he “did his part” mercy should be accorded him? Did he forward the cripple a pair of crutches, bid him make use of them, and hobble to Jerusalem as best he could? No, indeed; had anything like *that* been David’s policy, our typical picture had failed completely to exhibit “the kindness *of God*” unto those on whom He bestows His so great salvation. God does much more than provide “means of grace.”

“Then king David sent and *fetched* him” (v. 5). This blessed item shadows forth the efficacious work of the Holy Spirit in those whom God brings unto Himself. Had He done nothing more than give His Son to die for sinners, and then sent forth His servants with the gospel invitation, *none* had ever been saved. This is clear from the parable of the Great Supper: men were bade to come and assured that “all things were now ready.” And what was their response? This, “they all with one consent began to make excuse” (<sup><D1418></sup> Luke 14:18). But God was not to be foiled, and said to the servant (the Spirit), “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, *and bring in* hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.” Thank God for *bringing* grace; that He does all, both for and in His people.

*‘Twas the same grace that spread the feast,  
That gently forced me in;  
Else I had still refused to taste,  
And perished in my sin.*

# CHAPTER 48

## HIS KINDNESS TO MEPHIBOSHETH (CONTINUED)

### ~~III~~ 2 SAMUEL 9

Behind the noble magnanimity exercised by David toward the last descendant of his archenemy Saul, we may perceive the shining forth of the glory of God's grace unto His fallen and sinful people. Alas, how feeble are our apprehensions of this wonderful attribute of God, how altogether inadequate our best efforts to set forth its excellency! Those who are the most indebted to the divine favor, are most conscious of the poverty of their language to express the gratitude and praise, the admiration and adoration which is due from them. When the poor outcast and crippled son of Jonathan was brought from Lodebar to Jerusalem, and was received not only with kindness, but accorded a place in the king's family and given a seat at David's own table, he must have found words to utterly fail him. And when a slave of sin and captive of Satan is not only set free by Christ but made a joint heir with Him, he is lost in wonderment. Eternity will be required to render unto God that worship to which He is entitled.

Grace is the opposite of justice. Justice gives to each his exact due: it shows no favor and knows no mercy. It gives impartially to all precisely by the wages which they have earned. But grace is free favor, unwarranted and unmerited by the recipients of it. Grace is the very last thing to which rebellious sinners are entitled; to talk of *deserving* "grace" is a contradiction in terms. Grace is purely a matter of charity, exercised sovereignly and spontaneously, attracted by nothing praiseworthy in its object. Divine grace is the free favor of God in the bestowment of mercies and blessings upon those who have no good *in* them, and concerning whom no compensation is demanded *from* them. Nay more: divine grace is not only shown to those who have no merit, but who are full of positive demerit; it is not only bestowed upon the ill-deserving, but the hell-deserving.

How completely grace sets aside *every* thought of personal desert, may be seen from a single quotation of Scripture:

“Being justified freely by His grace” (~~4124~~ Romans 3:24).

The word “freely” gives intensity to the term “grace,” though the Greek does not convey the thought of abundance, but rather emphasizes its gratuitousness. The same word is rendered “without a cause” in ~~41525~~ John 15:25. There was nothing whatever in the Lord Jesus to deserve such vile treatment from the hands of His enemies, nothing whatever that He had done warranting such awful enmity on their part. In like manner, there is nothing whatever in any sinner to call forth the favorable regard of a holy God, nothing done by him to win His love; instead, everything to the contrary. Grace, then, is gratis, a free gift.

The very expression “the grace of God” implies and denotes that the sinner’s condition is desperate to the last degree, and that God may justly leave him to perish; yea, it is a wonder of wonders that he is not already in hell. Grace is a divine provision for those who are so depraved they cannot change their own nature, so averse from God they will not turn to Him, so blind they can neither see their malady nor the remedy, so dead spiritually that God must bring them out of their graves on to resurrection ground if ever they are to walk in newness of life. Grace is the sinner’s last and only hope; if he is not saved by grace, he will never be saved at all. Grace levels all distinctions, and regards the most zealous religionist on the same plane as the most profligate, the chaste virgin as the foul prostitute. Therefore God is perfectly free to save the chiefest of sinners and bestow His mercy on the vilest of the vile.

