

1 SAMUEL

INTRODUCTION

Israel had been governed by judges whom God raised up at crucial times in the nation's history; however, the nation had degenerated both morally and politically. It had been under the merciless onslaught of the Philistines. The temple at Shiloh had been desecrated and the priesthood is corrupt and immoral. Into this religious and political confusion steps Samuel, the miraculous son of Hannah. In a remarkable way the renewal and joy that his birth brought to his mother prefigures the same for the nation.

Samuel's own sons do not share his godly character. The people do not have confidence in his sons' abilities; as Samuel grows old, they press him to give them a king. Reluctantly, he does so. Saul, a handsome and charismatic man, is chosen to become Israel's first king. His ego is as large as his stature. He impatiently steps into the office of priest, rather than wait for Samuel. After rejecting God's commands, he is rejected by God. After this rejection Saul becomes a tragic figure, consumed with jealousy and fear, gradually losing his sanity. His final years are spent relentlessly chasing David through the wilderness backcountry of his kingdom in an effort to kill him. David, however, has found an ally in Saul's son, Jonathan, who warns David of his father's plots to kill him. Ultimately, when both Saul and Jonathan are killed in battle, the stage is set for David to become the second king of Israel.

(Spirit Filled Life Bible's Introduction to 1 Samuel, Jerry Cook)

1 Samuel 1:1-3:21

The life of Samuel marks a transition period in the history of Israel from the time of the judges to the kingdom of Saul and David. His was an epoch life like Abraham's, Joshua's and Luther's.

He stands out as the great reformer of his time, lifting his people out of the dark ages of the Old Testament and leading them into the golden age of David's kingdom and Israel's preeminence among the nations. More than any other character of the ages he resembled Martin Luther, the great reformer of the Christian dispensation, who lifted the Church of God out of the corruption of bondage and superstition and gave us the Reformation, the Bible, the doctrines of grace and the light and liberty of Protestantism.

Samuel also enjoyed the distinguished honor of being the founder of the school of the prophets and the first in that glorious succession of holy men who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and who formed the unbroken line of truth and righteousness in the history of God's ancient people.

We do not need to go farther than his own family to understand the social condition of the age. Samuel's own mother, poor Hannah, was the victim of the curse of polygamy—ever a sign of a low condition of social morality. Then, when we turn to the priesthood, as illustrated in the family of Eli, we see a shocking exhibition of low sensuality, licentiousness and cupidity that would disgrace even the grossest heathenism. Eli himself, while a just and holy man in his own private character, was weak and inefficient as a judge and priest and utterly failed to restrain his ungodly family or exercise any just administration of public affairs.

The whole nation was, therefore, in a most pitiable condition, at the mercy of its foreign oppressors and so enfeebled that at a period a few years later we find that there was not a sword in Israel, and they had even to go to the grindstones of the Philistines in order to grind their plow coulters for the ordinary operation of husbandry. It was at such a time as this that God called Samuel to be the deliverer of his country.

We need never say that the adverse circumstances of our life forbid the possibility of living to purpose and living for God. The blacker the cloud the brighter may be the rainbow. The harder our situation the more can our life become a protest against it. The lighthouse needs the midnight darkness and the stormbeaten shore to bring out its value and its purpose. There is no situation so trying and difficult but God can sustain us in it, and when we have learned our lesson, enable us to triumph over it.

We, too, like Samuel, are called to live in degenerate times. We are approaching the closing age of the dispensation, and the apostasy and tribulation which are to precede the coming of the Lord. It is not for us to excuse ourselves by prevailing wickedness, but to make our lives a protest against it and to shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of truth in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Philippians 2:15-16), a savor of life unto life if possible, but, if not, at least a savor of death unto death (2 Corinthians 2:15-16).

He was the child of faith and prayer, and his very name means "asked of God."

God loves to have every glorious thing born of someone's faith. Moses could not come until there was a Jochebed to believe for his deliverance and then to train him for the marvelous events of his history. Before even the Son of God could appear, Mary of Bethlehem had to be taught by the Holy Spirit to believe for His birth and to lay down her womanly pride in the most costly sacrifice she could have been called to make at her Lord's command. And so Samuel is but the outcome of Hannah's piety, consecration and faith.

Back of that faith there lies a broken heart, a woman's tears, a life of bitterness, disappointment and humiliation. Poor Hannah was the second wife in a polygamous system whose fruit must ever be jealousy and sorrow. But out of her crushed heart came at last the believing prayer that brought her victory and consolation. All other sources of comfort had failed her, and at last she went to God, and at the tabernacle in Shiloh she poured out her prayer in sobs and tears until old Eli, the priest, thought her drunk and reproved her for her conduct. But she told him her story, and he sent her away with blessing and encouragement, and God whispered to her heart that her prayer was granted and her days of mourning ended.

And she did not forget when the blessing came that it was not hers, but God's, and lovingly and faithfully she gave it back to Him from whom it came. As soon as her little son was able to be left without a mother's watchful care she took him to the tabernacle and gave him to Eli to be brought up as a child of the sanctuary. "So now I give him to the LORD," she said. "For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD" (1 Samuel 1:28).

Not for a few days or weeks did she give him up, but she gave him wholly and with a sacrifice that only a mother could understand. She consented that the little feet for whose pattering she had longed should be heard no more in her cottage, that the prattle for whose music her lonely heart had waited a lifetime should sound no more in her ears; but that she should live on till the end alone, glad to know that he was all the Lord's and she was giving back to God the blessing which He had brought to her. This is love and this is the difference between the love of earth and the love of heaven. Earthly love loves for the pleasure it can find in loving. Heavenly love loves for the blessing it can give to the loved one. Hannah knew that her sacrifice was best for Samuel, and that in giving him to God she was getting more for him than a mother's selfish fondness could ever have bestowed.

And yet there was still the sweet thought behind it all that he was hers. She was not losing him but lending him, and God counted her sacrifice a real service and some day would restore the loan with infinite and eternal additions.

But Samuel was not holy and good by natural birth or disposition. He was not called because he was good by natural temperament, but he was saved and sanctified as we and our children still must be only by the grace of God. Samuel, like every child of Adam, had to be born from above and receive the divine touch and the divine grace, and be brought into fellowship with the same supernatural power that saves us all.

We have the story of Samuel's first touch of God, and it gives us the keynote not only of his life, but of every holy and heavenly life. The whole story is told in a single word—Samuel became acquainted with God. God revealed Himself to Samuel and Samuel hearkened, listened and henceforth, forever, always implicitly obeyed.

The keynote of Samuel's life and of every saintly life is, "Speak, for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:10). Samuel's task was not a hard one, and yet how rarely it is repeated. He had simply to attend to God, and say and do just what He told him.

This is the difference between the earthly and the heavenly life. The one is merely human, the other is divine. The crisis moment comes in every life when God speaks to us, and we hearken to Him and begin to walk in His holy fellowship and His perfect will. The very peculiarities of Samuel's call linger in his later life in his message to Saul, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22).

All his blessings had come to him by hearkening and obeying, and all Saul's calamities had come to him because he willfully took his own way and refused to listen to God.

At first even he made some mistakes and misunderstood the voice that spoke to him so gently in his little chamber. Three times it called to him in vain, and he thought it was the old priest's message. But even when he did not understand he still responded and sprang to his feet, ready instantly to obey. And so God will give us time to understand His voice and learn His will. What He asks of us is the obedient spirit, and the readiness to hear and understand. He will call again and yet again if necessary, and teach us to know all that He would have us to do. Let us listen so attentively and respond so quickly that we will not need the stroke of His hand or the bit or bridle of His discipline to make us comprehend His will. He can guide us with His eye and flash into our inmost being the instinctive intuition of His holy will. Oh, the sweetness and the rest! Oh, the safety and the strength of the life that walks with God in this inner fellowship and knows no will but His!

But Samuel had to obey as well as hearken, and it was no easy task to go to Eli and tell him all that God had spoken against his house. It was the hard test which often came again in his later ministry as the messenger of God to sinful men. Again and again did he have to go to those he loved and say to them the thing which nearly broke his heart. A faithful minister cannot always say smooth things. Often must we speak the words of God where we know that they will wither and break and perhaps alienate the dearest friendships of our lives.

We have a picture of Samuel's life and work. Henceforth, "the LORD was with Samuel," we are told, "... and he let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the LORD" (1 Samuel 3:19-20).

What a picture of a successful life, where every word counts and the Lord lets nothing fail or have to be undone or taken back. How many of our words fall to the ground! How vain our efforts and our prayers and how often we have to traverse over again the paths of vanity!

How can we have an established life whose every step is fixed in God and led in the way everlasting? Only by doing as Samuel did, ever hearkening to God and speaking and acting only and always in Him. Then we will not need to advertise ourselves. Men will find us out. Sad and empty lives will come to us for help, and our work will be its own witness that God is with us. God help us to live such lives!

We, too, are in an epoch age. God help us to be epoch men—men for the times on which the end of the age has come. Samuel was called to act in the beginning of the Hebrew history. We are permitted to see the close of our dispensation. Never before did the world so need the highest types of men and the noblest, truest kinds of ministry—lives that understand God, souls that hearken, ears sensitive to His lightest whisper and wills adamant to obey implicitly His every word. These are the men that God is looking for to mold the history of the world's last generation, and to usher in the kingdom of David's greater Son, as much as He needed a Samuel in the darkest days of Old Testament history and for the inauguration of David's reign.

