Treasures of Christ
In the Life of David

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Treasures of Christ
Reflections through the life and reign of the son of Jesse
in the life of David

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Soli Deo Gloria
&
To Katie,
my best friend and lifelong companion
THE LIFE AND REIGN OF KING DAVID

The true introduction to the book of 1st Samuel is the book of Judges. The theme of the times of the judges is repeated throughout its composition, but just in case we missed it, we have it again summarized for us in the very last verse: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (21:25). Just like before creation the world was a wasteland, and darkness ruled before the Word of God was spoken, so too the nation Israel had sunk into new depths of chaos, sin and darkness. The Lord Himself was the King of His Israel, as the meaning of Naomi’s husband’s name hinted (“my God is king”). But there was no mediator between Israel and her God. The leaders had become corrupt. And just as it is today, so it was in those days that as the leaders went, so went the people. The digression of the book of Judges is a very telling example of what will always happen to humanity, and even the church, if she is left to herself and mere willpower. Mankind desperately needs more than just a law to follow; we need so much more than to be told the difference between right and wrong, for we have not the power to do what we know is right. Nor do we naturally have the desire to do what is right in God’s sight. Unless there is a mediator who will write the law of God on our hearts, we are undone.

It pleased the Lord to use the model of kingdom to demonstrate to His people and to the world truths that would later be fulfilled in Christ. God set David on the throne to shepherd His people Israel, as a type of a much greater coming reality. Thus, as we read through the pages of 1st and 2nd Samuel, we must understand the intention of the Holy Spirit in these sacred pages if we would understand them at all. Christ has said in Luke 24 that all of the Scriptures are about Himself. The story of David is very much the story of the shepherd from Bethlehem—we will get to this just below. But laced throughout
the life of David, as contained in these holy pages, is the life of Christ; and interwoven through the kingdom and reign of David, are truths, pictures, and types that penetrate and direct us to the One who would reign as the True Shepherd-King of whom David's life is a foretelling.

THE LIFE OF DAVID: AN INTRODUCTION

The Lord was indeed pleased to use the son of Jesse as a figure and picture of the coming Messiah—the Son of David—our Lord Jesus Christ. It is of upmost importance, however, to remember that David is not Christ himself. It is vital that we not lose the person and humanity of David in probing the riches of the One he would be shown to represent. King David was a man after God’s own heart. He was a shepherd from Bethlehem and the king of Israel. He was a mighty warrior and the sweet psalmist of Jacob. He is an immanent type of Christ, the Messiah to come, and yet at the same time a man so desperately in need of the grace which that Messiah would bleed and die to give. We will be looking at the particulars soon, but there are wonderful things in broad strokes as well that we can glean through meditating over the pages of sacred Scripture that deal with David's life and reign.

First, David's life is an example for us. There is a certain trend today that makes some very hesitant to think of any Old Testament men of God (or New Testament for that matter) as examples to follow. After all, they are sinners just like we are and they fall just like we do. This is very true of course (and we will deal with this a little further below). But did not the apostle Paul say often to the churches, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1; see also 1 Corinthians 4:17)? Indeed, Paul commended Timothy for following in his footsteps in 2 Timothy 3:10; and likewise, despite all Timothy's failings and weaknesses, admonishes him to make himself an example to those to whom he is ministering in 1 Timothy 4:12. Does not Peter in the same spirit exhort his fellow elders to prove to be examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:3)? There is, I believe, an inappropriate fear today in some circles of seeing Biblical characters as examples to follow. It results perhaps from a failure to distinguish between moralism and morality. David Murray rightly notes here,

[There are some who] confuse morality, which is biblical and Christ-honoring, with moralism, which is Christ-less and unbiblical,
and end up condemning both. Biblical morality requires ethical change empowered by thankfulness for Christ’s forgiveness and prayer for Christ’s grace. Moralism is simply legalism or pharisaism—it sets out God’s requirements and requires obedience. It fails to point the believer to Christ as the reason, basis, and power for this obedience. While we must shun moralism, we must promote morality and its Christ-centered basis. It is wrong to set up a false dichotomy between biblical history on the one hand and ethics or morality on the other.¹

Today we need more than good teaching and sound doctrine—we are in desperate need of living examples—men who despite their many weaknesses and failings, are able to say like Paul, “Follow me as I follow Christ.” David is certainly not without his faults; but just as certainly he is an example to follow. Of course it’s not about mustering ourselves up and pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps and by our own strength trying to make ourselves more holy. But according to the grace of Christ, for the glory of God, and by the Spirit of God, we ought to strive to follow David in the ways that he has followed Christ.

Secondly, David's sufferings are an encouragement for us. We are not alone when we are led into seasons of wilderness and confusion. Scripture reminds us in these times, “Those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines; and scourges every son whom He receives” (Hebrews 12:6). And we see this truth written throughout the pages of David's life. The wilderness is an incredible blessing. God needed to prepare David to lead God's people, and He did it through David's sufferings. The wilderness was David's training ground for such an awesome and weighty responsibility. After years of being hunted, living among the caves, and hiding in the wilderness, David could say with Joseph so many years before, “God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction” (Genesis 41:52). Sufferings were good for David. He sung to his God from the caves like perhaps he never did in the palace. It may have done David good to spend a few more years living in the caves and the wilderness than he did. A few more years of sharp pruning might well have kept him from that sin that so deeply stained his whole character. The afflictions God sends us are for our good—to save our very lives. How true it is, that He delivers the afflicted by their affliction. Be encouraged, saints, if the Lord has

¹Introduction to Redemptive-Historical Preaching:
http://headhearthand.posterous.com/introduction-to-redemptive-historical-preach
you going through a season of confusion and wilderness. Find comfort in reflecting upon how the Lord has brought His godly ones on the same path, and consider the outcome of His dealings with them! Be reminded of God's kind dealings with His beloved ones Joseph, Moses, Naomi, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and here in David.

Lastly, David's sin is a warning for us. I will here quote a section taken from the reflection upon David's shameful sin in 2 Samuel 11:

Who would have thought that David would fall into such grievous sin? We would never have thought David capable of doing the detestable things we read of in this chapter. We would never have marked him out as one who would fall into such grievous and devastating sin. Should the eyes that were continually upon the Lord (Psalm 25:15) drift away and set their gaze upon another man's wife? Should the mouth who sung praises to his God command his servants to call a strange woman to his house? Should the hand that played so skillfully to the Lord on the harp actually lay hold of the wife of his friend? Should the pen that wrote such eloquent prose to his Savior write such abominable words to Joab? It is an awful and frightful thing that happened in 2 Samuel chapter 11. David that day lost a certain pureness of heart, and he gained that day reproach that would not be blotted out. The sober words of Proverbs prove true of king David: “The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense; he who would destroy himself does it. Wounds and disgrace he will find, and his reproach will not be blotted out.” (6:5-6). The consequences were devastating, lasting, and irreparable. It is likely that his servants would never look at him the same again. Surely his wife Abigail would never look at him the same again. In one moment of temptation David lost what he would never be able to buy back with all the riches of his kingdom. And we would do well to brand this warning gravely upon our hearts. For if David was not above adultery and murder, then neither are you, and neither am I.

David has a history

And the Scriptures don't seem to want us to forget this either, for we have the book of Ruth placed just before 1 Samuel. In some ways the closing verses of the book of Ruth is the preface to the books of Samuel, for in them we discover that Ruth is the great grandmother of
king David. We also learn there that the father of Boaz, Ruth's husband, was Salmon; and if we flip over to the genealogy in Matthew (1:5) we will discover that Salmon's wife was Rahab, the prostitute saved from Jericho during the time of Joshua's conquest. It seems the Holy Spirit wants to communicate to us that it was truly for filthy wretched sinners that Christ came into the world. Just as it was Rahab alone who was saved from the destruction of Jericho, so it is only sinners—sinners who put their faith in Christ, who will be delivered from the coming wrath of God. We see this echo throughout David's lineage, for if we keep tracing his line back to Abraham we come to Judah and Tamar. Christ can take our most shameful moments, and somehow turn them into beautiful masterpieces of grace and glory; for from Tamar's prostitution with Judah came David, and from David, Christ. Perhaps the ungodly will turn this in to a license to sin, but in Christ's little lambs it produces a holy awe, and deepens our resolve to never take for granted the grace that was purchased at such a cost. For it was with the precious blood of Christ that we have been redeemed.

One more truth emerges as we look at David's history. It is an amazing thing that the king of Israel was himself a good part Gentile. Tamar may have been a Canaanite, Rahab was certainly Canaanite, and Ruth was a Moabite. We see this theme continue throughout the life of David in different ways: there were Gentiles among his mighty men. The ark of God dwelt at Kiriath-Jearim (a Hivite city in Judah) for years after it came back from the Philistines, and later it stayed at the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. During David's life the remaining tabernacle was at Gibeon (1 Chronicles 21:29), which was also a Hivite city. It was on Gentile land that the temple was constructed, and it was built mostly by a Gentile people (2 Chronicles 2).

**WHAT HAPPENED TO SAUL?**

One of the most baffling characters in the Bible is the first king of Israel. What do we make of Saul? He starts out so wonderfully. Yes, it was sin for God's people to ask for a king. But it seems that through Saul the Lord is going to weave a masterpiece of glory through this blunder of His people. It is clear that God had chosen him. We are told in 1 Samuel 9:15-17 that Samuel is led unmistakably by the hand of the Lord to Saul the son of Kish. It seems after his anointing in chapter 9 that God gives him a new heart.
(vv6,10). He sees himself as little in his own eyes (9:21; 15:17). When he returns to his uncle's house and is asked about his time with Samuel he says nothing about being chosen as the first king of Israel. Later in the same chapter, when he is publicly chosen as king at Mizpah, he is nowhere to be found. He is discovered hiding himself by the baggage. I have heard some interpret this as exposing in Saul an inability to take responsibility and lead God's people. But it seems to me to reflect a deep humility. The author of 1 Samuel himself seems to draw the same conclusion, as at the end of the chapter those who grumbled against Saul, saying, “How can this one deliver us?” are called “worthless men” (v27). But Saul refuses to retaliate. As they complain, he keeps silent (v27). In the next chapter, Saul courageously leads the people to rescue the men of Jabesh-gilead from the hand of Nahash the Ammonite. We are told that the Spirit of God came mightily upon him, leading him and the people to an overwhelming victory. Saul is then properly made king at Gilgal before the Lord and all the people at the end of chapter 11. After Samuel addresses Saul and all the people with a word of warning and admonition in chapter 12, there is war with the Philistines in chapter 13. It is here that a defining and sudden change takes place in Saul, a change that baffles us; and one that will end in the destruction of his kingdom.

What was Saul's sin?

Samuel had told Saul back in 10:8 to wait for him at Gilgal for seven days. Saul seems to wait the seven days, but the people are scattering from him, and Samuel still hasn't come yet (13:8). Saul decides to go ahead and offer the burnt and peace offerings himself, but as soon as he offers up the burnt offering Samuel comes to him. Samuel asks him, “What have you done?” (v11). Saul explains why he himself offered the sacrifice. Perhaps we are as shocked as Saul to hear the reply from Samuel: “You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you, for now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not endure. The Lord has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord as appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.” (13:13-14).
What was Saul's sin? The assertion that Saul's sin was himself offering up the burnt and peace offerings is one suggestion. Some say that this is a duty given only to the priests, the descendants of Aaron; and it is Saul's presumption in himself offering up sacrifices to God that led to his downfall. It is true that it was the priests who were to offer up the blood and sprinkle the blood on the alter for the burnt offering (Leviticus 1:5). But others were guilty of the same offense whose sin wasn't in any way counted against them. Samson's mother and father offered up a burnt offering before the angel of the Lord in Judges 13:19 and 23. Even David does the same thing, for we read that he also offered up burnt and peace offerings to the Lord in 2 Samuel 6:17 and 24:25. It is true that no one but the Levites who were the sons of Aaron were to offer the sacrifices. But Saul was no more guilty of this than David was.\textsuperscript{2}

We are told in the text that Saul had waited the seven days before forcing himself to offer the sacrifices. But many commentators believe that Saul did not wait until the very end of the seventh day. He waited until the seventh day (v8), but not until the close of the seventh day. This was Saul's sin. It was this that ripped the kingdom away from him, which had been given to him only days before. If you are like me you have struggled with this. Is it not harsh? Wasn't it just a small sin? Does the punishment really fit the crime? Should Saul have the kingdom torn away from him for not waiting another few hours, while David later receives a comparable slap on the wrist for adultery and murder? What in the world is going on here?

Saul a picture of the first Adam and his offspring

I believe that Saul's sin is a type of the sin that Adam committed in the garden of Eden. Saul is, as it were, a type of the first Adam, while David is a type of the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ (see Romans 5). Compare the two accounts, and we find they are astonishingly similar. Remember, God had given Adam one command, to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17). The covenant between God and Adam was thus a covenant of works, and Adam is tested with one command. Though the command given by God seemed a light and insignificant thing, life and death were riding on man's response. If Adam obeyed, it would result in life; but disobedience would result in death. Tragically,

\textsuperscript{2}Compare also to Solomon's actions in 1 Kings 3:15. Besides, though Samuel is a Levite according to 1 Chronicles 6:33, he was not of the priestly line.
Adam disobeys. When the Lord came to Adam in the garden and confronts him with his sin, Adam starts to blame-shift and make excuses. He even blames God Himself: “The woman whom You gave to be with me. . .” (Genesis 3:12). The disastrous effects of his sin were not gradual, but instantaneous. In the blink of an eye, death and destruction are thrust into the world. Because of their sin, Adam and Eve are cast out of the garden, but not before the Lord makes them a solemn promise. A descendant of Eve would one day come into the world. A deliverer would come who would destroy the works of the devil, and somehow undo the death and destruction that Adam and Eve had let loose into the world. He was to be the Messiah; the second Adam.

Now think again about Saul's story. Do you see the similarities? Saul is likewise given one command, as a test. This is clear from Samuel's words later in 13:13-14. The command given to Saul seems to us to be a light and trivial thing, just as God's command to Adam. Saul disobeys as his father Adam did; and just as death is thrust into the world in an instant after Adam's sin, so it is the same with Saul. We see a night and day difference between the Saul before his disobedience and the Saul after his disobedience. The one who had shown such humility is now found erecting monuments to himself (15:12). As we read through the rest of 1 Samuel, we are baffled by Saul. Truly the Saul of chapters 10 and 11 is a different man than the Saul we see after his sin in chapter 13. Samuel's words to Saul when he arrives are strikingly similar to the Lord's words to Adam in the garden following his fall into sin, “What have you done?” (13:11). Like Adam, Saul begins to blame-shift and even tries to blame Samuel for what he did, mirroring Adam after his sin (13:11). Finally, as Adam and Eve were thrown out of the garden for their transgression, so Saul has the kingdom torn away from him for his own iniquity.

As Saul is a picture of the first Adam, so he also is a picture for us of all those who are the descendants of that first Adam. In chapter 13, he is a picture of Adam himself and his fall into sin. We have seen above the incredible similarities between Saul's sin and Adam's. In chapter 15 we see the outworking of fallen nature in some of its manifestations; we see characteristics in Saul of what an unregenerate nature will look like and how it will act. We see in Saul in chapter 15 what man is without a Savior, without Christ; without the regeneration and sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit.
Saul is sent on a mission: to destroy the Amalekites (15:1-3). The Amalekites had their origin in Esau (Genesis 36:12). They had their roots in the covenant, but in the end made themselves the enemies of God and His people. They were those who stood against God's people Israel when they came out of Egypt (Exodus 17:8-16). Because of what they did, the Lord commanded Moses and the people in Deuteronomy 25:17: “Therefore it shall come about when the Lord your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget.” Later in the book of Esther, Haman the enemy of the Jews was called an Agagite, a descendant of Agag the king of Amalek. They were an enemy nation, rebels against God and haters of His people. And the Lord commanded Saul to utterly destroy them, “put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey” (15:3). But Saul does not obey the Lord's command. He slaughters the Amalekites, but spares the king and the best of the animals.

Saul reflects Adam’s fallen nature in a number of ways in chapter 15, both in his disobedience to fully carry out the Lord's command, and his response to Samuel when he is confronted with his sin.

First, Saul's sin was a refusal to destroy all that the Lord commanded him. He spares the king; he spares the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good; he was “not willing to destroy them completely” (15:9). So it is with the unregenerate nature. For Christ calls His people to daily put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit (Colossians 3:5). He calls His followers to wage a holy war against their own sin and selfishness; those enemies that still dwell within the land. The one who loves the world and the things of the world; the one who is a friend of the world shows himself to be an enemy of God (James 4:4). The call to come and follow Christ is the call to come and die. The one who has not a new relationship with his sin never has truly embraced Christ. If sin is still your friend, Christ is not. Either your sin is your enemy, or Christ is your enemy; “for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Romans 8:13). My friends, if you are not at war with your sin, then you have no true peace with God.

Secondly, Saul is acting as though he were the ultimate judge of what is right and wrong. In 15:19, Samuel rebukes Saul for doing
what was evil in the eyes of the Lord. Samuel's words should remind us of the theme of the book of Judges. Samuel is the last of the judges, and we have mentioned above how the summary of the time of the judges is repeated throughout; and in case we missed it is given as the very last verse as well: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (21:25). This is what Saul is doing. Saul does what he wants to do rather than what God has commanded him to do. And so it is with natural man who is still dead in his sins. This characterizes his life. He lives as though he has no God to give an account to.

This was remarkably illustrated to me just about a week ago. My wife and I were witnessing at a nearby park in San Diego. It seemed everyone we tried to talk with hated us for trying to speak with them about their souls. As we were leaving we tried to engage in conversation with a young lady reading a book. When asked what she would say one day as she would stand before God to give an account for her life, she responded, “I just don't see why I should have to answer that [to God], if that makes sense?” It makes perfect sense; for this is the heart of the unregenerate nature—it sees itself as the supreme authority, accountable to no one but itself, living according to no law but its own wicked desires, pretending that there is no God who has created them and who will demand an accounting at the judgment. It makes sense—her words didn't shock me like perhaps she thought they would; I've heard it a thousand times. But she is dead wrong. May Christ send us revival!

Thirdly, we see in Saul a refusal to acknowledge his sin. The more Samuel presses and confronts him with his disobedience, the more he makes excuses and tries to justify his actions. He greets Samuel with, “Blessed are you of the Lord! I have carried out the command of the Lord” (v13). Saul knows the right words to use. He sure sounds religious, doesn't he? Don't believe everything you hear. Samuel confronts him with the fact that he is surrounded by the sounds of the living animals of the Amalekites. Saul blames it on the people: “They have brought them, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, to sacrifice to the Lord your God; but the rest we have utterly destroyed” (v15). Saul then justifies himself a third time when Samuel presses him in verse 20: “I did obey the voice of the Lord. . .But the people took some of the spoil. . .to sacrifice to the Lord” (vv20-21). Saul blame-shifts again; he just cannot seem to fess up that he is in the wrong. He knows he is, for he owes up to it finally
in verse 24 (we'll get to that in just a bit). Saul is living in a fantasy world. It's almost like he's trying to convince himself that he obeyed. And this is exactly what those try to do who have not been born anew of the Spirit. There is a constant justifying of their actions, a minimizing of sin and the wickedness of their own hearts and the blood on their hands.

That same day in the park my wife and I also spoke for a few minutes with a young couple who were attending church but really had hardly any idea of what the Gospel really was. When I asked the young lady if she ever did something that was outwardly good but for the wrong reasons, she completely denied ever doing anything of the sort!! This time I was shocked. If she had an ounce of real knowledge of her own heart she would know better. Probably though, she does know better. Probably she knows her life is full of these kinds of sins; but just like Saul she won't fess up to them (apart from a supernatural work of God—Oh Lord do it!!). Until then she will just try to convince herself that she is a good person, has a good heart, and will stand before a holy God on judgment day with really no sin or wrong to give accounting for. She should know better. And like Saul she probably does; she only pretends otherwise.

Fourthly, Saul shows no sorrow over his sin itself, but only over the consequences of his sin. We saw just above how Saul first completely denies he did anything wrong. Samuel presses him, but still he refuses to humble himself and acknowledge his sin before the Lord. So Samuel tells him at last, “Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king” (15:23). It is only then that Saul finally owns up to his sin before God: “I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the Lord and your words. . .” (v24). But sadly, Saul's confession demonstrates no genuine repentance. Saul speaks up only after Samuel confronts him with the consequences of his sin: he has been rejected as king. It was the same with Judas. Jesus told his disciples as they sat around the table together, that one of them would betray Him. They are all cut to the heart and deeply grieved. Each one began to ask Him, “Surely not I, Lord?” Jesus then went on to tell them, “The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born” (Matthew 26:24). It is only then that Judas speaks up, and says likewise, “Surely not I, Rabbi?” For Judas there is no true sorrow over what he had done, and what he would do later that night.
The only thing that moved that lifeless heart was the prospect of the torments of hell. So it was with Saul. And so it is with unregenerate nature. When Ezekiel speaks of the new heart, he describes it as a “heart of flesh” (36:26). The Puritan divine Richard Alleine wonderfully expounds the implications such a description:

A heart of flesh is a soft and tender heart; flesh can feel; anything that is contrary to it puts it to pain. Sin makes it smart; it cannot kick but it is against the pricks; by its rebellion and resistance against the Lord, it receives a wound; it cannot hit but it hurts itself. A soft hand gets nothing by striking a hedge of thorns. A soft heart, when it hath been meddling with sin, is sure to smart for it. It can neither escape the pain, nor yet endure it; and what it cannot bear, it will take warning to avoid. Flesh will bleed. A soft heart will mourn and melt and grieve when hard hearts are moved at nothing. Flesh will yield. It is apt to receive impressions. The power of God will awe it; his justice alarm it; his mercy melt it; his holiness humble it, and leave his stamp and image upon it. And as the attributes, so the word and works of God will make sign upon it. Who sets a seal upon a stone; or what print will it receive?3

The tender heart of the regenerate is not perfect, nor sinless. But it doesn't need railing judgments and threats to move it to sorrow over its sin. Compare Saul here and David later when Saul comes hunting for him among the wilderness of Engedi (1 Samuel 24). When Saul unknowingly enters the cave in which David is hiding himself, he merely cuts off a piece of his robe as he was relieving himself, to prove that he had the chance to take his life but never would he do such a thing. But for such a small thing David's heart struck him (literally, v5). Later we see similar language when David gives Joab the command to number all the people of his kingdom (24:10). A new heart is a heart of flesh; it grieves and sorrows if it has offended its Lord. But an unregenerate heart will be moved only by the prospect of punishment.

Friends, what sort of heart do you have? Do you possess a heart of flesh, or a heart of stone? Is your conscience sensitive to the Lord Jesus? There is a difference between feeling bad about our sin and grieving over our sin. There is a difference between our conscience smiting us for doing what we know is wrong, and our hearts smiting us

for offending the One we love. The battle Paul speaks of in Romans 7 is not Paul's struggle between the good he knows he ought to do and the sins he daily commits. Rather, it is the struggle between the life of godliness and wholehearted devotion to Christ that Paul truly longs to live, with the remaining flesh that has become his most hated enemy. All men have a conscience. All men when they sin know they ought not to; and our conscience, if it is still working, will smite us for our transgressions. All men experience this. But only the true believer will feel not only the smiting of the conscience, but the smiting of the heart. When they sin they grieve, because they have grieved God. When they sin their own hearts break, because they have broken the heart of the God who is so precious to them.

Fifthly, we see in Saul a formality of worship without true obedience. He presses Samuel to come back with him to Gilgal to worship the Lord (v25, 30). Saul wants to worship the Lord, yet his life is reflecting nothing but disobedience. His worship is nothing more than an external formality. Make no mistake about it; there are plenty of people in our churches today who “worship God” every Sunday, but who by their lives prove themselves to be unregenerate, unsaved persons. It has always been this way. The prophets were constantly denouncing the Old Testament people of God for this very thing. They came into the temple and offered up their sacrifices and sang their songs, but their lives were full of rebellion and disobedience, and the Lord hated their sacrifices. “Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery and swear falsely, and offer sacrifices to Baal and walk after other gods that you have not known, then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, We are delivered!—that you may do all these abominations?” (Jeremiah 7:9-10). The Lord told them by Isaiah, “Bring your worthless offerings no longer, incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, they have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them. So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood” (Isaiah 1:14-15). There are many today who “worship” the Lord, but have never truly submitted themselves to His reign. They call Him “Savior” but they follow Him not as Lord. Paul likewise warned Titus of those who “profess to know God, but by their deeds deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed” (1:16). Friends,
you may have the external shell of Christianity. But do you truly have Christ? You may know something of Christ. But does He know you as His own? Have you submitted your life entirely to Him? Have you truly surrendered all to Christ?

Lastly, Saul is addicted to the praise of men. We see it implicitly in 15:24 and explicitly in verse 30: “please honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel.” Saul has fallen in love with honor and accolades. This is not only a sign of unregenerate nature, but a tragic snare that keeps many from coming to Christ. We read in John 12 that many of the rulers “believed” in Christ, but were not confessing him. Why? “for they loved the glory of men rather than the glory of God” (12:43). Earlier Jesus confronted the Jews on this very thing: “How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?” (5:44). For Paul this matter of loving the praise of men was not an insignificant thing—it was the very core of unbelief; it lay at the very foundation of conversion. Thus in Romans 2 in describing the nature of regeneration he writes, “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God” (vv28-29). In writing to the Galatians, Paul boldly asserts, “If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ” (1:10). This is something I don't think we talk about enough. The Scriptures emphatically declare that we cannot love both the praise that comes from God, and the praise that comes from men. We must pick between the two, for they are diametrically opposed to each other by their very nature! In fact, this in itself explains some of Saul's behavior, for the one who is in love with the praise of men cannot acknowledge his sin, let alone boast in his weaknesses. The one who has become addicted to man's praise can never receive the kingdom of heaven like a child (Matthew 18:3-4), and thus, in so far as he will not give this up can never enter the kingdom of God. The one who loves man's praise will never be able to admit how wicked his heart really is, for fear of what his friends will think, nor can he stand up for Christ in the midst of those scoffing His name for fear of the same. He will only own Christ when other people will think well of him for it; and so will be guilty of being ashamed of Christ. For the same reason though his doctrine may be sound, he will show himself unconverted by never sharing in the
sufferings of Christ (Romans 8:17). The one who is a slave to man's praise will never preach in the power of the Spirit, because he will never be willing to offend with the sharp truths of the gospel (see Jesus' first sermon in Luke 4). He will preach only selectively, and avoid the texts of holy Scripture which speak of the coming judgment, hell, the utter depravity of all men, and the just wrath of God reserved for the same. Or else he will deal with these texts half-heartedly or in a light and joking manner, so as to soften the weight of their force, dulling the razor-sharp edge they are so plainly intended to carry.

Lord Jesus, save us from this lethal snare.

Saul was given a command and he broke it. God seems to have dealt with him in a covenant of works. It was the same with Adam. To keep God's command meant life, to break it meant death. Adam fell into sin and all humanity with him. The moment his teeth sunk into that fruit, evil and death entered the world. From that moment onward, the earth would never be the same. He begins to blame his wife for what he did. We saw even he blames God Himself for his own sin. Maybe he can't even believe the words coming out of his mouth, and the bitterness rising out of his heart. But he can't help it.

Just as God dealt with Adam in the garden under a covenant of works, so too the covenant of works is still in force today. If man can obey God he can merit eternal life. If he can keep God's commands perfectly, he can enter through the ancient gates that lead to paradise. But if we truly understand what His commands are, it won't take us long to realize that we have fallen desperately short. Even if we were to keep ourselves from all outward sin all our lives—actions, words, thoughts—never lying, never stealing, always doing everything for the right reason (that reason being for the glory of God)—always putting God first in our lives in everything—even if we were to do this, it still wouldn't be enough. For the heart of God's law is not just to obey God's law—but to love Him with all our heart and mind and soul and strength (Deuteronomy 6:5). If we keep God's commands perfectly but don't do it out of genuine love for God, our best works mount up to nothing but more sin. The sum of God's law is not just to serve Him—but to serve Him with all our hearts; and to serve Him willingly and joyfully (Deuteronomy 11:13; 28:47). The Scripture says this is impossible because we are born with hearts that are opposed to God (Romans 8:7). We sin because our hearts love sin (John 3:19). For

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4This is quite necessary in faithful preaching, for the gospel itself is offensive: “Woe to you when all men speak well of you”, Luke 6:26.
this reason we can never please God (Romans 8:8). We are under obligation to keep God's law perfectly, just as Adam was, and if we are honest with ourselves, we fail miserably every hour of every day we live. Because Adam sinned so long ago, now sin poisons everything about us and everything we do. The disease that started with Adam infected us before we ever were born. We are helpless sinners. We stand condemned as criminals before a holy God. A just God will punish transgressors (Nahum 1:3), and God is most certainly just. We are wicked, our hands and hearts are covered with sin, and He is angry (and rightly so).

DAVID A PICTURE OF THE SECOND ADAM AND HIS OFFSPRING

Just as Saul is a picture of the first Adam, so David is a picture of the second Adam. David is born in Bethlehem. His name means “beloved one;” he is the one in whom the Lord delights (2 Samuel 22:20; see also Matthew 3:17). He is a shepherd (see John 10:11; Ezekiel 34:23). There is great similarity between the anointing of David in 1 Samuel 16 and the baptism of Christ. David is hated and envied by his brothers (1 Samuel 17:28ff), just as the Messiah would be by his own kinsmen. The poor, oppressed, distressed, and afflicted came to David and he became their captain (1 Samuel 22:2; see also Luke 4:18-19). David was a king, called a prophet in Acts 2:29-30, and at times functions as a priest (as in 2 Samuel 6:18; 24:25). Likewise Jesus is a prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15), a priest (Hebrews 7), and the king of kings (Daniel 7:9-14; John 18:36-37). Christ's life and ministry follows that of David—suffering before exultation. Jonathan Edwards says this about the life of David as a type of Christ:

“David, as he was the ancestor of Christ, so he was the greatest personal type of Christ of all under the Old Testament. The types of Christ were of three sorts; instituted, providential, and personal. The ordinance of sacrificing was the greatest of the instituted types; the redemption out of Egypt was the greatest of the providential; and David the greatest of the personal ones. Hence Christ is often called David in the prophecies of Scripture; as Ezekiel 34:23, 24: 'And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; My servant David a prince among them;”
and so in many other places. He is very often spoken of as the seed and the son of David.”

Just as David is a picture of Christ, the second Adam (see Romans 5), so too he is a picture of the spiritual offspring of Christ. Isn't it amazing, that Saul sins once and is cast off from the presence of the Lord, but David can't seem to get away from the lovingkindness of God no matter what he does? Saul disobeys God's command through Samuel to wait the full seven days for Samuel to come, and it costs him the presence and favor of God. But David can't escape God's love and faithfulness even when he commits murder and adultery?? This is because God is dealing with David, not according to his works, but according to mercy. The Lord had revealed this truth to Moses in Exodus 34: “Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth, who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. . .'” (vv6-7). How is it possible for the Lord to forgive iniquity, but at the same time to not leave the guilty unpunished? Because these are two different kinds of people. Some the Lord punishes for their sin. Others He forgives their sin. It is those who put their trust in the blood of Jesus Christ alone that the Lord forgives. He forgives them because Jesus was punished in their stead. It was not the Romans, the three nails and the cat of nine tails that made the Messiah sweat drops of blood in the garden that night. All the weight of the full force of God's anger, all the storehouses of the infinity of hell for millions, were thrust upon the Lamb of God in a matter of hours on the cross. God absolutely crushed His own beloved Son on the cross. He drank down in full measure the cup of the wrath of God, that He might freely give to those who believe upon Him the cup of salvation. God's dealings with David are thus only in mercy and grace, and forepicture His dealings towards all of those who put their hope in Christ (and showing so by their repentance).

Can I ask you a question friends? Where would you place yourself right now? Have you been covered in the blood of Christ? Are you safe in Him, like Noah was safe in the ark from the angry waters of the flood? Does a lifestyle of walking in the narrow way show that you have truly entered the narrow door? For the path is narrow, just as the door is narrow. I beseech you with all my heart—don't rest

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5 Edwards, History, Works V1, p552.
until you are sure of this! May Christ be your all, your treasure, your life!!!

A BRIEF WORD ABOUT BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

As we begin to study the life of David, I wanted to say a brief word about interpretation. The interpretative principles used in this present work have been based especially on the following convictions:

First, I believe it is vitally important to look at each passage in the Scriptures first in their own historical, literary, and redemptive contexts. We must first understand the text in its own terms. It's really important that we don't diminish the importance of the individual characters or narratives in any particular passage of Scripture. So again, for instance, one thing we absolutely don't want to do as we study through the books of Samuel is to say that David is a type of Christ, and only a type of Christ. David's life itself is extremely important in getting all the richness of the Scriptures. He is a man from Bethlehem. We learn from his weaknesses and failings. We see Christ in David's life simply by showing how David needed a Savior just like we do.

Second, I firmly believe that it is absolutely fundamental in studying the Old Testament Scriptures to recognize that there is an overall redemptive context at work. By this I don't just mean that God made promises to Adam and Eve in the garden, and those promises would be fulfilled in Christ, and David is living between these two points. I believe just as much as this, we must not only see Christ as the fulfillment of redemptive history, but present in every chapter. We must hold to Christ's words in Luke 24 and reject an over-academic way of interpretation that disallows us to recognize that the Bible interprets the Bible, and that the New Testament is our primary tool for unlocking the treasures of the Old Testament. A few quotes here:

“the Old Testament must be interpreted not only in its own context, but also in the context of the New Testament. Just as the apostles preached Christ from the Old Testament using the vantage point of the New Testament so must we.”

“The Puritan version of redemptive-historical preaching sees Christ not just at the end of redemptive history, but in it and throughout it.

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6 Greidanus, Preaching Christ from the OT.
For the Puritans, Christ was not just the last chapter that all the others were setting the scene for, but rather Christ was present from the very first chapter, and in every chapter of redemptive history... They did not view the Old Testament events as only stepping-stones to Christ. They saw Christ in the stepping-stones themselves.”

“One of the great shibboleths of modern hermeneutics is that we must not allow for any interpretation that goes beyond the original understanding of the original writer and his audience. Now, of course, the original understanding of the writer is important and we should investigate it. However, we must remember that there is a divine author behind the human writer. Calvin highlights this when he frequently speaks of the “intention of the Holy Spirit” or the “intention of God...”

There is one more aspect I believe is essential in interpreting the Scriptures. We must apply the text to ourselves, recognizing that redemptive history is not over yet!! We never want the study of the Scriptures to be just an intellectual exercise, even if we are talking about Christ. So often either we stop at the first step or the second. Especially perhaps in academia and scholarship we only emphasize the narrative or character himself in his original historical, cultural, literary context; completely neglecting the second two aspects. If we're a little bit better, we draw Christ out in some way; we show how any particular passage exalts Jesus and the gospel. But so often, especially in my circle, even the best preaching and teaching on these passages often neglects to recognize that the redemptive story of the Bible is not over yet. We must absolutely be Christ-centered in all of our Biblical interpretation and study. But we also need to remember that this is a living story, and we are playing a part in it in our generation. And my friends, there is still much to be done. There are millions in the world living in darkness, starving from the spiritual famine that has swept through the world. And Jesus calls you and I to go to them with His gospel. Christ has sent us out into all the world to bring home a bride to Himself. Paul says in Romans that we have received this grace, “to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name’s sake” (1:5). Thus, if our study is merely one of the past, we fail miserably. If we talk only about what Christ

8 David Murray, Ibid.
has done, speaking nothing about what Christ is now calling us to do, we have truly missed it. Yes, Christ is the source. And He calls us now, through the resurrection power He died to give us, to be filled with that power through the Holy Spirit, and to go to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach, joyfully laying our lives down as living sacrifices among the nations for His name's sake. There needs to be a sharp reminder to us all of a very, very present reality. The tabernacle of the Lord remains desolate as we sit in our paneled houses bickering over finer points of eschatology. We have not been faithful if at the end of the study of any passage we say, “Oh that's cool,” and shut our Bibles without a sober recognition of what Christ is calling each of us to personally.