In our last, we got as far as Mephibosheth being actually brought into the presence of David. What a meeting was that! For the first time in his life this man now sees the one whom his grandfather had so mercilessly and unrighteously persecuted. “Now when Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence” (v. 6). Fitting position was this to take for one whose very life hung upon the mere mercy of the king. What could he expect but to hear from his lips the sentence of death! There he lies, aptly portraying a trembling sinner, who, in his understanding and conscience, is brought, for the first time, face to face with the thrice holy God, with the One whom he has so long slighted, so wickedly ignored, so grievously offended. It was thus with Saul of Tarsus when the Lord first appeared to him: “he fell to

the earth” (<sup>4004</sup>Acts 9:4). Reader, have you ever taken your place before Him in the dust?

Most probably David had never before seen Mephibosheth, yet he now addressed him in the most intimate terms: “And David said, Mephibosheth” (v. 6). It is blessed to see that the king was the first one to break the silence, showing us in type how God *takes the initiative* at every point in connection with the saving of His people. This recalls to us that word of the apostle to the Galatians,

“But now, after that ye have known God, *or rather* are known of God” (<sup>9049</sup>1 Samuel 4:9).

A single word was all that David yet uttered—“Mephibosheth”—yet how much was expressed by it! How it reminds us of that precious declaration from the lips of the good Shepherd, “He calleth His own sheep *by name*” (<sup>8108</sup>John 10:3). When, at the burning bush, the Lord first revealed Himself to Israel’s deliverer from Egypt, He said, “Moses, Moses” (<sup>1304</sup>Exodus 3:4). The first word of the Savior to the one in the sycamore tree was “Zaccheus” (<sup>2195</sup>Luke 19:5). When He made known Himself unto the tear-blinded seeker at His sepulcher, it was by the single word, “Mary” (<sup>8316</sup>John 20:16). His first word to the persecutor of His church was “Saul” (<sup>4004</sup>Acts 9:4). Thus it was in our present incident. “And Mephibosheth answered, Behold thy servant.”

But the next word of David’s was yet more blessed: “Fear not” (v. 7) he said to the cripple prostrate before him. There was no rebuke for his having so long kept away from him, no reproaching him because he was of the house of Saul; but instead, a word to assure him, to put him at his ease. O how this should comfort every contrite soul: we have nothing whatever to fear, once we take our place in the dust before the Lord.

“God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (<sup>5046</sup>James 4:6).

Was it not thus with the Father, when the penitent prodigal cast himself on His mercy! No word of censure left His lips: instead He quickly assured him of His love. How this “fear not” of David to Mephibosheth reminds us of the same language found so often on the lips of the Redeemer when addressing His own! Wondrous is it to observe that, when the glorified Savior appeared unto John in Patmos, when that apostle fell at His feet as

dead, it was the same old familiar “Fear not” (~~1017~~ Revelation 1:17) which reassured him.

Not only did David address Mephibosheth by name, and quiet his heart with a “Fear not,” but he also added,

“For I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father’s sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at My table continually” (~~1017~~ 2 Samuel 9:7).

This was grace pure and simple, wondrous grace, the “exceeding riches of grace.” There was no contingency here, no bargain made, no conditions stipulated; but instead “I will *surely* show thee kindness.” David did not say “If you do this or that” or “if you will keep your part of the contract, I will adhere to mine.” No, no; it was free favor, gratuitous mercy, unmerited bounty; everything for nothing. David acted royally, like a king, for it becomes not a monarch to barter. How much more is this the case with the King of kings: He is “the God of all grace” (~~1010~~ 1 Peter 5:10), and eternal life is a *gift* (~~1023~~ Romans 6:23) wherever He is pleased to bestow it. To preach salvation by works is not only to mock impotent sinners, but is to grossly insult the ineffable Jehovah.