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

The grief Hannah felt from being childless drove her to God, there she found her only resource. **What was her vow to God if her prayer was answered?**

We believe Hannah knew some precious things about God such as: He saves, He is Holy, He knows, He kills, He makes alive, He makes poor, He makes rich, He brings low and He builds up. **So, what was the leading thought in Hannah's prayer or song of thanksgiving after the birth of Samuel? Could Hannah's prayer or song be considered a prophecy and Samuel's birth a pledge of the coming of the Messiah?**

Could Eli be reckoned an accomplice with his sons in their sin's against God?

How did Samuel carry out his message to Eli concerning his sons shameful sin? Was there any way to avert the judgment that was to fall on Eli and his sons?

1 Samuel 4:1-7:17

And Samuel said to the whole house of Israel, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." (1 Samuel 7:3)

We have looked at the great reformer; let us now look at the reformation.

It began in the complete failure of the people themselves and the demonstration of their utter inability to lift themselves out of their helpless condition. God has to let us come to the end of ourselves before He can interpose for our deliverance.

A mother stood on the deck of a ship, hardly restrained from throwing herself into the sea to save her drowning boy, while men stood by and waited as he sank again and again. At last, as he rose for the third time, a brave seaman leaped in and caught the sinking lad and held him safely while both were drawn to the deck. "Why didn't you save him sooner?" cried the frantic mother, as her boy slowly came back to consciousness. "Because," said the sailor, "I had to wait until his strength was gone, or he would have drowned both himself and me." And so God has to wait until our strength is gone before he can save or sanctify or heal us.

This was Israel's state when Samuel came to the front as the leader of the new reformation. Politically, the country was under the power of the Philistines. Morally and socially the people were corrupt, and the fearful example of Hophni and Phinehas, the very priests of God who turned the sanctuary at Shiloh and the very services of Jehovah's worship into an orgy of license, could not fail to have a fatal influence upon the manners and the morals of all the people. Even Eli himself, who was still recognized as the ecclesiastical and judicial head of the nation, while honest and sincere in his purpose, was a helpless tool in the hands of his family. And so the very fountains of justice and religion were utterly corrupted and all that was lacking was the crisis hour when this system of iniquity should fall to pieces by its own weight, as it really did at last. The critical moment came when the Philistines once more invaded the land, and in a moment of presumptuous despair leaders of Israel's forlorn hope brought out the ark of Jehovah. The Philistines realized at once their danger and their opportunity. They were fighting now not only Israel, but Israel's God. So with redoubled valor the captains roused the host to do their best, and by one victorious blow not only to crush their enemies but secure for themselves the supernatural secret of their victorious power.

As old Eli sat by the tabernacle court at Shiloh that evening a cloud of dust appeared upon the distant horizon, and a swift runner rapidly dashed along until he stood breathless before the aged judge. As he rushed along, the people had already caught from his manner and his looks the fearful tidings, and a great cry arose throughout the city. Eli heard the tumult and called the messenger to his side. The aged patriarch of 98 was too blind to see his form, and could but dimly hear his words; but he eagerly asked him for tidings from the field, and as those fearful words fell upon his ear, "Israel fled before the Philistines, and the army has suffered heavy losses. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured" (1 Samuel 4:17). That last word broke the old man's heart, and he sank back in a swoon and fell heavily to the ground. As they picked him up his neck was broken and his life was gone. Among the tragedies of that terrible day was the dying anguish of the wife of Phinehas and the significant name she left with her parting sigh of agony to the poor little orphan child which came that moment into life as the memorial of his country's shame—Ichabod, "the glory has departed" (4:21). Yes, it was the deepest, darkest hour of the nation's woe; but it was the darkness just before the dawn and deliverance was near.

The next stage in the preparation of the coming reformation was the revelation and vindication of God as Himself the nation's hope. The one great design of Israel's history as a nation was to be the witness and the revealer of God. All the supernatural manifestations of their glorious past were intended not to show the greatness of their leaders, but the glory and all-sufficiency of their divine Lord and Leader. Sometimes, therefore, God had to let the human instruments utterly fail so that He Himself might be the more gloriously vindicated in His own all-sufficiency and power.

And so we find in the later history of the nation that there came a time when the kings and the prophets and priests of Judah and Israel completely failed to glorify Jehovah among the nations or to accomplish His purpose for the world, and yet this became the most illustrious day of His own manifestation. He had to let the very kingdom of Judah and Israel pass away in ignominious defeat, and even the temple itself become a heap of smoldering ashes before the victorious power of Nebuchadnezzar. And yet, in that very hour He called four humble Hebrew youths in Babylon to stand for Him in the furnace of fire and the lions' den, and so to vindicate His own glory and supremacy that in the hour of his pride Nebuchadnezzar, the mightiest king and conqueror of the earth, was compelled to acknowledge that Jehovah was the only true God, and to issue a decree calling upon his subjects to worship the God of Daniel as the true God and the Sovereign Ruler of the universe. And a little later he compelled Cyrus, Artaxerxes and even Xerxes, the proud despots of

Persia, to recognize His supremacy, to protect His people and even to send back the captives from Babylon to rebuild the city and the temple at Jerusalem.

And so here we find in this period of Israel's history that, while the nation failed and the priesthood failed and the very ark of God seemed to fail, God Himself became the more gloriously vindicated even in the midst of His enemies. No sooner had the ark of God been taken by the Philistines than a long train of desolation followed in its path wherever it went. They set it up in the temple of Dagon among their gods, and in the morning Dagon was fallen on his face before the ark of God. They set him up again, and the next morning he was not only fallen down, but shattered to pieces before the awful presence of the God of the ark. The most humiliating and distressing plagues began to fall upon the people. They begged that it should be sent away from Ashdod, but no sooner had they taken it to Gath than there they begged that it be removed. And so they took it to Ekron, but the people of Ekron protested, saying, "They have brought the ark of the god of Israel around to us to kill us and our people" (5:10). And so at last they called a council and determined to send it back to Israel once more.

So, preparing a costly present and choosing two cows, they put it on a cart and committed it to the God whom it represented in some superstitious way to their terrified minds. But it needed no human hand to guide the holy symbol of Jehovah's presence. Contrary to their own instincts, those Hebrew cows went steadily forward at a divine command which they could neither understand nor disobey, lowing as they went, because their hearts carried them backwards to their calves. Yet on they went at the bidding of a power that drove them in the opposite direction until they reached Beth Shemesh, where the Levites met the sacred ark and took the cattle that bore it and offered them up in sacrifice unto the Lord and presented the costly offerings before the Lord. Thus God showed that He could vindicate His own glory and lead His own way without the help or wisdom of man.

And even a more solemn lesson still had to be learned, for as the men of Beth Shemesh presumed to approach the holy symbol of the presence of God with forbidden familiarity they were smitten with death and, as nearly as we can understand from the doubtful readings of the passage (1 Samuel 6:19), 70 men (not 50,070, as the Revised Version states) perished for their presumption.

This is the lesson that we all need to learn before we are prepared to truly represent God: God does not need us or our strength, but we need to understand Him and know that He is all-sufficient for His own work. And what He requires of us is that we know Him, bear witness to Him and truly represent Him. He is able to take care of His own cause if we only give Him right of way. "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32).

The best way to glorify God is to hold Him up to men and He will glorify Himself. As we go forth to meet the tests and conflicts of these last days we need to understand our God, and to know that One is in our midst and on our side who, standing between heaven and earth, has already said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me . . . And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

We have plenty of people today who know the culture and wisdom of the ages and even the theology of the Bible. But what we want are people that know their God and can stand alone and trust Him in the hour of trial, in the face of difficulties, in the midst of enemies, in the lands of the heathen and in situations where there is no hope or help but God and God alone.

The next step in Israel's reformation was national repentance and the turning of the people with their whole heart from all idolatry and sin unto the Lord. And so Samuel calls them together at Mizpah to a great day of national humiliation, and addresses to them the language of 1 Samuel 7:3, which is the watchword of every true reformation and revival.

The essential conditions of God's acceptance and blessing always must be deep sincerity, penitence and absolute rightness with God. No matter how long or how far you may have wandered, no matter how great your sin, or how deep your sinfulness, the honest, earnest heart will always and instantly find the heart of God. If you have not found Him, it is because there is some reservation, some insincerity, some idol to which you cling, some disingenuousness of heart or cherished crookedness of life. God has fixed the instant when every soul will find Him, and that is "when you seek me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

And so they came together, not only with fasting and with the symbolic pouring out of the waters of cleansing before the Lord, but the best of all is that "Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah" (1 Samuel 7:6, KJV). It is this judging of ourselves that puts us right with God. It is not emotional feeling nor fountains of tears, but simply calling things by their right names and putting them in their true places. Therefore the promise is, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

He does not say anything about great sorrow or deep feeling, but simple, straightforward confessing. What He wants is to have us see things aright, diagnose the disease, recognize the fault, and then we shall be saved from future deception and disobedience. This is the emphatic meaning of that remarkable passage in First Corinthians 11:31: "If we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment." That is, if we would discern ourselves and put everything in its right place in our lives, we should not need God's heavier blow to wake us out of our deception and hold us back from evil.

The next stage in Israel's reformation was the precious atoning blood. How beautifully that sacrificial scene is described: "Then Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it up as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. He cried out to the LORD on Israel's behalf, and the LORD answered him" (1 Samuel 7:9).

This was the difference between the present reformation and many of those that had gone before. There was at this time a thorough recognition of that atoning blood. Without this there can be no radical and lasting change in the life of an individual or people. The disposition to ignore the sacrificial meaning of Christ's death and to reduce His vicarious offering to a mere object lesson is the most alarming condition of our Christian life and the real secret of the declension of practical righteousness and holiness.