I hope this all makes sense. I pray Jesus is lifted up in these pages, and despite the many sins and failings of this pitiful mind and wandering heart, that He would get some glory for Himself.
Reflections on 1st Samuel
Many years before David the Lord had done wonderful things in Bethlehem. As Samuel was the last of the judges we are reminded of what had happened only a few generations back during the years the judges governed. The Living God drew a Gentile woman to Bethlehem. Her name was Ruth, and she had come with her mother-in-law Naomi. Ruth sought refuge in God, and she was not denied. Her husband Boaz could sympathize well with Ruth, for his mother had been a foreigner too. Her name was Rahab, and she had a similar story as did Ruth; for she had years before left her own people and the gods of Jericho. She had fled the city of destruction and set her face like flint upon the promise of Life in the Messiah. Naomi had thought of herself forgotten of God; but the Lord was getting ready to bless her in ways she would never have imagined. She thought herself barren, but in time the Lord would make her fruitful beyond her wildest dreams. Naomi, through Ruth, would have a son. Her son Obed became the father of Jesse of Bethlehem, the father of David. Naomi would inherit honor other women of Israel could only dream about—for she would be the great-grandmother of the greatest king of Israel. But there would be more. Jesse was of the tribe of Judah, through whom God had promised the Messiah would come (Genesis 49:10).

So too, many years after David the Lord would once again do wonderful things in little Bethlehem. He would again visit His people. Another woman would give birth to a son there. His name would be called Jesus. He would come to save His people from their sins. David reigned as a king, but He would be the King of kings. David was a man after God's own heart, but this King would have the Law of God written on His heart in a way David never did. And just as this Messiah-King would have one who would go before Him, announcing His coming, preparing His way, and anointing Him for the work of Shepherd of Israel, so too it was fitting for the prophet Samuel to prepare the way for David.

Thus, faithful Samuel is sent to Bethlehem in order to anoint one of Jesse's sons as the new king of Israel. This is indeed a momentous day in the life of the people of God. But more, it is a foreshadowing of the King yet to come. The anointing of David by the hand of
Samuel is later echoed in the baptism of our Lord by John. Both Samuel and John were sent by God the Father to anoint one whom had been set apart from his brothers. Samuel and John are both of the tribe of Levi. Both Samuel's mother and John's gave birth to their sons after a season of barrenness. Samuel is the last of the judges; John is the last of the prophets. Both were told by the Lord whom it was God had chosen to reign over His people. And though neither of them at first recognized the one God had set apart (see John 1:33), both Samuel and John were selected for the great privilege of consecrating the Lord's anointed. After David's anointing the Spirit of the Lord descended mightily upon him; likewise at John's baptism the Spirit descended upon our Lord as a dove (Luke 3:22). Lastly, it seems John and Samuel have the same heart. They never wanted their own kingdoms; they weren't chasing after crowns. Their hearts were fixed only and wholly upon the kingdom of God. Zeal for His house consumed them. They were servants only; they gladly bowed their knee to the reign of God, confessing freely before all men, “I am not the Christ” (John 1:20).

Let us dwell a little longer on the prophet Samuel before we move on to the life of the shepherd from Bethlehem. Samuel is a godly man. He is a man of prayer. We find him in this chapter grieving before the Lord over Saul in verse one. Later when Samuel goes to Bethlehem, the secret communion continues. The Lord whispers in Samuel's ear; and speaks to his heart. A man of God is a man who spends much time in secret communion with his heavenly Father. Our Lord tells us that God is found in the secret place (Matthew 6:6), and Samuel knows that he will only be of help to anyone to the extent he is intimate with his Savior—and that the only way to intimacy is through communion with His God. Samuel is a man much in secret prayer. He knows and loves the Lord. He obeys the Lord's command to go to Bethlehem, even though it seems it could have easily cost him his life (v2). He is also a man living by faith in future grace. God had not told him everything (v3), but he goes in the light that he has, trusting the Lord would show him the rest when he needed to know. And it seems the reaction of the elders of Bethlehem (v4) reflects the kind of deep respect and submission that is given to a seasoned man of God.

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Though 1 Samuel 1 says Samuel's father Elkanah was from Ephraim, 1 Chronicles 6:33 makes clear he was a Levite.
But though Samuel is a godly man, he is not without faults. He is not a perfect Christian. Samuel is still learning and growing, even as a seasoned minister of the gospel. He is afraid to go to Bethlehem because of what Saul might do to him. He looks at the outer appearance of Jesse's sons rather than the inward person of the heart. Samuel is a godly man, but he is still only a man. And it is men just like Samuel that the Lord uses. It is quite freeing to come to the realization that God always blesses His people despite them; and makes them instruments of blessing despite them. It has always been this way. One of my favorite passages is the verse just before the Great Commission, Matthew 28:17. Speaking of the disciples, we read, “When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful.” Yet it is these very men that our Lord Jesus sent out into all nations in the next verse. The Lord is well pleased to use weak instruments to accomplish His purposes in the world.

It seems that just when David is anointed by Samuel and the Spirit of the Lord comes mightily upon him, the Spirit of the Lord departs from Saul. Saul is one of the most tragic figures in the Old Testament. We have dealt more in depth with the question of what happened to Saul in our introduction, and we saw there that on many accounts Saul's sin was a parallel of the sin of Adam in the garden. We saw that Saul as the first king of Israel is likened to the first Adam and his fall into sin; while David is a type of the second Adam to come. This paradigm is helpful for me personally, but it still doesn't necessarily answer the question of what happened to Saul. Was he a true believer who fell away from God? Does Saul's turning from God prove that true believers can fall away from the Lord? In short, no. Scripture is clear: Jesus has promised, “I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish” (John 10:28). None who come to Christ will taste death. He himself is our victory. “Because I live, you will live also” (John 14:19). But we are also given many solemn warnings in the Scriptures—both explicitly in teaching, and implicitly through illustration, as here with Saul. His example is a solemn warning for us. We are constantly taught in the New Testament to look to the Old Testament characters like Saul as examples, and through the grace of God, to keep ourselves from the snares they fall prey to at whatever cost.10 Warnings are for our good; otherwise Scripture wouldn't have them. Our Lord Jesus taught us this himself in solemn words such as, “Remember Lot's wife” (Luke

17:32). John Bunyan in his classic, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, paints a powerful scene that reminds me all too well of king Saul. In closing I will quote it here at length:

Now, said Christian, let me go hence. Nay, stay, said the Interpreter, till I have showed thee a little more, and after that thou shalt go on thy way. So he took him by the hand again, and led him into a very dark room, where there sat a man in an iron cage. Now the man, to look on, seemed very sad; he sat with his eyes looking down to the ground, his hands folded together, and he sighed as if he would break his heart. Then said Christian, What means this? At which the Interpreter bid him talk with the man.

Then said Christian to the man, What art thou? The man answered, I am what I was not once.

**CHRISTIAN:** What wast thou once?

**THE MAN:** The man said, I was once a fair and flourishing professor, *Lk.8:13*, both in mine own eyes, and also in the eyes of others: I once was, as I thought, fair for the celestial city, and had then even joy at the thoughts that I should get thither.

**CHRISTIAN:** Well, but what art thou now?

**THE MAN:** I am now a man of despair, and am shut up in it, as in this iron cage. I cannot get out; Oh now I cannot!

**CHRISTIAN:** But how camest thou into this condition?

**THE MAN:** I left off to watch and be sober: I laid the reins upon the neck of my lusts; I sinned against the light of the word, and the goodness of God; I have grieved the Spirit, and he is gone; I tempted the devil, and he is come to me; I have provoked God to anger, and he has left me: I have so hardened my heart, that I cannot repent.

Then said Christian to the Interpreter, But is there no hope for such a man as this? Ask him, said the Interpreter.

**CHRISTIAN:** Then said Christian, Is there no hope, but you must be kept in the iron cage of despair?

**THE MAN:** No, none at all.

**CHRISTIAN:** Why, the Son of the Blessed is very pitiful.

**THE MAN:** I have crucified him to myself afresh, *Heb.6:6*; I have despised his person, *Lk.19:14*; I have despised his righteousness; I have counted his blood an unholy thing; I have done despite to the
spirit of grace, *Heb. 10:29*; therefore I have shut myself out of all the promises and there now remains to me nothing but threatenings, dreadful threatenings, faithful threatenings of certain judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour me as an adversary.

*CHRISTIAN:* For what did you bring yourself into this condition?

*THE MAN:* For the lusts, pleasures, and profits of this world; in the enjoyment of which I did then promise myself much delight: but now every one of those things also bite me, and gnaw me like a burning worm.

*CHRISTIAN:* But canst thou not now repent and turn?

*THE MAN:* God hath denied me repentance. His word gives me no encouragement to believe; yea, himself hath shut me up in this iron cage: nor can all the men in the world let me out. Oh eternity! eternity! how shall I grapple with the misery that I must meet with in eternity?

*INTERPRETER:* Then said the Interpreter to Christian, Let this man’s misery be remembered by thee, and be an everlasting caution to thee.

*CHRISTIAN:* Well, said Christian, this is fearful! God help me to watch and to be sober, and to pray that I may shun the cause of this man’s misery. Sir, is it not time for me to go on my way now?
We have watched Saul fall from God. If he had kept the Lord's command, there would have been life—the Lord would have established his kingdom forever (13:13). But like Adam many years before, Saul disobeyed the command of the Lord. Would chapter 17 be the day of reckoning? Would now death come to Saul and all those under his care? Would Goliath come with the sword of justice? Is this the day of judgment for Saul's sin? Who is able to go against this giant of a man? We quickly learn that Saul cannot, neither can any man in his entire army.

What does this teach us? First, Goliath is here a picture of the power and punishment of sin; Saul and his men a picture of the natural man. The natural man can never, never by his own strength set himself free from the power or the punishment of his sin. That is, those who have never truly been born again, as Jesus teaches in John chapter 3, cannot enter the kingdom of God. Those who have never been born of the Spirit are under God's just sentence of condemnation for their sin, as well as enslaved to the overwhelming power of their sins. Sins punishment is manifest from God's Word. The Scriptures declare with absolute clarity: “The person who sins will die” (Ezekiel 18:20); “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18). God is angry with us just like a good and just judge is angry with the wicked criminals that stand before him guilty of atrocious acts. “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), and this death includes not only the physical reality, but an eternal reality. This ought to make us tremble. There is a lake of fire whose smoke of torment goes up forever. The ones sent there have no rest day or night, their agony never ceases and the flame never quenches.

The natural man likewise, can never gain victory over the power of sin. Just like Saul and all Israel were hopeless and helpless before the taunts of Goliath, so too every man who is born in this world—apart from the radical, transformative, life-changing, supernatural work of grace in a soul—every single person on earth is naturally a slave of their sins. How helpless we are!! We cannot stop sinning—
nor can we even want to stop sinning. We drink down sin like a glass of water, and we love the taste of it. Man sins as naturally as a cow eats grass, or a lion feeds on flesh. God is not afraid to lay man's pride in the dust as He declares the truth about human kind in His holy Scriptures. According to the Bible, all men naturally sin not because they learn it from their parents, not because they had a bad upbringing, and not because they are forced to. According to Jesus, and all the Scriptures, men sin because they love sin: “men loved the darkness rather than the Light” (John 3:19). How do you know if you've truly been born again? According to Scripture, it is not because you said a prayer and asked Jesus into your heart. This is found nowhere in Scripture. Being baptized with water is no guarantee that you have truly been baptized with the Holy Spirit. Having a powerful emotional experience doesn't prove anything in and of itself. Having been healed in a miraculous way doesn't mean you have become a child of God. Only an intellectual belief in Jesus, being born into a Christian family, regular attendance at church, or mere outward profession of faith in Jesus are none of the things the Scripture gives for our assurance that we have had our sins washed away.

Rather, the greatest test is our desires. Regeneration is the great test of true conversion. Where are your deepest desires set? The true child of God can say with full honesty and without hesitation that he indeed used to love his sin. But when Christ saved him, his heart was so radically transformed that the sin he used to love is now his worst enemy. Sin used to be fun; now it makes him sick. Now what is fun is spending time with the Savior—pouring over the pages of the Bible, thinking upon the things of God, sharing times of intimate communion in secret prayer with the heavenly Father. A truly converted man possesses a new heart on the inside. And because this new heart has surrendered its entirety wholly to Christ, and loves and longs for God more than anything else, this man's life begins to change on the outside. For the power of sin has been broken. The

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11The “sinners prayer” is a very recent development in church history. One who prays in this way may indeed be expressing true and living faith in Christ; but it is vital to understand that it is repentance and faith in Christ that save a man, and that true repentance and faith will always evidence themselves in a changed life—a new heart that leads to walking in the narrow way—a lifestyle characterized by walking in the light. Jesus himself declares in Matthew 7 that there will be many professing Christians that never truly knew Him. I fear many in our churches believe themselves saved because they said the sinners prayer at a young age, but their lives don't back up the reality of their profession.
man who has never truly been born again, by the Word of God, and by the Spirit of God, always finds himself as sin's slave and his life is one characterized by practicing sin. Thus, just like Saul and his men before Goliath, a natural man can never be set free from sins punishment in the next life, nor can he ever gain victory over the power of sin in this life. But Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life; in Him is victory.

The story of David and Goliath drips with the message of the gospel. The sons of Israel were helpless and hopeless before their enemy. Goliath owned them. But just when it seemed there was no hope, something happened. A father sent his son to his own kinsmen, to seek their welfare. Some of his own kinsmen were jealous of him, scolded him, and hated him for his words (17:28-29). Nevertheless, he would deliver them from the hand of the strong enemy. David had been freshly called of God and anointed in the last chapter. It was for delivering the sons of Israel that the Lord had set David apart. It was for this he had been called. David was clothed with royal majesty and honor, the robes and armor of a king (v38); but he gave these up. So too Christ came into the world, sent from the Father, sent to His brethren; yet despised, rejected and forsaken of men. He too was hated for His words, for He came to testify to the truth, and the words He uttered were the very words of God, but men hated the truth. As David stripped himself of the royal ware, Christ emptied himself, leaving behind the kingly robes of glory and honor, and the crown due to Him, coming to the earth as a servant. Not only this, Christ gave up the armor of God's protection, for, “He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8). David single-handedly ran to that battle line; this was a battle he alone would fight. So it was with the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone took upon Himself the wrath of God to redeem a people for Himself. He delivered a people, at the cost of His own life. He set His eyes upon the cross, to drink down the cup of the fierce anger of God in the place of His brethren, as a substitute. David obtained victory by slaying Goliath; Christ obtained victory over death by being slain—laying down His own life, and rising up from the dead after three days.

We must note also why it was that David took his own life in his hand. It wasn't primarily for the sake of God's people Israel—rather it was for the sake of God's own name—to vindicate the name of God among the nations (v46). In the same way, Christ did not leave
heaven, come to the earth, die for the sins of God's people, and rise again from the dead primarily for your sake and mine. Everything that Christ did, He did ultimately for the sake of His Father (see Romans 15:7-9). David killed the giant with his own sword; so too Christ has conquered death through death. It was only in David's victory over Goliath that the sons of Israel gained victory over their enemies. It was when David cut off the head of the giant that the men of Israel rose up and pursued their enemies in overwhelming victory. In the same way, Jesus' life and death are the only grounds for our victory. We triumph because Jesus Christ has gained the victory. The strong man has been bound, and the power of sin has been broken. Through the precious blood of the Son of God, we have been released as the children of Israel were from the bondage of Egypt. Through the death and resurrection of Christ alone, we His people are now led in triumphal procession over our enemies (Colossians 2:15; 2 Corinthians 2:14). All the spiritual descendants of Adam die in Adam; likewise those who put their trust in Christ obtain victory through His merit alone (v9; see also Romans 5).

Friend, may I ask you—where do you stand? Are you living a life of true repentance, having been born again of the Spirit? Have you truly surrendered all to Christ? Or do you still consider sin as a kind of old friend—even if you know it's wrong? Does your life prove your profession, or rather show that you are still in your sins? If you feel you have never truly given over all to Christ, my friend, there is grace for you today! In Jesus Christ there is victory. He has done everything on the cross. He has paid in full for the sins of all those who put their trust in Him. And He came for real sinners. Run to Him! Run to Him like David ran to the battle field. And run with confidence, for God has made wonderful promises in His Word to the one who seeks Him with all their heart (Isaiah 55:6-7; Luke 11:9-11; John 6:37; Jeremiah 29:13; Proverbs 2:1-6; Romans 10:9).

For those whose repentant lifestyle proves the reality of your faith: Lift up your heads. Christ is your victory. You are nothing and you have nothing, but Christ has accomplished all in your place. You are helpless and hopeless no more, for Christ has done all. "For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). Ask Him no more for a word of forgiveness—He has given it to you; He has withheld nothing. It is finished. Jesus Christ is your champion. Let these sweet truths sink deep into your soul:
"The Son has life in himself, and he gives it to whom he pleases, and he does it when and in the measure he pleases. Christian, do you feel as if you are nothing? It matters not—for you are enough in your Jesus...Bewail your own poverty and weakness, but bless yourself in your Lord, for he is rich, righteous, and all-powerful...as the husband and the wife, so Christ and his saints are mutually concerned. They are rich or poor, stand and fall, live and die together...They have nothing but through him...Whatever is his is theirs. Whatever is theirs is his. His God is their God, his Father is their Father, his blood, his merits, his Spirit, his victories, all the spoils he has captured, all the revenue and income of his life and death—All is theirs! He obeyed for them, he suffered for them, he lived for them, he died for them, he rose for them, he ascended for them, and he has set down on the right hand of God to act for them. This is that Jesus who is given to us."12

Part 2

We have seen that our passage reflects truths of both the Father and the Son. God the Father, who had chosen David, is typified in David's father Jesse who sent him on a mission to his brothers, to bring back news of their welfare. It is Christ the Son who conquers. David is a picture of our Jesus, who alone is Mighty to save. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He did it through the cross. As David ran down the mountain, descending to meet the giant in the valley, Jesus, the King of splendor, descended to the depths of Sheol to slay death itself. But there is still more to glean from the text. We must probe further, gleaning truths concerning the third person of the Trinity.

Yes, it was only because of David—as a picture of Christ—that the Philistines were defeated that day. And likewise, our victory as believers is grounded wholly upon Christ and His finished work alone. Nevertheless, after David's victory against that giant, it was all Israel who pursued the Philistines. I ask: Has Jesus given no mission to His church? Is there no more work to do? Has He given no command to His people? Far from it. Our mission is clear: “as the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (John 20:21). The whole purpose of Christ's atoning work was to purchase a people for His Father from every tribe and tongue and nation under heaven. As

Abraham sent his servant into a foreign land to bring back a bride for his son, so we have been sent into all the world with one single solemn commission—to bring back home the bride of Christ. Yes, Jesus took the cup of wrath from our hands and replaced it with the cup of blessing. But He didn't shed His blood only for you. There are other sheep that He must gather as well. There are still empty seats at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

God had anointed David in chapter 16 to deliver His people in chapter 17. In the same way, Christ was commissioned by the Father, and anointed with the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). The work of the Spirit in the life of Christ is a precious and profitable study. Our Lord was conceived in the Spirit (Luke 1:35). In probably the first sermon our Lord preaches in Luke chapter 4, He declares He has been anointed with the Spirit of God, having freshly been baptized by John, after which the Spirit had descended upon Him as a dove (Luke 3:22; see also 4:18). Being then full of the Spirit He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness (Luke 4:1); after which He returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14). He offered himself up on the cross through the Spirit (Hebrews 9:14), and it was the Spirit that raised Him from the dead (Romans 8:11).

Though we cannot quote Isaiah 61:1 in the same way our Lord did as He preached that day in Nazareth, yet my friends, the Spirit that dwelt in fullness upon our Lord is the same Spirit that has been given to us. Yes, in once sense, David is a true type of Christ. But remember, David is not Christ. He is a shepherd boy from Bethlehem. He is an Old Testament believer in the coming Messiah, who is filled with the Spirit. I do not idolize David as a Christian hero with no faults. Indeed, there are no great men of God—only weak men who belong to a great God. But at the same time, I do not despise the teaching that puts David forth here as an example to follow. God is sometimes well-pleased to use a single match to ignite such a fire that sets whole nations ablaze. If we had more examples like David to follow in our day—men who though weak in themselves were filled with the Holy Spirit—men who trusted in their God and considered their own lives as nothing in their sight if only they might see Christ exalted in the world at whatever cost—maybe we would see revival again. Oh that God would fill us with that same Spirit that consumed our Lord—that our very food would be to do the will of the Father and accomplish His work. Oh for men today like St. Patrick or George Whitefield, men whom God used almost single-handedly
to bring entire nations to their knees before Him through their fearless open-air proclamation of the gospel. We are desperately in need today of Acts 20:24 men. Some would just rather talk about theology and never actually do anything. God save me from that cowardice that dresses itself in high doctrines! Paul was a missionary-theologian, and that's what I want to be. The kind of doctrine that glories in the cross and cares nothing for lost sinners on their way to hell has embraced a different cross than Jesus', for the whole purpose of His cross was for “the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy” (Romans 15:9). “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9). One preacher has rightly said, “It was a design of the cross. If you love the cross, you must love what it was designed to do—namely, gather a people from every people group on planet earth. If you don't love that, you don't love the cross—you're creating it in your own imagination.”

So, let's get back to the text. What can we learn in looking at our passage in this light? First, let us look to the means by which God delivers. Saul tries to get the shepherd boy to wear his robes and armor. The armor we understand in a sense, but why does he clothe David with his garments (v38)? Is Saul concerned that David should fight fashionably? As if David’s dazzling apparel will bring the 9-foot giant to his knees trembling? We are always tempted to fight the battles of the Lord with the weapons of the world, or the weapons of the flesh. Saul likewise girds David with armor. In ministry we so easily fall into trusting in our (seminary) education, our eloquence, our winsomeness, church-planting strategies, knowledge, power of persuasion, experience, reputation, or even our gifts, instead of the power of God. Thankfully, the shepherd boy isn't as advanced in the principles of warfare as the king. One needs to become a fool that he might become wise. The weapons God has given us seem as foolish as David's stick and shepherd's bag—but they are surely no less powerful for the destruction of fortresses (2 Corinthians 10:4)! Woe to us in the day that we abandon the mighty weapon of the Word of God—the gospel of the cross—preached with all its weight, sharpness, simplicity, and power—to put on other more advanced and modern armor. We have lost the battle already when we have laid down the mighty weapons of secret communion with Jesus and intercessory

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13John Piper, from his biography on the life of Adoniram Judson.
prayer for strategies and cleverness. God has given us weapons to use, and they will be effectual—but only if we put them to use. We have been given prayer and the Word of God. It is prayer and preaching that will bring revival again to our land.

We find these two truths wonderfully bound together especially in texts such as Ezekiel 37, and the vision of the valley of dry bones. Ezekiel was asked if the dry bones which filled the valley could live. Surely not—dry bones live? Conversion is just as supernatural. But Ezekiel is told to do two things: first, he is instructed to prophesy (or preach) over the bones (vv4-6); then he is told to prophesy (or preach) to the breath (v9). What does this mean? It is the same truth given at the end of the last chapter: “This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them: I will increase their men like a flock” (36:37). After commanding Ezekiel to preach the gospel to the dry bones, the Lord actually bids Ezekiel to preach to the breath—in effect—commanding him to “preach” to the Spirit, just as he was to preach to the bones—to preach back to God all the promises He has made, to plead with Him in prayer with such a boldness that it is likened to actually preaching to God himself!

Thus, if we want to see the kingdom of God go forth with power, we need ministers and witnesses who will declare the whole counsel of the Word of God. The altar in Moses’ day was to be built of uncut stones, for to wield any tool on it would profane it (Exodus 20:25; Deuteronomy 27:5-6). In the same way, the priesthood of all believers must declare the uncut Word of God. We must declare the Word as it is, neither adding to it nor taking away. The Lord solemnly warned Jeremiah not to omit even one word of what had been given to him (Jeremiah 26:2). The Scriptures are described as a sword for a reason, for the truths are meant to cut. Preachers must never try to smooth over what is meant to be sharp, lest they prove themselves to be false prophets, teaching only pleasant things that men want to hear. “Woe to you when all men speak well of you,” warned our Master in Luke 6:26. It was not unbelieving Gentiles who tried to throw our Lord off the cliff after His first sermon, but regular church-goers (Luke 4:28-29). Paul's preaching labors through the book of Acts demonstrate that the faithful preaching of the gospel will always generally produce two kinds of reactions: the anger of some and the repentance of others. A man must be deeply cut before he can be healed. It is the gospel of the cross alone that is the power of God, setting free the captives of sin as the demonstration of God's
power set free the sons of Israel from their captivity in Egypt (Exodus 9:16). We must preach the gospel of the cross of Christ, and we must preach it often, if we want to see many brought to the marriage feast. The Scripture contains both a promise and an exhortation which declares, “he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (2 Corinthians 9:6). The Psalmist writes, “He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him” (126:6).

We have also been given the mighty weapon of prayer. The man God uses mightily is the man that knows his God intimately in the secret place. It is said that the apostle James’ knees were callous because of the time he spent alone on his knees before God. Our Lord himself was often slipping away to find secret time with the Father; and it was while He was praying that the Holy Spirit descended upon Him as a dove (Luke 3:21-22). It was after much time of prayer in the wilderness that He returned again to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14). He instructed us to the end that we might always pray and never lose heart (Luke 18:1). It is through prayer that we receive fresh fillings of His Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). And prayer is effectual (James 5:17-18). It was when the sons of Israel called out to God that He sent them Moses; and likewise the judges. Countries are won to God through prayer. J.A. James recounts a wonderful story about the beloved Robert Bruce:

One sabbath, being unusually late before he appeared at the house of God, a messenger was sent to hasten him, who, upon coming to his study door, heard him distinctly and vehemently affirm, "I will not go hence except you go with me." Unwilling to disturb what he considered to be a conversation, the messenger returned with the report that Mr. Bruce was not likely to come soon, for he had heard him declare that he would not stir, unless a person who was in his study, and who seemed very reluctant to stir, would come with him. At length the man of God appeared, with such an unusual solemnity, unction, and effect, attending his words, as left no doubt upon the minds of the auditory who the Stranger was with whom Mr. Bruce, like another Israel, had wrestled and had prevailed.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{14}From the sermon preached at his brother’s ordination, \textit{Ministerial Duties Stated and Enforced}. 

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Let us like David, take up the right weapons, and put them to use. Spirit-wrought obedience is a very real means of grace. Paul thus exhorts Timothy, “For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God” (2 Timothy 1:6-8). We are told that David ran to meet his foe in battle (v48). We too might take up the weapons of our warfare with confident expectation, for our God who has promised is faithful. His Word is effectual (Isaiah 55:11-13); His sheep will hear His voice (John 5:25); the Father will indeed draw His elect from all nations (John 6:44).
Reflecting upon chapter 18, we first see two differing reactions to Christ's reign in one's life, in the reactions of Saul and Jonathan to David. For David here is a forepicture of Christ, and his reign as Christ's reign. The two reactions: Humble submission to God's plan or a clinging to advancement of one's own kingdom and praise. Saul will not give up his kingdom, for he views it as his, he seeks his own kingdom and glory and name. But Jesus is enough for Jonathan—he doesn't need the kingdom, nor does he want it. Saul is controlled by jealousy for his own kingdom; Jonathan willingly and gladly takes off his king's robes and weapons and gives them to David. Do we gladly give the glory to God and let Him alone have the praise He deserves? Or, like Saul, are we seeking to protect and build up our own kingdom? Are we jealous for Christ's glory or our own? This is a very, very important question. The Lord looks at the heart.

I want to be more like Jonathan. I want the heart of John the Baptist. The goal of his ministry was to lose his own followers to Christ. His heart was set upon his disciples leaving him to follow Jesus (John 1:35-37). When some of his disciples seemed to become jealous that his ministry was decreasing, He testified, \"He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full. He must increase, but I must decrease.\" (John 3:29-30). I want to be one who doesn't need to be the most important or best preacher, teacher, or missionary. I want to be happy with just Jesus. I don't want to be the one who needs to be used, either. I want to gladly rejoice in the raising up of others for the purpose of the advancement of the kingdom of God. I want to rejoice in my heart when God uses others instead of me. Lord Jesus, make me more like John and Jonathan.

We also see in this chapter the end result of sin. Satan always promises, doesn't he, that sin will bring happiness. Though we know when we disobey God we have to compromise our conscience and eternal destiny, Satan allures us to sin by telling us about all the happiness sin will bring. But we can see from Saul's life that this is nothing but a lie. Is Saul happy? Is he? Here is Saul, refusing to
submit to God, refusing to let God have control over his life, pursuing his own kingdom and glory—did it make him happy? Can he say, “Well, I may end up in hell forever and I can't get much sleep at night, but at least in living the way I want I'm happy”? No, Saul cannot say that. Saul is enslaved to his jealousy of David, and to his anger, and he is miserable. This is because what Scripture declares over and over proves true in this story and in our own experience—sin never leads anyone to happiness—only to misery. The path of sin is the path to misery. It promises life, but never gives it. It promises freedom and joy, but where are they? In this way Scripture talks about the deceitfulness of sin in Hebrews. It is deceitful because it promises to bring life and happiness, but in the end there is only emptiness, guilt, and misery.

We see it all around us, don't we? Just look at the faces of people that have lived lives the way they wanted to, lives of living as they pleased, lives of disobedience to God and His commands. Are they happy? Do their faces emanate deep joy? Now look at a Christian—a true Christian. A man who has given his life to Christ and follows His ways. Often now when I'm at a restaurant or on the streets I feel I can tell who is a Christian simply by watching them for a few minutes, and the life and peace that radiate from them. “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38).

After living in South Asia for a year without coming back to the west, I needed to spend a month in the States, and had to fly through Heathrow airport in London. I was literally shocked upon entering the airport—first because of all the fancy shops I had forgotten could exist in airports—but secondly, because of the misery on the faces of nearly every single person in that airport. People in poor countries in South Asia dream about going to the west because they think that if they make much more money they will be happy. But nearly everyone in that airport—from a wealthy country, a country that has now mostly rejected God and His ways, was in all truth absolutely miserable. Friends, don't be deceived by sin and Satan's lies. Only in Christ is true life and peace.

It is instructive to note what it is that is Saul's sin in this chapter. It is jealousy that drove Saul to want to kill David. We read in verse 8 after the women's song, “Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. . .” Jealousy is
something we don't normally think of as a grave sin, but the Scriptures speak of it as wicked and deadly. We must guard against jealousy in our hearts. One way we can test whether we are seeking God's glory and His kingdom or if we are seeking to further our own is if we have jealousy in our hearts against anyone. Are we jealous of the talents or gifts of others? Can we bless another person's giftings in our own heart and its success as we would our own, because the kingdom of God is going forth? How easily at times I find myself falling prey to this! Jealousy is a very dangerous and destructive thing. If it is in us let us get rid of it at any cost. For jealousy was the great sin that led Saul to such a sad state. It was jealousy that drove Cain to kill his brother. It was jealousy that drove Joseph's brothers to sell their own flesh and blood into slavery. And it was because of jealousy that the religious rulers in the day of our Lord turned him over to Pilate. And if this weren't enough, we have this passage from James, “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.” (3:16). Jealousy isn't only destructive, but it's silly for believers. As Peter walked along the beach with the Lord, we read that he looked back at the apostle John, asking Jesus, “Lord, and what about this man?” (John 21:21). It's almost as if Peter is a little jealous of John. How silly! Think of it, the apostle Peter being a little envious of the apostle John. It's just as silly for us, saints—for the Lord has created each of us and hand-crafted our talents and giftings perfectly for His special and particular purposes.

We also learn one more thing about sin in this passage. Saul seems very kind to David, he appears on the outside to be doing a good thing for him in giving his own daughter to him in marriage. But his heart is full of poison. Just like David writes in Psalm 55:21, “His speech was smoother than butter, but his heart was war; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords.” Many “kind deeds” on the last day will be exposed to be what they truly were. For when the Lord comes Scripture says He will “both bring to Light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts” (1 Corinthians 4:5).

There was recently in the media much talk of one who had earlier been seen as a great humanitarian who had written a very popular book—he was apparently exposed as no more than a deceiver who was merely fishing after his own greatness and the praise of people. Jesus will reveal on that day all the actions of men that seemed so good, all the humanitarian efforts that were applauded by men—
actions that at the heart of them were motivated by sinful and selfish desires. Deceivers will be exposed for who they really were. Either we expose our sins before God and man in this life, and inherit eternal life; or in the next life they will be exposed before all at great and eternal costs to ourselves. Let us be those who walk in the light and not in the darkness!

Lastly, in this chapter we see the meekness of David. He says twice, first in verse 18: “Who am I, and what is my life or my father's family in Israel, that I should be the king's son-in-law?” He repeats this later a second time in verse 23. David regarded himself as lowly and poor and undeserving of occupying any high position. This is meekness. This is meekness, because from what Scripture tells us at this point, David was the most valiant warrior in Israel on the battle field. He is the only one who just last chapter was courageous enough to face Goliath, and that without hesitation—he ran to the battle field. He is indeed a warrior. But he deems himself unworthy of any honor. David is not chasing after titles in the army or the kingdom or fame or popularity—David is chasing after being pleasing to Christ. And as he beholds Christ, he sees himself clearly, in the right light. He sees his sins much more than his victories, and he attributes all his victories to God. He is meek because he knows well his hidden weaknesses, because he has seen Christ, and he knows he can't do anything without Him. It is not a pretend humility, but true meekness. This is the kind I desire.
This chapter shows us what a false sort of faith or repentance will look like. In John 8 Jesus speaks to those Jews who had believed upon Him (v31), but to the same audience He ends up declaring that they are “sons of their father, the devil” (8:44). We learn by this that not all “belief” is true belief. There is a sort of faith that is not true saving faith in Jesus. There is the kind of “faith” that is only in the head but never comes to the heart. There is the kind of “faith” that bears no fruit. There is the kind of “faith” that demonstrates no true repentance. There is the kind of “faith” that does not last. And Scripture declares that this kind of faith is not true faith and certainly not the kind of faith that saves from the coming wrath of God. Only the faith that manifests itself with true repentance, and repentance that lasts, and the repentance that bears the fruit of the Spirit—only this kind of faith will save a man. “The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Matthew 3:10).

Thus, this chapter is very insightful for us, as we study Saul, in showing the signs of someone who has professed faith in Jesus, yet whose actions reveal that his “faith” is no true saving faith at all.

First, Saul loves David only when he furthers Saul's own agenda and his own kingdom. He loves David only to the extent that he benefits the king—but his love quickly turns to hate when he learns his own throne will be given over to the son of Jesse. There is a kind of man who loves Jesus only in so far as He will prosper him in this life. There is the kind of man who uses Jesus as a means to worldly gain. He follows Him only to the degree that his personal agendas and desires will be furthered. He is the man who eagerly calls upon the Christ to be his Savior from hell, but never truly makes Him his King and his Lord. He wants Jesus to save him from the wrath of God in the next life, but he doesn't want Jesus to save him from his sin in this life. Just like Saul cannot stand the idea of David being king instead of him, so this man never wholly surrenders his life over to Jesus. And we need to understand that this kind of faith is not true faith. This kind of faith is not just an immature faith—no, this man is not a Christian at all. For faith that takes Jesus as Savior but not as Lord—
faith that takes Jesus as Savior from hell but does not turn over its whole life to Him in repentance—this is a false faith; and this man has not yet entered the kingdom of God—he is still in his sins. For the Lord has said it, "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:5). But, friends, the door of the ark is still open—run to Christ.