And what effect did this astonishing kindness have upon Mephibosheth? Did it puff him up with self-importance, and cause him to act as though he was other than a poor cripple? No, indeed; such is never the effect of divine grace applied to the heart, though often it is the ease where airy notions of it sink no deeper than the head. “And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?” (v. 8). Is not that truly beautiful? The exceeding kindness of David did not work in him self-elation and self-exaltation, but self-abasement: it wrought in him a deeper consciousness of his utter unworthiness before such un-thought-of favors. He was amazed that the king should even notice, much less favorably regard, such a worthless creature as he felt himself to be. Did he not now conduct himself in suitable accord with *his name*, when he called himself “a dead dog;” for “Mephibosheth” signifies “a shameful thing.” And what is the name which Scripture gives to me?—sinner!: do I, by my attitude, own the truthfulness of it?

This line in our picture calls for particular notice in such a day as we are living in, wherein there is so much self-esteem, creature boasting, Laodicean complacency and Pharisaic self-righteousness. O what a stench

in the nostrils of the Almighty must be the reeking pride of modern Christendom. How little practical exemplification of that principle,

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (~~ROM~~ Philippians 2:3).

How few feel, like Paul did, that they are “the chief of sinners.” And why is this? Because the hearts of so very few are *really* touched and affected by the grace of God. Grace ever humbles. The goodness of God leadeth to repentance (~~ROM~~ Romans 2:4). Where the kindness of God is truly felt in the soul we are “little in our own eyes.” Just as the royal magnanimity of David bowed Mephibosheth before him, causing him to own that he was but “a dead dog,” so when the love of God melts our hard hearts, we realize and own what unworthy wretches, vile creatures, and corrupt worms we are.

We must now consider the wondrous *portion* which was bestowed upon Mephibosheth as the result of the great kindness which David showed him, for this was a striking figure of the “riches” which divine grace imparts to those who are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ.

**First**, there was *life* for him, for the king refused to slay him when he was in his power. That his life was spared him was a notable act of clemency on the part of the monarch. Blessedly did this illustrate the abounding mercy of God unto those who have flouted His authority, broken His laws, and deserved naught but unsparing judgment at His hands: though the wages of sin is death, yet the gift of God is “eternal life” through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Second**, there was *peace* for him: David’s “Fear not” was designed to allay his terror, quiet his heart, and set him at perfect ease in the presence of the king. So it is with the believer:

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God” (~~ROM~~ Romans 5:1).

**Third**, there was *an inheritance* for him. “Then the king called Ziba, Saul’s servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master’s son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house” (v. 9). What a truly wonderful line in our typical picture is that!—one, we are again constrained to say, which no merely human artist could have drawn. How it portrays to us the



bounty of our God in bestowing upon poor bankrupt paupers the riches of His grace. Though we come to Him empty-handed, He does not suffer us to remain so. But there is something there yet more definite: Mephibosheth had restored to him the *forfeited* inheritance. The heritage which had originally belonged to Saul had been lost to his family. In like manner, through our first father's apostasy, we lost our primitive heritage, even the life, image, and blessing of God. Nor could *we* possibly do anything to regain it. But as David "for Jonathan's sake" restored unto Mephibosheth the estate of his father, so God for Christ's sake gives back to His people all that they lost in Adam.

**Fourth**, there was a *wondrous portion* granted him. Said David to Mephibosheth, "Thou shalt eat bread at my table continually" (v. 7). What a tremendous contrast was that from being an outcast at Lodebar—"the place of no pasture": now to feast at the king's own table, and that, not merely for once, but "continually"! Truly it *was* the "kindness of God" which David showed unto him. How forcibly this reminds us of what we find at the close of the parable of the prodigal son, when he who, having been "in want" in the far country, after his return in penitence, is feasted by his Father with the "fatted calf." Nothing short of giving us His best will satisfy the great heart of "the God of all grace": and what is His "best" but *fellowship with Himself*, of which eating at His table is the symbol.