The deepest meaning of the blood, too, many of us fail to understand. It means not cleansing, but crucifixion; not blotting out, but burying. It is not merely that the blood wipes out the sin, but it wipes out the sinner, too. The significance of the death of Christ is that the man who committed the sin is judged, condemned and crucified with Christ, that he is not the same man that lives now, that he has been repudiated and forever put aside, and that a new man, born of Christ and descending out of heaven, has come in his place so truly that we can say in the literal language of the great apostle, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

This is the reason men hate the cross, because it is not only Christ's cross but it is bound to be their cross, too. It means not only a dead Savior, but a dead sinner. But this is the only way that the sin can ever cease and the cleansing ever be permanent and complete.

Next comes the test of faith and the attack of the foe. Just as the deliverance is about to come, the enemy musters in double force, and all Israel's fears seem about to be realized. How emphatic is the time of this attack. "While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle" (1 Samuel 7:10), and the trembling people stood unarmed, defenseless and dismayed. "Do not stop," they cried to Samuel, "crying out to the LORD our God for us, that he may rescue us from the hand of the Philistines" (7:8).

And as that smoking sacrifice ascended silently to the heavens, along the sky there burst the artillery of heaven, and a terrific thunderstorm poured down upon the embattled foe, doubtless with quivering lightning stroke and mighty hailstones. As in the day of Gideon's battle, the enemy fled in confusion, pursued by their triumphant foes until they were scattered and dispersed. So signal was the victory that we are told in the next verse they "did not invade Israelite territory again. Throughout Samuel's lifetime the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines. The towns from Ekron to Gath that the Philistines had captured from Israel were restored to her, and Israel delivered the neighboring territory from the power of the Philistines" (7:13-14). The victory was complete and permanent, and the reformation had become a restoration.

"Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, 'Thus far has the LORD helped us' " (7:12). This is ever the consummation of penitence and believing prayer. The sorrow is turned into joy and the prayer is translated into praise. This is the true way to show that we really do believe God. Not until we cease our pleading and begin to thank Him that the blessing is given shall we really have cause for thanksgiving. In the City of Salvation all the gates are praise, and the reason many fail to enter in is because they try to creep through the tunnels rather than enter through the open gates of thankfulness and praise. This is the secret of victory forevermore, to take what He gives and thank Him for it in advance.

This is also the secret of defeat and failure—a spirit of gloom, depression, moroseness and murmuring. The moment you begin to grumble God will give you something to grumble about; and the moment you begin to praise He will give you cause for love and praise. The dreary pathway that missed the Land of Promise and for 40 years trod the lonely desert all began in the murmuring at Taberah (Number 11:1). On the other hand, the glorious renaissance which led through Samuel's reformation to David's throne and Solomon's glory, all began in the stone of Ebenezer, and the praise of a trustful, thankful people.

Let us set up today over against every place of failure, over against every sorrow, over against every sin as we cover it with the cleansing blood, not a banner merely, nor even a song, but a stone of Ebenezer, and write upon it, "Thus far has the LORD helped us" (1 Samuel 7:12).

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Israel was now questioning why all of a sudden defeat was at hand and not victory as in the past. They brought the Ark into the camp of Israel in order to force God to aid Israel. Israel ended up suffering one of their worst defeats in history, many Israelites died and the Ark was captured. **Through all this was God's honor still intact and remained untouched? What place do visible symbols of God's presence (like the Ark) have among His people today?**

Show how Samuel begins his judgeship at Mizpeh?

1 Samuel 8:1-15:31

The place of Saul in Old Testament history is significant and, I believe, typical of great spiritual truths. It is conceded that Israel's redemption from Egypt foreshadowed human redemption through the cross of Calvary. It is also beyond question that the triumph of Joshua and the conquest of Canaan pointed forward to the Pentecostal baptism, the blessing of the apostolic church and the deeper rest into which the Holy Spirit brings the individual Christian.

We have already seen that the dark period of declension recorded in Judges and the earlier chapters of Samuel typify the dark ages of Christianity. The reformation under Samuel could be compared to our Protestant Reformation and the revival of the Church from the bondage of medieval darkness and superstition. A little further on we will find that the kingdoms of David and Solomon are representative of Christ's millennial throne.

But what was the meaning of the strange parenthesis of Saul's life? I believe it represents the counterfeit kingdom that Satan is seeking to set upon the throne of human selfishness and worldly pride—the rule of the antichrist. Unfortunately, we have too many evidences in the compromising and worldly ecclesiasticism of our day, and in the Laodicean picture given in Revelation of the church that is to be rejected at the coming of the Lord.

But while this is the dispensational meaning of Saul's life, it has a still more solemn personal application for every Christian. It is God's fearful object lesson of the power and peril of the self-life and the need of its utter crucifixion before we can enter into the true kingdom of spiritual victory and power.

We see the spirit of self in the motive that prompted the kingdom of Saul. Samuel recognized it for what it was—a rejection of God as the supreme King of Israel and a vainglorious desire to be independent of divine control and to be like the surrounding nations of the world. "Now appoint a king to lead us," they said, "such as all the other nations have" (1 Samuel 8:5). No wonder Samuel was deeply displeased. When he prayed to God, God answered, "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king" (8:7).

Nevertheless, Samuel still protested and solemnly warned the Israelites of the burdens and the exactions which a king would bring upon them and the trouble they were bringing upon themselves. "When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, and the LORD will not answer you in that day" (8:18). But Samuel's warnings were to no avail. The people had set their hearts on having a king: "We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles" (8:19-20).

This is like the spirit of the prodigal son when he told his father to give him his share of the inheritance. It is the desire of independence which is the root of human sin, and it is the spirit of conformity in the Church today. We are conscious of it in our own natural hearts. It is the large, self-asserting and dominant "I" that makes a man a god unto himself and refuses to surrender his will to Christ, or yield the direction of his life to the will of God and the government of the Holy Spirit.

The first step, then, in the new life is surrender. The essential condition of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to yield everything to God, even the things that in themselves may be harmless. Why? For no other reason than to prove our will is wholly laid down and that God is all in all.

We see the spirit of self in the character of Saul, in the qualifications that made him the choice and the idol of the people. Saul represented all that was strong, chivalrous, attractive and promising in human nature. He was of splendid physique, a head taller than all the people, a magnificent specimen of physical manhood—"every inch a king."

He possessed the intellectual, moral and social qualities that constitute a leader. He was brave, heroic, enthusiastic and generous, and the early years of his reign were adorned with stirring examples of heroic deeds. He was all that the human heart would choose. He represented the best possibilities of human nature. As the people looked at his splendid figure, they shouted again and again that patriotic cry which has so often re-echoed since, and which has so seldom been fulfilled as a prayer to heaven, "God save the king!"

But God had to let Saul stand before the ages to show that man at his best is only man, and that human self-sufficiency must end in failure and sorrow. This is the lesson that God is still trying to teach His children. How few of them have found it out so fully that they can say, "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature" (Romans 7:18). The sentence of death has been passed on the flesh, and there is only one thing that we can do with it—nail it to the cross of Jesus Christ, reckon it dead and keep it forever in His bottomless grave.

The spirit of self in Saul was combined with much that was good and attractive, both naturally and spiritually. Naturally, we have seen that he was not only a man of princely bearing, but one of many noble and heroic qualities. He also had a fine family. His son Jonathan is one of the most attractive figures in the long gallery of Bible characters.

When Saul came to Samuel and was first called to the kingdom, he seemed to have many elements of sterling virtue and genuine humility. Like a dutiful son, he went to search for his father's donkeys, and then he went to the prophet Samuel to ask counsel about finding them. When he came to Samuel and was told the extraordinary message and anointed to be king, there was no unbecoming self-consciousness about him. He kept his secret with discretion and modesty. Even in telling his uncle about the words of Samuel he said nothing to him about the greater message concerning the kingdom.

When he left Samuel he did just what he was told to do. When he met the company of prophets, he joined them and received a baptism of the Spirit and prophesied among them with genuine religious enthusiasm. And even when Samuel told his relatives to bring him forward so that he could present Saul to the people, Saul was hiding among the baggage. He seemed a paragon of modesty and unobtrusiveness.

But as we well know, Saul let the dark shadow of self blight his life and ruin his kingdom and his family. How self-deceptive is the human spirit! How pride itself will hide away in the very guise of deepest humility! Later, speaking of Saul's earlier life, Samuel pays a tribute to Saul's former humility: "Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel" (1 Samuel 15:17).

We cannot doubt that Samuel was sincere in giving Saul credit for a genuine humility. What then was the defect? May it have been this? It is one thing to be little in our own eyes, but it is quite another thing to be out of our own sight altogether. True humility is not thinking little of ourselves; it is not thinking of ourselves at all. What we need is not so much self-denial but self-crucifixion and complete self-forgetfulness. The perfect child is just as unconscious in the highest place as in the lowest. The true spirit of Christ in us recognizes ourselves as no longer ourselves, but so completely one with the Lord Jesus that we may truly say: "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

But what are we to learn from this combination of so many excellencies in one life and its ultimate failure and ruin? That Satan's cleverest ploy is to mix the good with the bad—to cover his poison as a sugar-coated pill. He knows we would never accept it in its uncovered form. Satan's choicest agents are those who are attractive and naturally lovely. Esau was more appealing than Jacob, but Jacob was the chosen one.