Second, we have an example in king Saul of the kind of faith that makes resolves but can't keep them, the kind of repentance that doesn't last (v6). Saul seems to turn from his sin, he seems to repent—but this repentance hardly seems to even last a few hours—at the most a few weeks. In the end he is back to his old ways. This is because Saul is still enslaved to his sin and it rules over him like a master does his slave. Unless a man experiences true conversion, his sins will always rule him. He may trade some sins in for others, he may give up drinking or cheating—but these will just be replaced with other sins, often times more refined and socially acceptable sins. Jesus says naturally every man is enslaved to his sins—whether greed, or lust, or selfishness, pride, jealousy, hatred, or the opinions and applause of others—every man is born a slave of sin. In Jesus we can be freed from this slavery, but the man who continues to live as a slave to his sin—the man who continues to walk in the darkness—shows that he is still in slavery to his sin. Just as Paul says in Romans 6:16, “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?” And again in Romans 8:13, “for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” That is, our fruit reveals our true root. A life characterized by walking in the darkness reveals a heart not yet changed by Christ; a life characterized by putting sin to death and walking in the Light reveals a heart that has been changed by Jesus. Once more in 1 John, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth” (1:6). That is, our true state is revealed not by our words but by our lives. We may say we are believers, we may go to church and call ourselves Christians, but what do our lives say? Are we walking in the Light? Do our lives evidence true repentance? Or do we make empty resolves like Saul—is our repentance only temporary because we are still enslaved to our sins?
Lastly, we have one more example of false faith at the end of the chapter: Emotions without true repentance. Despite Saul's resolve in verse 6 he is again shortly after trying to put David to death. He hears he is staying at Ramah with Samuel and sends men there to bring David back, but they seem to be convicted by God's Spirit and don't obey the order. This happens three times. So finally Saul goes himself, and the same thing seems to happen even to him. We read of this in verses 23 to 24. The Spirit of God comes upon him and he begins to prophecy before Samuel, and we read that he even strips his clothes off and lays down naked all day and all night. This is pretty strange!! What do we make of it? Saul goes to hunt for David at a revival meeting so to speak, and ends up getting saved himself? He goes to bring David back to kill him, but ends up singing songs of deliverance to Jesus? I met a woman once who told me she had been saved three times. She said the last time she even broke down and wept; it was a very moving and emotional experience. But when I asked her if her life had ever changed, she said no. Praise be to God, she made a profession of faith that day and her life did change from that point on. Her life showed that her profession was genuine. But her earlier experiences were experiences only—she was at times moved by emotion—but there was no lasting change, there was no true repentance—and so it showed there was no true faith. Saul here has a wonderful experience, it seems. But his life doesn't change. And soon he's back in full swing to his old ways and trying to kill David all over again. He has had a very moving emotional experience—but it is no true work of God—if it were it would last. He is like the Jews in John 8. The fruit of his faith is revealing its true root. It is only counterfeit.
As we begin this chapter we need to remember where we left off at the end of chapter 19. Do you recall? Saul had gone to look for David in order to put him to death, but on his way there and especially as he enters into Ramah, the Spirit of the Lord comes upon him and he begins to prophesy. We mentioned how we might take this as Saul's repentance if that was the last thing we read about Saul. But in the very next chapter as we pick up our text here in chapter 20, Saul is right back to his old ways. His repentance is like a mist that lasts for a moment. We saw that there is a lesson here. There is a difference between a mere profession of faith and actually true saving faith. We ought not to think that everyone who makes a profession of faith in Christ has really become a true believer. Indeed, many profess Christ, but there are few who endure to the end. The important question is, where is the man who “got saved” five years, ten years or twenty years later? Is he walking with Christ? Or has he fallen away and gone back to the world? In answering the question of why some who had confessed Christ as Lord end up straying away from the church, the apostle John declares, “They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us” (1 John 2:19). True believers, Scripture declares, do not fall away—Jesus keeps them. They may stumble into sin; they may go through dark seasons of the soul. But they won’t be able to get away from Jesus—He will always bring them back again. The Lord will complete the work begun in them (Philippians 1:6). It is because He will keep them that they will endure to the end (Jeremiah 32:40). Though they may wander for a season, yet if they be His they will again return, for the Lord’s own promise bears witness: “I give eternal life to [My sheep], and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:28). We learn this from the parable of the sower. There are some who at first receive the Word with joy. But they have no root in themselves, and when tribulation comes because of the Word immediately they fall away. Why? Because they never truly believed. True believers will persevere to the end. “For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.”
(Hebrews 3:14). The Scripture does not say that if we hold fast our assurance firm until the end we will be partakers of Christ. Rather, the text says that a person's enduring until the very end proves that person's conversion was true—their endurance proves that they had truly become partakers of Christ—their faith was real, it was genuine. Thus, Saul's actions in chapter 20 expose the “repentance” which we read in the last few verses of the previous chapter as counterfeit.

Moving on, let us turn now to examine the three characters here in chapter 20: Saul, Jonathan, and David; and what gospel truths we might glean from them:

Saul represents those who have set themselves against the Lord's Anointed. David is now the anointed king of Israel, the one who had claim to the throne (since chapter 16). But Saul refuses to submit to the will of God; he will never bow the knee to David. We saw earlier that to preserve his own kingdom, he is constantly seeking to put David to death. Saul would rather keep his life in this world than lose it for life eternal; he would rather cling to his earthly throne than save his own soul. This may sound familiar to us, because we see it all around us. It is the story of those who have set themselves in opposition to Jesus Christ. Psalm 2 speaks of them in this way: “The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, 'Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!'” (vv2-3). In the days of our Lord's earthly ministry, there were many like Saul who hunted for His life. They hated the truth He preached. Light had come into the world, but they loved the darkness rather than the Light. Just as Saul was set against the rule and kingship of David—the one whom God had anointed to reign—so it was with those who had plotted against our Lord. And much like Saul, it was while wearing religious masks on the outside that they set themselves against God Almighty. There is a word of warning here my friends. Make no mistake, Saul is religious on the outside. He can even fool his own son, Jonathan (v2). Perhaps he fooled himself. He fights outwardly the battles of the kingdom of God—but all the while cherishing a secret rebellion in his heart against the Lord and His anointed. But in due time his true intentions are brought to the light (v30ff), and he is exposed for who he really is. Indeed, the Lord will bring all things to light on that day, and each man's praise will come to him from God (1 Corinthians 4:5). Though some oppose Christ and the things of God, though they even seem to gain victory through their rebellion, just as Saul
did, yet they will at last be overthrown. For just as it was only a matter of time until David reigned in Israel, so it is with Christ—He may be banished for a time from the land, but He will soon come back to destroy His enemies and set up His kingdom forever.

David is a prefiguring of Christ. We see this in a few ways. For David had been anointed king, but his enemies still seemed to reign. So too, Christ is God's Anointed, yet it seems that His enemies are the ones who rule this world. We also are told none less than three times in this chapter (v5, 12, 19) that David is to hide himself in a field for three days. The repetition of the phrase, combined with our Lord's own teaching on the significance of Jonah's three days in the belly of the great fish, should teach us to pay close attention to what the Spirit desires to instruct us here. David is to hide out in this field, by a particular stone called “Ezel” (v19) for three days. On the third day, David again meets with Jonathan. After this, David is sent far away, leaving Jonathan there with Saul, until the day that he would come back to usher in his kingdom in Jerusalem. Does this remind us of anything? In like manner, Christ was hidden in the tomb behind the stone for three days, after which he was raised from the dead and appeared to His disciples. Shortly thereafter our Lord was taken away from them, ascending to the Father, until the day that He will come again with great glory and establish His eternal kingdom.

Jonathan's submission to David's rule is likened to the church's submission to Christ. We have seen this earlier in our study. The church has bound herself to Christ in solemn covenant, just as Jonathan did with David. And just as Jonathan had stripped himself of his kingly robes, giving them to David as a symbol of subjection to the throne of his king, so the church has submitted herself to the reign of Jesus, to be subject to His authority and kingship—His alone. Just as Jonathan loved David and David Jonathan, so the church loves Christ and Christ loves the church. And just as David had to leave Jonathan for a short time with his wicked father Saul until he returned again to set up his kingdom, so Christ had to leave His church when He ascended to the Father, until the day that He comes again to reign forever. It ought not go unnoticed that for Jonathan to do this, he must give up allegiance to his father. His allegiance could not belong to both David and Saul. Indeed, as our Lord declares, “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26).
In application, we ought to ask ourselves—where do we fit into the story? For in this story, there are only two responses to David and to his rule. Though he was good at pretending, Saul was dead-set against David ruling—for it meant giving up his own throne. Jonathan, on the other hand, forsook the kingdom that could have been his—and gladly bowed the knee to David. Like Moses before him, he turned his back on the pleasures and treasures of the world, “considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward” (Hebrews 11:26). There was no middle position of sort-of being submitted to David. And it is the same with Christ—there are only two responses. Have you fully and wholly submitted to Christ, my friends? Have you given over everything to Him—your very life? Have you, like Jonathan with David, entered into a solemn and very personal covenant with Jesus the Messiah—to give Him alone your allegiance and belong to Him only forever? Or do you resist Him and His reign (though perhaps secretly)? We have noted that Saul at times seems to deal kindly with David. But deep down his heart was at war with him. Some may pay lip service to Christ, and speak well of Him; they may even fool others as Saul did his own son for a time. But friend, I ask you: Have you, like Jonathan, in truth, given over your all to Christ? Or like Saul, though perhaps honoring Him with your lips, is your heart at rebellion with Him? There is indeed no middle ground.
Saul continues to hunt David, and now David realizes he must run for his life. He must do something extreme, for Saul is the king of the land. Wherever David might go he would surely stand out—one way or another Saul would find him. So David does something crazy—something that could cost him his own life—but perhaps the only thing he could do to keep himself alive. He flees to the land of the Philistines—his fiercest enemies. He had already fought with the Philistines much and killed many. The most memorable was his encounter with Goliath, in which after cutting off his head he led Israel to a triumphant victory. And now David goes to live in the land of his enemies—and not only that, but to Gath, the very city Goliath was from. Imagine how much the people there must have hated David. Not only this, but after visiting the house of God at Nob he goes there carrying Goliath's own sword!!

The ensuing episode at Gath perhaps strikes us as humorous—but it wasn't funny for David. He is just a step away from death, and after hearing what the king's servants start to say, the wise and valiant soldier pretends to be a madman to escape with his life.

We see once again in the chapter before us David as a picture of Christ. David was anointed as king, defeated Goliath, praised by some and hated by others, rejected, spent three days in the field, then sent away into exile with the enemy to Gath, but will come back later to reign as king. Christ was likewise commissioned by the Father (Psalm 2), anointed (Luke 3), praised and rejected, exiled to the tomb for three days, but will come back again one day with great glory to reign as King forever.

We saw in the last chapter how David's lying in the field for three days was a prefiguring of sorts of Christ's lying in the tomb three days. Jonathan then sends him away for a time, until he comes back to reign as king over all. This is reminiscent of what happens in the ascension—Christ goes away for a time, but will come back to reign.

But here in chapter 21, David is again a picture for us of the exile and sufferings of Christ. For David must, as we noted, be sent away from the land to go and dwell among his enemies, just as Christ was driven away to dwell in the shadow of death. This becomes especially
evident with two other details from the text. The first is the translation of the city Gath, which means, “winepress.” The second is David making like he was a madman before the Philistines. These two ideas of wine or winepresses and hysteria are found linked actually several times in both the New and Old Testaments. The wrath of God is at times there pictured as a winepress, and the juice from the grapes is squeezed into a cup—the cup of the wrath of God. It is this cup that at the judgment the Judge of all the earth will cause the nations to drink—namely, those who have rebelled against Him. And upon drinking this cup, all who drink it are overcome with madness. For instance, we read in Jeremiah 25:15, “For thus the Lord, the God of Israel, says to me, ’Take this cup of the wine of wrath from My hand and cause all the nations to whom I send you to drink it. They will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them.’” Similarly, Jeremiah 51:7 says, “Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of the Lord, intoxicating all the earth. The nations have drunk of her wine; therefore the nations are going mad.” Revelation describes something similar in 19:15 speaking of Christ: “From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.”

When Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane, He prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.” (Matthew 26:39). What was in the cup? Was it the physical sufferings He would endure on the cross? The crown of thorns, the piercing of His hands and His feet, the agonizing brutal lashes to His back? Was that cup He spoke of filled with the physical sufferings awaiting Him the next morning—the suffocating torturous slow death that He endured on Golgotha? If it was the physical pain awaiting Him that caused Him to sweat drops of blood, then how could it be that thousands of martyrs throughout church history could go singing hymns as they walked to the stake to be burned alive? How could it be that Christians would be braver at facing death than the King of Glory, the Son of God? No, it was not the physical pain that frightened Jesus. The cup that He spoke of was not the nails and the crown of thorns. It was what God had spoken of in the Old Testament Scriptures. It was the judgement of God upon sin, the very wrath of God—His white hot anger against sin. The same wrath that He will pour out forever upon many in hell—this is what was
poured out upon Jesus in the span of only a few hours. The cup was full of the wrath of God Almighty. It is what every single person deserves for their sin. And Jesus drank it down on the cross so you and I would never have to. David was sent away to the land of his enemies, the home of the giant he had killed, the city bearing the name of “winepress”, and there acted as a madman. In the same way Jesus Christ was sent to face the death He had come to destroy. For on the cross He drank down the last drop of the wrath of God fresh from the winepress—the wrath that is so terrible it causes all upon drinking it to be struck with absolute madness.

God delivers David, and he escapes with his life. But I wonder if as he fled from Gath David thought back upon the day Samuel had anointed him. We can only wonder about the questions in his mind; the confusion in his heart. Surely this was different than the way he had imagined things would be. Surely he never would have expected that being anointed king of Israel would mean being hunted down in the desert. Could David have ever imagined that being chosen as shepherd of God's people would bring upon him troubles and sufferings far worse than any of the bears or lions he faced in the days of pasturing his father's flock? David was no sooner anointed from heaven than he was thrust out into the wilderness. But he was not alone in his sufferings. There would be another who would likewise receive the anointing from heaven—only to immediately be thrust out into the wilderness. Indeed, this One would suffer in ways David never did. “Will the Lord reject forever? And will He never be favorable again? Has His lovingkindness ceased forever? Has His promise come to an end forever? Has God forgotten to be gracious, or has He in anger withdrawn His compassion?” (Psalm 77:7-9). No, David. God has not forgotten you. He has not forgotten His promises. But though David may not understand the Lord's dealings with him, he clings to his God. Like Abraham, Joseph, Moses (in Exodus 5:22-23), and the prophets who would follow after him, he holds fast to the Lord in this wilderness of confusion. It was just after the escape from Achish that we are told he penned the words in Psalm 34: “O fear the Lord, you His saints; for to those who fear Him there is no want” (v9).
Part 1
We can glean a few precious gospel truths in thinking upon David's life in this chapter.

First, in this life there will be tribulation for the godly. David continues to constantly flee for his life from the sword of Saul. The prosperity gospel claims men like Abraham, Jacob and David to prove their false gospel that Christ will lead them to health, wealth, and success. But a little more probing into the lives of these men might do them good. At least it would do us good, for the lives of the Old Testament saints and all their sufferings are a great encouragement for believers. Even their follies and blunders are a wonderful encouragement for the church—but we will get to that a little later. Here we are focusing on the truth of what Paul declared to the churches he planted in the cities of Galatia, that “through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:22). Paul says this as one who had freshly tasted the sufferings of Christ and His cross. But to him it wasn't something bad to try to avoid, for he says in Philippians, “For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (1:29). Suffering with Christ is to Paul a gift of God's grace; a wonderful thing. As the Puritan Samuel Rutherford sat in prison for the cause of Christ he confessed the same truths. And much like the apostle Paul, he wrote from his cell to encourage his flock: "You cannot, you must not have a more pleasant or more easy condition here, than he had, who through afflictions was made perfect.' We may indeed think, Cannot God bring us to heaven with ease and prosperity? Who doubteth but he can? But his infinite wisdom thinketh and decreeth the contrary. . ." In another letter he writes simply, "Sweet, sweet is the Lord's cross." Again, to another friend, "welcome, sweet, sweet and glorious cross of Christ; welcome, sweet Jesus, with thy light cross." We see especially in the book of John

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15From *The Letters of Samuel Rutherford*, p.18.
16Ibid, p.33.
17Ibid p.36.
how the first half of the ministry of our Lord was a teaching ministry, the second half a ministry of suffering. We see much the same in the life of Paul; we see it also in Rutherford. And we ought not to be surprised, for this is the portion allotted to us in this life. Did He ever promise us it would be roses and lilies in this life? “If they persecuted Me they will persecute you,” our Lord spoke to us in John 15:20. And again just a little later “In the world you have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33). Persecution according to Jesus is not something that just happens in particular countries. A country in which there is no persecuted church seems to me to be a Biblical impossibility. Tribulation for the sake of godliness and persecution is a promise in the Scriptures—at least for those who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:12). Believers should not be surprised if they are insulted or scorned or hunted for the sake of Christ—but they should have reason for concern if these things are completely absent, for our Lord has said to us in another place, “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Thus, if being poor in spirit, if hungering and thirsting for righteousness, if being pure in heart are signs of having true belief and possessing living faith—and if a true and living faith are to be doubted where these things are absent—is this last of the beatitudes to be an exception?

Secondly, we see echoes here of the truth that trials and afflictions are good for God’s people. It was perhaps David himself who penned the words in Psalm 119, “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word” (v67), and a little later in verse 71, “It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.” God’s Word and the testimony of experienced saints alike proclaim to us that the Lord delivers the afflicted by their affliction (Job 36:15). It is only in the crucible of the furnace that the dross can be burned away. Though in the furnace the vessel may not appear at all beautiful—when it is taken out, then it is that the change is clearly visible and the new luster shines like never before. It is in being crushed and ground to powder that spices give out their best fragrance. It is only in being pruned that the vine bears forth more fruit in the next season. For just as it is the purpose of the gardener who prunes to both cut away the diseased and unwanted parts of the vine as well as to make it more fruitful for the next crop, so it is with our dear Lord. For He says to His disciples in John 15:2, “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every
branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.” More fruit for the harvest is the design of the wise gardeners pruning knife.

The furnace is not delightful, the grinding block is not comfortable, nor does the pruning knife evoke pleasant images; but they are things that make more pure, more fragrant, and more fruitful. And though David now appears to be spending most of his time dwelling in caves instead of palaces, we see that it is rather in the caves of deep affliction that some of his best music is written, for it was out of the cave of Adullam that came the deeply rich tunes of Psalms 57 and 142. We must not think lightly of our time spent in the caves. The cave of Adullam was not ultimately a cave of shame and defeat for David, but of glory and overwhelming victory—in that here he was being transformed into the image of Christ like no other place. The cave in which Christ was laid began with the cry of sorrow and defeat such as never before, but ended with a shout of glory like nobody ever heard. And so it is with those who belong to Christ. God was refining David through his sufferings. Though David was surely now a man after God's own heart, this did not mean he didn't need any refining. It was the same with Job, who in God's estimation was a man who feared the Lord more than any other of his time—yet when his life was stirred up in the pot of affliction it was shown there was yet hidden dross that needed to be removed. We learn in our afflictions what we have missed in the Scriptures. We need the rod as much as the Word to mold us into the image of Jesus. And so after his narrow escape in chapter 21, the Lord yet again thrusts David out from the stronghold into the uncertain dangers of the wilderness of Judah (v5), perhaps reminiscent of the way the Son of God himself would later be thrust out into the wilderness by the Spirit (Mark 1:12). David was made better for all his afflictions. Perhaps if he had remained in the furnace a little longer it would have even kept him from that sin that so deeply stained his whole character. Though in the moment we question the wisdom and love of providence, it won't be long before we confess: “I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are righteous, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.” (Psalm 119:75).

We learn also here from David that even the godly are not without sin. We are reminded of this at the end of the chapter, when David no doubt with much sorrow and perhaps with tears tells Abiathar that he is the one responsible for the death of his whole family. In one
sense this is not entirely accurate of course. But it is the truth that
David was not entirely innocent in the matter, for he had not told
Ahimelech the whole truth about what had happened. If he had,
Ahimelech would most likely still have helped David, but still the fact
remains that David had not been entirely truthful with the high priest.
David was indeed a godly man, but in a moment of weakness he
erred in being fully blameless. We see this evidenced in Psalm 38,
for David writes, “But my enemies are vigorous and strong, and many
are those who hate me wrongfully,” adding that, “they oppose me,
because I follow what is good” (vv19,20). Yet in the same breath
David mentions no less than five times in the Psalm his anxiety over
his own personal sin: “There is no health in my bones because of my
sin. For my iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden they
weigh too much for me. My wounds grow foul and fester because of
my folly. . .” (vv3-5). We see in David what we know to be true of
ourselves as believers. We live in the already but not yet. God has
given us new hearts, the Lord Himself is our portion and we would
chose Him over all the world—Jesus is better to us than kingdoms.
But as Paul describes in Romans 7 and as we see throughout the
Scriptures in the lives of Old Testament and New Testament saints
alike, we continue to wrestle with our remaining corruptions until we
are taken home to glory. Christians are free from the penalty and
power of sin, but we will not be entirely free from its lingering
presence until we sit to feast with Christ at the marriage supper of the
Lamb.

But even in the midst of dealing with our remaining sin and its
very real consequences, we can lastly take great comfort in the
providence and goodness of God. Though we do not excuse David's
sin, we also affirm that his sin cannot undermine the sovereignty of
God and His good and glorious purposes. God does not rule over
the world only where people don't sin. If that were the case, God
could never rule the world at all. It is a comforting truth for the
church that Christ rules even in the midst of our sin, and despite our
sin, our God's purposes are going forth. It is in and through our
weaknesses and folly that He is fulfilling His every promise and
making a name for Himself among the nations. Friends, don't think
that God will only be faithful to His promises to you if you don't
commit certain sins, or if you have your quiet time every day, or pray
a certain number of hours a week, or witness to enough people today.
The basis for God's dealings with you and I is not our merit as
believers—just as we enter into His favor by grace so we are kept there
by grace, and God's every purpose and promise is given to us in grace. We don't deserve it now any more than we did when He first cleansed us. This is the message of the gospel—not only the free offer of grace for sinners but the promises of grace for Christians who fail. The promise to Abraham—for which he waited an agonizing twenty-five years—was finally given to him when? After a spectacular show of his great faith and long streak of avoiding sin? No. For in my Bible the headings read: *Chapter 20: Abraham's Treachery. Chapter 21: Isaac is born.* Or take Joseph's brothers. Or just take the story of Judah and Tamar. Or take how Israel's sin in not destroying the Canaanites ultimately contained hidden blessings. For in the end the Canaanites kept them trained in war (Judges 3:1-2) and kept them from the danger of wild beasts (Deuteronomy 7:22). And so it is with us, for God at times uses even our sins for His purposes, keeping us from more powerful and dangerous sins such as the wild beasts of pride or lust. Or consider even the darkest imaginable hour for Old Testament believers—the exile of the Jews. Through their sin and disobedience they were made to suffer the shame of exile from the land God had given them—yet even this God used to bring salvation to the nations and glorify His name in such a powerful way that it was entirely unparalleled before—bringing even Gentile kings to their knees before the God of heaven and making them His tools to declare His name among not only all of Israel but to Gentile nations as well (Daniel 4:1-3, 34ff; 6:25ff). This is the gospel; this is God's promise. It is not apart from our failures and weaknesses that God rules the world, fulfills His promises of grace to us, and uses us to declare His glory among the nations—but in the midst of them. It is not only when we walk in "God's perfect will" by somehow trying to be perfect and never mess up that God reigns over our lives and His purposes are fulfilled. Quite to the contrary. This is the way it always was and this is the way it always will be—forever. Our sins may carry very real and devastating consequences. But through it all we can be assured that God's good plan and purposes for us are not made void. For the Lord loves to take our sins and weave them into masterpieces of His glory. He delights to take the things we have stained and broken, and turn them into stained-glass windows that radiate His glory in ways we could never have imagined.
Part 2

We also can glean a few important truths in thinking upon Saul in chapter 22.

First, we see that Saul's reign of evil is only temporary. Saul still reigns now as king; but it's only a matter of time until his tyrannical reign will be broken. He now continues to hunt after David, but soon the tables will be turned. Jesus' teachings especially in the Beatitudes remind us of this truth: God's servants and followers of Christ are in this life the downtrodden, the oppressed, the persecuted, and afflicted. But the day is coming, and coming quickly, when for them the tables will be turned. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. . .Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:3-5,10). In Luke, Jesus pronounces curses as well as blessings: "Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way." (Luke 6:25-26). You may for instance be a student at a university where your professors regularly scorn and mock the name of Christ; perhaps they mock you too for being a believer. But the day is coming that even these very professors must bow their knee to Jesus Christ and confess that He is indeed Lord of all—whether voluntarily or by force (Philippians 2:11). As Isaiah declares, "The sons of those who afflicted you will come bowing to you, and all those who despised you will bow themselves at the soles of your feet; and they will call you the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel." (Isaiah 60:14).

Life for believers is at times very difficult. Because of this we need to be reminded that those who wait for the Lord do not wait in vain. Paul thus exhorted his spiritual children in Galatia, "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary." (Galatians 6:9). The Lord Himself exhorted the church at Philadelphia in Revelation 3, "I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown." The letter of Hebrews was written to encourage persecuted Jewish believers who had perhaps started having thoughts of giving up. He exhorts them,
Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.” (10:35-36). It's as if he is saying to them, “Don't give up now!! You've already run so far. Don't throw it all away now!! You're almost home, you've almost finished the race; you're at the final sprint—you're so close!! Don't give up now!”

There is the familiar story of a missionary who returned home to the west after serving the Lord faithfully for many years. He couldn't afford a normal ticket on the ship so he had to make his bed with the baggage and animals. When the ship began to arrive at the port he was surprised to see a throng of people gathered at the dock. He hadn't expected a welcoming party, but at the sight felt warmed and encouraged. But as he walked off the ship no one greeted him; the crowd had been waiting to welcome some prominent travelers that had been on board. He rented a small room and bought a loaf of bread and some butter; it was all he could afford. After he ate a little he finally poured out his soul to God: “Lord, I've served you and labored for Your cause all my life—and when I get home I don't even have a single person to welcome me back? I don't understand.” The inaudible divine reply came back to his heart, “You're not home yet.”

This world will not continue this way forever. Let us fix our hope fully upon the day coming when the tables will be completely turned; the day when we hear those beautiful words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Let us ever keep our hope fixed upon the reality the apostle lays before us: “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Second, we have before us the fearful truth that there are times when even the church can drive out Christ. We see it in the Scriptures. Gideon was a godly man but his son Abimelech was a devil. We gasp at the abominable behavior of Eli's sons, Hophni and Phineas, who had no fear to eat the little lambs who came to them instead of feeding them. We labor to find one faithful king after David over Israel in the north; not more than a few over the house of Judah. Their kings led the people so far from the Lord that when we read the accounts of their battles with foreign armies we hardly know whose side to pick: the invading pagan-foreigner or the godless tyrant of Israel? And it wasn't just the kings. We have often in the prophets
the charge that the leadership of God's people had in effect driven the Lord himself away from the land, just as Saul drove away David. In one passage among many, Micah confronts the rulers, prophets and priests when he says in 3:11, "Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, her priests instruct for a price, and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the Lord saying, 'Is not the Lord in our midst?'" Jeremiah warned of the coming exile as he boldly declared, "Behold, you are trusting in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery and swear falsely, and offer sacrifices to Baal and walk after other gods that you have not known, then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered!'--that you may do all these abominations?" (7:8-10). We see it of course in the life of our Lord himself—not just in His death but from His birth the priests and rulers seemed to have more interest in politics than the kingdom of God. Perhaps some reading this have sought Christ in a church but found that He had long before been driven away. Perhaps instead of Christ and the balm of Gilead some have found only the bloody sword of legalism—or the siren song of license. If this is your case, what David says in our text to Abiathar is what Christ says to all those who have encountered Christ-less Christianity: "Stay with me; do not be afraid...for you are safe with me" (v23). Though you may find little of Christ in a growing number of churches—don't let that deter you from Christ Himself! You are safe with Him. Yet we encourage you—don't remain on your own! Find a church thatdoes preach the gospel, entrusting yourself to the biblical means that Christ himself has appointed to nourish and tend His little lambs.

Lastly, we can learn much in thinking upon the outcome of Saul's life. We mentioned this briefly before, and we return to the same theme here once again. This is the result of sin—this is where the path leads. Is it glorious? Is this the abundant life? Is this happiness? Saul is enslaved to his anger and jealousy, and though he possesses a kingdom he does not enjoy it. He is miserable. And he knows, as Jonathan remarks in the next chapter (23:17) that it is only a matter of time before his reign crumbles.

This reminds me of the famous quote that came from the lips of the missionary martyr Jim Elliot, whose life had tremendous impact on me personally: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."18 To come to Christ is to give up only that

18From Shadow of the Almighty.
which we cannot keep—the world and all it can offer—in order to gain
eternity and Christ forever. How sad life must be for those who don't
know Christ and refuse His offer of eternal life! Think of it. As we
age we lose our youth, we lose our looks, we lose our strength, we
lose our memory, our hair, our eyesight. We start to die the day we
are born and we know eventually we will lose everything one day—and
all this not even to speak of the thought of the coming judgment. But
for the Christian, our joy grows even as we age and lose our strength,
for we know that for us in Jesus—to die is gain. To die for the
believer is to go home to our Lord and our reward—for we have
invested everything not in the temporal bank of this life—but in the
treasuries of the Lord, which endure forever—and whose interest rate
runs something like $10,000 on the penny of everything invested.

Let us consider the outcome of Saul's life. Is it not better to dwell
like David in the caves and the wilderness, though continually
running for his life—than to own a kingdom but to not have the
comfort of God's favor in Christ? Would it not be better to live in a
cave with God's presence than without it to reign as a mighty king? Is
it worth it to lose our soul for the world? “For what does it profit a
man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a
man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:36-37).

But we must note also that even our Christian sub-culture carries
with it these temptations. We can so easily fall prey to the same lies
even under the banner of the work of God: having a thriving ministry,
people who know us and love our preaching, read our books, praise
our gifts. If we're not careful we'll find we are just building sand-castle
kingdoms for ourselves. I am very aware in myself the temptation to
desire the approval and praise of others, and it is something I am
constantly putting to death, for the Scriptures make it clear that we
cannot at the same time seek the praise of God and the praise of
men. The two are diametrically opposed. Paul says in Galatians,
“For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving
to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a
bondservant of God.” (1:10). It is recorded in John 12 that there
were some Jews that “believed” in Christ but were not confessing
Him, “for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they
loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God” (vv42-
43). Earlier in John, Jesus testified to the Jews, “How can you
believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not
seek the glory that is from the one and only God?” (5:44). If we
know our hearts well enough we know that our motives can be so filthy we can find ourselves doing even God's work for the applause of men. Let us remember this well: it is better to have Christ and nothing, Christ and hunger, Christ and obscurity, the power of the Spirit and caves, the presence and comforts of God and the wilderness, than to possess a kingdom at their expense.
As we come to our text, we first learn from David about the difference between prayer and pragmatism. The chapter opens with David being informed about an attack upon some fellow brothers living in Judah. David then inquires of the Lord as to whether his men should go up and deliver them or not. David here by the help of God's Spirit avoids two huge mistakes.

First, he doesn't just dismiss this. David himself is constantly on the run from Saul, and he knows as well as his men do that to come to the aid of those living in Keilah could very well come at great cost to themselves. But David does not for this reason excuse himself and his men from the responsibility of delivering his brothers. I wonder if there are things we hear but just dismiss right out without taking it before the Lord? Are there any things we just immediately excuse ourselves from for convenience or safety sake? Perhaps there could be a word spoken here about the great need for laborers overseas. The Lord isn't necessarily calling you to another land; but He is calling His church as a whole to reach the whole world. It is quite amazing that we have so many rich gospel resources in the English language. It is wonderful. I praise God for all the gospel-saturated materials that are so easily available and accessible through the internet. But I'd like to challenge that a bit. I'd like to challenge us—or perhaps at least some of us. Saints and fellow ministers: it's time to stop writing books on theology. It's time to stop making HD videos on how we can be even more gospel-centered in our preaching. It's time to stop producing new study Bibles in the English language. Take your gifts to another country and another language that is literally starving—in desperate need for the most basic fundamentals of the gospel. Can you hear them calling for help? Can you hear their voice? Don't just dismiss this right out. Every one of us needs to be on our knees, like David, asking the Lord if He would have us pack up and take His gospel where there is a much greater need. There are whole towns and cities where you won't find a single believer. I have traveled to entire regions of countries that have zero churches—let alone the kind that carry our distinctive theological preferences. I tell you from personal experience, there are yet whole
people groups untouched with the gospel. We shrink with disgust at the Corinthians for what they did. “Could true believers actually get drunk partaking of the Lord’s supper—and while others receive nothing?” But friends, truly, as we feast in excess, there are entire nations and peoples dying without a crumb of the Bread of Life. Well, back to the text. David was hard-pressed; the last thing he needed was for Saul to find out where he was again. After all, he was God's anointed. He needed to stay alive, right? Wouldn't it be foolish if he dies at the hand of Saul while trying to deliver an insignificant town in Judah from the Philistines? Like David's men we might tell him it's just not pragmatic. But David didn't listen to them, and it was a good thing.

The second huge mistake David avoids is just rushing in to deliver Keilah without first seeking the Lord about the matter. How many times have I just done things or made decisions without giving enough prayer to them? David is continually seeking the will of the Father: verse 2, verse 4, and twice in verses 10 through 12. David does much more praying than doing. It seems that one of the benefits of living in the wilderness has been learning how to pray. One of the wonderful things about being in the wilderness and at your wits end is it makes you desperate for God. Like the widow coming to Elisha with her empty vessels, or as the disciples standing helpless before the multitude with a few loaves of bread in their hands, David is constantly feeling his emptiness and desperate need for fresh fillings of the wisdom, power and guidance of the Lord. Weaknesses and fears and troubles and distresses are good companions, because it is when we are empty that we are able to be filled up anew with Christ. Thus Paul said when he was weak, it was then he was really strong. And it is better to be prayerful in the wilderness than prayerless in the palace. The Lord is needing to continue to teach me that productivity is not the same as godliness. A prayerful life will be a godly life. A prayerful ministry, a fruitful ministry. But in truth a prayerless ministry is a Christ-less ministry. Especially as a minister I need to devote myself much more to prayer, for this is half of my calling (Acts 6).

“Are there trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.”
So, having spent time in secret prayer with the Father, David goes down to Keilah to deliver the people of God from the hand of the Philistines. The text says he “struck them with a great slaughter” (v5). Yet, when David and his men hear that Saul is planning to trap them at Keilah, and David again seeks the Lord in prayer, he is told not only that Saul will come down, but that if David and his men stay in Keilah, the men of the city will give them up into his hand. David took his life in his hand to deliver these people. What was the response? Ungratefulness would be too light of a word I think! The man who delivered them from their enemy at the risk of his own life, they would have just handed over into the hand of Saul. David the faithful fought and delivered Keilah the faithless. It seems this serves as a picture of the One who would not only deliver His people at the risk of His blood—but the One who did in fact lay down His very life for thankless and ungrateful men—even His enemies. For Christ came to lay His life down for those who spit on Him, insulted Him, and scorned His precious name—even as He shed His blood for them. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). And again, “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

We read next in verse 16 that Jonathan “arose and went to David at Horesh, and encouraged him in God.” Literally it reads that Jonathan, “strengthened his hand in God.” How does he do this? Jonathan reminds David of the promises of God—that David would one day soon be king—just as God had promised him back in 1 Samuel 16, so many years before. Jonathan reminds David of the unseen—that the Lord sits as King of all creation, that He has made promises, and that no matter how things seem in the moment—God will never go back on His Word. David needed to look beyond circumstances and feelings and trust in his God. David needed this. Proverbs 18:21 says, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” Truly, Jonathan's word spoken in season seems to breath new life into David's soul. There is no Christian so strong that he doesn't need the strengthening and encouragement of other brothers and sisters. We need one another. This was true even for the apostle Paul, who in the midst of feeling overwhelmed even to the point of death was comforted “by the coming of Titus” (2 Corinthians 7:6).
Jonathan has a heart of gold. Here again we see that he doesn't care about the kingdom. He doesn't want to be king. God had said David would be king, and that's enough for Jonathan. Yes, he is the heir of the throne. But kingdoms or even worlds for that matter don't seem to mean much to Jonathan. He would rather follow His God. And if following the Lord meant yielding his own throne to David, then he will gladly give it up. Unlike his father, the kingdom and the throne were not what Jonathan's eyes were fixed on; they were not a big enough reward. Like Moses before him, he had caught a glimpse of treasures far surpassing the kingdoms and glories of this age. His eyes were fixed on Christ, and so like the man who found the treasure in the field—Jonathan not only gives up all that would have rightly belonged to him—but he does it with joy.