**Fifth**, there was *an honored position* for him:

"As for Mephibosheth said the king, he shall eat at my table, *as one of the king's sons*" (v. 11).

He eats not as an alien or stranger, but as a member of the royal family. Not only was he sumptuously fed, but highly honored: a place in the king's own palace was now his, and that, not as a servant, but as a son. How this makes us think of

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that *we* should be called *the sons of God*" (☞ 1 John 3:1)!

O what a marvellous place does divine grace give unto those that are the objects of it: all believers stand accepted as the children of God, the subjects of His everlasting favor. That is something which Saul never enjoyed, but for Jonathan's sake Mephibosheth now gained more than he had previously lost. So through Christ the believer obtains far, far more than he lost in Adam. Where sin

abounds, grace does *much more* abound. “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (~~1671~~ Romans 5:21).

Under the king’s table the crippled feet of Mephibosheth were *lost to sight*: in Christ all our deformities are hid!

There is a sequel, both pathetic and blessed, recorded in the later chapters of 2 Samuel which we will here briefly notice, for it provides a lovely completeness to all which has been before us.

**First**, in ~~1016b~~ 2 Samuel 16:1-4 we learn that when David fled from Absalom, Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, met the king with a liberal provision of food for his men. When David inquired where Mephibosheth was, Ziba answered him, “Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, Today shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father.” This is one of many warnings given to the saints in Scripture that they must be prepared for calumny and unkind treatment: often—as was the case here—by those from whom it should be the least expected.

**Second**, after Absalom’s death, there went forth a company to do honor to the returned king. Among them was Mephibosheth, of whom it is said, that he “had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace” (~~1019d~~ 2 Samuel 19:24). What a lovely picture does that present to us of a loyal soul, whose heart had remained true to the (temporarily) rejected king! How clearly Mephibosheth’s condition evidenced *where his affections* had been during David’s absence! David now repeated the tale which Ziba had told him, and is informed it was utterly false. Mephibosheth then cast himself on the spiritual discernment and sovereign pleasure of his royal master (vv. 27, 28). The king then put his heart to the test, suggesting that the land be divided between Mephibosheth and his servant—the same in principle as Solomon’s proposal that the living child be divided between the two women who claimed it as hers.

Had Mephibosheth been the false-hearted wretch which Ziba has painted him, he had acquiesced promptly to David’s suggestion, glad to escape so easily: “a wise settlement” he would have exclaimed. Instead, he nobly replied,

“Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house” (~~1019d~~ 2 Samuel 19:30).

How that gave the lie to Ziba's accusation: how it demonstrated he was clear of any carnal covetousness. It was not *land* which he wanted: now that his beloved master had returned, he was quite satisfied. O how this should speak to and search us: are *our* affections set upon the Person of the absent King? Is it *His* presence that *we* long for above everything else?

# CHAPTER 49

## HIS SERVANTS INSULTED

### <1000>2 SAMUEL 10

The next incident recorded in the life of David needs to be pondered from more than one viewpoint. This is intimated to us by the fact that in <1000>2 Samuel 10 it is given immediately after the account of the grace which he showed unto Mephibosheth, whereas in 1 Chronicles 19 it is placed right after a parallel account of what is mentioned to <1080>2 Samuel 8. Yet though the context of <1000>2 Samuel 10 and <13190>1 Chronicles 19 is so different, each of them opens with *the same* words: “And (‘Now’) it came to pass after this.” Thereby it is suggested that inasmuch as this incident is described at length in almost identical language in 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles, it, possesses a *twofold* significance; and because it is given different settings that it requires to be considered *separately* in its relation to each one. We shall endeavor, then, to follow up this clue, viewing the subject first as it comes immediately after what was before us in the preceding chapter.