A person can be beautiful, wise, cultured, moral, useful, noble and generous but living for himself or herself, and in the end be self-destroyed like Saul. Satan does not want our souls outright; he only wants a mortgage on them. He is content to take a lien for \$1,000 if he cannot get one for \$100,000. He can wait for the day of foreclosure. All he wants is to have his hand in it. It is these mixed lives that are doing the mischief.

But God says,

"Therefore come out from them
and be separate,
says the Lord.
Touch no unclean thing,
and I will receive you."
"I will be a Father to you,
and you will be my sons and daughters,
says the Lord Almighty."
(2 Corinthians 6:17-18)

The first test came to Saul in an hour of severe trial when, beleaguered by his enemies and deserted by almost all of his soldiers, he seemed to be facing destruction. Waiting seven days for Samuel to come and begin the battle by the usual sacrificial offering, Saul at last grew discouraged and impatient. Then he presumed to take upon himself the priestly functions which belonged only to Samuel, and to offer up the sacrifice without waiting for the prophet. As he was offering it, Samuel arrived and questioned the king.

"What have you done?" asked Samuel.

Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, ... I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering."

"You acted foolishly," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command." (13:11-14)

Many of us live successful lives while things are going well. But in the hour of trial self always shows through. Saul was a splendid king until that first trial, and then he became discouraged, distrustful, self-asserting and presumptuous, daring to take in his own hands the things that belonged only to God. He usurped the throne of God Himself and showed his true nature. He was a man of his own heart and not of God's heart. Therefore, God sought out a man after God's own heart who would do God's will and not his own, thereby being a true representative of Israel's true King.

Because of Saul's actions, God showed him how little He needed his strength and wisdom—He used Jonathan and his armorbearer and one sword to defeat the Philistines and show Saul how all-sufficient God is to those who truly trust Him. But Saul missed all this, nearly wrecking the victory God brought by his unthinking interference (1 Samuel 13:23-14:45). After this it became apparent that Saul could not be trusted with God's work, and that his persistent self-will would always hinder the will of God.

Saul's crisis did not come immediately; God let the spirit of self work out into its full development. It was now evident that Saul's life would fail, and that Samuel's prophecy was all too true.

God gave Saul another opportunity and a second test. He sent him on an important expedition to destroy Amalek, the race of Esau that had tried to hinder Israel in their passage through the wilderness.

There is a deep spiritual meaning back of this story: Amalek is a type of the flesh, and it is an illustration of the principle represented by Saul's life. Saul's failure to destroy Amalek shows how deeply rooted the self-principle was in his own life. The man who spared Agag was the man who spared the principle of self in his heart. And the two pictures blend with an awful significance for us.

Saul successfully accomplished the invasion and returned smugly victorious. He even seems to have been so possessed with the spirit of self-complacency that he failed to realize his own true character until Samuel uttered his fearful words of doom. Upon seeing Samuel he said, "The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD's instructions" (1 Samuel 15:13). But the prophet's words answered him back: "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear? . . . Why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the LORD?" (15:14, 19).

"But I did obey the LORD" (15:20), Saul maintained, saying that he saved the best of the plunder to sacrifice to God. But Samuel replied,

Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices
as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD?
To obey is better than sacrifice,
and to heed is better than the fat of rams.
For rebellion is like the sin of divination,
and arrogance like the evil of idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
he has rejected you as king. (15:22-23)

It is doubtful if even then Saul fully realized the nature of his sin. So subtle and self-deceiving is the spirit of self that all he seemed to feel was the fear of being humiliated before the people. He begged the petty bauble of Samuel's public recognition and honor, and this bit of vainglory was the solace and the comfort of his spirit when the sentence of death and ruin was thundering in his ears.

What a spectacle of self-complacency and self-deception! We see the snare of a religious motive, keeping the spoil to sacrifice to the Lord. And we see the fear of man, in the unwillingness of this weak man to displease the people when they begged him to save the precious booty of Amalek.

One word above all others seems to crystallize the very element of Saul's stupendous folly—compromise. Saul obeyed but with a compromise. He did much good, but he compromised with evil. God's commands are uncompromising, inexorable and unqualified, and our obedience must be inflexible, absolute and complete. The faintest reservation is really the spirit of disobedience. And the failure to hearken to the full meaning of God indicates a spirit of unwilling obedience.

Saul stands before us in this picture as the incarnation of self-will and as such, the enemy of God, even the rival of God upon His throne. Could there be any other issue? "You have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you as king over Israel" (15:26).

Not immediately did the judgment culminate. Slowly still the coil of self unwinds until all its hidden sinuosities have been revealed. Saul accomplished much good work after this; he fought a number of battles—fought them well—reigned over Israel and established a powerful kingdom. But it was Saul's kingdom, not God's.

All his remaining years were ones of self-activity and self-vindication. For nine of those years he pursued his rival David with ferocious hate. The Spirit of God left him, and an evil spirit—by God's permission—possessed him. And as the years went on, the beginning and the end of his existence was Saul and not Jehovah. It was self-incarnate, with all its miserable works and fruits.

At last the culmination came. Eaten out by the canker of self, his heart became the dwelling place for Satan. The devil took entire possession of him. In one dreadful hour Saul gave himself up to spiritism and, rejected of the Lord, sought the counsel of a medium, whom he had formerly persecuted and banished from the kingdom. It was his last fatal step. Self had driven God from the throne and had given it to Satan, and the next chapter of the self-life was self-destruction.

Trembling and prostrated by the fearful vision, which his own presumption had brought up from the depths of hell, Saul rushed with reckless despair into the last battle of his life. The next day the tragedy was complete—the flower of Israel's youth was lying on the slopes of Gilboa. The army of Saul was annihilated, the Philistines were victorious on every side and the kingdom Saul had built up for a quarter of a century for himself was broken to pieces and scattered to the winds. Even Saul's sons had been killed, and in the end Saul killed himself.

The scorpion self had stung others, and now, at last, it stung itself to death. The revelation of human selfishness was complete.

Before this sad and fearful spectacle we may well stand in awe and humbly, earnestly and fervently pray:

Oh, to be saved from myself, dear Lord,
Oh, to be lost in Thee!
Oh, that it might be no more I,
But Christ that lives in me.

The people could not trust God to raise up a suitable successor to Samuel, so they demanded a king who would ensure a firm and certain succession by handing on the throne to his son. Saul had apparently all that was needed to make an ideal king, but the Bible dismisses his reign contemptuously in two chapters and does not even preserve his age or the length of his reign (cf. 13:1 in RSV). All that we are told of him from ch. 15 onwards is merely to create the background for the story of David. Chronicles produces the same effect by telling only the story of his death (1 Chr. 10). (H. L. Ellison)
Show how Saul as a man is entirely unfit to represent God.

The sin of Samuel rebuked in Eli, reappeared in his own family and undermined his influence. Samuel's sons failed to walk in his steps and Samuel made the mistake of delegating authority to them. **Do you think seeing the behavior of Eli's and Samuel's sons precipitated the desire of Israel for a king or were there other reasons Israel forsook their present position as a theocracy — a nation directly ruled by God (Hos. 13:9-11)?**

1 Sam 8:1-5

Through all that was happening Samuel remained faithful to Israel. **Show how Samuel was a true mediator and intercessor when he cried unto God in behalf of the people.**

1 Sam. 8:6 1 Sam. 12:19-25 Ps. 99:6 Jer.15:1

1 Samuel 15:32-35

Then Samuel said, "Bring me Agag king of the Amalekites. "

Agag came to him confidently, thinking, "Surely the bitterness of death is past."

But Samuel said,

"As your sword has made women childless, so will your mother be childless among women. "

And Samuel put Agag to death before the LORD at Gilgal.

(1 Samuel 15:32-33)

We have already referred to Samuel 15 as an illustration of Saul's character. But there is still a deeper type (foreshadow) of the subtleties of the self-life in the picture of Agag, which the Holy Spirit has framed into the narrative of this solemn history. Both Saul's and Agag's lives teach the same lesson—offer the same warning—of the peril of a self-centered life. But they teach it in different ways, and the story of Agag is worthy of our prayerful and heart-searching consideration.

Agag belonged to the race of Amalek and the family of Esau, who represent through their entire genealogy the life of the flesh. From the beginning of the human race, God has drawn the line of demarcation between two races—the fleshly man and the spiritual man. Just outside the gate of Eden the division began. The family of Seth called themselves by the name of the Lord, while the race of Cain went off and built their city of culture and pride and became the pioneers of worldliness and wickedness, refined and ameliorated by all the grace of human culture and all the attractions of earthly delight.

The separation, though, soon began to disappear, and by the time of Noah the two races had mingled and intermarried. The result was progeny so degenerate and depraved that God turned with loathing from the whole race and pronounced the awful sentence, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth" (Genesis 6:7).

After the flood God chose a separate family, the line of Abraham, and again endeavored to keep His chosen people separate. Down that family tree we see off-shoots separating from the central trunk and going out into the world. The first of these was Ishmael, a type of the spirit of bondage and sin. The next of these was Esau, the progenitor of a whole race who inherited the earthly spirit of their father—Isaac's son who sold his birthright for a morsel of meat and afterward married the daughters of Canaan, becoming as corrupt and polluted as they were. In the same line were the descendants of Lot's unnatural daughters, the Moabites and the Ammonites.

Above all this, the race of Esau and subsequently the Amalekites were the representatives of the spirit of the flesh and the world. This was the reason why God pronounced the decree of their extermination. We find that when the Israelites left Egypt and started on their journey to the Land of Promise, Amalek was the first to attack them. It is not difficult to see in this the foreshadowing of the fact that the first adversary we have to contend with when we leave our sinful past of bondage and iniquity is the carnal nature in our own hearts. It soon asserts itself and tries to force us back

into that life of bitterness and captivity to sin (Acts 8:23). This is what Agag represents, and this is what each of us has found to be real in the experience of the Christian life.