Jonathan's visit is timely, for no sooner does he leave than David is running for his life again, this time from the Ziphites of Judah. Perhaps it is fitting here to take a moment here to be reminded why God has driven David to the wilderness. Before ascending to the throne David must be prepared; and it is through the furnace that David must pass before he is to reign. God's way is a cross before a crown; suffering before glory. We see this in the life of Joseph; for though he was set apart from his youth, he needed to suffer much to be properly prepared for the great work to come. And we can see by the way he deals so tenderly in love with his brothers in the end that it really was in faithfulness that the Lord had afflicted him—truly it was in the land of his affliction that the Lord had made him fruitful (Genesis 41:52). For before his sufferings there was spiritual pride towards his brothers; but after long years of enslavement and prison, genuine love. As a youth he wanted to be great; but after his sufferings in the dungeon all he wanted was to strengthen his brothers in God. Moses likewise had to be deeply broken in the desert before he was ready to lead God's people for such a great task. For he seemed ready and eager to lead the people at the ripe age of forty, but after another forty years in the desert he was a different man; a humble man. So humble and broken that we accuse him for being overly hesitant, thinking himself too unqualified for the task. This was not the same man as before. And so it is here with David. The wilderness was the Lord's appointed training ground for His chosen king. As it was with our Lord himself, it is in the wilderness that David must learn submissiveness to his Father before shepherding the lambs of Israel.

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19Hebrews 5:8.
First, there is much we can glean from this chapter regarding the conduct of David. David here is in a different situation than where he found himself in chapter 23, but faces a similar temptation. There were many arguments David could easily have used to justify taking Saul's life in the cave. Once again, one form of reasoning could have been simply pragmatism. The story has often been told of the man whose house was going down in a massive flood, praying that God would save him. A boat came to help him but he told his would-be rescuers that he was waiting for God to deliver him. As the flood waters rose he fled to the roof of his house. Shortly after this a helicopter spotted the victim and descended to his rescue—but to no avail—he gave them the same reply. A little later the water finally overtook the house completely and the man was swept away in the flood. We are taught from the story that God often uses means to answer our prayers. This is true enough; but not when it's used to justify sin. No doubt this was an argument David could have used for evil. God had promised him the kingdom, and now here is his golden chance. David, wake up! David, don't be like the dumb guy in the story that misses the boat and the helicopter—this is from God, David! This is the means the Lord is using to usher in your kingdom!! But David refuses to listen to those kinds of lies. In his strivings against sin; in his fighting off the poisonous whisperings of the enemy—though ever so imperfectly—he did indeed fore-picture that great Shepherd of Judah who would come forth from his seed. For it was with loud cryings and tears that the Christ himself fought off the lies of Satan as he suffered in the wilderness, likewise refusing to take the kingdom in any way contrary to the will or timing of His Father. We must similarly be on guard ourselves—for we share a common enemy.

David refused to lay a hand on Saul in that cave because Saul is still “the Lord's anointed” (v6). But again, David easily could have reasoned differently. He could have reasoned that since God had rejected Saul from being king and had anointed him in his place, that Saul was no longer worthy of the title, the Lord's chosen one. He could have argued that because the anointing had been taken away
from Saul, he had no more claim to the throne. For we read in the Scriptures that when David is anointed, the Spirit of the Lord not only comes mightily upon him, but that same Spirit departs from Saul (see 16:13-14).

Further, David could have reasoned that Saul had not only lost his anointing of God to reign, but through his blood-stained trail of rampant and reckless wickedness—such as we saw especially in the slaying of the Lord's priests and the people of Nob—that Saul must indeed be stopped. He could have argued that the reign of Saul over God's people was so detrimental to them that it would be far better for the sons of Israel if Saul was removed from being king entirely. Indeed, David had the perfect opportunity to get rid of Saul and usher in his own kingdom free from any accusation of selfish motive, declaring, “I did it not for my own sake, but for the sake of God's people.” But David refuses to buy into these hellish arguments. Not because he is by nature a nice guy who does the right thing; but because of the sanctifying grace of God at work in his heart. Because he has by the Spirit declared a holy war on his indwelling sin. Because he had set his heart to obey the Word of God, even when it meant saying farewell to his deepest longings and desires; even when it came at great cost to himself.

There was another who patterned this submissiveness to the leading, timing, and will of Yahweh. As we read Luke chapter 4 we discover that David served as a prefiguring of our Lord's temptations in the wilderness. For our Lord was likewise led into the wilderness to be tempted by the evil one. And Satan's tactics were still much the same. To turn the stone into bread would have been sin because He would not have been depending upon His heavenly Father to provide His needs. Our Lord waited with unblemished trust upon His Father, submitting in faith to Him. He refused to lay claim to His special position as God's Anointed One, choosing rather to submit to His Father's will, trusting Him to take care of His needs. After all, His brothers possessed no supernatural powers to turn stones into bread at will; and He must become like them in all things in order to be a faithful High Priest; in order to sympathize with them. When Satan came to Him offering Him all the world and it's glory, we realize that this was the offer of good and right ends—at the sacrifice of good and holy means. For Jesus to receive the glory of the nations is right. But it would have been in the wrong way. He submits rather to His Father's will and timing. If He is to be exalted and reign as
King over the nations, He will do it only in His Father's way. In John 6:15 when the Jews tried to come and make Him king by force He withdrew and hid from them, much the same way Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife when she grabbed his garment to entice him. Jesus submitted Himself fully to the will His Father, in a way that David never could. And the Father's will for Him was to embrace a cross. Even in the garden, as He faced the prospect of being crushed with the full force of the fierce wrath of God, He cried out, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.” (Matthew 26:39). Satan tempted Adam and Eve in the first garden with the desire for power, telling them, “you will be like God.” But in the garden of Gethsemane, the Son of Man gave up His rights, and His power, choosing rather to submit to the will of His Father.

We are also warned as we see in Saul more characteristics of a false faith. Earlier in chapter 19 we mentioned some ways that Saul demonstrated a spurious faith. We see in Saul further characteristics of a phony faith here in chapter 24.

First, Saul displays tears of sorrow but no lasting change: When Saul hears David's words and understands that it is David who is speaking to him, he “lifted up his voice and wept.” (v16). But though Saul may even perhaps be fooling himself with his tears, he no longer can fool us. This is the same old story with Saul. Just as his words have shown themselves to be empty, so now empty tears gush forth from his eyes. Boo hoo. But you're not going to fool us this time, Saul. We refuse to believe these tears because you're right back at it again in chapter 26. You may let the tears run, but we know they are not tears of true repentance. We are told in Hebrews that it was the same with Esau, who “when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.” Does this mean Esau tried to repent and God wouldn't let him? Perhaps. And this should be a warning to us to not play games with God as he did, or as the Pharisees did, to whom our Lord said, “I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going you cannot come.” (John 8:21). If one thinks he can outwit God by living a life of rebellion against him, supposing he can just make peace with Him at the end on his death-bed, he may be shocked to find that the Lord won't let him repent. Repentance is a gift that God gives (Acts 11:18). This should teach us to fear. Nevertheless, I think the meaning of the text is that Esau's repentance was not true repentance. His tears were like the tears of Judas. For
we see in the gospels that Judas was not concerned about his actual sin of treason against the Son of God—but rather the consequences of his sin. For when the Lord says that one of them would betray him they all begin to be deeply grieved and say, “Surely not I, Lord?” But it is only when Jesus describes the punishment that would come to this man that Judas speaks up: “The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.’ And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, ‘Surely it is not I, Rabbi?’” (Matthew 26:24). Saul seems to change for the moment—he leaves David and goes back to his palace; but there is no lasting change with Saul. Like a lion that tries to go on a diet of salad for a few days but in the end returns to his true nature; or as a pig that vows to forsake his muck but can only stay away for a few hours, so it is with Saul. This is not to say that the source of Saul's trouble is that he cannot repent—for Jesus' offer of forgiveness is freely and truly offered to all. The one who comes will not be denied. The one who seeks will not be turned away. The problem, rather, is that Saul simply won't repent.

Secondly, Saul demonstrates confession of sin with no change. This is, again, similar to what we saw in chapter 19—though in that chapter Saul does not actually admit his wrongdoing; he only resolves that from that point onward he would give up hunting David (how nice of him! See 19:6). But here Saul clearly makes an open confession of his sin against David. He says in essence the same thing that Judah said when he was confronted with his sin against Tamar:20 “You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you.” (v17). But we learn here from Saul that confession is not the same thing as repentance. Confession with no lasting change doesn't prove anything. Saul is beginning to look to us like a smooth politician who gives great speeches with master eloquence, but proves them empty words, neglecting to be backed up with any kind of action.21

We learn an important lesson here. The difference between godliness and ungodliness; between true faith and false faith; is not in our knowledge. It is not found in gifts and ability. It is not

21I do not mean at all to dishonor the office of public service here. My father was a public servant who took that title very seriously and held his office with great integrity. Not all politicians are like the ones I refer to here, but we know the type.
determined by the spirituality of our vocabulary, or by a position in the church. It is not marked by confession of our sin, or even by the frequency of our tears. For all these things Saul displayed. He was greatly exalted in position among the people of God—the king of Israel. He possessed much knowledge of God; there were no flaws that we know of in his doctrine. When confronted with his sin the tears stream down his face. And he confesses his iniquity in riveting poetic form. But Saul is not a godly man. Rather, the difference between true and false faith is measured by what Samuel had told the king years before when he neglected to fulfill the command of the Lord against the Amalekites. It is obedience. “Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry.” (15:22-23). We have this warning also in the New Testament. James exhorts the professing church: “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.” (James 1:22). James in his epistle is on a mission to expose the difference between true and false faith; between those who truly know Christ and those who merely profess Jesus to be their Lord. He wants to show us the same truth we are learning from Saul—that not everyone who calls themselves a believer is truly saved. “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” It is those who bear good fruit, and fruit that remains, that show themselves to be truly rooted in Christ.  

22James writes this way probably because he himself used to be an empty professor. For Jesus was James’ own brother, but we read in the gospels that for some time his faith was not saving faith (John 7:5). Once James was truly converted, he made it his ambition to bring to true saving faith those who are once like he was—a church-goer who didn’t truly know Christ.
In chapter 24 we saw that David was strengthened, by the Spirit we trust, to put to death the sin that desired to master him. Though his own men pressured their captain to take the life of his enemy, David refused to take vengeance. He would leave judgment in the hands of the Lord. Thus David gained a victory of sorts in the last account we read. Yet the sin that David had seemingly so easily resisted in chapter 24, he nearly falls head-first into here in chapter 25. David had so valiantly fought off the temptation to repay Saul with evil in the last chapter, but apart from the sovereign grace and power of God he would have fallen head long into the same pit of revenge here with Nabal. Is it not often the case as believers that after the greatest victories come the greatest temptations? Elijah won a great victory on Mount Carmel against the prophets of Baal. But before the sun had set that night we find him utterly crumbling before the threats of the enemy. We ought always to be watchful—but especially so after our victories.

Not only this, but David nearly falls here where he has shown himself to be the strongest. David was not one to lose his temper because of the opposition or oppression of an enemy. If anything characterizes David, it is a humble submission to the will of God. David was one who was strongest in his refusal to take things into his own hands; refusing to pay back evil for evil. But Scripture shows that this too is a common occurrence among God's children: they have the propensity to fall just where they are so often the strongest. The Puritans used to talk about this. Abraham was strongest in his faith, yet it was in his faith that he also had his worst failures. Moses was strongest in his meekness, yet it was an uprising of pride that caused him to disobey the Lord's command at the waters of Meribah. Job was known most for his patience, yet it was his impatience that was exposed in the course of his sufferings. Peter's greatest strength, it seemed, was in zeal, yet on the night the Savior was suffering his cowardly fear consumed him to such a degree that he wasn't able to stand up to a servant girl. In this we see how utterly desperate we are for the sustaining grace of God. We may have gifts, but without the strength and favor that God gives, our gifts are nothing. Spiritual gifts
plus self-reliance will always result in sorrow, death and defeat. We need to stay desperate on our knees before God.

We see something here of what we saw back in chapter 23—that as believers we need one another. David would have committed great sin (v33) if Abigail had not been there to remind him of the truths of the gospel. Our God has not only given us His precious Word and His Spirit. He has given us one another as gifts of grace (Ephesians 4:12).

And yet, at the same time, we see that it was God himself who was behind all of this. Yes, Abigail was the one who restrained David from falling into grievous sin; but it was God who was sovereignly behind it all (vv26, 34). When Abimelech, the king of Gerar, pleaded innocence in taking Abraham’s wife (thinking her his sister), the Lord told him, “Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her” (Genesis 20:6). Likewise Joseph’s brothers sold their flesh and blood into slavery in Egypt, but it was God who was behind it all for good. Men crucified the Lord of glory; but not apart from the sovereign will of the Father (Acts 2:23). The sovereignty of a good God is one of the sweetest and most precious comforts a believer has in this life.

But there is more, I believe, we can glean here. The story recorded here in chapter 25 is a striking picture of the kingdom of God and the gospel of Christ. Jesus spoke a parable about a wedding feast in Matthew 22. Many were invited, but they made excuses; so others were invited to the feast instead. The language is a little different here but the principle I believe is the same. David is here a picture of Christ. He sends his servants to this man with a message of peace (v6), and a request. The messengers thus go to Nabal in David’s name to deliver the message (v9). But after delivering the message of the son of Jesse, they receive only insult and scorn from this Nabal (whose name indeed comes from a word in Hebrew that means “fool”). Indeed, one of the reasons Nabal gives for refusing David and his men was that he did not know where they were from (v11). This is strikingly similar to what some of the Jews said of the Lord Jesus: “We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from” (John 9:29; see also 7:27-28). The first time David sends his servants with a message of peace, but when rejected David himself will gird on his sword and come to
Nabal at an hour he does not expect. To refuse David's offer through his messengers is to declare war on David himself. Friends, Jesus himself is presently sending out His servants into all the world, bearing the message of peace with God through the blood of His cross. David made an appeal to Nabal—God is not only making an appeal to all men—but making a declaration to all men—to repent. As in the words of the apostle Paul, “God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31). These are His terms. He sends His message of peace now by the hand of His servants, but He himself will come again one day in great wrath, avenging those who have scorned His name and trampled upon His message: “the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

We close with one more picture. I believe that just as David is here a picture of Christ in some respects, so also is Abigail in other respects. Abigail, the innocent, took upon herself the blame for the guilty (v24). Though without sin, she went to procure favor on behalf of the guilty by making herself the object of blame: “Please forgive the transgression of your maidservant” (v28). The innocent traveled outside the city in order to stand in the gap for the guilty. She went to propitiate the anger of David. Her offerings caused his anger to subside. So too Christ came into the world, and for the sake of guilty fools like us He went outside the camp, outside the city, in order to bear our reproach. “Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate” (Hebrews 13:12). Christ the innocent lamb of God took upon His own body the blame due to the guilty. “But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him” (Isaiah 53:5-6).

Because of Abigail's courage, nearly all of her family was delivered from death. But not Nabal. The Lord himself struck him shortly thereafter. This is to instruct us that Christ's atoning work has not
purchased eternal deliverance for all men unequivocally. Christ has indeed shed His blood. But not all will be saved. There must be a response to the gospel. A man must repent of his sins and believe in Christ, proving the authenticity of his faith by a life lived unto God—walking in the Light, bearing fruit, by the Spirit putting to death the deeds of his body. Friend, Jesus came into the world as the Lamb of God, to lay down His life for sinners. But He will soon come again one day as the Lion of Judah, to tear His enemies to pieces. Don't be as foolish Nabal! We ask: have you accepted His terms of peace?
The events in chapter 26 should remind us of what had happened just a little earlier in chapter 24. Saul comes out to hunt for David. The Lord not only refuses to deliver him into the hand of the king, but once again actually delivers Saul into David's hand. David has a chance to take vengeance but he refuses to. Saul seems to be really convicted of his sin and vows to never do it again; and they both go on their way. Saul back to his palace; David to the caves of the wilderness.

It is good here to take a step back and remember why all this is happening. David has been anointed to reign as king over all Israel, in the place of Saul, who had been rejected by the Lord. Saul knows this, and he is doing everything in his power to stop it from happening. He sees David as a massive threat, an enemy who needs to be eliminated at whatever cost. He is a slave to his hatred, and a slave to his jealousy; he can't resist its lure.

It is the same with the sons of the darkness, of whom Saul is a type. For Saul's hatred for David is a picture of the hatred of the world toward God—and the Lord's anointed, Christ Jesus. David calls out to Saul and his men from the mountain: “Why then is my lord pursuing his servant? For what have I done? Or what evil is in my hand?” (v18). David has done nothing wrong. Like the One who would come as the great anti-type of the son of Jesse, he was hated and pursued without cause. So too, presently, the natural man—the unconverted man—will never let Christ reign over him. Like Saul holding on to his fading kingdom, the man of the world holds on to his secret sins. He is at enmity with his Creator, and that without cause. He is opposed to God as Saul is to David; he is neither able nor willing to bow the knee to the Almighty (Romans 8:7). He is in fact unable to be willing, and unwilling to be able.

The contrast to Saul is his own son, Jonathan. We saw earlier how Jonathan cares nothing for his father's kingdom. There is another kingdom that Jonathan has his eyes fixed upon, of exceedingly precious and infinite value—a kingdom, unlike his father's kingdom, that will never pass away.
But David has the Almighty on his side. Though Saul pursue him in the mountains with three thousand or three million men, it will do no good, for greater are those with David than those against him. David just walks right down to the middle of the camp and takes Saul's spear and water jug as a souvenir, for “a sound sleep from the Lord had fallen on them” (v12). When will Saul learn that his raging against David is completely futile? Has it ever occurred to him that he will not be able to outsmart the Almighty?

His kingdom is indeed fading away. He has been at this for years now. And we say it here once again: Saul can't even seem to enjoy his kingdom while he possesses it. He's too plagued by David to even enjoy the passing pleasures of his palace. So it is for those who refuse to bow the knee to Christ—who refuse to give up their hearts and allegiance to God's Anointed. Sin promises happiness; but only gives misery and chains. Oh that they would realize and taste what that demoniac from Gerasene did the day he met Jesus! The man who had once begged Jesus to let the demons stay—once our Lord was finished with him—left him begging that he might never have to leave Him again. True life is only found in Jesus Christ. Sin's pleasures are the shell—and passing away. They are only a cheap counterfeit of the deepest, richest, untapped joy in this world: “But I would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.” (Psalm 81:16). It is only when we give up everything—when we surrender over our very lives and bow the knee to Christ—that we experience the kind of joy Satan only wishes he could reproduce. True joy, true freedom and true life is found only in Jesus Christ. Friend, have you tasted the kindness of the Lord (1 Peter 2:3)? T'rn not speaking of mere head-knowledge about the gospel. Have you truly tasted? Have you truly encountered this Jesus in a way that has completely changed your life? If not there is another invitation for you even now: “let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost” (Revelation 22:17).

Saul can't fool us anymore. We've simply seen this too many times before. All the elements of genuine repentance seem to be there. He seems to humble himself and confesses his sin as utter folly (v21). He uses the right words (v25). But we don't trust him anymore, because his words don't match his life. He acknowledges and confesses his sin over and over, but he never actually repents. He never turns from his sin. A man can survive under the water while he
holds his breath, but nature demands that he come back up for air; and it is the same with Saul. He may be able to temporarily abstain from his sin for a few days. He may even go back to the palace this day pleased with himself that he was so merciful and kind to David! But before we know it he's back at the hunt again. There is no true repentance. Saul's life is characterized by thorns rather than figs. So he can say, “Praise the Lord” all he wants. His life has exposed him for who he truly is. And it's soon to come to a close.
David here comes to the point once again where he knows he has to get away from Saul. Perhaps in a way not too different than the experiences of our Lord, it seems that David is much more welcome living among Gentile Philistines than he is his own people. Indeed, Christ is still received at times more warmly by those outside than by the church-goers who fill the pews. So David flees again to Gath of the Philistines, the same city that he had fled to at first in chapter 21. We're not told how David described his former insanity to the king. It may have been quiet a shock to Achish that David was this time in his right mind!

It is not an easy endeavor to interpret David's behavior in this chapter. Is he flat-out lying? Or are these half-truths that he's feeding to the king of Gath? Exactly who are these people David is making raids against? Are they themselves enemies of the Philistines? Or are they actually on good terms with Gath, making David's actions all the more deplorable?

There are differing lines of thought on these questions. Some, for example, are of the opinion that those David raids in verse 8 must also be enemies of Achish. Their reasoning is that if this were not the case, David wouldn't have been able to keep this up for so long. Because some things about the events of this chapter remain a little obscure, however, we must focus on the things that are clear. We know that those David attacks in verse 8 are not Philistines. Yet, we know that those David had reported to have raided were completely different than the ones he actually made those raids against. So, though we don't know what kind of relationship the Philistines had with the Geshurites, Girzites or the Amalekites during this time, it remains evident that David was in fact deceiving the king of Gath at least to some degree.

So as we gather bits and pieces of what is clear from the text; and in doing so find that David was indeed in some measure deceptive in his dealings with the Philistines, we must come to the question: Was it right what David did? Was it right for David to lie to Achish about what he was doing and who he was making raids on? Even putting David's deception for a moment to the side; was it even lawful for
David to make raids on these people the way he did? Those David was annihilating in these attacks were dwelling outside Canaan's borders (v8). God had indeed commanded His people to utterly destroy the nations that lived within the land He had promised them (Deuteronomy 20:15). But according to the Law, if Israelite kings invade other lands, they must first offer them terms of peace (Deuteronomy 20:10); and we read nothing of that here in our text. So, even the integrity of the attacks themselves was quite questionable. And on top of this, for David to be totally dishonest with the Gentile king about his behavior? And that for a period of over a year? Actually, even the initial move to Philistine territory is questionable on David's part, after having been told by the prophet to leave the safe strongholds of the land of Moab (22:5). It seemed that God Himself wanted to be the stronghold that David trusted in, but in moments of weakness he began to trust in other things; I suppose in much the same way we do. But though we can relate to David in his weakness, and though we can sympathize with him in his sufferings, his actions are still without excuse. Though others may be quick to justify David's behavior and let him off the hook, we cannot. And though there may be other religious systems that justify (or even praise) deceptive means for the sake of profitable ends, we emphatically declare that what David did in this chapter was wrong.

The Puritan minister Thomas Goodwin dealt with verses 8 and 10 in this text as he wrote on the reason God at times leaves His children in the darkness. One of the reasons Goodwin cites is, “for some gross sin committed against the light.” It is under this heading that the author mentions both David's previous lies in speaking with Ahimelech in chapter 21 as well as his behavior here in chapter 27. He argues that it was sins against the light such as these that caused David the sorrow he wrote of in Psalm 119:25, “My soul cleaves to the dust.” The source of that sorrow is contained three verses later in 119:29, “Remove the false way from me.” This false and lying way in David, according to Goodwin, is what had caused him such grief of soul.

It is interesting to remember that these events are some of the last recorded of David before he is to be given the throne. This is a precious reminder for us of how God operates with His children. It is here, I believe, just as it was with Abraham when he received the promise. We mentioned before that he waited 25 long years for the

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23In his *Works*, V3 p.295.
son of promise to be born. When did God fulfill His word to the Patriarch? After a season of great spiritual victory and triumph of faith? Quite the opposite. It was immediately following one of Abraham’s biggest blunders of faith that we read of the birth of Isaac in Genesis 21. And I suspect it is the same here with David. For it is only after falling into a dark season of unbelief and deception that the Lord fulfills His promises to this shepherd boy from Bethlehem.

We have in David not a hero, but a man. A believer who needs a Savior. At times he triumphs over temptation in wonderful heroic form, as with Goliath, or toward Saul. But at other times he stumbles in faith; he doesn’t trust in his God as he should; instead of songs of praise we find lies and deception coming out of his mouth. This is because in David we are not to look for a Savior. There was only one who lived a life of perfect obedience, there is only one who obeyed his Father with perfect humble submission: Our Lord Jesus. He is the hero. As for David, we can find encouragement even in his follies and blunders, in that they show he is not so different than us after all. He needs a Savior just as we do. For the blessing of God is not given to those without sin—but those who have come to the rest of a Savior who forgives sinners like David, and sinners like myself. Just as David wrote in another place, “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.” (Romans 4:7-8 quoted, from Psalm 32).

Perhaps we can add here one additional word of application. David in fleeing from Saul had gone over to the side of the enemy. But though he seemed to be joined to the Philistines, we know it is only a facade. Though he may appear to have become an enemy, it is only pretend. David is just as much an Israelite as ever before. And so it is at times with Christ and His flock. Sometimes the Lord pretends to be against us and on the side of our enemies. As believers we can feel sometimes like Christ has forsaken us and become our adversary. Job felt this way. Naomi felt this way. Jeremiah felt this way as he penned in Lamentations 3: “He has driven me and made me walk in darkness and not in light. Surely against me He has turned His hand repeatedly all the day. . .He is to me like a bear lying in wait, like a lion in secret places. He has turned aside my ways and torn me to pieces; He has made me desolate. He has bent His bow and set me as a target for the arrow.” (3:2-3, 10-12). Asaph likewise questioned, “Will the Lord reject forever? And will
He never be favorable again? Has His lovingkindness ceased forever? Has His promise come to an end forever? Has God forgotten to be gracious, or has He in anger withdrawn His compassion?” (Psalm 77:7-9).

There are times Christ seems to set himself against us as an enemy, just as Joseph did with his brothers when they had come to him in Egypt. There are times Christ seems to answer us harshly and appears to be against us, as in His dealings with the Syrophoenician women in Matthew 15. But it is only pretend. And even these times are somehow for our best good (just as David used his time in Philistine territory for the good of Israel). In due time His presence will return. Just as Jeremiah discovered, “For the Lord will not reject forever, for if He causes grief, then He will have compassion according to His abundant lovingkindness. For He does not afflict willingly or grieve the sons of men.” (3:31-33).
As we begin our reflection on the present chapter, we have first a solemn warning. We read in verse 6, “When Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets.” What do we make of this? Doesn't the Bible unconditionally declare that all who call upon the Lord will be delivered (Romans 10:13)? Doesn't the Messiah proclaim, “the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” (John 6:37)? Don't we read in the prophet Isaiah, “Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:7)? We have two truths demonstrated here, which we have dealt with before in our study through Samuel.

First, we are given no reason to think that Saul is here wanting to repent of his sins. His concern is not the condition of his heart, but the condition of the battle field. Saul's behavior here is reflective of the other criminal on the cross beside Jesus who shouted, “Are you not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!” (Luke 23:39). This man's concern was mere deliverance from sins consequences. He had no desire to be delivered from sin itself. And so it is here with Saul. He is in trouble and he knows it. But just as has been the pattern of his life, what he is concerned about is deliverance from the consequences of his sin, rather than deliverance from sin itself—rather than turning to God in true repentance.

There is a second warning here for all of us. We read of it in Isaiah 55:6, the verse immediately before the one we just quoted above: “Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.” In the Bible we have many tensions. For instance, Scripture clearly teaches the doctrine of election. God does not merely foreknow those who will believe in Him. He rather handpicks those whom He had chosen before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). The only free will in the process of salvation is the Lord's free will to chose those whom He desires. No man can come to Christ unless the Father first draws him (John 6:44). Yet, mysteriously, salvation at the same time is freely and truly offered to whoever will call upon the Lord. Just as we quoted in part above,
“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” (John 6:37). His sheep will assuredly come: election. Yet, in the same breath Jesus bids come whoever will: the free offer of the gospel. This is a tension. Another tension in the Scriptures is what we may be seeing in our present chapter. On the one hand Scripture declares emphatically that the one who calls upon the Lord will be delivered (Romans 10:13); the one who seeks Him will find Him (Isaiah 55:7; Jeremiah 29:13; Matthew 7:7-11). But we have in Isaiah 55:6, quoted above, the other side of the tension. We are commanded to seek the Lord “while He may be found.” Frightening words proceed from the lips of the Savior when He tells some of the Jews in John 8:21, “I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going you cannot come.” Wisdom, who is a prefiguring of Christ in the book of Proverbs, calls out a word of sober warning to all when she declares: “Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention...Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but they will not find me, because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord.” (1:24-25, 28-29). This is not to say that Jesus will not make good on the promise He made in John 6:37. Saul of Tarsus after many years of rebellion was warmly received into the arms of the Savior. The other thief came to Jesus in his dying hour and Jesus boldly declared to him that very day they would be together in paradise. As another has put it, this example of “deathbed conversion” is in the Scriptures to show us that Jesus is so gracious as to even save sinners who come to Him at their dying hour. But there is only one to teach us not to presume upon this kindness. We are told in verse 6 of our chapter that when Saul inquired of the Lord, “the Lord did not answer him.” We are here warned of the great danger of playing games with God; of thinking we can just live a life of rebellion and wickedness, and then expect mercy on our death-beds. God is merciful, to be sure; be He is not mocked. As we mentioned earlier in our study, repentance is a gift that God gives. He chooses to give it to those whom He desires and withholds it from others (John 12:40). This should make us tremble. If you play games with God, as Saul did, know that you are walking on very dangerous ground. It is a risk I don't personally want to take.

We have secondly in this chapter a demonstration of the differences between the godly and the wicked. If we remember David's deception of Achish in just the last chapter, we might ask what
the difference is between David and Saul? We might ask how Saul's lying to the sorcerer about his identity (v12) was any different than David's lying to Achish about his actions (27:9-10)? We might wonder how Saul's seeking refuge in a medium was different than David seeking refuge among the Philistines? How is it then that David is considered a man after God's own heart while Saul has been rejected by the Lord? This is a very important question, and we will give here two answers.

One answer is found in the declaration of God's own character to Moses in Exodus 34:6-7. We read, "The Lord...who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished." This is an amazing statement. According to God's Word, what is the difference between those who receive His favor and those who don't? It is not that one group of people are sinners and the other group are not. It is not that the sins of one group of people are really, really bad, but the sins of the other group are less in comparison. Both groups stand as criminal-sinners before God. The difference is simply that one group of people are forgiven their sins, and the other group of people are punished for their sins. This is because one group of people have trusted in the Messiah, and their sins have been punished upon Him instead of upon them. God's punishment for their sins was put upon Christ. But the other group are those who choose to reject God's offer of forgiveness in the Messiah, and so receive punishment in full for their sins. What is the difference between the godly and the wicked? What is the difference between David and Saul? They are both sinners, yes. But David's sin had been forgiven. Saul's hadn't. This is the Biblical truth of justification. Friends, we do not have to wait until Judgment Day to know what God will say to us. Just as Saul knew for sure what was going to happen the next day after talking with Samuel, so we can know now in this life what will happen in the next. The verdict God will give on Judgement Day has already been given to us in His Word: In the words of John the Baptist, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:36).

We can draw out one other answer to this question. Though David and Saul both be sinners, though David is found deceiving in chapter 27 and Saul is found deceiving in chapter 28, there is one more difference. We are not surprised when Saul does it. This is who Saul is, this is who he has shown himself to be, this is his nature.
But when David does it, we are taken aback. This does not fit David's character at all. We know him to be a godly man, to trust in his God. Saul's nature is to deceive. But when we find David committing sin, we know that it is out of character. This is the Biblical truth of sanctification. When God saves a man, He takes away his heart of stone and gives him an entirely new heart; a new nature—this is called regeneration. And from that moment onward the Lord is conforming him more to Himself, making him holy as He is holy from the inside out; this is sanctification. All true believers are in the process of being sanctified. But those who are not being sanctified show that they have not yet truly been justified; they have not yet received a new heart by the Spirit, and thus have not yet come to know Christ. For Hebrews makes clear that without sanctification no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). Those who walk in the darkness, who evidence a life characterized by sin, prove that they have never really been born of the Spirit. But when a person truly comes to Christ, he is given a completely new heart that no longer desires what is evil, but what is good. Believer's still have sin, but a radical change has been wrought within them, down to the core of their being. Before, sin was their friend. But now it is their worst enemy. The deepest longings of their hearts have been changed completely. And these new desires, in turn, give birth a new life. For this reason we read in 1 John 1:6-9, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us."

David is still a sinner, no question about it. But his life has become characterized by walking in the light, because he has been given a new heart in Christ. Saul is a different story. As we have studied Saul's behavior, it is evident that he is one whose life is characterized by walking not in the light, but in the darkness. His actions bear witness that his heart has never truly been changed. Friend, what is your life characterized by? All men are sinners. But have your sins been wiped away? Has a new, inward, holy hunger given birth to a new life? Have you indeed been born of the Spirit of God?
As we come to this chapter we are reminded first of the Lord's kind providences to His children even on their worst days. David had spent a year and four months in the land of the Philistines (27:7). We have seen that David had both sinned against God by trusting in men, and sinned against men by not trusting in his God. It was questionable for him to be seeking refuge in the safety of Philistine territory after the prophet had told him to leave the strongholds of Moab in 22:4-5. The Lord wanted David to trust in Him alone as his stronghold. We fall into sin and sorrow when we take back again the shield we had earlier given to God, trying to protect ourselves. In the wilderness of Judah he was made to trust in his God, but in the safety of living among the Philistines his faith had faltered. And along with it his integrity, for his fearful unbelief gave birth to inexcusable deception towards the Philistine king.

At times David conquers kingdoms by his faith; at other times he falls prey to unbelief and temptation. So we see that the main constant in David's life is not the greatness of his faith, but the faithfulness of his God. We are reminded here once again that the hero in 1 Samuel is not David, but the Lord. We are reminded that the hesed, never-ceasing, loving-faithfulness displayed through these chapters belongs to Yahweh alone. David fails as we do. But in the midst of all David's failings, both in the chapters that have gone before and the ones we know are still coming, God does not fail David. David may forsake his God, but his God will never forsake him. The Lord's kind and good providence guides David even on the days that he shows little or no faith in the Lord.

We are reminded of this again in this chapter. David has dropped the ball in major ways leading up to the events of chapter 29. His faith in God and his personal integrity had wavered. And his lies have brought him face to face with a massive problem. The Philistines are going up to fight against Israel, and he is asked by their king to join them in battle. David is faced with what seems an impossible situation. To go to battle against his own people would be absolute folly. Should the shepherd of Israel ravage the sheep entrusted to his care? But to refrain would surely begin to raise
questions in the mind of king Achish about David. Further, to turn against the Philistines in battle he would have to sin against the Lord and profane the name of his God by completely betraying the trust of the Philistine king. Besides, the wives and children of David and his men would be left behind (as we see in the next chapter), leaving them completely helpless to a Philistine retaliation.

David had dug himself into an impossible situation. But God displays His kind providence to His wayward servant at the last moment. And He does this in two ways. First: The Lord, who holds the hearts of kings in the palm of His hands, stirs the hearts of Achish's commanders in such a way as to cause the king to send David and his men home. But this is only the first kindness, for we see in the next chapter that there was another reason God led them back to Ziklag: though David and his army don't realize it yet, their homes and been burned down and their wives and children taken away. Thus, though David had wavered in his faith, the Lord would not waver in pouring out His unmerited, even demerited graces on David. He sends them back to Ziklag with time to recover what had been lost.