The king of the Ammonites having died, David purposed to express a neighborly and friendly sympathy for his son. Accordingly, he sent some of his servants “to comfort him.” But instead of this kindly overture meeting with appreciation, it was regarded with distrustful suspicion. The princes of the Ammonites imagined that David had evil designs against their city, and that the men who had ostensibly come to console their bereaved master, were but spies, seeking information with a view to their overthrow. Whereupon Hanun the king grievously insulted his visitors and put them to an open shame. His action was a declaration of war against David, and so the king of Israel regarded it. The remainder of the chapter records the fighting to which their insult gave rise. But it is the typical and spiritual meaning of it with which we are desirous of being occupied. Nor should this be difficult to ascertain.

The link of connection between <1000>2 Samuel 9 and 10 is obvious on the surface: the former opens with “and David said, Is there yet any that is left

of the house of Saul, that I may *show him kindness* For Jonathan's sake?" the latter opens with, "And it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead. Then said David, *I will show kindness* unto Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness unto me." But with the exception of the words we have just italicized everything else is in sharp and solemn contrast. In <sup><10001></sup>2 Samuel 9 David shows kindness to an Israelite; in <sup><10001></sup>2 Samuel 10 he shows kindness to an Ammonite. In the Former, it was to the descendant of his archenemy; in the latter, it was to the son of one who had befriended him. In the one, his gracious overtures were deeply appreciated; in the other, they were maliciously resented.

Now as we showed at length in our two chapters upon <sup><10001></sup>2 Samuel 9, that chapter gives us a most lovely typical picture of the free and sovereign grace of God unto His elect. What, then, is it which is distinctively prefigured here in <sup><10001></sup>2 Samuel 10? In seeking the answer to this question, as we attend closely to each word used in the first five verses of it, we notice a further contrast: throughout <sup><10001></sup>2 Samuel 9 it is David himself who is prominent; whereas in <sup><10001></sup>2 Samuel 10 it is his ambassadors who occupy the center of the stage. In verses 2-4 the *servants* of David are referred to no less than Four times; whereas his servants are not mentioned once in the preceding chapter. Here, then, is the key to our incident; typically, it is the ambassadors of the Son of David who are in view.

“But after that the kindness and pity (margin) of God our Savior toward *man* appeared” (<sup><5004></sup>Titus 3:4).

And wherein is that “kindness and pity of God our Savior” revealed? In the Gospel. And to whom is His Gospel to be preached? To “every creature” (<sup><41615></sup>Mark 16:15). There are some of our readers—preachers—who need reminding of this. Christ has commissioned. His servants to preach the Gospel, to make known His “kindness and pity,” not only to those who give evidence of having been awakened by the Holy Spirit, but also to the unregenerate. There is something seriously wrong with any creed or theological system which cramps and fetters the preacher in his free proclamation of the Gospel. They who imagine that the Gospel is only for the “elect,” err grievously. On the other hand in order to “do the work of an evangelist” (<sup><5046></sup>2 Timothy 4:5) one does not have to believe either in a general redemption or in the free will of fallen man.

In the parable of the Sower, Christ makes it clear that *He* sowed the seed upon *all* parts of the field, and not on the “good ground” only. In the closing parable of <sup><4030></sup>Matthew 13, He represents the Gospel “net” as gathering in fish of all kinds, “bad” as well as “good.” In the parable of the Great Supper, the servant is sent forth to say, “Come, for all things are now ready,” and this, even unto those who “all with one consent began to make excuse” (<sup><2147></sup>Luke 14:17,18). In the closing section of the parable of the two sons, Christ declared concerning the *elder* brother (the self-righteous, hard-hearted Pharisee) “therefore came his Father out and *entreated* him” (<sup><2158></sup>Luke 15:28). O my dear brethren in the ministry, seek grace and wisdom to make *your* ministry square with that of Christ’s! HE did not allow the eternal decrees of God to tie His hands or muzzle His mouth.

It was the same with those that immediately succeeded Christ, It was to a *promiscuous* audience (<sup><4089></sup>Acts 3:9), to those who were unbelievers (v. 17), that Peter said,

“Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (<sup><4089></sup>Acts 3:19)!