The name of Agag is significant. It is from the root word *hak*, which is a generic term denoting, like Pharaoh, "a ruler." It represents the spirit of self-will, self-assertion and self-dependence. Its prototype is Lucifer, the prince of light and glory, who, being lifted up with pride and refusing to be controlled, turned from being an angel to a fiend and has become the desperate leader of the rebellious hosts of hell.

We see it next in the supreme temptation of the Fall: "You will be like God" (Genesis 3:5)—the desire for supremacy. We see it in the spirit of human ambition, in the despot, in the world conqueror, in high society and in politics. All belong to the same family—the race of Amalek and the house of Agag. Their cry is like the prodigal's: "give me my share of the estate" (Luke 15:12) and let me be free from parental control to do as I please.

There is no country where it is so rampant as our own United States. It appears to us as young mannishness and womanness and calls itself liberty. But its end is lawlessness and that lawless one who is yet to embody the combined elements of human wickedness and pride, and end the present dispensation by defying God and man, and perishing, like his father, the devil, in his presumptuous pride.

This spirit is found in every human heart. It may be disguised in many insidious forms, and it may call itself by illustrious names and ape the highest ambitions and the noblest pretensions, but it is Agag and Satan every time. The thing in you that wants to rule, wants to have its own way, to be independent, to refuse control, to despise reproof, is wrong in its very nature. The first thing you need in order to be of any use anywhere is to be thoroughly broken, completely subjected and utterly crucified in the core and center of your will. Then you will accept discipline and learn to yield and obey in matters in themselves right, and your will will be so merged in His that He can use you as a flexible and perfectly adjusted instrument. Henceforth you will only do what God wills and choose only what God chooses.

This is the real battleground of human salvation; this is the Waterloo of every soul; this is the test question of every redeemed life. This was the point where Saul lost his kingdom and Agag lost his life, and where eternal destinies are lost or won as we learn the lesson or refuse to be led in triumph by our conquering Lord.

Let us mark it well. Let us not miss the warning. Let us remember forever that no man can rule others until he himself is absolutely led of God, that no man can conquer foes until he first is conquered, that no man can lead in triumph the hosts of evil or the hearts of men until he himself is led in triumph as the willing captive of the Savior's love and the Master's will.

God has determined that the race of Amalek and the house of Agag should be utterly exterminated. They were not to be spared, but to be destroyed. It was a case of no compromise. There was nothing good in them. The last element of Agagism was destructive; and the whole community, with all their goods and belongings, must be put out of existence, just as in history when the effects of a household where some have died of contagious disease were wholly given to the flames.

This is God's decree against the flesh in us. It cannot be cleansed. It cannot be improved. It cannot be cultivated. It cannot be educated into ideals and principles. It must be exterminated.

What is the flesh? Is it the bad principle in man? Is it some outward or inward evil that can be cut away like a tumor by a surgical operation? "The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God" (Romans 8:7-8). There is the uncompromising decree of the total depravity and the hopeless condition of the flesh.

"You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but *by* the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you" (Romans 8:9). There is the distinction clear as a ray of celestial light. Every man who does not have the Spirit of God is in the flesh. And everything outside the Spirit of God is flesh. Therefore, the flesh is not simply the sinful part of human nature, but the whole of human nature. It is the Adam race. It is the natural man. It is the whole creature, and the whole thing is corrupted and polluted. The tree is so crooked that it cannot be straightened without cutting it in two. The tumor is so interwoven with the flesh that you cannot cut it out without killing the man.

There is no remedy. There is no hope. The old life must be laid down and the new creation, wholly born of heaven and baptized with the Spirit of God, must take its place as a resurrected life, as a new creation, as an experience so supernatural and divine that its possessor can truly say, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

Do not try to sanctify the flesh. Slay it! Don't attempt to evolutionize the kingdom of heaven out of the kingdom of hell. It is not evolution; it is creation. It is not morals or manners; it is a miracle of grace and power. Take no risks with the old man. He will fail you every time. You may think your trained hawk is a dove, but in an unsuspecting moment its beak will be buried in your flesh. Your little wolf may have all the manners of a lamb, but in an evil hour it will destroy all your lambs and perhaps rend you limb from limb.

The flesh is hopelessly, eternally corrupt. It cannot please God, and it must be completely dethroned, renounced and crucified with Christ.

We see next in this account the attempt of man to compromise with the flesh and to disregard God's decree for complete extermination. Saul spared Agag so that he might use him to build up his triumph before the people. He kept the best of the spoil that he might sacrifice them to the Lord.

He obeyed God's command to a certain extent. In a sense he defeated Amalek and destroyed the nation. Saul did all God told him to do as far as it was agreeable to him. But he took his own way when it served his self-interest. His obedience, therefore, was not really obedience to God but obedience to self. He retained just enough of the flesh to destroy the whole service.

The very essence of the command was extermination, and the very essence of the disobedience was compromise. The worst thing about it was that he tried to put the evil to good use. It was an insult in the face of heaven to bring the forbidden thing and offer it to the God he had defied. This is the spirit of modern religious culture: "Don't go too far. Don't be extreme. Don't be puritanical. Go easy. Be liberal. Meet the world halfway. Marry that scoundrel to save him. Take the bar owner into church membership because you can make good use of his money. Put that brazen-faced woman up in the choir because she will draw her theatrical set to hear her sing. Go to the theater and the play with your husband to get him to go to church with you on Sunday."

Nonsense! The devil will always get the best of you in such an unequal contest, and instead of being saved the husband will drag the wife to his level. Or the operatic singer, instead of bringing her friends under the influence of religion, will bring the church to the level of her set and turn it into a clubhouse and a concert hall. The bar owner's money will moderate the tone of the preaching so that it will be a comfort to Sodom, and vice and sin will sit unchecked and even count themselves the buttress and pillar of the cause of Christ.

Do you think God will accept such service? Will He who owns the treasures of the universe, He who could create a mountain of gold in a moment, He who could send a thousand angels to sing in His sanctuaries, accept the money that is stained with the blood of souls and polluted with the filth of dethroned purity and honor? Will He accept the meretricious service that is sold for sordid gain? Will He go begging to the devil's shrine, asking his permission to let go his captives that they may be saved? Absolutely not! Shame on our unfaithfulness and our compromise! Oh that we had the sword of Samuel to hew in pieces the compromises that are an offense to heaven and a disgrace to the bride of the Lamb!

We see the fawning pleading of the flesh for indulgence. Agag came forth, walking delicately, mincing like a silly, coquettish girl, smiling, seeking by his blandishments to disarm opposition, to win favor—looking like an incarnation of gentleness and innocence. Indeed, he was the perfect gentleman! Surely, he could not harm a child! Surely, no one could dream of doing him harm!

But that is the old flesh pleading for its life, pointing out its refinement, its culture, its graces, the good that it is doing and wants to do, its claim upon our consideration and regard. It will decorate our churches with the finest taste; it will sing in our choirs with all the harmonies of classical music and attract crowds; it will bring society to our churches; and it will give us a bright and liberal theology. It is full of humanitarian plans for the relief of the suffering and the uplifting of degradation, and it offers us a Pullman palace car prepaid to the gates of heaven.

Surely, such a beautiful, gentle creature should not be rudely slain. But behind its disguises and fawnings, the Holy Spirit will show you, if you will let Him, the serpent's coil, the dragon's voice and the festering corpse of the charnel house.

Death is not always repulsive at first sight. The daughter of Jairus was beautiful in her shroud and a flush of life still lingering on her cheek, but she was as dead as Lazarus festering in his tomb. And so that sweet-faced girl with her fawning charms, that brilliant minister with his intellectual sophistries, that voice that sings like an angel in the choir, is as corrupt and polluted as that poor creature that lies in the hospital dropping to pieces in the last stages of corruption, or that red-handed assassin reeking with the blood of his victim. They are both flesh, only at different stages of their moral putrefaction.

We see in Agag the flesh feigning death. "Surely," said Agag, "the bitterness of death is past" (1 Samuel 15:32). Similarly we find plenty of people in pulpits and pews, on platforms and in obscure corners, who would make us believe that they are dead. Yet we are reminded, when we get a good look at them, of corpses walking around in their grave clothes. They are so conscious of their deadness that we know they are alive. They are so proud of their humility that we would rather they were proud than humble. And they are so constantly in their own shadow that they try us by their religious egotism.

Surely, people who are really dead do not know it, do not think about it, are unostentatious, unobtrusive, modest, simple, natural, free and, like good water, without taste, color or consciousness. Oh for this blessed simplicity and this place of self-forgetting rest! Oh for this fulfillment of the prayer, "Lord, let me die so dead that I will not know it!"

There is no danger so great, especially among Christians somewhat advanced, as that of counting ourselves in a place where we really do not live. There is nothing so hardening to the heart as to take the place of self-surrender and then live a life of self-indulgence, self-will and adding to it the greater fault of self-complacency—calling things holy that are not, bringing the heavenly standard down to our own experience and filling ourselves with a self-complacent dream. Truly, we are to reckon ourselves as dead, but we are not to reckon that we are reckoned dead. We are to reckon on a reality and to insist upon it and take nothing less from God or from ourselves. Oh that we would dare to call things by their right names and have no counterfeit, even from ourselves!