We are also reminded here of the Lord's promise to make His children instruments of blessing even on their worst days. For despite David's lapse of unbelief, leading him to dishonestly in his dealings with Achish, it seems that David's life had made an impact on the Philistine king. For Achish not only considers David to be “like an angel of God” (v9), but the pagan ruler invokes the very name of Yahweh, the God of Israel, in verse 6. It almost appears as though the king of the Philistines has a greater faith than the son of Jesse. This may remind us of a similar truth back in Genesis. It was in Genesis 20 that Abimelech, the Philistine king of Gerar, seemed to act with more integrity than did Abraham. Yet, even through the patriarch's lapse into dishonesty, the Lord was making him an agent of blessing. For when Abimelech comes later to Isaac he not only makes a covenant with him, but the pagan ruler invokes the name of Yahweh, declaring to Isaac, “You are now the blessed of the Lord.” (26:29). This could be just empty language, but it seems to me that Abimelech had come to seek refuge in the God of Israel as a direct result of his dealings with Abraham—and that fully despite the massive failure of the patriarch. Here in our present chapter we have a similar truth. The Lord not only continues to lavish His kindness upon David despite his sin; but despite him, He resolves to fulfill and
uphold the other promises He had sworn on oath to Abraham. Even in and through David's worst blunders, the Lord is making him a blessing to the nations.
Having passed through a prolonged season of wilderness and confusion, David must face the biggest trial of all just before taking the throne. When the soldiers return home, they find Ziklag completely burned to the ground. Their beloved families had been taken captive by the enemies of God's people. The Amalekites were perhaps the most bitter enemies of Israel. They were the ones that the Lord commanded to be destroyed completely in Deuteronomy 25:17, having attacked the people of God in the wilderness under Moses. They were the same ones whom Saul had refused to destroy earlier in 1 Samuel 15. This was his test, and just like the first Adam, Saul miserably failed. Haman in the book of Esther, the bitter foe of God's people is described as an Agagite; that is, a descendant of Agag, the king of the Amalekites during the time of Saul. The Amalekites were also some of those that David had just recently been making raids against with his men during their time at Ziklag. And now these Amalekites had raided his own city, burned it with fire, and taken away the wives and children of David and his men. The bitter enemies of God's people had destroyed their city; and death itself seemed to triumph over David and his men.

The whole account drips with the gospel story. For when David seeks the Lord, the Divine reply comes from heaven: "Pursue, for you will surely overtake them, and you will surely rescue all." (v8). In this way the Lord sends David on a mission to rescue those who had been taken captive by the enemy. Does the story sound familiar? It may remind us of Moses, the one the Lord had sent to deliver the sons of Israel from Egypt. But it also points us forward. Many days later there would come another king who would be sent by Yahweh on a mission to rescue His people. He would be called the Son of David. He was the Lord's anointed in a way David never was—He was the Messiah himself. And just as the Lord sent David on this mission to rescue those who had been taken captive and enslaved by the enemy, so too the Christ would be sent by the Father into the world on a mission to rescue all those belonging to Him, who had been taken captive by Satan to do his will. It is worthy of note, that
the day David gained victory over the Amalekites was the day the kingdom of Saul was crushed. So too, it was through the atoning work of Christ and His resurrection from the dead that the promise of Genesis 3:15 would at last find their fulfillment. It was in Christ's triumph over death that the serpent of old received his fatal blow.

Just as with David on his rescue mission, so Christ came into the world in obedience to His Father. To recover the captives, we read in verse 9 that David must cross the brook Besor. The meaning of Besor is “good news,” for it is a foreshadowing of what awaits David and his men. There is good news because the Lord had promised victory. Indeed, after three days, David will triumph over his enemies and free all those who had been taken captive (v12). But our Lord Jesus was made to cross another brook when He walked with His disciples towards the garden of Gethsemane. For after they had finished the Passover meal, we are told in John's account that they crossed over the ravine of the Kidron (John 18:1). And while Besor denotes “good news,” Kidron signifies “darkness” or “sorrow.” For our Lord was also sent on a mission, and He too would deliver the captives after three days, but in a much different way. We would gain our freedom in Christ, but it would come at a cost we cannot comprehend. The cup of wrath was taken out of our hands, but only because it was given to Him to drink in our stead. David was led to his enemies and slaughtered them completely. But the precious lamb of God was led by the hand of His enemies to His own slaughter. David punished his enemies. Jesus was punished in their place: “But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5).

According to God's promise David recovers everything, and so has Christ. Just as the men recognize that the sheep and cattle that were recovered were David's spoil (v20), it would do us good to remember that everything recovered from the hand of the enemy belongs solely to Jesus our Savior. Christ said to Peter three times, “Shepherd My sheep” (John 21:16), perhaps in part to remind Peter (and us) whose sheep they were. They certainly were not Peter's. It is Christ who has conquered; all the spoil belongs to Him. Further, shortly after David conquers the Amalekites and recovers the lost ones, we read that he sends some of the spoil “to all the places where David himself and his men were accustomed to go” (v31), saying to them, “Behold, a gift for you from the spoil of the enemies of the
Lord” (v26). In like manner, we read in Ephesians 4:7-8 that Christ “gave gifts to men.” David gave to his friends and followers gifts from the spoil after coming home to Ziklag. In the same way, after Christ had gained full victory over death through the cross and His resurrection; having again come home to His Father, He sent the promised gift of the Holy Spirit to all those who had believed. At Pentecost, Christ poured forth the gifts of His spoil upon His people, distributing various spiritual gifts to different members of the church for the building up of the same (Ephesians 4:12).

Moreover, we know it is shortly after this that David will leave Ziklag and take the throne to reign over all Israel. In a very short time David will reign as exalted king over God's people. Likewise, the church, though having received the victory spoils of the King, yet presently waits for Christ to come and establish His kingdom. She longs for the day when He will come to her again, returning to reign fully over her and in her midst forever.

**Part 2**

We have seen how 1 Samuel 30 drips with the story of Christ and the gospel. But I believe with all my heart that to stop here would be a mistake of massive proportions. We have learned that this is the story of the rescue mission of Christ; the story of regaining what had been lost to the enemy. True enough. But what we need to understand is that the rescue mission is still happening. What we have to realize is that Christ's mission is not over. We are deceiving ourselves if we tell the story of Christ freeing the captives in the past tense only. There are still captives to be rescued. Christ's atoning work on the cross is finished, to be sure. But His present work of rescuing captives is not. There are many sheep that are still lost. They are still held captive in the den of Satan. And Christ has said, “I must bring them also” (John 10:16).

But I don't know if we hear that must as forcefully as He said it. I don't know if we understand how precious they are to Him. For another picture of the church in the Scriptures is the bride of Christ. Some of us have tasted what it is like to love a bride, and this must surely be just a fraction of the love Christ has for His bride. Just as David's wives and children—those dearest to him in all the world—had been taken captive by the enemy, so the very bride of Christ as I write this is being held captive among dark nations. The reason we are not
sitting right now at the marriage supper of the Lamb is that there are still empty seats. Shagorika has not been gathered yet from Bangladesh. Ahmed is still being held captive under the lies of the evil one. Chisomo’s seat at the marriage supper is still empty, because she still lives in the darkness of animism. The Great Commission is the explanation of how Christ will gather His bride from among the nations. When Jesus told His disciples, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” in John 20, He was sending them, and us, on a mission to gather His bride. You and I must bring her back. This is not just a command like, “Clean your room,” or “Wash the dishes.” The command to gather Christ’s bride from among the nations is the most precious thing Christ could ever entrust to us to do. So we have to ask ourselves, have we taken Him seriously?

The first thing the men do when they return is weep until they can’t weep anymore. This is the most natural thing in the world. Their wives and children have been ripped away from them. The most precious things to them in all the world have fallen into the hands of cruel, immoral, and wicked men. Of course they weep; it was what they should have done. But friends, do we? Do we weep over those still in darkness and captivity? Are we affected at all? Paul wept. He was so broken over the eternal destinies of his fellow unbelieving Israelites that if it was possible, he said, he would rather himself be sent to hell than them (Romans 9:1-5). Moses carried the same love for the unbelieving among the Israelites in the wilderness, asking of the Lord, “But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!” (Exodus 32:32). And what Moses and Paul asked to be done, our Lord himself actually did. For Jesus did not just give up the king’s robes and worship of angels in glory at the incarnation. He didn’t just say goodbye for a few years to live on the earth until returning to glory. Jesus gave up glory itself. He was cut off from the land of the living in order that we might be grafted in. For on the tree, our Lord gave up the paradise that was His by right, and instead took upon Himself the punishment of an eternity of hell. He bore the full, infinite wrath of God in His body in the course of a few hours. On the cross, Christ gave up His cup of blessing, choosing instead the cup of the fierce wrath of God, which was ours to drink. This is love. Is there any of this love in us? He sacrificed everything. Will we sacrifice anything? Shall the king of glory give up paradise itself to
purchase His bride, and we refuse to lift a finger to gather her home to Him?

But there is a word of encouragement here if we have been negligent. For we read in verse 6, “But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.” I used to interpret this as basically something like this: When David encountered problems, he would seek the Lord before doing anything, and so should I. When I face difficulties and hardships, like David, I should strengthen myself in the Lord. This is not entirely wrong, but I believe there is more meaning than this here in the text. We need the context of the last few chapters to really understand what is being said here. For when we glance back over the last few pages of Scripture, we are reminded that David has been less than a hero of faith, to say the least. His move to Philistine territory was at the least questionable. His raids on foreign nations living outside the land were extremely dubious. And his outright deceiving of the Philistine king was absolutely inexcusable. We may not recall the last time we saw him strengthen himself in the Lord. We get the feeling that what David does here in verse 6 is perhaps something he has not done for a long time. We get the sense that this strengthening is through tears of confession and repentance. David had failed God. But when David comes returning to the Lord in verse 6, God does not fail David. The Lord does not remind David of his failures over the last sixteen months. The Lord does not condemn David and forsake him for his sin. And this is a great encouragement for us, isn’t it? We may have been negligent. We may have fallen into almost lifeless formality. We may have lost our former zeal. Our love may have grown cold. But in Christ we may return, receive cleansing and forgiveness, and move on in the power of the Holy Spirit. In Christ we can forget those things behind and reach forward to those things which are ahead. Receiving fresh cleansing for our past negligence, we can get up, go after the Amalekites, and bring home what had been lost. You may remember that the request of blind Bartimaeus was not just to see—it was to regain his sight (Luke 18:41). He had lost his sight, and he came to Jesus asking to receive again that which he had once possessed. Neither was he denied: “Receive your sight,” was Jesus’ reply (v42).

Friends, have you lost your vision? Have you diminished in your intimacy with Christ? In your zeal for lost sinners? In hungering and thirsting for righteousness? Do you grieve over anything that has been lost? In Jesus Christ you may gain it back again. We have
sinned. But in Christ we have the invitation to return, to be strengthened in His grace, and to move on in His power.

Next, David begins to inquire of the Lord: should they pursue the Amalekites? The answer comes from heaven, “Pursue, for you will surely overtake them, and you will surely rescue all” (v8). We have here a promise and a command. The Lord here commands David and his men to pursue the Amalekites, giving them a promise that they would indeed recover everything. They are commanded to go, but they don't go with an uncertain hope. They go with confidence because God had promised them that everything would be restored. Yet, the promise of recovery was contingent on David and his men getting up and pursuing the band of Amalekites. For David and his men, the ends were intimately and inseparably connected with the means.

William Carey, in the sermon that launched the modern missionary movement, preached on the command and promise found in Isaiah 54:2-3. His two main points: “Attempt great things for God; Expect great things from God.” God has His elect. Jesus will gather His sheep from among the nations, though their hearts be ever so hard. But nothing will happen if we do not go and preach to them. It was the same with Joshua. He was given marvelous and wonderful promises of God's presence and future victory of the land as he stood on the banks of the Jordan. But if Joshua and his men didn't actually cross the Jordan, they would have missed the blessing—it would perhaps be given to the next generation. The Lord had bound the promise together with the command: “Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses.” (1:3). David and his men had been given a promise, but they must actually go to receive it.

But David and his men disobey the Lord and remain at Ziklag. No, thankfully that's not what we read! Would it not have been a sin of unbelievable proportions for David and his men to just sit at Ziklag when their own flesh and blood had been taken captive, and the Lord had told them to go after them—even giving them absolute assurance of victory? But maybe now this is getting a little too close to home. What has Jesus told us? Yes, Jesus has promised that His sheep will hear His voice and come. But just as it has always been, this promise is forever bound together with His command to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. Jesus has not suggested, but commanded His
followers to make disciples of all the nations. It took the disciples some time to realize that this included the Gentiles. At first they had assumed what Jesus meant was to preach the gospel among the Jewish people. But He meant more than that. We sort of laugh at them and how long it takes for them to get it, that the gospel was for the Gentiles too. But what if we have done the same thing? They didn't realize that Jesus was sending them to the foreigners too. Could it be that we also don't get it? What if the Great Commission isn't just about Americans reaching other Americans, or Koreans reaching their own country? What if Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations means more than if we have lots of extra resources after everything else on the list, we can think about investing them in lands much darker than ours? The disciples finally figured out that Jesus was sending them to the Gentiles. May we wake up soon to the fact that the church in the States is just as responsible for India as Georgia. Please, Oh God. May we wake up from a long slumber to the truth that to not send laborers to unreached areas in Bangladesh is to have the blood of millions on our hands. Wake up church!! Wake up United States!! Stop turning a deaf ear and a deaf wallet to the cries of the unreached! We sit here, prayerless for them, uncaring for them, unmoved by their eternal destinies. Can the love of God be in us?

It is true, that later some stay with the baggage at the brook Besor, and not all can be sent in the cause of missions. Yet, it should instruct us that it is two hundred who stay behind and four hundred who move ahead. It was the same when Joshua led the sons of Israel over the Jordan to take the land. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh had already taken possession of their territory on the east side of the Jordan. They had received their inheritance. But their brothers had yet to receive theirs. So Moses exhorts these men: “Shall your brothers go to war while you yourselves sit here?” (Numbers 32:6). They swear to Moses that they will not rest until all of God's people have received their inheritance: “We will not return to our homes until every one of the sons of Israel has possessed his inheritance” (v18). They take no rest until their brothers have rest. We see later that they were also compelled to leave a few men back east of the Jordan, for when Moses sends them back to their inheritance in Joshua 22:8, he says to them, “divide the spoil of your enemies with your brothers.” So, there were some that had to remain with the women and children. But it would be an understatement to
say that most of them went. And the same is true here with David's men: It is four hundred that go; two hundred stay with the baggage.

Can I speak plainly? We know that we're not taking the Great Commission seriously when thousands stay in the States while a handful or two cross over the Besor into dark lands. Is this too strong? Are we getting legalistic? I heard the other day of a church that had received four hundred applicants. This was just one church. My brothers who are seeking a calling in the ministry: I beseech you with all my heart to consider before the Lord whether He would have you serve Him in a place where the needs are much greater, and the applicants are invited with open arms.

Alexander Duff had a profound affect on the church of Scotland for the sake of the cause of Christ overseas in the nineteenth century. He delivered a powerful message to the Free Church General Assembly challenging them with the fact that there was one minister in Scotland for every thousand, while they had sent only twelve missionaries to India with the responsibility of hundreds of millions. He boldly proclaimed to his fellow ministers, “God then, I say, may some day require the blood of these millions at our hands.” He understood that they in Scotland were responsible for the souls in India. Isn't it the same today?

No, I don't believe God is calling everyone to the mission field. But while churches in the States are bombarded with hundreds of candidates seeking a pastorate calling; whole villages, towns, cities, and regions in the darkest places in the world remain entirely untouched by a single Christian, let alone a church. When David crossed the Besor with his men it was not five hundred and eighty five who stayed with the baggage. David needed more than fifteen men to fight the Amalekites. An army of that size would never have brought home their lost family. O Lord, send out laborers into Your harvest field.

Samuel had told Saul many years ago of this day. The kingdom would be ripped away from him and given to another. Though it seems it took several years to come to fulfillment, the prophetic word was no less certain. For so many years David appeared to be defeated, while Saul's kingdom had appeared strong and victorious. But today the tables turned. Even in the last chapter David seemed so nearly swallowed up by death and defeat. But after three days, Saul's kingdom was overthrown, and David's was established forever.

We have seen in our study of David and Saul in 1 Samuel that so often the Scriptures put these two kings forward as types of the first and second Adam (see Romans 5). Saul prefigures the first Adam. At first, like the first Adam, Saul truly seems to walk with God. There are no signs initially of rebellion or disobedience. But like Adam, Saul was given a test. Saul failed to wait for Samuel in chapter 13; he disobeyed the command and so failed the test. Just like Adam in the garden, Saul began to put the blame on others. And just like Adam, Saul's first sin was only the beginning. For this single act of disobedience proved to poison his whole being, giving birth to sin, and giving Saul over to all manner of abominable evil and wickedness. Because of his disobedience, Saul and his kingdom were rejected; and the Lord raised up another who would follow Him fully. David was chosen to rule over God's people, having been anointed at the hand of Samuel. But though he had been anointed as rightful king, he must first be rejected and suffer many things before he would reign over God's people.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:22, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.” Just as Saul and David prefigure Adam and Christ, Scripture declares that every person is either “in Adam” or “in Christ.” Either we are united to Adam or to Christ. Either we walk in the ways of Adam, or through new birth by the Holy Spirit we have been joined to Christ. Scripture teaches that every man is born into sin. Sin is like a fatal disease—and results in eternal death. Our lifestyle and desires show us whether we are “in Adam” or “in Christ.” Paul says in Romans 8, “For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.” (v5).
Are our lives characterized by walking in the darkness, or in the light? Are our hearts set upon Christ and the things of Christ, or the things of the world? Have we put to death the flesh with its sinful desires? Have we died with Christ to the world and all it offers? And do our lives bear witness to these things? Have we taken up our cross to follow Jesus?

The question we need to ask ourselves as we finish 1 Samuel is, are we ready to stand before Christ today? If today was our last on this earth, and today was the day we must stand before Jesus and give an account, would we be ready? Would we stand before God like Saul? Or like Jonathan? Would we stand before the Lord as a friend, or as a foe? Scripture makes clear that there are only two groups. There are those He will place on His right hand and say to them, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” And there are those He will put on His left hand, who will be thrust out of His heavenly kingdom to spend forever in the lake of burning fire. Have our lives proved that we have sought Christ and the kingdom of God? Or will our lives testify to the fact that though we may have confessed Him with our mouths, we never followed Him? Though we may have called ourselves Christians, will the last day reveal that we were merely fruitless branches that showed themselves to not truly be united to the Living Vine? For Jesus has said there is a kind of branch that is in Him, but bears no fruit (John 15:2); and concerning these branches Jesus declares, “and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.” (v6). There is a kind of person who is part of the professing church but does not truly belong to Christ. There are those who confess Him with their mouths, but have never given Him their hearts. There are those who call Him “Lord” to whom He will declare, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.” (Matthew 7:23). It was to church-goers that Jesus declared, “Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' then He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets'; and He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from Me, all you evildoers.” (Luke 13:27). These people were not atheists. They were not Muslims or Buddhists or Hindus. They often heard the Word of God, they were often in the
presence of other believers, they sat under His teaching. But they proved themselves only hearers of the Word and not doers. They may have known much about Christ, but they didn't truly know Christ, and He didn't know them.

For Saul things end very tragically. He dies in the battle in a way that reminds us of Goliath, the enemy of the Lord, and enemy of Israel. His head is severed from his body; his armor is stripped away and brought into the temples of the gods of the Philistines. But Saul does not only lose his kingdom and his own life in the battle against the Philistines. He must now stand before God Almighty as one whose life seemed to demonstrate that he didn't really know the Lord. Indeed, it is noteworthy that his body was finally buried on the east side of the Jordan; for Jabesh-gilead was located outside the true boundaries of the promised land.

For Saul it was now too late; just like in the days of Noah. When God closed the door of Noah's ark right before the flood, and the clouds became black and they began to realize they were in big trouble, perhaps some of Noah's neighbors came running to the ark and began to bang on the door. Maybe at that moment many of them wanted to change their mind. Maybe they started pleading with Noah to let them in. But it was too late for them. God had shut the door. And it is now too late for Saul. But the wonderful news is that it is not yet too late for us! The door of the ark is still open, and God is commanding you now to come in to the safety of Jesus. God is commanding you this very moment, before it's too late, to turn from your sins and come to Christ. To forsake your sin and trust in Him. God's Word assures us that in Jesus there is complete forgiveness and eternal life to everyone who comes to Him. There is a full and free pardon to all who call upon Jesus, for Scripture says, “Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Romans 10:13). May God so move in the hearts of many this day by His Spirit, drawing them out of their sin and in to life in Himself!!

Reflections on 2nd Samuel
There is an awful artifact found in the midst of an excavation of Pompeii after the city was destroyed by a catastrophic volcanic eruption in August of 79 AD. Because of the fossilizing nature of volcanic ash, the artifacts have been preserved with incredible detail. But some of them are a tragic reminder of how quickly the city was consumed with lava, and even give a glimpse into what people were doing in their very last moments. One of these is a word of sober warning to us as we think upon the coming day of God's judgment. There was a man preserved in ash who in his last moments was found curled up, clinging to a bag of gold in his hands. We don't know the story. Perhaps this was his gold and he thought he had time to take it with him and escape the devastation. Perhaps he was a thief who thought he had time to ransack the treasures of those who had already fled before he himself sought refuge from impending danger. But whatever the case was, this man could not take his gold with him. He may have thought he would escape not only with his life, but a bag of earthly treasure. But instead he was immediately ushered into the presence of Jesus, to give an account for his time on earth.

As we come to the first chapter of 2 Samuel, we find a similar story. Three days after Israel's defeat in battle, we read of a young Amalekite who runs from the battle line to David at Ziklag. As we begin to try to understand our text, we need to pay close attention to who this man is and what he is doing.

First, who is he? He is an Amalekite. We have seen already that this nation was perhaps the greatest enemy of the Lord and of His people. Remember, the Lord had commanded His people to destroy Amalek for what they did to them in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 25:17-19). The great sin of king Saul in 1 Samuel 15 was his refusal to destroy all the Amalekites. Later, in the book of Esther, we are told that Haman, the great enemy of God's people, was a descendant of Agag, the Amalekite king that Saul had befriended instead of destroying (1 Samuel 15:20). Moreover, David and his men had just two days prior returned from slaughtering the band of Amalekites who had raided their city and taken their loved ones captive (v1).
Next, why is this young Amalekite making such a long trek to David? In looking at our Bible maps we learn that Ziklag was quite a distance from Mount Gilboa. This young man covered some ninety miles to get to David! We ask what would motivate this young Amalekite to run such a distance—the equivalent of well over a marathon a day for three days?

As we give thought to this question we must note something about the text. There are obvious discrepancies between what we read in 1 Samuel 31 and what we hear from this young man. First, we are told clearly in 1 Samuel 31 that it was only after Saul's armor bearer had seen that Saul was dead that he also took his own life (31:5). Secondly, the account of Saul's death in 1 Samuel 31 informs us that he fell upon his sword, while the Amalekite tells David that it was his spear he had fallen upon. It is in these details that this young Amalekite begins to give himself away. His account of Saul's death doesn't match what Scripture had told us before, because Saul had already been dead when he came to him. His story is a lie. He pretends to make the long (and perhaps dangerous) journey to Ziklag merely out of loyalty to David. But he is only after worldly treasure. He comes to David with the crown and bracelet of the fallen king in his hands. He runs for days to the man who would surely reign in Saul's place. He supposes he is bringing David good news, and he expects a great reward. But he is dead wrong.

This young Amalekite thought he had a winning lottery ticket and he was going in to cash in his prize for the reward of a lifetime. He will be the one to tell David that today is the day he takes the throne. To make it all the more certain he will even place the royal crown in the hands of the new king. He frames his story as if to leave absolutely no room for accusation against his actions, and even as if to make David his debtor. He makes it seem that he had no choice in the matter, that not only did he honor Saul by performing what (he says) Saul himself requested, but in this same action, he is the one who places the kingdom in David's hands. He makes himself into a hero. As he traveled those ninety miles he had crafted his story perfectly; a water-tight argument so as not only to clear himself of any wrong or blame, but to secure for himself the tip of a lifetime. He thought if his Amalekite king would give out considerable rewards to runners bringing good news, how much more would the generous and God-fearing David lavish honor and riches upon the one bringing
the best news of his life? But he misjudged David. And he paid with his own life.

How many today are like this young Amalekite? There are indeed many who follow in his footsteps. And as they trace his footsteps, so they will share in his fate. For just as he came into David's camp on the third day expectantly, only to be cut down with the sword, so it will be for many at the resurrection of the dead.

Some, like the young Amalekite, serve the Lord only outwardly in hopes of great earthly treasure. Paul speaks of them in passages like Philippians 3:18-19: "For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things." They are enemies of the cross of Christ. Like the young Amalekite before David, they use Jesus as a means to an end. Their hearts are never truly set on Christ himself—their eyes and their hearts are set on the things this world has to offer. Often they know the Scriptures—sometimes you find them even preaching the Scriptures—but never living them out. Like Esau, their god is their belly. They are like the Jews who were said to be "seeking Jesus" (John 6:24), but only for another meal. And like Elisha's servant, their god is their wealth, for they chase after riches as Gehazi chased after Namaan's treasures.

They consider, I suppose, like the young Amalekite, that they can deceive God as they have deceived themselves. Perhaps, again like the Amalekite youth, they presume upon His reputation of generosity and kindness. They have heard Him to be a gracious and loving God. But they fail to recognize that Jesus is is the Lion of Judah as well as the Lamb of God. They fail to understand that the Christ is not only the friend of sinners, but the enemy of the unrepentant: "If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword" (Psalm 7:12). And just like the man clinging to his sack of gold, they will perish with their wealth. As John the Baptist foretold, "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matthew 3:12). Indeed, the Lamb of God is not only the object of worship in glory, but the overseer of the torments of hell (Revelation 14:10). It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the Living God.

There are others perhaps, like the young Amalekite, who think they will be able to talk themselves into heaven. They think they will
be able to argue their way into paradise, to clever-talk their way out of the coming judgment. Like the young runner in our chapter, they think they will be able to frame their case in such a way as to make God feel sorry for them. They are certain they will be able to craft their story in such a light as to make themselves look like hero’s; that God Himself ought to be their debtor. They think God is like them. But they too are greatly and tragically deceived. Our Lord taught that there will be many on that day who will seek to enter but not be able. They may be just as surprised on the day of judgement as the young Amalekite when they hear those frightful words, “Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.” (Matthew 7:23).

This Amalekite youth brought with him Saul’s royal crown and bracelet. Perhaps he reasoned that at the very least, David owed him some handsome payback for these valuable commodities. Even their face value must have been enormous, let alone what they signified—that with Saul’s death the kingdom had finally been handed down to David. Surely, if anyone could have merited the favor of the son of Jesse, it would have been this Amalekite youth. After all, he brought with him nothing but the best ornaments that could be found from the fallen king. But we learn that even the choicest riches of Saul do not impress David. Indeed, they are detestable to him. Truly, if the young Amalekite had known anything about David, he would have kept his life.

What are you trusting in to give you favor with the King on the day of the great resurrection? Are you carrying with you the repulsive ornaments of a fallen nature? Are you trusting in crowns or bracelets of human achievement or goodness to give you favor with Christ? The best works that human nature can produce will only kindle the wrath of the Son of David.

What will you be found clinging to on the day the earth and all its works are burned up? A bag of earthly treasure? A rucksack full of excuses? A briefcase enclosed with your religious resume? Or is your claim:

*Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
  My beauty are, my glorious dress
  'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
  With joy shall I lift up my head.*
It might help us to speak a little about the significance of the meanings and locations of some of the places mentioned in this chapter before we dive into the text. It is always good, if possible, to study the Scriptures with a good concordance and Bible dictionary. I believe we are prone to miss at least half the meaning of any given text in the Old Testament simply because most of us don't speak Hebrew. The names of people and places in the Old Testament Scriptures often provide important insight into understanding the meaning of a text. There are other rich truths we miss because we forget our Biblical geography, failing to notice significant events that occur in the same places in God's Word. The student of the Scriptures will do well to take note not only of what is happening in any given chapter, but where the events are taking place.26

This is especially evident in our present chapter. For instance, consider the place called Mahanaim (v8, 12, 29). This is the place Ishbosheth is made king over Israel in verse 9. It was the same place, back in Genesis, that Jacob was met by the angels of God just before he crossed the Jabbok (in Genesis 32:2). Its location is especially important because it is on the east side of the Jordan; it is outside the true boundaries of the promised land. Thus, it is not insignificant that Ishbosheth is here anointed king. That he is both anointed and reigns as king outside the promised land is to hint at the illegitimacy of his kingship. David, on the other hand, is anointed king by Judah at Hebron. Hebron was the place God's promises were given to Abraham (in Genesis 15), and it was the main dwelling place of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.27

The meanings of the proper names in the text are no less significant. Ishbosheth, the man who presumed to take to himself the throne rightly due to David, appropriately carries the meaning, “man of shame.” Hebron, where David was anointed king (vv3-4), means “company,” while Mahanaim, where Ishbosheth is proclaimed king, carries the meaning of “two companies.” Originally, Jacob named the

26A few excellent examples: Shechem and Mt. Moriah (cite of three very significant Biblical events!). For some wonderful (and topographical) Bible maps, see www.bibback.com.
place “two companies,” either because there were so many angels they were divided into two companies, or to signify that he and his household were one company, with the angels of God making up another company. But here in our text there seems to be a play on words. Israel breaks off from their rightful king in order to form their own “company,” cutting themselves off from David. This perhaps also hints at the division between Israel in the north, and Judah in the south, that would later become permanent in the days of Solomon’s son Rehoboam.

Having understood a little more of the background of our passage, we now turn to our text. We notice first a great contrast between the actions of David and Ishbosheth. David had been promised the kingdom (1 Samuel 16:13). God had chosen him to rule over His people. But David would only be king in God’s way, and in His time. He submits to painful years of waiting and suffering in the caves of the wilderness. Finally, Saul dies in battle. But even now, David refuses to rush into claiming the throne. He inquires of the Lord, should he go up to one of the cities of Judah (v1)? David’s joy and supreme desire is to follow his God. And if the Lord had changed His mind, David would gladly go back to being a shepherd. He cares not for kingdoms. David would rather live in the caves with His God than in the palace without Him. How about us? What if the decision was ours? Would we rather live in obscurity with God’s blessing than gain a kingdom at its expense? Are we, like Abraham, willing to lay on the alter what is most precious to us? Are you willing to leave everything and follow Christ overseas to dark nations who know not God? Or on the contrary, are you willing to lay down your dreams of being a great missionary overseas to serve Him in normal, rural America? I remember when I had to lay on the alter my personal ministry desires and say again, “Not mine but Your will be done.” The true answer to this question does not come from our lips. What answer does our life reply?

We have the opposite reaction in Ishbosheth. David laid upon the alter that which God had already given him. Ishbosheth takes by force what was never his. David surrenders the kingdom to keep his soul. Ishbosheth sells his soul to gain an earthly kingdom. David is prayerful, for he seeks the will of God. Ishbosheth is prayerless, for he seeks his own will. Indeed, we learn that a prayerless life is akin to a disobedient life. A prayerless ministry shows itself to be a Christ-
less ministry. The life of a prayerless man testifies against him that he cares nothing for discerning and following the will of God.

We read of the men of Jabesh-gilead in verses 4 through 7. The men of Judah told David it was they who had buried Saul, referring back to 1 Samuel 31:11-13. The history goes further back. It was this city that Nahash the king of the Ammonites had besieged, threatening to gouge out the eyes of its inhabitants (1 Samuel 11). Saul had delivered these men from the Ammonites; so it makes sense that they are the ones to take down the body of their fallen king in order to give him a proper burial.  

David first commends them (not to be confused with flattery) for their bravery and faithfulness to their former king. We also ought to commend and give honor to those whom it is due. Scripture commended the Bereans for their examining the Scriptures to see if Paul's words were true. Paul himself commends the people of Athens for anything that was worthy of commendation (Acts 17:22). Our Lord commended anything good that was found in the seven churches to whom John wrote in the early chapters of Revelation. Having commended them, David begins to plead with them. In effect he is saying to them, “You have done well in your allegiance to Saul. Now give your allegiance to me, for it is I that the Lord has anointed as rightful king of Israel.”

But even before we can hear their reply, Abner has set another king on the throne. Just as quickly as the seed is thrown on the soil, the birds come and eat it up. So it is today. How often does Satan steal the gospel seed away even the moment it is being proclaimed! Just yesterday some friends and I were talking to a group of young men about Christ. One of them would deflect the gospel truths he was hearing with laughter and levity. But after some time he started to listen genuinely. It seemed he began to let soak in what Christ was saying through His Word. He became serious and thoughtful. But his seriousness only lasted a few minutes. When another of his friends in the group came asking him to go with him somewhere, he simply got up and walked away. Just as the seed seemed to want to penetrate the soil, along came the birds and plucked it up.

War breaks out between the servants of David and the servants of Ishbosheth, between the house of Saul and the house of David, between the followers of the true king and the followers of the man of

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28See also Judges 21 for a study on the people of Jabesh-gilead.
shame. Israel fights against the rule of David. So it has been from the beginning of time and continues today: men are at war with God. “Why are the nations in an uproar and the peoples devising a vain thing?” (Psalm 2:1). And because carnal men are at war with God, so they are at war with the people of God. As David wrote in another place, “They oppose me, because I follow what is good” (Psalm 38:20). John wrote similarly to the churches, “Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you” (1 John 3:13). There will always be enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). Thus, Cain hated and killed his brother Abel. Ishmael, the son of the slave woman, persecuted the son of the promise (Galatians 4:29). In the same way here in our passage, the servants of Ishbosheth fight against the servants of David.

There are only two groups of people in our text: those who followed Ishbosheth and those who followed David. Friend, who are you following? Is Christ Jesus your king? Or have you resisted giving your whole allegiance to Him? Are you truly Christ’s servant, fighting to establish His kingdom in the world? Does your life unequivocally show that He alone is your Lord and Master? Or are you the king of your own life, following after your own sinful desires? Do you love Christ, or do you love the world (1 John 2:15)? There is no middle position. Either we have given our wholehearted allegiance to Christ, or we remain in defiant rebellion against Him. Further, being in the church doesn’t guarantee anything. This should really frighten us. Remember, all the tribes of Israel made up the people of God. They all belonged to the Old Testament church. But out of twelve tribes, only Judah followed their king during his time in Hebron. So too, it was to Israelite church-goers that Jesus spoke those solemn words in Matthew 7: “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

Christ is pleading with us as David did with the men of Jabesh-gilead. What will your response be? Will you follow Christ or reject Him? It seems the men of Jabesh-gilead did nothing. But by doing nothing they made a decision. So it is with us. To not respond to Christ is to refuse Him. To not get up and go after Him when He says to you, “Follow Me,” letting Him pass by, is to make a decision. Following Jesus will not make your life easier. If you become a true follower of Jesus you can expect the world will hate you, and there
will be persecution. You may lose your job. You may be forsaken by your family. You may even be beaten or killed for His sake. Indeed, Jesus has spoken the following concerning those who want to be his followers: “But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, and you will be hated by all because of My name” (Luke 21:16-17). The men of Jabesh-gilead chose to ignore David's offer to them. What about you? It won't be easy. But will you count the cost? Will you surrender all allegiance to King Jesus?
We saw how the war between the house of David and the house of Saul represents in part the present conflict between the spiritual descendants of the Messiah, and those of the serpent. For these are two houses, two kingdoms in opposition to one another. Saul is in many ways likened to the first Adam, and his seed are those who have yet to give their allegiance to Christ.

There are, I believe, other truths we can draw from this war as well. There are applications for the Christian and his fight against sin. Believers hate their sin, and fight against it as their greatest enemy. It is those who put to death the deeds of the body who show themselves to be true followers of the King of Judah. Indeed, this is a long war, we will fight our remaining corruptions until we go home to Jesus. Yet, what is written in verse 1 of chapter 3 is also true of believers and their holy war against sin: just as the house of Saul grew weaker continually, so believers are being changed by the Spirit from one degree of glory to another. The more we behold Christ, the more we are changed into His glorious image.