“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them” (<sup><4085></sup>Acts 8:5):

we are not told that it was to a small and picked company, who had been quickened by the Spirit, but to “the *city of Samaria*” in general. And what was the theme of his preaching? Christ!—as an all-sufficient Savior for the very chief of sinners. The apostle Paul was not cramped in his message:

“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (<sup><4021></sup>Acts 20:21):

the impenitent he called upon *to* repent and the unbelieving, he bade believe on the Savior. Are not these very things recorded For *our* learning, as a precedent for us to follow!

That which we have sought to emphasize in the last three paragraphs receives striking illustration and confirmation in the incident we are here considering. If <sup><4090></sup>2 Samuel 9 supplies a blessed representation of the kindness of God shown toward one of His elect, our present chapter gives an equally clear type of the overtures of the Lord’s kindness extended unto

the non-elect. Here is the reason why the two incidents are placed side by side: the one *supplements* the other. If in the last chapter we beheld the “kindness” of David manifested unto one with whom he was in covenant relationship, in the chapter now before us we see his “kindness” being shown to one who was outside the commonwealth of Israel, to one who was a heathen. And it is in *that* particular fact lies the typical beauty of our passage, and the great evangelical lesson which we need to learn from it.

“And it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead. *Then* said David, I will show kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash”  
 (2 Samuel 10:1,2).

It is only as we attend closely unto each detail here that we can appreciate the accuracy of our typical picture. *Death* provided the dark background for it. It was the decease of Nahash which supplied the opportunity for David to manifest the kindness of his heart! Once our minds are definitely focused on this item, what anointed eye can fail to perceive its spiritual signification? No “comfort” was needed by man in his unfallen state; the Gospel had been entirely unsuited to Adam during the brief season that he remained in unclouded communion with his Maker, But the entrance of sin entirely altered the case.

Adam’s transgression cast a pall of blackness over the fair scene of Eden; nor was its darkness in anywise relieved till the light of the Gospel (*Genesis 3:15*) broke in on it. It is *sin* which exhibited the need for a Savior; it was that spiritual *death* into which the fall plunged the whole family, which makes evident the glad tidings of life in Christ. The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. And it was where sin abounded, that grace did much more abound. The sin of then brought out the marvellous grace that was in the heart of God. The Lord had by no means acted unjustly, had He eternally doomed the whole human race when their father and federal head apostatized from Him. But He did not do so: in wrath He “remembered mercy.”

Here, then, is the first line in our typical picture: *death* provides for it a suitable background. The more the awfulness be felt of that spiritual death which it adumbrated, the more will we appreciate the blessedness of that wondrous “comfort” which divine mercy hath provided. The terrible fall which brought in spiritual death was of such an aggravated nature that it

left all whom Adam represented without excuse. The nature of our spiritual death is described in ~~(4048)~~ Ephesians 4:18,

“Having the understanding darkened, being *alienated from the life of God* through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.”

it has wrought in us a carnal mind which “is enmity” against God (~~(4807)~~ Romans 8:7). Why, then, should the Lord have any regard for us? Why should He concern Himself about those who prefer darkness to light, evil to good, death to life? Had He totally abandoned us to our ruin and wretchedness, that had been all we deserved.

“Then said David, I will show kindness unto Hanun” (v. 2). Here is the second line in our typical picture, pointing us unto the One who is the Author of all that is good, gentle, sympathetic and unselfish in His creatures; and is Himself “of great kindness” (~~(3942)~~ Jonah 4:2). O what kindness did the Lord show when He left Heaven’s glory and came down to this sin curst earth! What kindness for the Lord to take upon Himself the form of a servant, and minister unto others rather than be ministered unto. What compassion He exhibited when in the presence of want, suffering and misery; what kindness when He

“healed all manner of sickness and all manner of disease” (~~(4023)~~ Matthew 4:23).

Thus did the kindness of David shadow forth the infinitely greater kindness of his Son and Lord.

“And David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants” (v. 2).