Finally, we see self exposed and slain. Agag could not deceive Samuel. The old prophet pierces him through with one glance of the Holy Spirit, and looking at his mincing, fawning figure, we can imagine him saying, "You cannot fool me. You are a murderer and a selfish, cruel tyrant. Your sword has made many a mother childless, and many an innocent

victim has been crushed beneath your tyranny. Behind all your smiles is a skeleton and a serpent's sting." And then with that sharp sword, Samuel cut through his blandishments and hewed him to pieces before the Lord.

A notorious woman, who was once the star of the vaudeville stage, had in her role a hideous song in which one verse may be translated, "Go bring thy mother's heart to feed my dog." It is a true picture of that diabolical selfishness that seeks to hold the very soul of her idolatrous admirer in her power, that can even make him rend his loving mother's heart to please his devilish mistress. That is the skeleton back of the society queen. That is the serpent coiled around the heart of beauty and pride.

"But that is the darkest and worst picture," you say. Ah, but sin never stops until it reaches its worst. Here, God shows us the extent to which the smallest seed of selfishness can ripen.

Let us ask God to expose it in our hearts. Let us open our being to the sword of Samuel, the sword of the Holy Spirit. That sword is described in the solemn words of Hebrews: "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (4:12).

All that we need to be delivered from self and sin is to be willing to see it, to recognize it, to call it by its right name, to throw off its disguise, to brand it with its true character, to pass sentence of death upon it, to give God the right to slay it and to stand upon the sentence without compromise. Then there is power enough in the sword of the Spirit, in the blood of Calvary, in the faithfulness, love and grace of God to make us dead indeed to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

What does the complete destruction of the people of Agag (1 Sam. 15:3) have to do with Hebrews 4:12, "piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow"?

1 Samuel 16:1-12:

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 miner: see Gal. 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. Jude), and He was to do so by becoming the woman's "Seed" (Gen. 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' (Isa. 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' (Jer. 23:5). So Christ, in the New Testament, is called '*the root and offspring of David*' (Rev. 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 Ezek. 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*" (Judges 21:25). Following this was Israel's demand for a king, and that, that they might "be *like* all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:20); therefore did Jehovah declare, "I gave thee a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath" (Hosea 13:11). He, too, was an apostate, and his history ends by his consulting a witch (1 Sam. 28), and perishing on the battlefield (1 Sam. 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" (1 Sam. 16:1). This is the sequel to what is recorded in 1 Samuel 16:10-12. Saul had despised Jehovah, and now he was rejected by Him (1 Sam. 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 (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 Micah 5:2 informs us, Bethlehem Ephrathah 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" (1 Cor. 1:27, 28). And why? "That no flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Cor. 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" (1 Sam. 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 (Acts 15:9), a heart that loves Him supremely (Deut. 6:5), or a heart that is still "desperately wicked" (Jer. 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*" (Prov. 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" (16:12). Most blessed is it to compare these words with what is said of our Lord in Song of Solomon 5:10, 16, "My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest 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 though, 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" (Rom. 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 heart*, 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 Sam. 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 Sam. 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 (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" (Ps. 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" (1 Sam. 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 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" (1 Sam. 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" (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" (Ps. 78:70-72).

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

1 Samuel 16:7 tells us "the Lord looks at the heart" and although David was a sinner like Saul, David was accepted by God because his underlying motive was to do God's will and to love God supremely. **Show how Saul and David were tested to uncover their real motives in their worship of God?**

1 Samuel 16:13-23

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" (Judges 21:25). The terrible failure of the priesthood stands out clearly in the character of Eli's sons (1 Sam. 2:22). The nation as a whole had rejected Jehovah that He should not reign over them (1 Sam. 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" (1 Sam. 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" (Ps. 132:6). Well, then, might our patriarch cry out, "Help Lord, for the godly man ceaseth" (Ps. 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*" (1 Sam. 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" (Luke 21:26). But, blessed be His name, "the Lord hath *His* way in the whirlwind" (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" (Eph. 1:11). Faith lays hold of the Divine promises which declare, "at eveningtide it shall be light" (Zech. 14:7); and "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (Isa. 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 (foreshadow) 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' (Ps. 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' (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' (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" (1 Sam. 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 (Lev. 8:12); and, at a later date, we read of Elisha the prophet being anointed (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 (1 Sam. 16:13). Second, by the men of Judah (2 Sam. 2:4). Third, by the elders of Israel (2 Sam. 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" (1 Sam. 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 (Luke 1:35). Second, He was publicly "anointed with the Spirit" (Acts 10:38) at His baptism, and thus equipped for His ministry (see Isa. 61:1). Third, at His ascension He was "anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows" (Ps. 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" (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" (Dan. 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" (Ps. 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" (Heb. 8:1). "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore, God, thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows" (Ps. 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 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Isaiah 16:5; Jeremiah 23:5, 6; 33:14-17; Acts 13:34; 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 *carنالizing* 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*" (2 Tim. 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 Matthew 2:16; Luke 4:29; John 8:59; 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 (Gen. 12:3), yet he performed it not for thirty years (Gen. 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 (1 Sam. 26:20, etc.). Yet was he enabled to say, "I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry" (Ps. 40:1). So the Christian has been begotten to a glorious inheritance, but "we *must* through *much* tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). It is only "through faith and patience (we) inherit the promises" (Heb. 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" (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 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 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 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: 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; agreeable to that prophecy, Isaiah 2:3, 4: 'out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem' " (*Work of Redemption*).

The two halves of 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" (1 Sam. 16:14). Exceedingly solemn is this, the more so when we consider that which precedes it. In 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" (1 Sam. 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 1 Sam. 10:10 and contrast 1 Sam. 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" (1 Sam. 10:9), this must not be confounded with "a new heart" (Ezek. 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" (Heb. 6:4), of spiritual aspirations (Num. 24:2; 23:10 etc.), of deliverance from the "pollutions of the world" (2 Pet. 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" (1 Sam. 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" (Eccl. 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" (1 Sam. 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 (1 Sam. 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" (Matthew 5:16).

"Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep" (1 Sam. 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" (1 Sam. 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?" (Prov. 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" (Rom. 11:36).

"Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep" (1 Sam. 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" (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" (Phil. 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" (Ps. 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 armorbearer. 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 God's providence. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will" (Prov. 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" (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 chapter 17:55, 56 some have concluded that what has been before us in the closing verses of chapter 16 is placed out of its chronological order. But there is no need to resort to such a supposition. Moreover, chapter 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.

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

In 1 Samuel 16:13 we are told of the Spirit of the Lord coming upon David and in 1 Samuel 16:14 we see the departure of the Spirit from Saul. This special endowment which was given Saul for his kingly office had been withdrawn. In the

Spirit's place was given a distressing or troubling spirit from the Lord. **Can God allow an evil spirit to enter unbelievers and believers today and if so for what reason?**

Rom. 1:24, 26, 28-32

1 Samuel 17:1-58

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" (1 Sam. 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" (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.

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" (1 Sam. 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 (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 (Ps. 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" (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 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 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" (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 (1 Sam. 8:7). The dismay of Saul (v. 11) is in solemn contrast to his boldness in 11:5-11 and 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" (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" (9:2). There was Jonathan who, assisted only by his armor-bearer, had, on a former occasion, slain twenty of the Philistines (14:14). There was Abner, the captain of the host (14:50), a "valiant man" (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" (Prov. 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" (Isa. 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" (1 Cor. 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" (Ps. 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 (2 Cor. 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: 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 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 (16:10, 11), and only three of them had joined Saul's army (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 (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 (foreshadow) to the Antitype (that which was foreshadowed), and hear Him say, "Lo, I come, to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. 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 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 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" (Gal. 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 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" (Rom. 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" (Eccl. 9:11); and again, "God resisteth the proud" (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" (Prov. 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 Hebrews 2:14.

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

After Saul lost the special consciousness of God's presence and power, the whole kingdom became demoralized, and the Hebrews had the humiliation of hearing in silence a defiant challenge to "the armies of the living God." It looked like the answer to Goliath would have to go by default, — that Jehovah was a God that could not save. The impotence of the Israelites made Goliath still more defiant. But David was undaunted by what he heard, his soul was aglow with heroic

faith — avowing that he was willing to go alone to fight the Philistine. **How do you react to formidable challenges like; inbred sins that claim supremacy over your life, demoralize and humiliate you as a “child of the living God”?**

1 Samuel 18:1-11

Had we sought a topical title for this chapter, "The Price of Popularity" might well have been selected. The 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" (1 Sam. 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" (Gen. 39:21), the Israelites "favor in the sight of the Egyptians" (Ex. 3:21) at the time of their exodus, Esther in the sight of king Ahasuerus (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 (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" (Eccl. 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" (Rom, 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" (Col. 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" (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" (Isa. 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" (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" (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" (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" (Eph. 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" (Ps. 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*" (Isa. 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 (1 Sam. 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" (Rom. 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" (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*" (Jer. 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 jealously 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" (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" (Mal. 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 Psalm 146:3; Proverbs 17:18; Jeremiah 9:4; 17:5; 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. 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 (Eph. 4:26, 27). "And he prophesied:" all prophesyings are not inspired by the Holy Spirit, that is why we need to heed 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.

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

Using James 1:14-15 show how Saul's envy for David was able to progress to a point of wanting to kill him?

1 Samuel 18:12-30

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 previously 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" (1 Sam. 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" (15:23, 28). While he was probably ignorant of David's anointing (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" (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 him.