This long war also demonstrates another truth. David continues to wait for the promises of God to be fully realized. There was waiting at Gibeah. There was waiting in the wilderness. There was waiting at Ziklag. Finally, it seems, David's time has come. But the Lord says again, “Not yet.” We are reminded here of Abraham's story. God had promised He would make him a father of a multitude, with as many descendants as the sand on the seashore. The promise seemed almost impossible at the time it was given, for Abraham was seventy-five years old. Months went by, then years, and he still had no children. Abraham waited twenty-five years for God to fulfill His promises concerning Isaac, and he never saw the fulfillment of possession of the land of Canaan—that had to take another four hundred and thirty years. God wants His children to trust in Him, and to wait for Him. He is testing us. Will we wait for our God? Or will we take things into our own hands? One thing is clear though: God rewards the waiting of His children in ways over and above what we could ever ask for or imagine. Consider the outcome of God's dealings with Abraham. As Scripture promises: “Kings will be your
guardians, and their princesses your nurses. They will bow down to you with their faces to the earth and lick the dust of your feet; and you will know that I am the Lord; those who hopefully wait for Me will not be put to shame” (Isaiah 49:23).

We now turn to examine the two main characters in chapter 3: Abner. Called, “A prince and a great man” by king David. But what will the book of life say? What will be written in the Lord's book of remembrance? Our Lord Jesus admonishes us to remember, “that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15). Many who were great men on the earth will be detestable for all eternity. Many, on the other hand, who for Jesus' sake, for the cause of truth, and because of zeal for Christ were insulted and bore reproach (Psalm 69:8-9) will shine forever like the stars of heaven.

We don't know for certain where Abner stood. Was his turning to David genuine? Or was it just another stepping stone to build up his own name and kingdom? Was this true repentance we see? Or do his motives betray him? He seems in one sense to be sincere in his coming to David. He resembles the prodigal who came to his senses and returned to his father. His life seems to resemble Saul of Tarsus, whose allegiance changed in a moment at Damascus. After Paul's conversion his zeal in preaching Christ surpassed what had been his former zeal to destroy the church. Is Abner like the prodigal? Is he like the apostle Paul? Does he die, so to speak, a martyr for Christ?

Many commentators suspect his motives. We cannot be certain whether the accusations in verse 7 were true or not. If it was indeed a work of God in his soul that motivated him to return to David, his response does seem strange to me. “Am I a dog's head that belongs to Judah?” Compare this with the words of Mephibosheth in 9:8, and David's own words about himself in 1 Samuel 24:14. True believers, those who have tasted the wickedness of their own hearts and have begun to see their need of Christ, have no problem referring to themselves as dead dogs. They know deeply that they deserve nothing but hell, and they consider themselves as undeserving of the air they breathe. To be truly poor in spirit, to truly belong to Christ, one needs first to come to a proper understanding of their absolute depravity. Is there a deep-seated pride dwelling in Abner? Does he indeed see himself as a great man, worthy of much honor, and far above the need of any accountability?
Ichabod Spencer, the “Bunyan of Brooklyn” as he was called, tells of his interview with one prospective member of his church, who before his profession had been an antagonist. He was even reported one night to carry stones in his pocket to throw at this minister, because of his continued emphasis in preaching on human depravity and the judgment to come. When Spencer asked him about this, the young man replied, “I know my heart was wicked enough to do almost anything, but it never was bad enough to do that.” The wise minister noticed the expression and it concerned him, but the young man did indeed became a member of the church. It was only a few years later though, that this young man walked away from Christ and the church. Spencer went on to note, “I have often thought, that a truly regenerate man cannot have any doubt of the entire depravity of the heart. If he does not see that, it is probable that he does not see his heart.”

Is Abner joining David because he has had a true change of heart and come to grips with the fact that David is God's anointed king? Or do his words reveal a heart yet to be humbled? Are there rather motives of self-advancement and self-glory laying below the surface and driving all he does?

Ultimately we cannot say. What we can say is that life on this earth is short and uncertain. And what we can say is that God tests the hearts of every man. He sees not only our actions, but the motives and intentions of our hearts. When the Lord comes He will, “both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God” (1 Corinthians 4:5).

Joab. Joab does indeed possess some admirable qualities. We are introduced to him in the last chapter as the valiant captain of David's army. Through the whole of David's life, he shows himself both courageous and loyal to the king. He seems to genuinely seek David's welfare in proposing to bring Absalom back from Aram, desiring the king to be reconciled with his estranged son (chapter 14). And he knows when to execute justice on the same after his subsequent rebellion and attempt to usurp the kingdom (chapter 18; see also chapter 20). He rightly rebukes David for his excessive sorrow in chapter 19; and he is disgusted at David's self-serving

29 A Pastor's Sketches, p175, 177.
command to number the people in chapter 24 (see also 1 Chronicles 21:6).

Yet David's nephew Joab is a man who seems to often be consumed by anger and unforgiveness, as here in our passage. He couldn't stand to let Abner go unpunished for taking his brother's life in battle. He also seems jealous to protect his own position, seemingly at whatever cost. This is evident not only here with Abner but also of his murder of Amasa later in chapter 20. It seems both Abner and Amasa may have had Joab outmatched for his position as commander of David's army. Does Joab murder both of these men in cold blood simply because he's fearful of being replaced? Further, he has no problem following David's orders to put Uriah to death after David's sin with Bathsheba. It seems that Joab follows the king's orders when he wants to; when they happen to line up with his personal agenda. I don't know if we can say with certainty whether Joab possessed an uncircumcised heart or not. But the testimony of David himself in this chapter would sure make me tremble to be in his shoes. In verse 29 David lays the guilt of Abner's blood on Joab and on his house forever. Again in verse 34, while lamenting his death, David says of Abner, "As one falls before the wicked, you have fallen." Later David goes on, "these men the sons of Zeruia are too difficult for me. May the Lord repay the evildoer according to his evil." Could Joab be a hidden reef in the kingdom? Could this great man, the very head and captain of David's army, be one who is found on the day of Christ to be just as much an enemy as those he fought against in David's name? Could one whose life's vocation consisted in fighting the Lord's battles be found himself fighting against the Lord and against His Christ?

David is deeply grieved by what happens. How must Christ be grieved, even disgusted, at all the “friendly fire” in His church. When His children shoot arrows at each other, are jealous of one another, harbor bitterness and hatred, when they murder each other with their words. Joab pretended to justify his actions with the claim that Abner was a spy. We are not sure, as we said, of Abner's motives. But there is absolutely nothing from the text that would give any support to Joab's words in verse 25. Joab has forgotten so quickly where the battle really is. He shows himself to be more concerned about fighting his own battles than those of David. If it were not for the sovereign will of God, his selfish act could have single-handedly destroyed any possibility of David ruling over all Israel.
There is a difference between standing for the truth handed down to the saints once for all, and unnecessary friendly fire. To strive for unity at the cost of truth is to be guilty of the charge of unfaithfulness. As Iain Murray has said, “Unity is a mighty blessing, but not at the expense of truth.” There is far too much of this false “unity” today. Indeed, our Lord Jesus shed His blood for His unwillingness to compromise doctrine (see John 8:24, 58-59). I personally believe in the doctrines of grace with all my heart; and I will not compromise them. Church history has proven that the theology that the Puritans taught and preached was powerfully present in seasons of revival and absent during the years the church was in decline. But there is a kind of friendly fire in the church that only pretends to stand for truth. Behind it is only selfishness, bitterness, anger, pride, and the jealousy that caused Cain to kill his brother, Joseph's kinsmen to sell him into slavery, and the Pharisees to hand over our Lord to Pilate. Let us not forget, brothers, where the battle truly is. While we sharpen our arrows to fire at Christ's own lambs because they have a different view of eschatology, whole nations are perishing without Christ. While we try to make each other say Shibboleth, entire people groups are passing into eternities of damnation. And it may very well be that God will one day charge us with their blood. Let us make sure it is the Lord's battles we are fighting, and not our own.

30Banner of Truth Magazine V1, Editorial, p108.
31See especially Iain Murray's, The Puritan Hope.
There are few doctrines I can think of that can bring more comfort to believers in the midst of the uncertainty of this life than the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. Believers can know that God is king of the universe—that nothing happens by accident. Not only this, but God is good, and let's nothing happen that isn't for the best good of His people. He is always sovereign and good. Further, the Lord is not only sovereign in our lives; He reigns over the universe. Great kings and presidents are as nothing before Him: “Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales” (Isaiah 40:15). He upholds galaxies we haven't discovered yet. And not the smallest thing happens in the world apart from His purposes: “Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father” (Matthew 10:29).

Moreover, our Lord reigns in the midst of a sinful world. Christ is king and His will prevails even in the midst of wicked actions of evil and sinful men. What this means, is that sinful men doing sinful things cannot mess up God’s sovereign purposes in the world. He works in and through them, using them as instruments to accomplish His glorious purposes. He loves to turn death into resurrection. We see this throughout the Scriptures. When Joseph’s brothers sold their own flesh and blood into slavery in Egypt, God was behind it. The sin was theirs. But God was using their sin to weave a masterpiece of glory. Judah committed sexual immorality with Tamar his daughter-in-law. But through her child came Christ in the flesh. Likewise, David committed unspeakable atrocities, we will see, when he violates the wife of Uriah. But it is through Bathsheba’s son Solomon that Christ would come. The cross itself was the epitome of God using the wicked actions of sinful men to accomplish His purposes. Peter boldly declared to the Jews in Jerusalem, “this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death” (Acts 2:23).

Through the events of chapter 4, God will fulfill the promises He had made to David in his youth. It will be through the wicked actions of sinful men that God’s purposes would be established, to sit David on the throne over all Israel. But just because God uses the plots of evil men to accomplish His holy purposes, it doesn't mean these
same men won't be held accountable for their actions. God was sovereign and glorified in the lives of John as well as Judas, in Barak as well as Balaam, in Saul as well as David, in Paul as well as Demas. But I sure wouldn't want to trade positions with Balaam or Judas on judgment day. Judas will not be able to argue his way out of damnation, reasoning that if he didn't do what he did, Jesus wouldn't have been crucified, and salvation would have never come to the world. Men will be held accountable for their actions.

We now get to our text. These two brothers, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, decide they will be the ones to transfer the kingdom over to David. They come to the house of Ishbosheth and murder him in cold blood as he sleeps on his bed. And they do it thinking they are pleasing David. They take his head and travel all night, arriving at Hebron presumably in the morning. David is disgusted and outraged. He gives the word, and they are instantly put to death. It is not clear whether they are first killed before their hands and feet are cut off and hung, or whether they were made to undergo these tortures while still alive. But one thing is clear. They were dead wrong in how they thought David would respond, and they paid for it with their lives.

At first glance, this is very similar to the story recorded in chapter 1. Both parties misjudged David. They feared not to force the hand of God and take another life. Since it seemed to be for David's advancement, they thought their deeds would be received with praise and handsomely rewarded. And they are terribly deceived in their notions. There is at least one major difference, though. The man in chapter 1 was an Amalekite; the men in chapter 4 are Israelites. The former was a stranger to the covenant, the latter were those who claimed to be part of the people of God.

It is not difficult to look back upon church history and acknowledge with deep sadness all the wicked things that have been done in the name of Jesus. Perhaps you yourself have been deeply wronged by a Christian, or by someone who called themselves by that name. What you need to know is that Jesus does not approve of the actions of wicked men claiming to be acting for the God of the Bible. Jesus is disgusted more than anybody by the atrocities done in His name. There is no partiality with God. He will judge the wicked, whether Amalekite or Israelite, whether outside the church or inside.
These men seem to be completely ignorant of the events that occurred in chapter 1. Surely they would not have been so foolish if they were aware of what had happened to that young Amalekite. But for these two brothers, ignorance was not bliss. Sins committed in ignorance are not excused in the day of God's wrath. We have been given the Word of God. It is our duty to study it, learn what God commands, and keep His Word. Those calling themselves Christians who are living in hypocrisy and disobedience will not be pardoned because they never opened up their Bibles. The dust on their Bible covers will testify against them on the day of God's judgement.

There are many people who “do things for Jesus” that will never enter the kingdom of God. We already have referred to Jesus' words in Matthew 7. They prophesied in His name, in His name cast out demons, and in His name performed many miracles. But Jesus will tell them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness” (v23). Our Lord says in another place: “Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 24:45-51). Friend, are you a Christian in name only? Your mere profession of Christ cannot save you on the day of God's wrath. Scripture teaches that just as your works cannot save you, so without the evidence of Spirit-wrought sanctification, you cannot be saved (Hebrews 12:14). An intellectual belief alone in Jesus, without true repentance testifying of genuine conversion, and without new and holy affections testifying of new birth, is no saving belief. Our Lord pleads with us in Luke 13:24, “Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.”

The day is coming when the head of the house will get up and shut the door (Luke 13:25). But the door of God's ark is still open for all who will come. None will be turned away who come to Christ for forgiveness and new hearts. Christ has shed His blood for all who
will call upon Him. No one will ever seek Christ in vain: “Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:6-7).
David's rise to the throne comes through stages. In his years in the wilderness of Judah and at Ziklag he is David the persecuted. Though anointed God's king, he must suffer before taking the throne. In chapters 2 through 4, David is king at Hebron. He reigns over Judah, but only Judah—it is only a remnant who would have David be their king. We do read in 1 Chronicles 12 that there were others who came to David during this time—some from Gad, some from Manasseh and even Benjamin (vv8, 16, 19). Perhaps this turning back to the true king was that which was in the mind of our Lord when He went about preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). Nevertheless, just as it is now, the majority refused to submit to the king God had anointed. But things change in chapter 5. All Israel comes to David, making a covenant with him before the Lord, anointing him as king over all Israel. We have the short version in Samuel, but it is beautifully expanded in the parallel account in 1 Chronicles: “All these, being men of war who could draw up in battle formation, came to Hebron with a perfect heart to make David king over all Israel; and all the rest also of Israel were of one mind to make David king. They were there with David three days, eating and drinking, for their kinsmen had prepared for them...There was joy indeed in Israel” (1 Chronicles 13:38-40). In both the Samuel and Chronicles accounts, David's ascent to the throne is then immediately followed by the bringing up of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem.

The Bible teaches us through pictures. Many of the doctrines of the Scriptures are illustrated in this way. For instance, the doctrine of regeneration—the new birth—is illustrated for us in the Scriptures through the pictures of creation (and new creation), birth (and new birth), and resurrection (from death). Christ and His salvation are communicated to His people through the tangible pictures of bread and wine, and baptism with water. So too, throughout the Old Testament Scriptures we have pictures of Christ and His redemption in the laws, characters and narratives given in God's Word. David in many ways is a picture of Christ. As Israel's shepherd-king, in his anointing, in being rejected by his kinsmen, in suffering before being crowned with glory; even in the meaning of his name, “beloved one.”
So too, could it be that these stages of David's kingship are a fore-picturing of the advancement of the reign of Christ? The wilderness and Ziklag may be compared to Christ in His earthly sufferings. David at Hebron over Judah may be likened to the present time, when Christ is reigning as king but it is only few who have bowed the knee to His reign. David at Jerusalem over all Israel may, in this way, be likened to the coming glory days of the church, and the establishment of the kingdom of Christ; when all will bow the knee to Him, when the glory of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters do the sea. The Scriptures hint that there were be a wonderful revival among the Jews that will usher in a season of glorious days in the church. Indeed, one day Israel “in the flesh” will return to her Messiah, as the remaining eleven tribes here return to David. This will in turn give birth to a new outpouring of God on the Gentiles (see Romans 11:12-15, 25-26). When David is here anointed king at Hebron over all God's people, Scripture records that “There was joy indeed in Israel” (1 Chronicles 13:40). So too, there will surely be joy like never before in those days for the church of Christ, when Jew and Gentile sit side by side in the house of God, together worshiping the Messiah!!

In the opening verses in chapter 5, Israel comes back to David like a wife comes back to the husband she had deserted. “Behold, we are your bone and your flesh,” verse 1, alludes back to Adam's words in Genesis 2:23 when the Lord brought the woman to him that He had formed from his own rib. They return to David like the prodigal returned to his father when he finally came to his senses. Oh friends, have you strayed away from the Shepherd and King of your souls? Have you been running away from Him in disobedient rebellion? His heart breaks for you, and He longs for you to return. And when you do, He will run to meet you as the father did his runaway son, and embrace you in his arms. Will you not come to your senses and return to Christ? He is inviting you to return to your bone and your flesh, to come back to Him. You may have been estranged from birth—He loves to save sinners—it was the very reason He came. You may have already given Him your allegiance, but have since wandered away. He has given to you a special invitation in His Word: “Return to Me, for I have redeemed you” (Isaiah 44:22). This invitation is particularly for those that know Him but have strayed from Him. It does not read, “that I might redeem you,” but, “for I have redeemed you.” It is for the redeemed who have lost what they
once had, and want to regain their sight. His invitation is standing: Won't you return to your bone and your flesh?

Yet let us know what it really means to belong to Christ. Make no rash decisions. Understand well the terms of the marriage covenant. The sober words of the Puritan divine Richard Alleine are well worth quoting at length:

“Will you take Him for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer? Though your Lord be a King, yet His kingdom is not of this world. He came not to minister to, but to minister. He came to serve and to suffer, and all those that will follow Him must suffer with Him. He did not come to divide lands and spoils and crowns and temporal dignities and honors among His disciples, but crosses and prisons and scourges and wants. You will join yourself to the Lord, but will you take up your lot with Him? You will live with Him and abide with Him, but do you know where He dwells, and what His entertainment is? Sometimes He has bread, and sometimes He is hungry; sometimes He has clothes, and sometimes is naked; sometimes He has a house, and sometimes He has none; sometimes He has friends, and sometimes He has none; He is sometimes used kindly, and sometimes used coarsely; sometimes it is Hosanna, and sometimes it is Crucify. Sometimes He is cried up as a King, sometimes cried out against as a devil. And as it is with the Master, so will it be with the scholar; as with the Lord, so with the disciple; where He is, you must be also. Can you say Where you go, I will go with You; where you feed, I will feed with You; where my Lord dwells, if in a tent, if in a cave, if in a dungeon, let me dwell with Him? Consider what you say, and be not overhasty.”

There was never any uncertainty that David would reign over all Israel in the end. God's promises are as good as in the past tense when He makes them (1 Chronicles 12:23; see also Genesis 15:18). Christ will reign with power one day over the nations. There is no uncertainty about this. And those who are His—who have made a covenant with Him through blood—will reign with Him. But those who have ignored and despised Him, fighting against His rule, will live forever under His wrath. The Jebusites would have done much better to submit to David and possibly keep their lives than resist him and suffer the consequences. Don't men know that when they resist Christ they are only bringing misery and destruction upon

32From Heaven Opened, pp338-39.
themselves? How experience proves the Scriptural declaration that all men are naturally at enmity with God!! How just a few hours of trying to plead with lost sinners, to speak but a moment with them about God, reveals with absolute clarity what the Scriptures teach—that naturally men hate God and resist His reign over them, even as the Jebusites hated and resisted David to their own destruction. You see it in their eyes and hear it as they answer with hatred spewing off their tongue. Do they not know that when they reject His messengers with insults and derision they are spitting in the face of the One who sent them? I truly know not how they have no fear of facing an eternity of the wrath of God. They are like a little child who puts his fingers in his ears and babbles to himself, trying to pretend he can't hear you. They pretend to not believe what their own consciences testify to them to be undeniably true. They pretend to believe they will have no reckoning to make to Christ, as if trying to believe it hard enough will make it true. And indeed, I believe with all my heart that if it were not punishable by the law, or socially unacceptable, Christians who truly preach Christ to sinners in the United States would daily be beaten and crucified just as their Savior was. Those days may be coming quicker than we realize. Let us be ready, and may God give us the grace to fear Him rather than men. For though Christ is the Lamb of God, yet one day He will roar as the fierce Lion of Judah and destroy His enemies, as David did the Jebusites. Flee to Christ, my friends. Fear Him and flee to Him while the door of the ark remains open.

It seems that no sooner does David take Jerusalem that the Philistines come against him. They spread themselves out in the valley of Rephaim, which is just south west of Jerusalem. They come against him twice, and they are defeated twice. They are defeated, because through prayer David keeps himself in close communion with, and submission to his God. How true it is that where there is advancement of the kingdom of Christ, there is opposition. Too often it is that there is great defeat right after an overwhelming victory—because we let our guard down. So it was with Elijah just after the powerful victory on Mount Carmel. Likewise, the sons of Israel were given a supernatural victory over the great city Jericho, but defeated just after at Ai, a city so small they only sent three thousand men up to the battle. Gideon also seems to have suffered a sorrowful defeat just after the Lord had given him an overwhelming victory against Midian. We need to keep watch. Often times it is that to the degree
God is moving powerfully, there will be the same degree of resistance from the kingdom of darkness: “What I say to you I say to all, ‘Be on the alert!’” (Mark 13:37).

Part 2

We finish our chapter with a meditation upon verse 12: “And David realized that the Lord had established him as king over Israel, and that He had exalted his kingdom for the sake of His people Israel.” David is not so foolish as to think that it was his own genius or strength that resulted in his being established as king and shepherd over Israel. Most in similar positions attribute their success or rise to high position to anything but the Lord. But David knows better. He knows he can’t even take his next breath if God doesn’t give it to him, let alone inherit a kingdom. Surely it was in thinking upon his father’s rise to the throne that David’s son Solomon would later write, “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it” (Psalm 127:1).

Nebuchadnezzar had to learn this the hard way. As he walked on the roof of his palace, we read, “The king reflected and said, ‘Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?’” (Daniel 4:30). The next instant he is driven away not only from his kingdom but from humanity. God makes him like a wild beast, he begins to eat grass like the cattle, and resembles a bird more than a man. No, Nebuchadnezzar, this did not come into your lap because of your own might and power. It was God Almighty who put you in this position, and He will take it all back in an instant when He pleases. Let any who are reading this that have been entrusted with a position of high authority know that they are nothing: “Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; Behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust. . .All the nations are as nothing before Him, they are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless. . .Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers. . .He it is who reduces rulers to nothing, who makes the judges of the earth meaningless. Scarcely have they been planted, scarcely have they been sown, scarcely has their stock taken root in
the earth, but He merely blows on them, and they wither, and the storm carries them away like stubble” (Isaiah 40:15,17,21-24).

This is true also of the gifts Christ gives to individuals in the church. Paul reminded the Corinthians of this when he wrote, “What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?” (1 Corinthians 4:7). In other words, everything we have, including our natural abilities and spiritual gifts—are indeed gifts given from the hand of God. Sometimes, like Nebuchadnezzar, when we begin to think it is by our own power or wit that we possess these gifts, the Lord needs to teach us hard lessons to remind us that we are nothing and have nothing apart from Him.

David realizes not only that it was the Lord who had exalted his kingdom, but why He had done this. We read again, “for the sake of His people Israel.” Yes, God had been the One who had exalted David. But David also learns that He did this not necessarily at all for David's own sake—but for the sake of His people Israel. The Lord raised up a shepherd for the purpose of protecting and nourishing His sheep. We have this truth expanded upon in Psalm 78:70-72: “He also chose David His servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him to shepherd Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them with his skillful hands.” David realized that there was a greater purpose in his rise to the throne than his own exaltation. The whole reason God put him in the position He did was for the sake of the bride of Christ, the flock of God.

Joseph had come to the same realization many years before. Do you remember the story? His brothers sell their own flesh and blood as a slave into Egypt. Joseph spends many years in slavery, and not a few years in a dark dungeon. In due time he is exalted as a great king in Egypt. His brothers come and bow down before him, fulfilling the dreams he had seen in his youth. But what is his response? Does he gloat about his dreams and tell them “I told you so”? No. Joseph says to his brothers, “God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance” (Genesis 45:7). Joseph's words are truly incredible. In other words, he is saying to them, “This isn't about me; it was never about me. The whole reason God sent me here was for you guys!! God knew
the famine was coming and so He sent me here in order to keep you alive!” Perhaps in his youth Joseph had been a little arrogant, self-centered; a little too interested in his own exaltation and glory. But through the sanctification of the Spirit of Christ, God had shown Joseph, much like David, that it wasn't about him at all. He was only an instrument, a tool, an unworthy servant. There were much greater and eternal purposes behind all of this. He had been brought to the realization that it was all for the sake of his brothers. God raised Joseph up in order to preserve his brothers alive, and many others, through a great deliverance.

Paul says very similar things about the ministry which had been entrusted to him. Writing to the Colossian church he testifies of his ministry, “Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me, to make full the Word of God unto you” (Colossians 1:25, author's translation). The reason the Lord had put him into the ministry, according to Paul, was in order to make full the Word of God to the church, that they might be built up in Christ. In other words, it was for the sake of the church that God raised up shepherds like Paul. Christ whispered sweet and precious truths to Paul that he might proclaim them on the housetops. He showed him wonderful things from His law in order that Paul the under-shepherd might lead the sheep into green pastures and eat their full.

The Lord exalted David's kingdom for the sake of His people. And so He does still, at times exalting preachers and ministries for the sake of His flock. I praise God for raising up men such as John Piper, Paul Washer, and David Platt (I most gladly stand and fight together with my faithful baptist brothers), whom God has used powerfully to reach many. They are voices of truth, raised up to combat the lies of scores of those who would poison the sheep instead of feeding them; who preach dreams, opinions, visions or fancies rather than the Word of God. We do live among a perverse generation who cry out as many did to the prophets of old, “Speak to us pleasant words, prophesy illusions...Let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel” (Isaiah 30:10-11).

But often it is in gospel ministry, that the Lord afflicts His shepherds for the sake of His people, rather than exalting them. In His infinite wisdom He exalts a few, and in that same wisdom He afflicts all. Samuel Rutherford's words are well worth quoting again here: “You cannot, you must not have a more pleasant or more easy
condition here, than he had, who 'through afflictions was made perfect.' We may indeed think, 'Cannot God bring us to heaven with ease and prosperity?' Who doubteth but he can? But his infinite wisdom thinketh and decreeth the contrary."

As Paul quoted the Psalms in his letter to the Romans, “For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered” (Romans 8:36). This passage is in the context of Christ's marriage-covenant love for His church. It might seem strange that such a loving husband would deal this way with His bride. But Christ gives His sheep over to wolves, to peril, distress, famine, and confusion—in love for us, and for the glory of His name. For it is in these times that we are most desperately thrust upon Him in utter dependance (2 Corinthians 1:9), it is in these times that He purges away our dross (Isaiah 48:10-11), pruning off the sickly branches in order that we might bear more fruit (Genesis 41:52; John 15:2), and it is in these times that Christ's glory shines through us the brightest and most beautifully (2 Corinthians 4:11). Moreover, it is only in passing through seasons of death that we can really minister to others. Thus Paul viewed his own sufferings as being a wonderful benefit for the sake of the church. In 2 Corinthians 1:5-6 he writes, “For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort, which is effectual in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer.” Whether he was comforted or afflicted, Paul saw all that happened to him as happening for the good of the church. If God brought him comfort from a particular promise, bringing him out affliction, it was for the church. Paul could then comfort others who struggled in the same way, being able to deeply sympathize with them, and being more equipped to comfort them from the Scriptures, having discovered those comforts himself in his time of need. And if Paul was afflicted it was for the church's sake. He wrote of the same truth later in 4:11-12, “For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us, but life in you.” Horatious Bonar puts it wonderfully:

It is on earth that he expects to get glory from us, glory such as angels cannot give, glory such as we shall not be able to give

33From his Letters, p18.

34Paul before and after refers to the “love of Christ”, and in asking who can separate us from His love (v35), uses the same word he used in 1 Corinthians 7 for divorce.
hereafter. It is here that we are to preach to angels; it is here we are to show to them what a glorious God is ours...But it is especially in sorrow and under infirmity that God looks for glory from us...What a God-honoring thing to see a struggling sorrowing child of earth cleaving fast to God, calmly trusting in him...Now, then, is the time for the saints to give glory to the Lord their God. Let them prize affliction, as the very time and opportunity for doing so, most of all...Ah, surely [a season of affliction] is one which an angel might covet, which an archangel would gladly stoop to were that possible. They can glorify God much in heaven amid its glory and blessedness, but oh, not half so much as we can do on earth amid suffering and shame.35

For this reason, ministers of the gospel will often undergo a great deal more suffering and affliction than other believers. Recalling the Lord's dealings with Joseph, Moses, and David, we are quickly reminded that the wilderness is His appointed training ground for those who would shepherd His flock. Rutherford said that sufferings were the second half of our ministry. It seemed to be so for Paul. And it certainly was so for our Lord Jesus; who took upon Himself not only a ministry of teaching but a ministry of suffering. For Christ is the pattern of the Gospel minister (see Hebrews 2:17-18). We must not just know the temptations and afflictions of others categorically, we must taste them, we must know them intimately. How else can we truly minister to them? Pretend like we understand? Try to sympathize? It simply will not do; Christ cares too much for His dear flock.

David has been freshly anointed as king over all Israel. We are told in the Chronicles account (chapter 13) that David consulted with the leaders of Israel, along with the priests and Levites. They will take the ark from Kiriath-jearim, where it was left many years before in 1 Samuel 7, and bring it home to Jerusalem. But we are shocked to read that what should have been one of the happiest days of the kingdom becomes a day of tragedy and bitter mourning. The ark is put upon a cart, and as it passes through the threshing floor of Nacon, it is unsettled. Uzzah, one of those having oversight of the ark, grabs ahold of it, and we are told he is struck dead for his irreverence (6:7).

There are some that take accounts like this from the Old Testament and draw a sharp line of distinction between the Old and New Testaments. Some perhaps would even follow in the footsteps of the early heretic Marcion, in concluding that the God of the Old Testament must be different than the merciful and gracious God of whom Christ teaches in the New Testament. This kind of teaching is a failure to understand who God truly is. Yes, He is a God of grace and mercy. God is love. But we learn here that the God of the Bible is also just, holy, and greatly to be feared.

David makes at least two mistakes in his endeavor to bring the ark to Jerusalem. First, though he involves the priests and Levites in the attempt, he fails to command the appropriate Levites to be directly in charge of the ark. Deuteronomy 10:8 reads, “At that time the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to serve Him and to bless in His name until this day” (see also Numbers 4:15). But David, perhaps more out of forgetfulness than outright disobedience, allows the sons of Abinadab, Ahio and Uzzah (non-Levites), to be those chiefly in charge of the operation. Later in 1 Chronicles 15, David recognizes his error and turns from it, making clear from then on that it must only be the chosen Levites who bring the ark of God home to Jerusalem.

David’s second mistake was he allowed the ark to be brought on a cart instead of carried on the shoulders (by the Levites). This is clear in the verse quoted above, coupled with David’s realization of wrong
in 1 Chronicles 15:13, “Because you did not carry it at the first, the Lord our God made an outburst on us, for we did not seek Him according to the ordinance” (see also v2).

What can we glean from all this? I believe one application is that as believers, we are called to be thoroughly acquainted with the Word of God. Again, probably David's mistakes were due more to simple ignorance or forgetfulness than outright disobedience. But if this is the case, the lesson for us is that even wrong done in ignorance can cause great harm. Though we may possess real sincerity and devotion, our ignorance can give birth to great disaster, possibly even bringing about the ruin of eternal souls. This is especially the case in the work of the ministry. As ministers of the gospel, we of all men need to feel the massive weight of our calling. Iain Murray rightly notes, “No one is in a more solemn position than the minister of the Gospel. No one will have to give an account of so much at the last day (Hebrews 13:17, a verse which Chrysostom said shook him like an earthquake). If he fails to rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15), if he doesn't preach every doctrine in its Scriptural proportion, if he doesn't place a true emphasis on each of the revealed attributes of God, his failure may have eternal consequences.”36 This thought is not meant to paralyze us with fear. We all stumble in many ways (James 3:2). But let us feel deeply the awesome responsibility we have been given: eternal souls have been entrusted to our care.

We are also called to do God's work God's way. We have seen that the Lord's appointed way was for the Levites to be in charge of transporting the ark. Moreover, they were commanded to carry it on their shoulders, not on a cart. The Lord had given specific commands for how the ark was to be transported. The Puritan divine John Collings remarked on the present passage, “What matter whether it was carried on a cart, or on their shoulders? Whether they touched it or the priests only? God will have his ends done by his means and in his order. It is a dangerous thing for us when God hath prescribed us an order for his worship to make ourselves wiser than God, by arguing from carnal reason a needlessness of observing details.”37 When pragmatism begins to trump Scripture in governing how we go about doing God's work, we are in trouble. God had

36Quoted from Iain Murray's article, The Puritan View of the Ministry, The Banner of Truth Magazine V1, p263.
37Ibid. p262.
established how the ark was to be transported in His Word, and the people would have done well to follow what He had said. Perhaps they thought to carry the ark by hand was a little old-fashioned. After all, that command had been given hundreds of years earlier. Maybe it seemed a little out-dated now. Or merely unnecessary, since they now had such fancy carts available. But what they discovered is that God meant what He had said. Friends, we are not wiser than God. His Word is sufficient and needs no new and updated editions. Let us do God’s work then in the way that He has commanded.

Let us be those who speak up when it’s difficult. David had called the priests and the Levites to be part of the endeavor. Surely they knew the commands that had been given in the Pentateuch, even if David did not. But perhaps because of fear they kept their mouths shut. Surely it would have been a fearful thing to question the command of the king. We need to ask for great boldness to speak up for what we know is right when it is difficult. May God give us grace.

We have in our passage a beautiful picture of Christ, the church, and the advancement of the kingdom of God. This is especially evident in chapters 13 through 16 of the Chronicles account. King David gives command to his servants to bring up the ark of God, by the hand of its appointed caretakers (the priests and Levites), to her final resting place in Jerusalem. The journey is not an easy one. There are bitter hardships on the path. Some of those who began the journey are buried along the way. But in the end, the ark is brought home to Jerusalem and the Levites are commissioned to minister “before the ark continually, as every day’s work required” (1 Chronicles 16:37). Does this sound familiar? The ark is said to be the place where God’s Name is called (1 Chronicles 13:6). It is the place where God’s presence dwells. In the New Testament, this is the church. God’s presence resides no more in houses or temples. His Word teaches us that believers are the temples of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord questioned Saul, “Why do you persecute Me?”, because the church is the temple of the Lord, the people who are called by His Name. The church is, as it were, the ark of God. And King Jesus is on a mission to bring up His church, especially by the hands of His ministers, carried on their shoulders, to her final resting place, the New Jerusalem. There will be bitter hardships on the path. We will mourn for some who fall along the way. But Jesus will bring all those who are truly His safely home to Himself.
Finally, we see from our passage that it is the Lords people who are called to be the instruments of ushering in the kingdom of God. For just as God's people were the Lord's instrument for bringing home the ark of the covenant, so it is now with the church. David doesn't do this all by himself. The ark is brought to Jerusalem by the hands of David's servants. The Levites must carry it home to safety. He commanded them and they act. If the king's subjects didn't obey David, the ark wouldn't go anywhere. So it is with us. King Jesus has commissioned His church, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:18). Christ has given us a command—to take His gospel to the ends of the earth. To be sure, He will fill the earth with His glory, but only as the church goes to Him outside the camp, bearing witness to the message of the cross. He will usher in His kingdom, but only as His people “remind the Lord, take no rest for [themselves]; and give Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth” (Isaiah 62:6-7). He will make the latter glory of the temple greater than the former (Haggai 2:9), but not until we get to work (Haggai 2:4). The Lord had many years before sworn to give the land into the hand of Joshua and the people: “Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses” (Joshua 1:3). But the promise was in vain if they refused to cross the Jordan. Let us be those who learn from the sermon text that launched the modern missionary movement under William Carrey: “Enlarge the place of your tent; stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, spare not; lengthen your cords and strengthen your pegs. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your descendants will possess nations and will resettle the desolate cities” (Isaiah 54:2-3). Let us be those who, through humble reliance on the Spirit, expect great things from God, and attempt great things for God. “Consider your ways! Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified” (1:8).
This chapter is of incredible importance in redemptive history and for the church of God. It is commonly referred to as the “Davidic covenant”, and takes its place in the covenant of grace, which was born with the promise of God, given to fallen man in the garden of Eden. The Davidic covenant appears subsequent to the Noahic covenant (in Genesis 9), the Abrahamic covenant (in Genesis 12, 15, and 17), and the Mosaic covenant (in Exodus at Mt. Sinai). This covenant with David is followed in Scripture only by the forthcoming new covenant that our Lord inaugurates in His blood (in Jeremiah 31:31ff and Matthew 26:28). God had first promised to send a Deliverer in Genesis 3:15. He said to the serpent, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.” This was the first promise of the coming Deliverer. Through the Scriptures, God promises to save a people from their sin, through the coming of the Messiah. And through His covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and ultimately Christ, He reveals His plan to save His people.