This gives the third line in our typical picture. During the days of His flesh, Christ announced, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (~~(4048)~~ Luke 4:18), Since His ascension, He has continued this gracious ministry through His ambassadors and servants: ~~(4762)~~ 2 Corinthians 5:20, ~~(4162)~~ Mark 16:20. O what a message of “comfort” have Christ’s ministers for every poor sinner that will give ear to them: a message which makes known a way of escape from the wrath to come, that tells of how the forgiveness of sins may be



obtained; how peace, joy, everlasting life and bliss may become our portion.

The fourth line in our picture is given in the next words, “And the servants of David came into the land of the children of Ammon” (v. 2). These servants of David were not like Jonah, who demurred when called upon to preach unto the Ninevites. No, they made no objection against going *outside* the bounds of God’s covenant people, and journeying to a place of idolaters. As such, they prefigured the obedient servants of the Son of David, whose commission is

“That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among *all* nations” (~~12347~~ Luke 24:47).

“And the princes of the children of Ammon said unto Hanun their Lord, Thinkest thou that David doth honor thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? hath not David rather sent his servants unto thee to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it?” (v. 3).

Is any interpreter required here? Is not this next line in our picture so clear that it speaks for itself! The common experience of the Christian evangelist is identical in substance with that which befell the servants of David. Though his intentions are of the best, they are interpreted as being evil. Though he comes with a message of true “comfort” the poor blinded dupes of Satan regard him as a “kill-joy.” Though his only object be to make known the “kindness” of his royal Master, the vast majority of those to whom he comes, resent his mission. Alas, that now, in many circles of professing Christians, the true servant of Christ is not wanted, but rather looked upon with suspicion, as a “self-seeker” or “disturber of the peace.”

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

This line in our picture is also so obvious that it needs little comment from us. It foreshadowed the treatment which the Son of David’s servants would receive from those whose welfare they sought. Those servants were mocked and insulted: not wanted, they were “sent away” in shame. Men today have other ways of insulting and disgracing the ministers of the Gospel beside the methods used by those Ammonites; but they are just as

effective. Wrongful charges are made against them, false reports are spread, so that they are excluded from many places.

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

Here is the sequel to the unkind treatment they had met with: the servants of David are called upon *to retire* from *the public eye*. They have to spend a season—one of some months at least—in, seclusion, cut off from fellowship. One wonders how many today are, like the writer, “tarrying at Jericho”! Not a few “teachers” are now “removed into a corner” (~~2301~~ Isaiah 30:20), for the time hath come “when they will not endure sound doctrine” (~~5048~~ 2 Timothy 4:3). Concerning Israel of old we read,

“But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was *no remedy*” (~~4366~~ 2 Chronicles 36:16)

—is this soon to be repeated in the history of Christendom?

The final line in our typical picture—occupying the remainder of ~~10100~~ 2 Samuel 10—is a solemn one: *David avenged his insulted servants*. He regarded the ignominy heaped on them as a direct affront upon himself. Thus it is in the antitype. Concerning His ministers, Christ has said,

“He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me” (~~21016~~ Luke 10:16).

He regards the ill-usage of *them* as a declaration of war against *Himself*. He has said, “Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets *no harm*” (~~19515~~ Psalm 105:15), and He will not be disobeyed with impugntiy. Solemn is it to look forward to the time when those who have despised, slandered, insulted and cast out His servants, will yet have to answer to the Son of David Himself.

Many and important are the lessons for the servants of Christ in this incident. Chief among them are:

1. They are to obediently carry out the orders of their royal Master, no matter how unreasonable they may appear or how distasteful they be unto themselves.

2. They must be prepared for their best intentions and kindest actions to expose them unto the basest suspicions. They must expect ingratitude, contempt and abuse; but sufficient for the servant to be as his Lord.
3. These things must not discourage them, for eventually, Christ Himself will plead their cause!
4. They must not attempt to avenge themselves, but rather follow the example left by their Master: ~~1 Peter 2:23~~ 1 Peter 2:23.
5. if now, for a reason, they are required to “tarry at Jericho,” they may take comfort from the fact that it is their Lord who has ordered that isolated seclusion.