"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" (Gen. 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" (Gen. 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 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" (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. How 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" (Ps. 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 (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" (Luke 2:11), and "born King of the Jews" (Matthew 2:2); yet the king of Judea sought His life (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" (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*" (Mark 7:37). Let this ever be our desire and aim. "And the Lord was with him," protecting and prospering. That word in 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" (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 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 (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 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" (Ps. 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 Lord's 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 chapter 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" (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*" (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" (Rom. 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 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" (2 Sam. 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 chapter 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" (Eccl. 8:11). They will scruple at nothing, but employ any and every means at 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 Genesis 29:18; 34:12; 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 hath bestowed upon us!' (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 Philistines; 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 (Ps. 76:10).

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

What deceptions were used by Saul to destroy David and what was the outcome of Saul's effort?

1 Sam. 18:25

1 Samuel 19:1-24

At the close of 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" (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 (Heb. 1:4); yea, He has been given "a name which is above every name" (Phil, 2:9). "Precious" beyond description is that Name unto His own: they plead it in prayer (John 14:13); they make it their "strong tower" (Prov. 18:10).

"And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David" (1 Sam. 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" (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 apostles were "beaten" and again commanded "not to speak in the name of Jesus" (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 (what was foreshadowed in a type): 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" (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" (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" (19:1-3). 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" (Eph. 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 (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 (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" (Ps. 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. 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" (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 (Eph. 4:18), utter strangers to Him in experience (Eph. 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 (Ps. 37:5), has no need to resort unto tricks and deceits. 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" (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" (Ps. 125:2).

When the servants returned 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 (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 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.

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

Michal lied not only to save David (1 Sam. 19:14) but also herself (1 Sam. 19:17). **Are there excuses for “lies of necessity”?**

Lev. 19:11 Col. 3:9

1 Samuel 20:1-42

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 (foreshadow) 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" (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" (1 Sam. 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 (Prov. 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 (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 (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 (19:11), of the messengers sent to arrest him (19:20), and of his going after David in person (19:22). But all doubt is removed by "Saul spake to *Jonathan* his son, and to all his servants, that they should *kill* David" (19:1). Jonathan deliberately equivocated in 20:2, and "evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33): thus it was here—David lied too (20:5, 6).

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 (2 Sam. 9), faithfully carried out its terms. The words "David hid himself in the field" (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).

Jonathan should not have been ignorant of his father's desire to kill David. Saul's intentions seemed quite clear from his throwing the javelin at David, instructing his servants to kill David (1 Sam. 19:11) and sending messengers to arrest David (1 Sam 19:11). **So why did Jonathan need this elaborate plan to find what his fathers intentions were? Should Jonathan have left his father the king to join David?**

1 Samuel 21:1-15

"Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest" (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 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 (Rom. 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 (17:34-36), in his devotion for the tabernacle (Ps. 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" (Rom. 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 returning 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" (Ps. 84:1, 2, 10 and cf. 42:3, 4, etc.) Second, it seems clear from 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" (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 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 whereabouts I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place" (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" (Ps. 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 (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 at 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 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" (21:7). And yet in *his* hearing David had proffered 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 (22:9, 10), and later he was ordered by the enraged king to wreak 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" (1 Sam. 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 Sam. 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."

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 (2 Pet. 3:16). God forbid that we should deliberately sin in order that grace may abound (Rom. 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 (Gen. 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 (Gen. 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" (Gen. 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" (Gen. 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" (Ps. 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 (Mal. 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 (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" (2 Chron. 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.

Previously 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 (Phil. 4:19) and to do for us far more exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think (Eph. 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 (Gen. 20) and Isaac (Gen. 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.

Previously we also made brief reference 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" (Ps. 36:9). As the Lord Jesus declares, "he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness" (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" (2 Peter 1:19), and if we are not ordering our steps by the Word (Ps. 119:105), then we shall flounder and stumble. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his *own* ways" (Prov. 14:14), not with the "ways" of God (Ps. 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 previously, 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" (1 Sam. 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" (1 Sam. 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" (Eccl. 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" (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" (Phil. 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" (Prov. 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" (Ps. 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" (Ps. 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).

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

David imposed and deceived Ahimelech the priest to get what he needed for his escape from Saul. He then went to Achish, king of Gath and pretended to be crazy in order to find shelter away from Saul. **How strong is this tendency to be self reliant and depend on ourselves to escape an undesirable situation? What are good guidelines to follow even when we cannot feel the Lord's presence?**

1 Samuel 22:1-2

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" (Ps. 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" (Ps. 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" (Hab. 2:3).

"David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam" (1 Sam. 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 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 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 34th casts its welcome light upon the close of 1 Samuel 21, so Psalm 57 and 142 illuminate the opening verses of 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 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" (Ps. 142:1, 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" (1 Sam. 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" (1 Sam. 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 (foreshadow) 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" (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 had nowhere to lay His head" (Matthew 8:20). Read too, "And every man went unto his own house; Jesus went unto the mount of Olives" (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" (1 Sam. 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 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" (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

The second verse of 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" (Luke 12:32), that only "few" tread that narrow way which leadeth unto life (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 lose interest. That merry 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" (Heb. 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" (2 Tim. 3:5). Identify yourself with Christ on the outside; walk alone with Him.

Fifth, "And he became a *captain over them*" (1 Sam. 22:2). Important and striking line in the picture is this. Christ is to be received as "Lord" (Col. 2:6) if He is to be known as Savior. Love to Christ is to be evidenced by "keeping His commandments" (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 (Matthew 11:29). Nor need we shrink from it, for He declares "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

By reading Psalms 57 and 142 tell what state of mind David was in during this period of his life.

What striking analogy is there between David's followers and the followers of Christ?

Matt. 7:14 Matt. 8:20 Matt. 11:29 Luke 12:32 1 Cor. 1:26-29

1 Samuel 22:3-23

"And David went there 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" (1 Sam. 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 1 Samuel 22:1 we learn that "all his family" had come to David in the Cave. From 16:1 we learn that their home was in Bethlehem: but the Philistines were now encamped there (2 Sam. 23:14), so they could not return to that place. 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 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 from there 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 (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 Moabish 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" (Heb. 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 22:23, we may see that "the excellent" of the earth (Ps. 16:3) were more and more gathering to him who was a type (foreshadow) 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. 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" (Ps. 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 (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 flatter 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 unadorned 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 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 (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 (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.

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

Saul in the past was compassionate but now that the Spirit of the Lord has departed Saul we see the desperate wickedness within him. With unrelenting revenge we see the priests of the Lord murdered and nothing spared of all that belonged to them. **Saul was unrighteous in doing this but was God righteous in permitting this to happen?**

What were David's feelings after hearing that Doeg the Edomite had told Saul about Ahimelech giving him help?

Ps. 52

Should David feel somewhat guilty of what happened to Ahimelech, the fellow priests and their families?

1 Samuel 23:1-13

The first section of 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, failed 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 (22:5). That word he had heeded, and now we are to see how the Lord *used* him again. Strikingly does this illustrate 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" (1 Sam. 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 (Josh. 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: Judges 6:11, 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 well being. 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" (Prov. 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 relief 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" (Ezek. 36:37). He delights to be "proved" (Mal. 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" (1 Sam. 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" (Eph. 3:20)! God not only overthrew the Philistines and delivered Keilah, but as well, bountifully provided David's army with a supply of provisions.

"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 rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul" (Ps. 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" (Ps. 25:14). Ah, but *only* with them that truly "fear" Him. "If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not" (John 11:9). "He that followeth Me," said Christ, "shall not walk in darkness" (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 (2 Cor. 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 (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 (Heb. 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.

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

Since we have no priestly ephod to direct us how are we convicted to know His plan for our life?

Prov. 3:5

1 Samuel 23:14-29

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous" (Ps. 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.

Often times 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 (group of songs or verse). 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" (1 Sam. 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" (Prov. 16:32). O for more godly self-control; for this we should pray earnestly and often. 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" (Rom. 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" (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 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: 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" (Ps. 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" (Ps. 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" (Ps. 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, 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.

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

Jesus will come to pour in the oil and wine of His presence into a hunted soul. **Give other examples from scripture where people were strengthened by others of like faith or angels or even by God Himself during trying circumstances?**

Esther 4:13-17 Dan. 10:19

1 Samuel 24:1-15

We began our last section by quoting "many are the afflictions of the righteous," the remainder of the verse reading "but the Lord delivereth him out of them all" (Ps. 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 (Matthew 23:35), the stoning of Stephen, are examples to the contrary. Then did the promise of 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 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 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 Psalm 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" (1 Sam. 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 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" (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 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" (Rom. 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" (1 Sam. 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 (Ps. 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 would 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" (Isa. 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" (Ps. 37:5, 7). O for grace to do so; but such grace has to be definitely, diligently and daily sought for.

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 thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee" (1 Sam. 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" (1 Cor. 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" (Ps. 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" (1 Sam. 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" (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" (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 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" (1 Tim. 4:2), and of some "being past feeling" (Eph. 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" (Ps. 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" (Ps. 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.

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

Our actions must not be determined by the opening of the door of circumstance, but by conscience, faith, obedience, and a high sense of Christian honor. **Why did David restrain himself from killing Saul in the cave of Engedi?**

1 Samuel 24:16-22

"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" (1 Sam. 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" (2 Kings 6:20-23). May these incidents speak loudly unto each of our hearts.

"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 (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" (Rom. 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 went up to the stronghold." 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 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."