The Previous Covenants in Scripture: Noah, Abraham, and Moses

There is a progression in God's covenants. God reveals different facets of Himself and of Christ through these distinctive covenants. Each successive covenant in the covenant of grace builds on the one before it (rather than replacing it). Unique facets of God's character and purposes are manifested in each successive stage of the covenant.

For example, in Noah we learn of the particularity of God's redemptive grace. Just as it would be later with Abraham, it was God who chose Noah, not the other way around. Noah walked with God only because he had first found favor in God's sight (Genesis 6:8-9). In other words, Noah loved God only because God had first set His love upon Noah. Noah is also an eminent type of Christ, the second Adam. For in the flood, God poured out His anger upon the children of the first Adam, but all the descendants of Noah were
spared. So too, it is through the obedience of the One that the many will be made righteous (Romans 5:19). Even the ark itself is a type of Christ. God's wrath is coming, and just as the ark was the only place of safety, so it is only those in Christ who will be saved. Just as being in the ark was the only safe place from the coming wrath of God, so too, being in Christ is the only safe place from the coming judgment of God. In Isaiah we read the parallel between the Noahic covenant and its fulfillment in Christ: “For this is like the days of Noah to Me, when I swore that the waters of Noah would not flood the earth again; so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you nor will I rebuke you. For the mountains maybe removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken.” (Isaiah 54:9-10). In the Noahic covenant also we see how firmly rooted are the promises of the covenant of grace. For it seems that the grande purpose for which the Lord spoke the words He did in Genesis 8:22, concerning the seasons, was for the sake of demonstrating how unchangeable was His promise in the new covenant, later to be expressed in Jeremiah 33:25-26: “Thus says the Lord, 'If My covenant for day and night stand not, and the fixed patterns of heaven and earth I have not established, then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, not taking from his descendants rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. . .” We also find a hinting of God's redeeming work among Jew and Gentile with Noah's blessing in Genesis 9:27, that the descendants of Japheth (Gentiles; see 10:2-4; Isaiah 66:19) would one day dwell in the tents of Shem (who was the father of the Jews, 10:21).

Paul teaches us in Romans 4 that God's covenant dealings with Abraham make clear that the Old Testament saints were saved the exact same way we are in the New Testament. Ever since the beginning, man has been saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ, the Messiah, alone. Abraham's faith wasn't perfect, but it was a true faith in the coming Messiah. Indeed, God was to make incredible promises to Abraham. Yet, at the same time, Abraham must leave Babylon to receive them (Genesis 12:1). So too, the unmerited promises of the gospel are precious beyond words—yet they are always inseparably bound together with the command to turn from our sin. This power we lack, but God gives it to those whom He desires. In the Abrahamic covenant, God bound Himself to Abraham in solemn promises of land, seed, and blessing. God would give Abraham a land as an inheritance, the land of Canaan. The
Messiah would come forth from Abraham's seed. And thus, in Abraham, all nations would be blessed. But though God had made sweet and wonderful promises to the patriarch, he was never able to see their fulfillment. God had promised to give him the land of Canaan, but he lived as the only follower of the Messiah in the midst of a land full of pagan unbelievers. God promised to make him a blessing to the nations, but oftentimes in Genesis he seems to be more of a hindrance to God's glory than an instrument of blessing. God had changed his name from Abram ("exalted father") to Abraham ("father of a multitude"), yet for 25 years he had not a single child. But though he didn't see the fulfillment of many of the promises, Abraham believed God and His Word. Believers in Jesus are the true children of the patriarch, the spiritual seed of Abraham (Galatians 3:29). In Christ, God has promised us an eternal inheritance in glory (1 Peter 1:4). And through the promise of the Holy Spirit, believers will be instruments of great blessing in bringing salvation to all the nations (Acts 2:38-39; Galatians 3:14).

God's covenant with Moses at Sinai is unique in that the line of the Messiah does not go through Moses, as it does with Noah, Abraham, and David. This is perhaps to demonstrate that there is something especially distinctive about the Mosaic covenant. God's covenants with Noah, Abraham, and here with David are filled with promises. However, the covenant under Moses is filled not with promises but commands. We learn in Moses what God's Law is and what it requires. In Moses, we learn much more of the holiness of God, and we are brought to our knees before the Lord as we see just how righteous He is, and how utterly sinful our hearts and actions really are. We are confronted with God's Law and we tremble, because we know we can never keep it. Yet, under Moses, provision was also made for sin, through the shedding of blood. Moses' life itself foreshadows the coming of the One who would give His life as a ransom for many. Born into a poor family yet the son of a king, born the child of a slave yet himself free from the bondage of all his brothers, Christ, our great Interceding-Prophet, is truly "the mightiest of warriors and the meekest of men." In Jesus, God has provided for His people the Lamb of God, to take away the sins of the world. We don't have the power to keep God's Law. But Christ kept it perfectly in our place, then on the cross He bore the curse and the

38I.e., the incident with Hagar in Genesis 16; the incident with Abimelech in Genesis 20.
39A.W. Pink, Gleanings In Exodus, p16.
wrath that we deserved for our sin. At Sinai God wrote His commands on tablets of stone. But after placing our faith in Christ, God writes His law on the hearts of His people. Thus, while believers are made right with God through faith in Christ apart from the Law, yet through the Holy Spirit, God produces in believers what the Law had intended all along. He circumcises our hearts, melting them through the Spirit, giving us holy desires, taking away the stone and giving us new hearts that really do love Him after all. In Christ, Moses' command becomes a promise of the Spirit: “You shall follow the Lord your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him.” (Deuteronomy 13:4). Believers have been set free from the curse and condemnation of the Law through the cross of Christ, but instead of using their freedom as a license to sin, believers in Jesus long for and love the Lord with all their soul, mind, and strength. God has given them a new heart by the Spirit.

Thus, all of the covenants come to fulfillment in Jesus Christ. They all point to Him. Ever since Genesis 3:15, God promised He would send a Deliverer. He would be a descendant of Eve. Later the Lord reveals to Abraham that this Deliverer would be one of his descendants (Genesis 22:18). The same promise was given to Isaac and Jacob. And what was hinted at in Genesis 49:10 is later confirmed to David (see also Psalm 78:67-68). The line of the Messiah would go through Judah, and later, as we will see, through the son of Jesse.

The covenant of grace, as revealed in Scripture and fulfilled in Christ, is indeed an unfathomable mercy. That God would come to us, and through Christ and His cross, open a fountain of salvation, should cause us to stand in awe and wonder. But as the covenant of grace is full of sweet mercies, it also contains a warning, and calls us to examine ourselves. Have we personally embraced God's covenant from the heart? It is a sad truth, that though God had made so many offers of mercy to the physical descendants of Abraham, God’s Word tells us that it was only a small number of them that truly embraced the Messiah and were saved. For Paul quotes the prophet Isaiah in the book of Romans, “Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved” (Romans 9:27). Many children in Israel grew up hearing about God and His covenant with them. They grew up listening to stories about Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, and how God had chosen Israel to be
His special people. But sadly, God's Word tells us that many of them were not saved. Though in their minds they knew lots of things about God, His Word, and the coming Messiah, many of them did not truly put their trust in Him. Though they possessed much knowledge about the Bible, their hearts were hardened, and they refused to turn from their sins and believe in Christ. Let us not make the same mistake! May we be those like Noah, Abraham, and David, who personally called upon God's Messiah to forgive their sins and change their hearts!

**The Davidic Covenant: God's Promises to David**

We read here in 2 Samuel 7 that the prophet Nathan comes to David and declares to him that just as God had made a covenant with Noah, Abraham, and Moses, so God is going to establish His covenant with David. Though the word covenant is not used here in this chapter, we find it later in Psalm 89:3-4: “I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sword to David My servant, I will establish your seed forever and build up your throne to all generations.” Among other things, the Lord promises to David that, 1) He will subdue all his enemies (v11), 2) He will build a house for David (v11), 3) one of David's descendants will build a house for the Lord (v13), and, 4) the Lord will establish David's kingdom, and the kingdom of his seed, forever (vv12-13, 16).

We should probably begin by addressing a point of confusion in the text. Who is David's descendant who will build a house for the Lord? At first it may seem like an easy answer: it was Solomon. After all, Solomon is the descendant of David who will be king after him. And Solomon is the one we read about later who builds God's temple. But there are also things in this chapter that make it seem that the Lord is referring to someone else. First, the Lord promises to establish the throne of this descendant forever (v13), but Solomon's reign seems to have reached its end long ago. Secondly, we read in verse 19 that David takes Nathan's words as referring to the “distant future.” So we ask: Could it be that these promises look forward to the coming of Christ? Could it be that the Lord is promising David, just as it was with Abraham long ago, that the Messiah would come through David's line? But if this is the case, we encounter a conflict in the text. For if the one of whom Nathan spoke was truly the coming Messiah, then why is there mention of his
sin in verse 14? Surely Christ was sinless! Why then are we told that the Lord would correct him for his iniquity? Is the promise pointing us toward Jesus or simply to Solomon?

The answer, is yes! There is a partial fulfillment in Solomon, but the true and grande fulfillment of these promises is in Christ. Think back to Noah. Noah's father in Genesis 5:29 names his son Noah ("rest"), saying, "This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the Lord has cursed." Thus, Noah's father seems to recall the promise of Genesis 3:15 concerning the Messiah, and apply it to his son. He seems to be prophesying that his son Noah would be the one God had promised who would reverse the curse, the Messiah who was to come. In a way he was, but only as a picture, or as a type. We saw in the last section the similarities between Noah and Christ. Noah was in fact a picture of the second Adam, of Christ and His salvation. Thus, there is in one sense a partial fulfillment of rest in Noah, but only in so far as he is a picture of the true rest that will reach fulfillment in Christ. Similarly, we read later in the book of Haggai about Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah during Israel's return to the land from exile in Babylon. The Lord says of him something quite remarkable: "On that day,' declares the Lord of hosts, 'I will take you, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, My servant,' declares the Lord, 'and I will make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you,' declares the Lord of hosts." (Haggai 2:23). Just like Noah, this promise was partially fulfilled in Zerubbabel, but only in so far as he was a picture or type of Christ. For just as it was with Abraham, Noah and David, the line of the Messiah would also run through Zerubbabel (Matthew 1:12), reaching complete fulfillment, at last, in Christ.

Thus, these promises are partially or temporally fulfilled in Solomon, but fully and eternally in Christ. Nathan is declaring here to David in this chapter that the Messiah would be one of his descendants: "I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (vv12-13). The house that would be built by David's seed would only partially reach fulfillment with the beautiful temple erected by Solomon. Later, long after David's reign had ended, we read in more detail of the kingly reign of the coming Messiah:
“My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.” (Ezekiel 37:24-28).

The Jews understood that these promises reached partial fulfillment in Solomon’s temple, but their fuller fulfillment was yet to come. This is why “son of David” was a phrase commonly used to describe the Messiah in Jesus’ day. Our Lord alluded to these truths when He told the Jews in John 2:19, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” For this reason also Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, makes mention of the Davidic covenant in foretelling the salvation which would be accomplished in Christ: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant” (Luke 1:68-69). At Pentecost Peter similarly asserts that the Davidic covenant was fulfilled in Christ: “And so, because [David] was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ” (Acts 2:30-31).

There are many similarities between David’s reign and the reign of king Jesus. We see this here in the first few verses of chapter 7. We read there that David the king tells Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within tent curtains” (v2). David’s heart beats for the glory of God. Others might have been proud of themselves for already having brought up the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. But David wasn’t satisfied with that. To him it wasn’t enough. Why should he live in a cedar palace and the ark of his God in a tent? David was insatiably and infinitely hungry for the Lord to receive the kind of glory He deserved. “For zeal for Your house has consumed me,” he wrote in one of his

psalms (69:9). Indeed, David's food was to do the will of the Father, and accomplish His work.

There was another who was consumed with zeal for God's house. When Jesus fashioned a whip and began to drive out the money changers and sellers in the temple, His disciples remembered this word (John 2:17). Our Lord Jesus was consumed with zeal for His Father's house. What David expressed here in 2 Samuel 7:2 is what in fact our Lord Jesus did. He was not satisfied to sit on His throne in paradise while His Father's house lay desolate on the earth. So, He left the safety and rest of paradise to vindicate the name of His Father. He gave up the throne of glory, and even glory itself, for the sake of His Father.

David had to endure much agony before he took the throne. For David it was suffering before glory, and a cross before a crown. He was anointed as king, but didn't yet live as a king. He was afflicted and persecuted. He made his home in the wilderness with the beasts and in caves. So did our Lord Jesus in His time on earth. Though He was anointed at John's baptism, He was afflicted, rejected, and persecuted by His own people. Later, David reigned at Hebron over Judah. Only one tribe among 12 bowed their knee to him. So it is now in our day. Jesus has been exalted through His resurrection and sits at the right hand of God, reigning as the greatest of kings—yet only a small remnant submit their allegiance to Him. One day, this Jesus will come again in great glory. Just as David finally reigned over all Israel, Jesus will be the exalted king of the whole universe. On that day all will bow their knee to Him. Some voluntarily, others perhaps by force.

When Jesus came to the world, though in many ways His reign was similar to David's, His kingship also looked much different than most people thought. There is a song that captures this beautifully:

_Hail, King David, Shepherd from Bethlehem_
_Set the temple of God In mighty Jerusalem_
_You were a king on a throne Full of power, with a sword in his fist_
_Has there ever been, ever been a king like this? Full of wisdom, full of strength, the hearts of the people are his_
_Hear, O Israel, was ever there a king like this?_

_So speak, Isaiah, Prophet of Judah_
_Can you tell of the One This king who's going to come_
Will he be a king on a throne Full of power with a sword in his fist? 
Prophet, tell us will there be another king like this?
Full of wisdom, full of strength, The hearts of the people are his 
Prophet, tell us will there be another king like this?

"He’ll bear no beauty or glory; Rejected, despised
A man of such sorrow, We’ll cover our eyes
He’ll take up our sickness, Carry our tears
For his people He will be pierced
He’ll be crushed for our evils, Our punishment feel
By his wounds We will be healed."
"From you, O Bethlehem, Small among Judah
A ruler will come, Ancient and strong."

We leave with two points of application. First, we ask again: have you submitted your entire life to king Jesus? Have you given Him your entire allegiance? Have you bowed your knee to Him alone? Have you submitted and surrendered yourself wholly and unreservedly to His reign? Our Lord Jesus came for weary sinners. It is a beautiful, wonderful thing, that in the covenant of grace, God freely gives what He requires. He requires faith in Christ, and that faith is a gift He freely gives (Ephesians 2:8-9). He requires a new heart, and He gives it to all who come to Him for it (Ezekiel 36:26-27). He requires repentance, and repentance is a gift He freely and gladly gives to the one asking for it (Acts 5:31; 11:18). I urge you to call upon Him now if you have not already. Bow your knee to His Lordship, crying out to Him to grant the gift of faith and repentance He has promised for all who come to Him for it.

Second, are we consumed with the same zeal that David was? There was a point in John Calvin's seminary in Geneva that, because of the intense persecution, the life expectancy of his graduating students was six months after graduation. But there was no shortage of students. Do we have the burning in our bones that was in the Lord Jesus? Are you insatiably consumed with zeal for the house of the Lord—the state of the church and the mission of God in the world? Does your heart bleed for the kingdom of Christ spreading to every corner of the world? Do your finances prove it? Does your life show it? Do your knees carry callouses, or is it your hearts that carry

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From Andrew Peterson, “So Long, Moses”, from Behold, the Lamb of God album.
them? Are you absolutely consumed with zeal for the glory of Christ?

The Lord rebuked His people when they had come back to the land after the exile into Babylon: “Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?” (Haggai 1:4). They had come back from exile. They had fixed their houses and now happily lived there. Yet God's house was a pile of ruins. It didn't seem to bother them. What about us? Are we bothered that there are thousands of unreached people groups still totally unpenetrated with the gospel of Christ? Am I bothered that the banner of Christ cannot be found anymore in many places in Europe? Are you bothered that there are hardly any Christians among the Bengali-speaking Muslims of South Asia? Are you bothered that there are thousands of villages in India that have never heard about the Savior? Let us be those who burn with the same hunger that consumed our Lord Jesus. For David, this hunger seemed to have cost him dearly (see Psalm 69:8). For the Lord Jesus it cost Him dearly. For the students at Calvin's seminary it came at a high cost. It may also come at a great cost to us. But by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, let us be those who consider the reproach of Christ better treasures than all this world has to offer.

**David's Prayer**

We need to take another section here to extract a little more of the rich sap contained in this chapter. We learn here in verses 18 through the end of the chapter more about the nature of God's covenant with David, and thus, God's covenant to all the saints in Christ. This section contains David's prayer of response to his God. We can learn just as much about who God is from David's prayer as we do from Nathan's words. There is rich theology in David's prayers. But David would be the first to tell us that this rich theology was the fruit not only of meditation upon God's Word, but intimate communion with Him in prayer, and a life of humble submission and Spirit-wrought obedience to what had been revealed in God's Word. As David tells us in a different place, he came to know about his God not only through meditating on His Word, but through obeying it, for he says in Psalm 119:100, “I understand more than the aged, because I have observed Your precepts.” Let us now get to the text.
We learn first through David's prayer why God enters into covenant with him, and thereby why God in Christ enters into relationship with sinners. David, in pouring out his soul to God, mentions that the Lord established His covenant with him: 1) according to His own heart (v21), 2) for the sake of His word (v21), and, 3) for the sake of His own name (vv23, 26). In examining these points we will take them in reverse order:

We are told that God made His covenant with David for the sake of His own name. David says in verses 25-26, “...do as You have spoken, that Your name may be magnified forever.” Further, it was not only in this covenant with David that the Lord acted for His own name. When God redeemed His people from Egypt, it was for the same purpose, for David says in verse 23, “And what one nation on the earth is like Your people Israel, whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people and to make a name for Himself. ...?” David acknowledges in his prayer that the ultimate purpose of these things was for the sake of the Lord's own name.

We find this teaching all over the pages of the Bible. This is an extremely important truth, because it is the reason the Scriptures give for why God does everything that He does. Isaiah 48:11 says, “For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act, for how should My name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.” Ezekiel 20 is also tremendously important for understanding why God deals with His people in such grace. Three times in this chapter, we are reminded how Israel rebelled against God and turned away from Him. They did not forsake their idols in Egypt, they did not keep His sabbaths, and they rebelled against Him in the wilderness (vv8, 13, 21). Each time the Lord says that because of their sin, He resolved to pour out His wrath on them. But He didn’t. Instead, we read, “I acted for the sake of My name,” by upholding His people in grace and showing them mercy. Everything God does is for His own name's sake and glory, and it glorifies Him to never cease treating His people according to His lovingkindness. God will always deal with believers in grace—not because we deserve it—but because it glorifies His name. This is incredible. For His own name's sake, God forgives the sins of His people: “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins” (Isaiah 43:25). For His own sake He will never forsake His people: “Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the Lord . . . For the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name’s sake” (1
David writes in another place, “He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake” (Psalm 23:3). We read in Psalm 79:9, “Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name; and deliver us and forgive our sins for Your name's sake.”

We might ask, “How is it that the Lord showing me lovingkindness is for His own name and for His own glory?” This is a great question. I believe we have a hint of the answer towards the beginning of David's prayer, when he says, “for the sake of Your word. . .You have done all this.” In other words, it glorifies God to uphold His own word and His own promises. If God tells Abraham He is going to do something, but doesn't do it, He is shown to be a liar and untrustworthy, and His own name suffers for it. And God had indeed made promises to Abraham. Since God had promised to do these things the truthfulness of His Word is on the line. We see this from the text we quoted earlier in Ezekiel 20. We had read there how the Lord did not destroy His people for the sake of His own name. But another truth we see in this chapter is that the reason God not destroying His people would be for the sake of His own name is because it would go against the promises He had earlier bound Himself to uphold. The beginning of the chapter reads, “On the day when I chose Israel and swore to the descendants of the house of Jacob and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt when I swore to them saying, I am the Lord your God, on that day I swore to them, to bring them out from the land of Egypt into a land that I had selected for them” (Ezekiel 20:5-6). God's own name was bound to His dealings with His people. Because He had sworn promises to them, He would uphold those promises at any cost—His own name was at stake. And it is the same with us. God will keep His promises to His people, which are bound together in the promises He swore on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and fulfilled in Christ.

We also learn in this chapter that the Lord makes His covenant with David according to His own heart (v21). God didn't make this covenant with David because He had to. He was under no obligation. It wasn't made out of duty. Rather, it was made wholly out of delight. It was, David declares, “according to Your own heart.” This is a precious truth for us as believers, because it is no different in God's covenant with His saints in Christ. Everything the Lord does is not only for His name's sake, but also with great pleasure. And this is
especially true in pouring out His infinite stores of grace upon His people. Jesus said in Luke 12:32, “Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Friends, if you are in Christ, the Lord saved you not only for the sake of His name, but because He had set His heart upon it. Indeed, we learn from Ephesians 1:5-6 that these two truths are inseparably woven together: “In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention (Lit. “good pleasure”) of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.” And it is not only at salvation. In all of God's actions toward His saints, the Lord takes great pleasure in pouring out not only unmerited, but demerited stores of lovingkindness upon His people. We read in Jeremiah 32:40-41, “I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from doing good to them. . .I will rejoice over them to do them good and will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul.” We have the same precious truth in Micah 6:18: “Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love.”

As we close we will mention just one more thing from this chapter. One beautiful truth that we see not only in David's life, but through the lives of Noah and Abraham as well, is this: the sins of God's people cannot nullify the Lord's covenant promises to them. God had made a covenant with Noah, saving him from the waters of judgment. Yet, sometime after the flood we are shocked to find Noah drunk in his tent. Similarly, God had chosen Abraham and poured out rich covenant promises upon him. But after receiving the promises, Abraham was guilty of grievous sins before the Lord. He committed adultery with Hagar. He twice used his own wife as a shield, giving her into the arms of foreign men to protect himself. But the Scripture headings themselves boldly declare that our sin can never nullify God's promises to His saints. We mentioned this earlier, but it is a precious truth worth repeating: “Chapter 20: Abraham's treachery. Chapter 21: Isaac is born.” And it is the same with David, is it not? For if we are familiar with his life, we know the tragic story that is recorded just a few chapters later. But even this great sin that David commits cannot nullify God's covenant with him. That doesn't mean that it didn't have tragic and lasting consequences. This sin David commits with Bathsheba and against Uriah deeply
stains his entire character. There are indeed lasting consequences. But even this could not annul God's promises to David. Instead, wonder of wonders, God even uses this, his greatest sin, to fulfill His promise to him. For the line of the Messiah was to go through Solomon, teaching us that the Lord can use even our darkest hour and worst sins to uphold and fulfill His promises to His saints. Perhaps upon hearing this, those who are Christians in name only will gladly take this and use it as an excuse to plunge themselves into unrestrained wickedness. Paul anticipated the objection: “And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), ‘Let us do evil that good may come?’” (Romans 3:8). And just as Paul declares of them, “Their condemnation is just.” For God's true children, upon hearing truths like this, will be brought to a greater fear of their sins, and worship of the Lord. As Scripture says, “But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” (Psalm 130:4).
David's victories in battle here in chapter 8 harken back to at least two different promises God had made earlier. One promise we just saw in chapter 7. There the Lord had told him, “I will give you rest from all your enemies” (7:11). In the parallel passage recorded in 1 Chronicles we read, “and I will subdue all your enemies” (18:10). The Lord had promised to David that He would subdue all of his enemies, and He makes good on His promise to David here in chapter 8.

But there was also another promise of God that was being fulfilled in chapter 8. It was made much earlier, back in Genesis 15:18. God had there promised the land of Canaan to Abraham as an inheritance. In one sense, this promise was fulfilled when Joshua led God's people into the promised land. We read in Joshua 11:23, “So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Thus the land had rest from war.” But if we compare the boundaries of the land that were given to the twelve tribes under Joshua with the land that was promised to Abraham in Genesis 15:18, and again later in Exodus 23:31, there is a huge difference. The land that was taken under Joshua is just a small portion of what was actually promised to Abraham. God had promised Abraham that the boundaries of the land on the northern side would extend all the way to the river Euphrates, and on the southern side the land would stretch all the way to the Red Sea. This was fulfilled only in part through Joshua. For through him the land is taken, but it is only a fraction of what had been promised. Under David, however, here in chapter 8, the promise is wholly fulfilled. David extends the borders of the land to the extent that God had actually promised Abraham. Here in this chapter David is taking back from the enemy what God had promised long ago.42

42It should be noted that David also in this chapter extends the boundaries of the land. Though the eastern border is the hardest to determine the exact boundary; Moab, Edom, Ammon, and it seems at least some of the land of the Arameans were outside of the original boundaries of Canaan. According to Deuteronomy 20, Israel was to destroy those nations living within the boundaries of Canaan. They were permitted to extend their land.
There is rich spiritual food here for believers. Just as the Lord had made promises to David in chapter 7, so the Father has made promises to Christ. Indeed, David and the promises he received in chapter 7 are a type of Christ, who was called the Son of David. We see in chapter 7 wonderful and precious promises that were made to David. Then here in chapter 8, those promises are fulfilled through David. The Lord had told David that He would subdue his enemies, and here, this is exactly what the Lord does. So too, God the Father has made promises to His Son, and He will most certainly bring them to fulfillment.

This is a type of what theologians call the covenant of redemption. Though the phrase cannot be found in Scripture, the concept can. Before the foundation of the world, God the Father made a covenant with God the Son, to give a people to Him. Sometimes these people are described in the language of an inheritance (as in Psalm 2:7-8). Sometimes they are described in the language of a bride (as in Revelation 21:9). When Jesus spoke, He often referred to this people as His sheep (see John 10). God the Father had promised to the Son that a people would be given to Him. And just as what God had promised to David would certainly be given, so it is with Christ. As our Lord has said, “This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day” (John 6:39). God has promised a people to His Son out of every tribe, tongue and nation. They will be given.

And just as the Lord had made promises to Abraham, so too He has made promises to believers, who are the true descendants of Abraham. The promise that was made to Abraham concerning the land of Canaan, as we have seen, was (temporally) fulfilled in David here in chapter 8. Paul uses similar language in speaking of Christ, who fulfilled the promises made to the fathers. He wrote in Romans 15:8, “For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision beyond the boundaries of Canaan, but were to first offer terms of peace (Deut.20:10-18). This also is a prefiguring of the gospel, and carries with it rich applications for believers today. We are to take no mercy on the enemies within, and we are to extend the kingdom to the distant lands without, but not without offering terms of peace. Thus, as believers, we are to show no mercy to our indwelling sin (Romans 8:13). We are never to compromise with its demands, but rather we are to utterly destroy it. In extending the kingdom beyond the boundaries, however, we are to offer terms of peace. This has to do with evangelism and the proclamation of the gospel to spiritual foreigners. We go to them declaring that God's judgment will surely come unless they submit to His terms of peace. The terms of peace, of course, is the message of the gospel. To submit to the gospel is to escape the impending destruction.
on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the
fathers.” Paul says again in 2 Corinthians 1:20, “For as many as are
the promises of God, in Him they are yes.” Thus, just as the
promises God had made to Abraham were (once again, temporally)
fulfilled in David, so too the promises that God has made to believers
are fulfilled in Christ.

What does all this mean? It means first of all, that just as God
fulfilled His promises to David, so too the Father will certainly fulfill
that which He has promised to His Son. Christ will reign over the
nations. One day, “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the
glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14). One
day, every knee will bow to Christ, He will reign with power over the
nations, and His people will reign with Him.

But Christ will not only be victorious over the nations one day far,
far away. The Father has promised to gather a people for Him from
every tribe, tongue, and nation. All authority has already been given
to Him through His atoning death and resurrection from the dead
(Matthew 28:18). The gates of Hades will not hold up against His
power (Matthew 16:18). The strong man has been bound (Matthew
12:29). We carry great hope with us now as believers empowered by
the Holy Spirit. Just as the walls of Jericho crashed down before the
army of Israel, Satan's kingdom is powerless before Christ and must
fall. The preaching of the gospel will accomplish much more than we
think. Some will be hardened. But we should expect whole nations
to be saved. Abraham in Genesis was one believer among a nation of
unbelievers, but God had promised He would fill that land with His
glory. Though the promise seemed impossible, God brought it
about. As I write, Bangladesh is a country with a fraction of one
percent of its population professing evangelical Christians. But God
has made promises, He has given all authority to Christ the Son, and
He has empowered us with His Holy Spirit. The preaching of the
gospel has turned whole nations upside down in the past. The deep
darkness of whole countries has been shattered by the Light of Christ.
Where there were once dry deserts there are now well-watered
countries, like the garden of the Lord. And we have no reason
whatsoever to doubt that what the Lord has accomplished in the past
He has set His heart upon to continue to do. There are precious and
grande promises God has made concerning our days. The fullness of
the Gentiles, and the re-ingrafting of the Jews (see Romans 11:12,15,
25-26) must happen before Christ returns. Old Testament
prophecies of massive world-wide revival such as Malachi 1:11 and Zechariah 8:23, where ten men will grab the garment of a Jew, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you,” must happen in the present age of the church.

If this is true, one might ask, then why do we not see more revival? Why do we not see the kingdom of Christ spreading with such rapid force and greatness of power? We see in the Scriptures that though promises were made to Abraham concerning the land, still Joshua had to fight against the Canaanites to possess that land. The promises were re-affirmed to him in Joshua 1, but only insofar as he led Israel to fight against the Canaanites. God had made incredible promises, to be sure. But if they didn't cross the Jordan to fight against Jericho, nothing was going to happen. The Lord had told Joshua, “Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses” (1:3). But if their feet didn't move, that generation would have missed out on the blessing God had promised (just as the previous generation did). The ends are thus connected with the appointed means of blessing. It was the same with David. The Lord promised in chapter 7 to subdue all his enemies, but David must fight against Moab, Edom, and Aram if he would take hold of what God had promised.

I believe the reason we do not see more gospel advancement presently is that we fail to believe God's promise, we fail to preach the gospel, and thus we fail to see the enormity of the spiritual victory and blessing that our eyes might behold otherwise. Let us then be those like Joshua, who receive the promises with faith, show it by our actions, and thus receive the blessing. Isaiah 62:6-7 declares, “You who remind the Lord, take no rest for yourselves; and give Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.” Let us therefore plead with our God for His kingdom to come with power. Let us devote ourselves to calling upon the Lord of the harvest to look upon His desolate house and send laborers into the kingdom and salvation to the nations, and not stop praying until He does it. Then we will see the blessing. It is the gospel that is the power of God. If we preach not the gospel, there is no promise of blessing. Let us then preach the gospel as if we actually believed that upon its message lay the salvation of the world. Let us preach Christ crucified, believing that this message alone is both the only way to salvation, as well as the power of God for salvation. Then we will see the blessing. We need today more men like Jonathan, who single-
handedly, together with his armor bearer, took down an entire Philistine army. By faith they crossed over to the garrison of the Philistines, and by faith these two men accomplished more than Saul's entire army: “Now Saul's watchmen in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and behold, the multitude melted away.” (1 Samuel 14:16). We need today more men like Caleb, who said to Joshua, “Now then, give me this hill country about which the Lord spoke on that day, for you heard on that day that Anakim were there, with great fortified cities; perhaps the Lord will be with me, and I will drive them out as the Lord has spoken.” (Joshua 14:12). We are told in verse 14 that the Lord indeed granted his request.

One other final note of application. There are, I believe, truths here for individual believers as well. We read in Philippians 2:12-13, “So then, my beloved. . .work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” God has made promises, not just to the church as a whole, but to individual saints who make up the whole. Sanctification is a promise (Psalm 23:3; Jeremiah 32:40; Ephesians 5:26; Titus 2:14). But it is also a fight. It will not come to us if we do nothing. We must be active in our fight for holiness. If we are not, by the Spirit, putting to death our sin, we will find before long that it is our sin that is putting us to death. Similarly, perseverance unto glory is a promise. But just like it was with Joshua, we must fight to lay hold of it. It is true, saints who are in Christ will indeed persevere to the end. But it is equally true, the ones who persevere to the end have proven the authenticity of their faith by a life of waging war against their sin (see Hebrews 3:14). May God grant us strength and grace to be those who, by His Spirit, believe, fight, and lay hold of the promises, and thus receive the blessing.
We learned about God's promises in chapter 7 and the certainty of those promises being fulfilled in chapter 8. But what do those promises look like fleshed-out? We saw in chapter 8 that Christ will be victorious—both in the future as well as now in the present age. But what will His victory look like? The kingdom of God surely will fill the earth as the waters do the sea. But what does that mean?

We find out what it means in chapters 8 through 10. Here we see both grace and truth upheld in all their purity. Here we see an incredible combination of terrifying judgment and the sweetness of mercy. In these chapters we are both terrified by David's severity, and blown away by his gentle tenderness. We find that he carries with him both a sword for his enemies and candy in his pocket for his little children. He slaughters the Moabites, yet he takes the lame into his home to feast with him at his table. Who is this king? What matter of man is he? David is a reflection and prefiguring of the coming One who would be known as both the Lion of Judah and the Shepherd of Israel.

Christ is indeed the most tender and gentle of shepherds. Isaiah says of Him, “Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes” (40:11). Ezekiel likewise foretells, “As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day. . . and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel. . . I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest,” declares the Lord God” (34:12-15). Matthew likewise in his gospel attributes the prophecy of Isaiah to Jesus: “A battered reed He will not break off, and a smoldering wick He will not put out” (v20). Reeds are common enough. A battered one is of no use, and most people wouldn't think twice about just throwing it away and getting a new one. But not Jesus. He is tenderest with the weakest. He is the most gentle with those of little
faith. Richard Sibbes, a beloved and renowned Puritan pastor, put it best in his classic, *The Bruised Reed*: “let all know that none are fitter for comfort than those that think themselves furthest off. Men, for the most part, are not lost enough in their own feeling for a Savior. A holy despair in ourselves is the ground of true hope.”  

And again, “His tenderest care is over the weakest. The lambs he carries in his bosom (Isaiah 40:11). He says to Peter, ‘Feed my lambs’ (John 21:15). He was most familiar and open to troubled souls.”

But we do well to remember also that Christ will one day be as a lion to His enemies. Yes, His heart breaks for sinners. But the day is quickly approaching when He will come again to break the bones of those who refused to submit to Him (Psalm 2:9). He is indeed the most gentle and tender of shepherds. But even in the chapter we quoted earlier from Ezekiel, He says also, “but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment” (34:16). Just as David in the days of his youth delivered the sheep of his flock from the bears and lions, so Christ will one day soon come to execute judgment on the wicked: “Wail, you shepherds, and cry; and wallow in ashes, you masters of the flock; for the days of your slaughter and your dispersions have come, and you will fall like a choice vessel” (Jeremiah 25:34). The King of Kings wields a shepherds staff to lead His sheep, but also a rod of iron to destroy His enemies in the day of His wrath (Psalm 2:9). It is a popular notion that hell will be the absence of God. This is not true. It is a terrifying truth, what Scripture declares of those who continue in rebellion against Christ: “he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb” (Revelation 14:10). We need to thus ask ourselves, am I His friend or His foe? Am I reconciled with Christ? Am I like Mephiboseth in chapter 9? Or am I like the Philistines, Aram, and Amalek in chapter 8 (and Ammon in chapter 10, as we will see)? Please don’t misunderstand. Christ holds out his scepter of mercy now to all. He declares boldly that, “the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” (John 6:37). Every single person who comes to Him for forgiveness will be received. The door of the ark of salvation stands open for all who desire to enter; none will be refused who come. But the day is approaching, just as in the days of

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43P14.
44P15.
Noah, when the door of mercy will be slammed shut, and judgement will come. After the door of the ark is closed it will be too late.