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

David's noble self-restraint awoke the best side of Saul's nature. **What effect did this have on Saul and was it a change in mood or will?**

1 Samuel 25:1-12

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 (Rev. 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*" (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 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 (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" (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" (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" (1 Sam. 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 (1 Sam. 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" (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 (1 Sam. 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 2 Samuel 13:23 it appears that it was the custom in those days to combine feasting and merriment with the shearing: compare also 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 at 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 (1 Tim. 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—Deuteronomy 15:7-11. Nabal's repeated use of the word "my" in verse 11 reminds us of the other rich "fool" in 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" (Heb. 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 (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" (1 Peter 2:23). Ofttimes God brings us into trying situations to reveal unto us whether we are "acknowledging Him in all our ways" (Prov. 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 (Ps. 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 (1 Cor. 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).

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

Show the striking contrast between David's reaction to Nabal's taunts and cutting reproach and Christ's reaction to an insult?

1 Samuel 25:13-35

In our last section we saw how 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" (1 Sam. 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 offence 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?" (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?" (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" (Rom. 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" (Ps. 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 (Prov. 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, verses 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" (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 (2 Chron. 32:31), 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, someone crossed our path, and we were delayed, hindered, deterred? That someone 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 ill-treatment 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 reprover upon an obedient ear' (Prov. 25:12). Abigail was a wise reprover 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' (Ps. 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" (Col. 2:14).
2. She was barren to Nabal (see Rom. 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)!

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

There is a blessed partnership when husband and wife are so united by a common purpose, but this was not the case with Abigail and Nabal. **Show how Abigail did not step down to the level of her circumstances but by using admirable tact was able to give a remedy to the disastrous situation.**

1 Samuel 25:36-44

"Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner" (Prov. 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 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 to 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 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" (Ps. 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: 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 section), 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: 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: 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: Isaiah 55:2. So sottish (stupid) are some in the indulging of their appetites that they sink lower than the beasts of the field: Isaiah 1:3. It is adding insult to injury when the sinner not only breaks God's laws but abuses His mercies: 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" (Prov. 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 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 hand 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 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" (Prov. 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 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" (Ps. 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 (humblest) 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 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: 2 Sam. 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" (Matthew 19:4-6).

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

What is given us in this passage is God's judicial dealings with a man by the name of Nabal. **Is God's governmental justice with man similar today as it was in Old Testament times?**

Abigail, by becoming David's wife would not only have to leave her comfortable position and house but share in hardship and trials. **What insight did Abigail have for what was in the future for David?**

1 Sam. 25:23-31

1 Samuel 26:1-12

His Chastening

Some of our readers may wonder why we have given to the present section such a title, and what bearing it has upon the contents of 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" (Prov. 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" (Ps. 19:11), in this life (1 Tim. 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 (Prov. 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" (Rom. 5:21). And when one who has been saved by grace fails to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts" (Titus 2:12), then the chastening rod of God falls upon him, that he may be a "partaker of His holiness" (Heb. 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 before, 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" (Isa. 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 (2 Chron. 16:9). When our ways please Him, then He makes even our enemies to be at peace with us (Prov. 16:7). Then how diligently should we guard our hearts and ponder the path of our feet (Prov. 4:23, 26). Carelessness invites disaster; disobedience ensures chastening; sinning will withhold good things from us (Jer. 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?" (1 Sam. 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 1 Samuel 21:1. 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. Ps. 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" (Eccl. 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 (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" (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 Ner, 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 innocence. 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 (1 Chron. 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 (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 (v. 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 (foreshadow) of Christ in His wonderful forbearance toward His enemies, and in His faith in God: 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.

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

God had put the resolve into David's mind to go into Saul's camp and take Saul's spear and jug of water. It was a very dangerous mission but he did it. **How do we know if we are being led by the Spirit of God or by natural impulse when called upon to perform some difficult or dangerous task?**

1 Samuel 26:13-25

"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).

David and his lone attendant 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" (1 Sam. 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" (Prov. 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 jug of water that was by his head." 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" (Mal. 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. 1 Sam. 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?" (John 8:46), and again, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou Me?" (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" (Lam. 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 (1 Cor. 11:31). It is always a timely thing to say with Job, "Show me wherefore Thou contendest with me" (Job 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" (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 (1 Sam. 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 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 favored 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.

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

David did not take matters into his own hands but waited for God to unfold His divine purpose. **What kind of an effect did this have on Saul at this point?**

1 Samuel 27:1-3

After Saul's departure (1 Sam. 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 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" (1 Sam. 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" (1 Cor. 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" (1 Sam. 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 aforesaid. 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 (absolve, exonerate) 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 (obstinacy) 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 Maach 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 (1 Sam. 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 (regretted) 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" (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" (Ps. 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 (1 Sam. 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 a previous section David's "chastening" and sought to point out the connection between what is found at the end of 1 Samuel 25 and that which is recorded in 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 section 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.

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

From Samuel, Jonathan and even Saul himself David was given assurance that he would be king but at this point he becomes faint hearted and concludes he will perish by the hand of Saul. **Describe others in the Bible that fell into a similar state of mind because of their discouraging situation.**

1 Kings 19:2-4 Jonah 4:3

1 Samuel 27:4-12

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" (Prov. 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 (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: Rom. 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 (Rom. 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 section 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" (1 Sam. 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" (Ps. 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" (Isa. 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" (1 Cor. 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 (Josh. 15:31), then to Simeon (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 and 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 disobediently 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 previously, 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."

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

David was driven to ruthless cruelty that was wholly unworthy of a servant of the Most High. **Do you think this came about because the driving force was now fear?**

1 Samuel 28:1-25

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" (Ps. 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.

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" (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*" (Isa. 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?*" (Ezek. 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 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 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.

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

Saul's jealousy of David had driven him into a pitiful state of mind. This chapter records the climax in which Saul's sins have led him. **Is this case an example of how a soul cannot live apart from God, and when not seeking after God the emptiness will be filled with demons?**

1 Chr. 10:13-14 Jer. 2:13, 19 2 Pet. 2:20-22

That there should be an apparition of Samuel occasions no difficulty, for Moses and Elijah were permitted to speak with our Lord of the "decease" to be accomplished at Jerusalem, so God may have specially permitted the prophet to speak to Saul. We may believe that these sentences passed between them without any aid on the part of the medium. From the lips of the prophet came no words of comfort or hope. Nothing could avert the descending avalanche of destruction. As Saul had sown, so must he reap; as he had fallen, so must he lie. (Through the Bible Day by Day, F. B. Meyer) **Give your thoughts on this encounter with Samuel and did the medium bring up Samuel?**

1 Samuel 29:1-11

"Then the Philistines gathered together all their armies at Aphek; and the Israelites encamped by a fountain which is in Jezreel. And the lords of the Philistines passed in review by hundreds and by thousands, but David and his men passed in review at the rear with Achish" (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 the princes of the Philistines said, "What *are* these Hebrews *doing here?*" And Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, "Is not this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, who has been with me these days, or these years? And to this day I have found no fault in him since he defected *to me.*" (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?" (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 (1 Cor. 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).

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 (disguising) 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.

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.

"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." 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" (Ps. 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.

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

David living the last 18 months in deceit brought him into a great conflict; he now was forced to fight Saul, the Lord's anointed and his friend Jonathan. A great sense of relief must have come over David when Achish dismissed him and his men from the fight. **How important is it for us to make a right evaluation of persons, situations and future predicaments before becoming too involved?**

1 Samuel 30:1-6

"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" (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" (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" (Hab. 3:2).

"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 25:43, 44 and 26:1, 2), his unbelieving fear (27:1), and his seeking help from the ungodly (27:2, 3). We mention this because it supplies *the key* to all that follows from 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 (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" (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" (Heb, 12:11): he must bow beneath the rod, yea, "hear" and "kiss" it, before he will be the spiritual gainer.

"My times are in Thy hand" (Ps. 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 Sam. 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" (Prov. 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 (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" (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" (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" (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 (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.

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

Our only hope is to turn to the Lord when we, like David are at wits end. **Using Romans 8:28 show how we then can assure and encourage ourselves that He can bring light out of darkness, peace out of trouble and good out of evil.**

1 Samuel 30:7-15

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 (1 Cor. 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 (27:2), but now that he is restored to happy fellowship, he will not think of taking a step without asking for divine guidance.

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.

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 not (Num. 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" (Ps. 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" (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" (Prov. 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?" (1 Sam. 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 honoured 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" (1 Sam. 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" (Isa. 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*" (Ps. 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 (Deut. 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.

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

Show how providence gave David and his soldiers intelligence of the enemies' motions and guided them in their decision on how to proceed in recovering them. Is this same providence working in our lives each day?

1 Samuel 30:16-31

"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" (1 Sam. 30:16, 17). We resume at the point where we left off in our last section. 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" (1 Thess. 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 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" (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 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 at 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 (foreshadow) 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" (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.

"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 (repeated) 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.

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

Try to picture the relationships the members of this group would have with each other in the future if David listened to the advice of the men of Belial.

1 Samuel 31:1-13

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 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" (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, "*There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people*" (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" (10:24); more, "there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched" (10:26), giving the young king favor in their eyes. Not only so, but "the Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul" (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, ruined 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" (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 (22:18, 19), till at last he scrupled not to seek the aid of the devil himself (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 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" (Heb. 3:13).

The cases of Ahithophel (2 Sam. 17:23), Zimri (1 Kings 16:18) and Judas the traitor (Matt. 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 (Ex. 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" (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 (Lam. 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.

(The Life of David, A. W. Pink)

This defeat meant something more than just a temporary reversal in military strength but was symptomatic of national decay. Saul's reign had brought moral degeneration, their moral fiber was impaired, their life blood impoverished. Saul and the people were weighed in the divine balances and found wanting. **Does this incident correspond to what is said in Galatians 6:7: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap".**