Chapter 9 is the story of salvation given, a beautiful picture of both reconciliation and adoption. We see this in several ways:

It was David who chose to show lovingkindness to Mephibosheth. David was the one who took the initiative in bringing him to himself and lavishing mercy on him. In the same way, Christ has said, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you” (John 15:16). We were not saved because we decided one day we wanted to follow Jesus. We were dead in our sin and we were happy to be dead in our sin. We were enslaved to our sin, and we were happy slaves. And just like Mephibosheth before David, we did not seek God. It was God who sought after us.

Mephibosheth calls himself a “dead dog” in verse 8. After spending some time in South Asia I believe I understand better the implications of Mephibosheth referring to himself as a “dead dog.” In South Asia, there’s not much more loathsome than a living dog. So there’s no real words that can describe the worthlessness and abhorrence of a dead one. Mephibosheth here thus reflects the church in his poverty of spirit. The saints know that they have absolutely nothing to offer God, and that they deserve nothing from God. The saints know they deserve nothing but punishment and death. Mephibosheth receives David’s kindness with reverent awe, humbleness, and poverty of spirit, just as David’s great grandmother Ruth had so many years earlier, before Boaz’ kindness (Ruth 2:10).

Why did David show mercy to Mephibosheth? We read, “for Jonathan’s sake” (v1). There was a reason outside of Mephibosheth that David wanted to show him mercy, and it is the same in the gospel. The primary reason that God saves His people and keeps them saved in Jesus is for His own name’s sake (see 1 Samuel 12:20, 22; Isaiah 43:25; Ephesians 1:5-6). It is a very precious thing that Christ does everything for us in salvation for the sake of His Father (Romans 15:7-9). As believers we will fall, and we will fail. And what is God’s response? God’s response is that He will never, ever, ever cast us away. And why? Because you are still more or less good enough? Better than you were, at least? You haven’t crossed over the sin limit yet (but may soon, watch out)? No way. It is for the sake of His own name that He will never cast you away. And that is a precious truth. His own name is on the line.
The kindness that David showed to Mephibosheth was also rooted in the covenant that was made between David and Jonathan, before Mephibosheth was even born (1 Samuel 20:16-17). In the same way, the kindness God shows to us as believers is rooted in the covenant that God the Father had made with Christ the Son. Thus, God pours out His kindness on us, not only for His own name’s sake, but also because He has promised His Son Jesus that He will give Him a people as an inheritance (Deuteronomy 32:9; Psalm 2:8). In other words: God delights to show you and I mercy for His Son Jesus' sake, because He has promised us to His Son!

David calls Mephibosheth by name (9:6), and tells him not to fear (v7). This is what God does for us in Christ (see John 10:3 and Luke 5:10). The Lord says in Isaiah 43:1, “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine!” And again in Isaiah 41:14, “Do not fear, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel; I will help you, declares the Lord, and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.”

We see here also that David's kindness to Mephibosheth is unconditional. David's dealings with Mephibosheth do not operate on an if, then basis. There are no strings attached. There are no conditions. This is the way God deals with us in Christ. In Jesus, God asks only what He gives, and gives all that He requires. His own righteousness, faith, repentance, a new heart—all these God freely gives us in Christ. Jesus meant it when He cried out from the cross, “It is finished.”

Lastly, David grants Mephibosheth an inheritance, adopting him into his home as one of his own sons (vv7,11). So too, in Christ we have been adopted into God's family as His own dear children (Galatians 4:1-7). We sit at our Father's table as beloved adopted sons. God has not saved us like David saved Absalom. We will get to this later in our study. David cleared Absalom of his punishment when he brought him back to Jerusalem, but wanted no kind of relationship with him. When God draws us home, however, He does not just rescue us from hell's punishment. He delights in being our Father (Zephaniah 3:17). He delights in us as His beloved children. He brings us home and sits us at His table. As believers every day we have the privilege of sitting and feasting at the table with the King. In Christ, He has become our father.
Mephibosheth feasting at the table of king David evokes other images from Scripture. In Exodus 24:9-11 there is a sacred meal shared between God Almighty and the leaders of Israel. We read, “Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel, and they saw God, and they ate and drank.” On that mountain, sinners of men did feast with the Holy One.

We think also perhaps of another table of feasting with a much greater king than David. It was the night of the Passover celebration. Sinners feasted upon the paschal lamb in the upper room with the Son of God. Men shared table fellowship with the King of Righteousness. Jesus broke bread with former tax-collectors and rough fishermen.

In the narrative of David and Mephibosheth we learn that the king does invite the lame and unworthy to His table of salvation. At the Lord’s Supper we learn how the Lord can look past the defects and impurities of the spiritually lame. Can the justice of God just sweep the sins of Mephibosheth and David under the rug? Can the King of Righteousness pretend that the sins David would commit two chapters later didn't happen? Would a judge let a man-slaughterer walk free at a mere apology? No. God cannot just acquit the guilty. He will judge justly. But Jesus feasted that night with Peter, and John, James and the others, and spoke words of peace to them (John 14:27). He drank the Passover wine with them. This was because Jesus would drink another cup that night His disciples would not. It was the cup of the wine of the wrath of God. For Jesus did not only give up the crown of glory and kingly robes when He left paradise to come to earth. He gave up paradise itself. Moses begged of God that his own name might be blotted out of the book of Life for the sin of his kinsmen. But the Lord told Moses No. Moses couldn't have done that, even if he wanted to. Only a sinless offering could be made. But God knew the plans He had laid up before the foundation of the world. It would not be Moses who would give up his place in paradise. The Son of God himself, that Passover night, gave up one cup in exchange for another. He placed in their hands the cup of salvation, because he took from them the cup of the wrath of His Father. Indeed, the cup they drank together was the cup of the new covenant in His blood. This is why spiritual Mephibosheth's
like you and me can feast at the table of the King. “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:5-6, NIV).
We are told at the beginning of the chapter that David hears of the death of the king of the Ammonites, and desires to console his son Hanun. We find it strange perhaps that David mentions the kindness of Nahash. The only thing we have recorded of him in the Scriptures was the fierce attack he made on the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead in 1 Samuel 11, where he threatened to gouge out the eyes of everyone in the city. But it could have been that being an enemy of Saul, he made a friendship with David during the time of his exile. We do not know.

We should also note that the events of chapter 10, though recorded later in sequence, seem to be connected with the victories of David back in chapter 8. It seems that chapter 8 is thus a description of the mighty victories of David, primarily showing us it was through David that the Lord brought to fulfillment the promises which had been made to Abraham. The events in chapter 10 have a different purpose, instructing us in some of the particulars of how these things came about.

But the account in chapter 10 points us back to more than just the events recorded in chapter 8. There are striking similarities between this account, and the account of David's kindness to Mephibosheth. Just as David greatly desired to show kindness to Mephibosheth a chapter earlier, so this chapter begins in a very similar way. David hears about the death of the king of the Ammonites. His heart goes out for his son Hanun, and he longs to show kindness to him also. The major difference, of course, is that Mephibosheth receives with absolute awe the offer of the king's mercy. Hanun, the son of Nahash, on the other hand, rejects his offer of kindness.

If one of the things we learned from the account in the last chapter was the Biblical doctrine of election, we learn in this chapter of the free offer of the gospel. David's special and undeserved kindness was eagerly and humbly received by Mephibosheth. But this same kindness is despised and rejected by Hanun. The doctrines of the Scriptures at times plummet to unsearchable depths and ascend to unreachable heights. Many of them we cannot understand.
The Scriptures give us one truth: election. It is as clear as anything in God's Word. Jesus tells the Jews, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:44). Paul declares unashamedly in Romans 9 that salvation is God's to give to whom He chooses. Free will in the Scriptures does not belong to man but to God, who chose out of all mankind a particular people (Ephesians 1). He hardened Pharaoh's heart and He hardened the hearts of the Jews, for we read in John 12 that the reason the Jews didn't believe in Jesus was that God Himself had closed their eyes: “He has blinded their eyes and He hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and be converted and I heal them” (v40; see also Isaiah 6:10). God chooses whom He will. Yet, the Scriptures offer the gospel freely to all who will come. Often these two truths are hand in hand, and sometimes even in the very same verse! Jesus proclaims in John 6:37, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me.” Election. Yet, the free offer of the gospel is given in the second half of the same verse: “and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” In Romans 9, Paul discourses upon election. Yet, in Romans 10 he affirms that the Lord is abounding in riches for whoever will call upon the name of Jesus (vv12-13). John 12, which we just quoted above in speaking of election, also gives another reason why the Jews didn't believe. They refused to repent. They loved the approval of men more than the approval of God (12:43). So, why did the Jews in John 12 not believe? Scripture gives two reasons. First, because they could not believe. God had hardened their hearts. Election. Second, because they loved the approval of men more than the approval of God. They were not willing to give up their sin. They were not willing to repent. Thus, we must learn to flee the errors of both the Arminian on the one side, who holds foolishly (and unbiblically) to human free will, denying the reality of God's sovereign choice, and the hyper-Calvinist on the other side, who refuses to preach a free offer of the gospel. The Scriptures are clear. Salvation is a gift of God. It is a gift that is only given to the elect. Yet, it is at the same time, always given to everyone who comes to Christ for it (John 6:37). David extended his kindness to Mephibosheth and it is warmly received with awe and thanksgiving. But when he offers the same kindness to Hanun, it is trampled and spit upon.
I don't believe it is a great reach to say that chapters 9 and 10 are a picture of the very story of the reception and rejection of the gospel. In chapter 9 it is received by Mephibosheth. Here in chapter 10 David likewise desires to extend his kindness to Hanun. The king sends his servants to foreigners with words of comfort and a message of peace. But the messengers are despised and rejected. Indeed, the messengers are only rejected as a sign that Hanun is in fact rejecting the one who had sent them. To despise and reject the messengers and message of the king is to despise and reject the king himself. To refuse his offer of peace is to set yourself at war with him. Hanun's rejection of the messengers was thus a rejection of the king himself, and would soon lead to his own destruction. Does this sound familiar? Jesus declared in Luke 10:16, “The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me.” Christ has likewise sent His messengers throughout the world, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. To reject the message of the gospel given by His messengers is to reject Christ himself, and to reject Christ is to reject the kindness of God Almighty. Hanun rejected and humiliated David's servants. But Hanun shortly thereafter had to come face to face with David himself. A day is coming quickly when those who reject Christ and His gospel will likewise have to come face to face with the King who sent them.

While David plotted good for Hanun, he and his people accused David of wickedness and ill-doing. Even after they put his servants to shame, they themselves are the ones who go up to war against David! They wrong David and his servants, and then it seems they would rather fight against him than have to acknowledge their sin and ask forgiveness for their wrong committed. Wow.

Thus, we see that their going to war against David is not only of their own instigation, but illogical and foolish, and in the end it will be shown to be futile. Is not this a picture of man's sin and raging against God? Sin is illogical and foolish. It doesn't make any sense. An alcoholic only ruins his own life. Harboring bitterness, hatred, and unforgiveness only destroys the one who holds on to them. And sin is not only illogical and foolish in this present life but all the more in considering the life to come. Our Lord plainly asks, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?” (Matthew 16:26). This is the most down-to-earth, logical question in the world. No man would put his money into a bank if the policy of
that bank was after 20 years the deposited money would legally become the bank's property. You would think one moment's consideration would turn the tables, and cause men to come to their senses, and turn to Christ. Surely a moment's consideration would have helped Hanun. But like so many after him, he would have none of it.

Continuing in rebellion against God is not only illogical and foolish, but it is futile. We go back once again to Psalm 2: “Why are the nations in an uproar and the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!’ He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury, saying, ‘But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain’” (vv1-6).

Friends, let us learn from our passage in chapter 10 that it is futile to rebel against the Lord. It is wisdom to submit to Him. It is wisdom and life to receive His message of comfort and peace. Why choose destruction, misery and death? Why not bow the knee to Christ now and choose life? I can't speak for Hanun, but as for me, I will gladly bow my knee to Christ now, humbly and gratefully receive His gospel of comfort and life, and declare my full allegiance to Him.

We must mention one more thing from the passage. It is something I confess I'm not sure if I quite understand, but cannot be left out. The names of people in the Old Testament are often incredibly important and reflective of their character. But the significant names of those here in chapter 10 seem to make no sense. Nahash, carries the meaning of “snake,” though David had considered him his friend. Hanun, on the other hand, signifies “blessed” or “gracious,” though we have seen his life exhibited much of the opposite. What do we make of this? Perhaps we discover here the truth that things are not always as they appear, and we must leave all judgment to the Lord, “who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts” (1 Corinthians 4:5). I would rather be considered a snake by others but known to my Lord as a true friend, than be considered gracious or blessed by men, all the while being an enemy of the King of Kings. There are some who superficially appear gracious and merciful, but the last day will reveal their true heart motives, exposing them as nothing but snakes. Others are hated for Christ's sake and called all
kinds of things, but the Lord knows them by name, and though they are hated on earth because they are unashamed to declare the truth, they will be received in glory. Let us not have to hear the same word that Christ spoke to the Pharisees: “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15).
We have to deal now with the darkest moment in the life of king David. We would never have thought David capable of doing the detestable things we read of in this chapter. We would never have marked him out as one who would fall into such grievous and devastating sin. Should the eyes that were continually upon the Lord (Psalm 25:15) drift away and set their gaze upon another man's wife? Should the mouth who sung praises to his God command his servants to call a strange woman to his house? Should the hand that played so skillfully to the Lord on the harp actually lay hold of the wife of his friend? Should the pen that wrote such eloquent prose to his Savior write such abominable words to Joab? It is an awful and frightful thing that happened in 2 Samuel chapter 11. David that day lost a certain pureness of heart, and he gained that day reproach that would not be blotted out. The sober words of Proverbs prove true of king David: “The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense; he who would destroy himself does it. Wounds and disgrace he will find, and his reproach will not be blotted out” (6:5-6). The consequences were devastating, lasting, and irreparable. It is likely that his servants would never look at him the same again. Surely his wife Abigail would never look at him the same again. In one moment of temptation David lost what he would never be able to buy back with all the riches of his kingdom. And we would do well to brand this warning gravely upon our hearts. For if David was not above adultery and murder, then neither are you, and neither am I. May God use the tragedy that has already been written as to frighten thousands of others from falling into the same depths.

How did this happen? In one sense it did happen in one moment. But we know that if Christ be treasured in the heart, the heart will keep the eyes. The man who cannot keep his eyes has already fallen in his heart; the man who cannot keep himself from adultery argues a heart that has become nearly lifeless, having already given his eyes over to roam unrestrained. Colossians 1:23 warns against being shifted away from the hope of the gospel. It is only when lust has conceived that it gives birth to sin, and sin gives birth to death (James 1:15). David had not kept his heart. He had been
victorious; he had conquered foreign lands. And he had forgotten his God. We do well to take note that it is often after our greatest victories that we lie vulnerable to the most grievous sins. It is not for no reason that the Scripture tells us pride comes before a fall. Add to it the parched dryness of lethargy and boredom and you have the perfect condition for a massive forest fire at the spark of a match.

There is a carnivorous plant that attracts flies with a sweet aroma at the bottom of its shoot. The fly descends gladly down the stem only to realize after reaching the bottom that it cannot get back out. For there are thorn-like spikes that are angled just enough for the fly to descend, but make it impossible for what is inside to ever exit again. So it is with sin; and David had become its willing prey. So far gone was David already before he gave the order to call Bathsheba, that not even the answer of his servants could restrain him now. For when he asks the identity of the woman, he is told that she is not only the wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of David's mighty men; but she is also the daughter of Eliam, another of his mighty men according to 2 Samuel 23:34. Even the meaning of the names themselves should have been a restraint to David. Uriah carries the meaning, “Jehovah is Light;” Eliam bears the testimony, “God is my kinsman;” Bathsheba was named by her father, “daughter of an oath.” But sin is like a magnet that pulls stronger the closer we come to it, and the pull now is so powerful David cannot resist its lure. Sin as it pulls will not tell you about its consequences; it will not tell you it will cost you your life.

When we consider the devastating consequences of sin, we who have been in any way prevented by grace ought to praise God for our afflictions. God sends affliction in part to spare us from the sorrow and shame of such grievous sin. He saves the afflicted by their affliction. Like their Savior the saints learn obedience through that which they suffer. He sends bodily disease to keep us from spiritual disease. He scourges His children with the whip to keep them from the devastating scourging of sin. David cried out to God as he hid from Saul in the caves like a wild animal, but perhaps another few months in the caves would have kept him from the sin that so deeply stained his whole character. He prospered in the caves like perhaps he never did in the palace.

Uriah, what a man of integrity. We marvel at his words. He was a Hittite, a Canaanite; yet represented his God as perhaps none who ascended to the throne in Jerusalem. His death is sealed by David's letter. Joab's words to the messenger are very telling. If Joab gave so
many words for defending the foolishness of approaching so near to
the city wall (vv19-21), surely a mighty man in David's army would
have understood the folly of such an action. If Job knew it was folly
to approach that wall, so must have Uriah. But that didn't stop Uriah
from obeying the king's order. Uriah must have known in his heart
the foolishness of the order, and that his death was a very likely
possibility. But Uriah would rather obey his king than keep his life.
Though the order was a death sentence, if his death should please the
king, he will go gladly to that wall, and fight with all his heart, and spill
his blood on that battle field. The innocent Uriah gladly gave his life
for the sake of his king. The innocent gladly gave his blood to cover
the guilty. Behold the picture of our Savior. Behold the One who
went gladly to His death for the sake of the guilty, and to please His
King from whom He received the order. Behold, the Lamb of God,
who takes away the sin of the world. At the cross justice was satisfied,
and human love blushed with shame.

There is a word of comfort here for those who have likewise
fallen. It was through Bathsheba that Solomon is born, and his line
was one through which the Savior was born (Matthew 1:6,16). David
had indeed tasted firsthand the truth he penned, “But the
lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those
who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children” (Psalm
103:17). That God would truly forgive such sin is unfathomable. So
what word can we use to describe how He uses the broken shards of
such sin to form stained-glass windows that radiate beams of His glory
all the more? Such truths may perhaps give the ungodly more excuse
to give themselves over to their sins, but in God's children it produces
a very different reaction. Punishment gives one type of fear; the
depths of the grace of God give another. “But there is forgiveness
with You, that You may be feared” (Psalm 130:4). When the storm
came upon the boat the disciples became afraid (Mark 4:35ff). But
when Christ calmed the wind and the waves and everything became
still, another greater fear swept over them: “Who then is this, that
even the wind and the sea obey Him?” It is the depth of His grace
that teaches us to fear. As the prophet Ezekiel declares, “You will
remember your sins and cover your mouth in silent shame when I
forgive you of all that you have done. I, the Sovereign Lord, have
spoken!” (16:63, NLT).
2 Samuel 12

A loving father will discipline his children. Scripture tells us a father who hates his child will withhold the rod (Proverbs 13:24), but “those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.” Thus, the Lord sends Nathan the prophet to David.

First, we find here a worthy example in Nathan of a true friend to David and faithful servant of the Lord. He is a wonderful pattern for us. It was not an easy thing for Nathan to do what he does. A king is not like a president or prime minister. He has absolute authority; he does what he wants. In Scripture, the kings that followed David put prophets and priests in prison or worse for standing against them. It took great courage for Nathan to confront king David with his sin with such boldness; he dared to proclaim the truth in the name of the Lord, whatever the cost might be. The same spirit would later dwell in the priest Azariah, who along with another eighty priests valiantly stood up to Uzziah in the temple, boldly declaring to the king that he had overstepped his bounds. He joins the ranks of faithful men of God like Elijah, who alone took his stand on Mt. Carmel, or Micaiah son of Imlah, who was the sole voice of truth among Ahab’s gang of false prophets. The motto of the latter ought to be branded with fire on the heart of every preacher: “As the Lord lives, what my God says, that I will speak” (2 Chronicles 18:13). The apostle Paul would also follow in Nathan’s footsteps, testifying to the elders of the church at Ephesus: “You yourselves know how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable” (Acts 20:20). Paul spoke often of the difference between living to please God and men (Romans 2:29; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Galatians 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:6). Indeed, we must decide between pleasing God or man, for we certainly cannot do both.

But Nathan did more that day than prove himself a faithful servant of the Lord. He also proved himself a faithful friend to David. It's

45This is a frightful thing, for the combination of a sinful heart on the inside and little or no accountability on the outside cannot make for anything good. We do well to take note of this in application for church government. They are surely asking for reproach and sorrow who set themselves up as all authoritative kings over a church. Sinful men—even those after God’s own heart—desperately need accountability.
easy to praise and compliment our friends. But it's quite another thing to look a friend in the eyes and boldly declare as Nathan did, "You are the man!" Real love speaks the truth. Nathan cared enough about David to confront him. And it was this sharp life-giving reproof that delivered his soul.

We also see here that it is one thing to know the law, and another to keep it. It is a frightful thing to have the Law of God all but memorized, but to be knowingly living in secret sin. When Nathan comes to David, it seems the prophet is asking for a judgment from the king. David takes the story very literally and declares an actual judgement: the man must pay back to the poor man four times as much. This number is not arbitrary, but is actually exactly what God's Law requires for someone who steals or kills a neighbor's sheep (see Exodus 22:1). David knows the Law like the back of his hand. But he's living in unrepentant sin. Friends, if as you read this you know that there is secret and unrepentant sin in your life, don't wait for a Nathan to come to you. Expose your sins to God and to man—expose them and forsake them. Better is humiliation and the peace of God than to one day stand before the Lord, having lived a life of secret sin and unrepentance.

The Lord disciplines David. There are consequences for sin. But this discipline should not at all be confused with punishment. If the Lord wanted to punish David for his sin, it would not have been as nearly as light as it was. David in fact deserved a double-death penalty for what he did. We know already what punishment Moses had commanded for murder (Deuteronomy 19:11-13). And we read in the Law more than once that the man who commits adultery with a married women must also be put to death (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22).

In view of this, perhaps a number of questions arise. If the Law required the death penalty, why is David not punished accordingly? Does he get to go free simply because he's the king? Is God here shirking justice? The questions are perhaps compounded when we reflect on the events of the end of the chapter. "What," we might ask, "is the difference between the Ammonites and David? How is it that David walks free of punishment for his sin, and in turn gruesomely massacres the Ammonites for theirs?" To be sure, the Ammonites were a wicked people. These were those who made their children walk through the fire—in effect burning them alive. But is David
justified in dealing out such severe punishment to them after he himself committed sins worthy of a double-death penalty?

I cannot say whether David was too severe with the Ammonites or not. The days of kings and kingdoms were different than the days we live in today. To be an Ammonite was to be under the headship of the king of Ammon. The king was the representative of the people. For the king to be an enemy was for the people themselves to be enemies. Some take David's treatment of the Ammonites to be harsh and un-called for. I myself do not know. I am certainly no expert on the subject.

What I do know is that whether his actions were justified or not, they represent a coming reality. There is a day coming when God's wrath will be revealed. John spoke boldly of the day when the One would come who "will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12). Jesus spoke often of the coming judgment, and He spent much more time warning of hell than speaking of heaven. He spoke of unspeakable torments; of a lake of fire whose inhabitants spend forever in excruciating agony. When Paul makes known the gospel he preaches in Romans chapters 1 through 3, most of the content of his gospel is the coming wrath of God. Rabbah ("Great"), the capitol of Ammon, is a picture of this evil age, just as Babylon was in the writings of the prophets: "Flee from the midst of Babylon, and each of you save his life! Do not be destroyed in her punishment, for this is the Lord's time of vengeance; He is going to render recompense to her" (Jeremiah 51:6). The inhabitants of Ammon represent those who are living in their sin, at enmity with God. The day of God's wrath is coming to those who live in Rabbah. We are told that David put all the cities of Ammon under his instruments of torture (v31). There will be none who fall through the cracks on the great day of the wrath of the Lamb.

Why is there only fatherly discipline for David's sin, but unbearable torments for the inhabitants of Rabbah? We alluded to it in the last chapter. Paul makes it very clear in Romans 3:23-25: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed." David's sin would be dealt with in full; God would uphold His justice.
But it would fall on another. The Messiah came for this purpose. David would walk away, but his punishment would not be swept under the rug. God himself would bear David's punishment. Christ would take the sentence upon his own body on the tree. Jesus was made to endure much more than the excruciating pain of sharp instruments and the brick kiln. On the cross, the Savior endured an eternity of God's fierce torturous wrath for David's sin, and for mine, and for millions more. The difference between David and the Ammonites (and whom they represent), is not a difference in the severity of their sin, but the presence of a substitute. The question is not: Is my sin bad enough to deserve the wrath of God? The question is: Do I own a substitute who has taken away the punishment my sins deserve?

Friends, do you own Christ as your substitute? Is Jesus alone your Redeemer-King, or are you serving another lord? Are you living in the city of wrath, or have you fled to the city of refuge? If you are still living freely in your sins, you are like the Ammonites who lived in Rabbah. But there is good news: The blood that covered David can cover even you!! Christ didn't just come for David. He came to save as many as who would call upon Him. And we learn in 1 Chronicles 11:39 that among them was Zelek the Ammonite; one of David's mighty men. He had fled his own people, he had forsaken the city that had made themselves enemies of Israel, and he had joined himself to David. Like Rahab in Jericho, he had forsaken all that he might be joined to the God of Israel. Like Ruth the Moabite, he had made the resolution: “Your people shall be my people and your God, my God” (Ruth 1:16). To Zelek, it was gain to lose everything he had once possessed if it meant finding refuge in the wings of the Almighty. And so must it be for us. Friends, do whatever it takes to flee your sins and come to Christ. Do not play games with eternity. The wrath of God is no joke. Imagine how it will be one day for those in hell that spent Sunday after Sunday listening to the gospel, but never submitted to Christ! Imagine this torment added to their torments, that they knew this was coming, but they chose not to heed the warnings. This is a present reality even now for many who have perished in their sins. What they wouldn't give to be in your place. What they wouldn't trade for one more chance—but for them there are no more second chances. Their eternity is sealed. Oh friends! Be not among them. Be found covered in the blood of Christ when He comes. Be found in Him and known as His. Be found citizens
not of this world; but those who have fled to Christ, whose citizenship is with Him in heaven.
Joseph Hall, in beginning his description of the life of Absalom, writes of David: “His future pardon is promised, but not without his present suffering. In the heinous offense of Amnon, in the subsequent murder of the guilty prince, in the dissimulation by which that murder was effected, the unhappy father reads his own transgressions. The sting of sorrow, as well as of death, is sin.” In Christ Jesus our sins can indeed be forgiven, and our God can turn tragic deaths into glorious resurrections. But the consequences of David's sin are a warning for us all. David's sin is included in Scripture to comfort those who have likewise fallen, but more so to spare us from repeating the same folly and plunging ourselves into an ocean of sorrows and misery. A skimming through 2 Samuel following the account of David's grave sins in chapter 11 will attest to the truth of Hall's words. David's sin gives birth to a string of sorrows that seem to be never-ending. Is it not true that though sin promises joy and life it only leads to sin and misery? Just as with David, sin now promises Amnon fulfillment, but its whisperings are only lies from hell. In every sin there is a death. In the same way, God has been pleased to forever bind together happiness and holiness. Indeed, David's sin is played out before him in the lives of his sons. The story before us in chapter 13 is deeply laced with the memories of David's sin with Bathsheba. In both we have immorality and murder. David sinned twice; violating Bathsheba then sending her husband to be struck down in the heat of the battle. Amnon likewise sins twice, violating his sister Tamar then sending her away (contrary to the Law's command in Deuteronomy 22:28-29).

Even the very Hebrew names seem to re-tell the story of David's sin in allegorical form. “Faithful” Amnon violates the innocent. Absalom is the fruit of David's union with Maacah, “oppression.” Even Absalom's name, “my father is peace,” can be taken as ironic, reflecting upon the previous account of David and Bathsheba. Jonadab seems to reflect perfectly his name, “Jehovah is liberal,” in mirroring the lies of the enemy. Isn't it Satan's way in the heat of temptation to speak to us of God's liberality? Nothing about the

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46Joseph Hall, Scripture History, p143.
destructive and fatal consequences of our sin; only of a “grace” that gives us the freedom to indulge our sins. Satan preaches to us as Jonadab did to Amnon, that we need not bother to resist our sin because God is liberal to forgive. It is the doctrine of demons. Jonadab's continue to lurk even now in our churches, for Jude says, “certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (v4). Amnon becomes willing prey to the lies of Satan and the lusts of his flesh. His sin promises life and happiness, but in the end it only leads him to the grave.

There are also allusions in this story to other narratives in the Scriptures, pointing us both backward and forward. Tamar's garment is described literally as a varicolored tunic. She goes in before her brother but does not know that he is pretending to be what he is not. Just before he reveals his true and malicious intentions, he calls out, “Have everyone go out from me” (v9). In these details we are reminded of the story of Joseph and his brothers. Joseph also wore a multi-colored tunic. Joseph also disguised himself before his brothers, and at the moment he was to reveal himself to them he gave the same command (Genesis 45:1). Joseph's brothers violated their innocent brother. Amnon violated his innocent sister.

But we also have here a looking forward to Christ. Amnon violated his innocent sister. Christ died for his guilty sister (Song of Songs 5:1). Later, Amnon, the first-born of the king, would be hated and killed because of his guilt. But the firstborn of all creation would be hated and killed without cause.

There may be some that have sinned not only against God but, like Amnon, have committed a serious sin of immorality against a spouse. Scripture here is exhorting such a one against committing an even more grievous evil by sending that spouse away. Scripture is here pleading with those husbands or wives that have fallen into immorality—be reconciled to God and to your spouse. You may have committed a great evil. But please, don't commit an even greater one now. Humble yourself. Confess your iniquity. Let God heal your marriage. Be not twice deceived by your sin.

There may also be applications here for the ministry. David entrusted his daughter Tamar into the hands of her brother Amnon. And Christ has entrusted His church into the care of her ministers. He said to Peter, “Shepherd My sheep” (John 21:16). There are
some shepherds who feed the flock and deliver her from her enemies, even as David did from the paw of the lion and the bear. But there are others who are not afraid to eat the flock instead of shepherd them. They are wolves in shepherd's clothing. Paul warned of them in Acts 20:29-30: “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.” Like Amnon, they pretend to have good intentions, but they lie in wait to take advantage of the daughter of the King. And like Haman, they will be held to a strict account for their wicked dealings (Esther 7). Oh, let ministers be faithful in shepherding the precious flock of God, who has been entrusted into their care! It is not a light thing to meddle with the very bride of Christ.

It is instructive that Tamar appeals to her wicked brother twice. Once before he violates her, and once before he sends her away. In the same way, Christ now appeals to sinners, pleading with them. Christ in his mercy pleads with us as Tamar did with her guilty brother. It is not too late! We may have sinned in grievous and wicked ways against God—yet it is not too late: “Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” (Isaiah 55:7). But to send Him away again even as He still offers us mercy is to do greater evil than in what we did to Him at first.
Absalom had taken vengeance upon Amnon for Tamar's sake. At his command his servants had put him to death. Absalom then fled to Talmai the king of Geshur (in Aram), who was the father of Absalom's mother Maacah, a wife of David's (see 2 Samuel 3:3). Joab notices how David's heart goes out to Absalom. Perhaps hearing of how Nathan had come to David earlier, and confronted him with his adultery and murder in the form of a parable, Joab decides to do something similar. He sends a woman to the king with a story designed to move David to bring his lost son back home. The differences between Nathan's actions and Joab's were at least twofold: first, we know that it was God who sent Nathan to do what he did (12:1); and secondly, Nathan had the courage to rebuke the king himself.

The woman declares to the king that she had two sons. One had slain the other, and now her relatives were demanding the guilty to be put to death, thus leaving the woman bereaved of all her children and her husband without a name or surviving heir in Israel. Though the Law is clear, that in such a case of intentional murder, the guilty must be put to death (Exodus 21:12-14; Numbers 35:16-21; Deuteronomy 19:12-13), this verdict for her remaining son would not only bring upon her the bitter sorrows just described, but add another sorrow to them. It appears that the motive of her relatives for putting the guilty son to death was not justice, but financial gain. If her son was given the death penalty, there would no longer be an heir, and if there was no longer an heir, *they* would be the ones to inherit the woman's land and possessions. It is not an easy case for David. It seems that in verses 8 through 11, David tells the woman he will consider her difficult matter and send word to her of his decision. But she continues to press him for a favorable verdict. Finally, after much persistence, she is granted her request. David swears to the woman that her son will not be put to death.

One application for us here is perseverance in intercessory prayer. Perhaps this story is what our Lord drew upon when He told the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18. This widow continually went to an unrighteous judge to plead her case. Though this man did
not fear God, yet because of the persistence of the woman he granted her request. Our Lord continued, “now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?” (Luke 18:7). God has indeed given promises in His Word, that the earth will be full of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14). Yet, our Lord also teaches us that this promise is bound together with the prayers of His people. This is no new teaching, for the Old Testament is full of such admonitions. Isaiah bids the people of God, “You who remind the Lord, take no rest for yourselves; and give Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth” (62:6-7). Ezekiel also binds God's promises together with the pleadings of His people, for after the grande promises recorded in 36:22-36, we read in verse 37 of the means connected with those promised ends: “Thus says the Lord God, This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them: I will increase their men like a flock.” It is when the house of Israel asks for revival blessings that the Lord will send them. If God's people do not pray, there is no promise of revival in the church, nor the powerful spreading of His kingdom throughout the earth. But where the pleadings of God's people for revival ascend to His throne, He has bound himself to hear and act. Do you believe that? Do your prayers prove it? This is what the Scriptures teach. Though we may not see it with our own eyes, we may hold confidently to His Word. We can rest assured with all certainty that those prayers will be answered, though possibly in a later generation. The prayers of God's people in faith are always effectual. Though they are not always immediately answered, they have no expiration date. Joseph did not see with his own eyes the fulfillment of the promises made to his forefathers, to give Israel the land of Canaan as an inheritance. But he held firmly to the promise, believing that God would later indeed make good on His Word. In faith he instructed his brothers to carry up his bones with them, looking to the day when God would fulfill His good promises (Genesis 50:25).

As we return to our text, we read of David listening to Joab's admonition and bringing back Absalom from Aram to himself. There is much in this story of David and Absalom that reminds us of the parable Jesus tells in Luke 15 of the love of a father for his prodigal son. Jesus' parable teaches us of the love of God for the wandering and rebellious, and the standing offer of forgiveness for even the worst of those who have strayed away. But there is also a
strangeness here that we perhaps cannot quite put our finger on. Though Absalom seems to be forgiven, yet there is no true reconciliation. Even when we read of Absalom finally being brought into the king's presence, we still feel that something is not right.

We feel something is not right in the story because justice is not truly served, mercy is not truly given, and thus there is no true restoration. Our God is a just judge who will by no means leave the guilty unpunished (Nahum 1:3). Yet at the same time, with Him there is true mercy: “But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared” (Psalm 130:4). The forgiveness of Absalom leaves us feeling strange because there is neither true justice upheld nor true mercy given. This is what a cross-less and Christ-less reconciliation looks like, and its ill effects which we read about in the next chapter are the only thing it will ever produce. Without Christ, and without His cross, there is no true justice and no true mercy. This is why the God of Christ-less monotheistic religions can be neither truly just nor truly merciful. True justice demands that a sinner must pay for his sins forever in hell (one reason being that the unbeliever doesn't stop sinning after death). But Islam, for instance, minimizes God's justice by declaring there will be only a partial punishment—that hell will only be temporary. Catholic doctrine likewise minimizes God's justice and perverts Scripture with the doctrine of purgatory, doing essentially the same thing. Many simply refuse to believe that God will actually judge sin, hoping perhaps, that if they believe it hard enough, it will become a reality. True mercy, on the other hand, extends a full and free, unmerited pardon. But this the God of Islam cannot do; for in Islam mercy is only extended in a limited measure, and only to those who earn it. But mercy earned is no true mercy. Catholic doctrine again does essentially the same thing, perverting the message of the gospel with their demonic teaching of mercy plus merit (If you think this is too harsh, consider Galatians 1:6-9). Only in Christ and His cross can justice and mercy fully embrace one another in truth. Only in the cross of Christ is God's justice truly upheld. And only in the cross of Christ is His mercy truly, freely, and fully lavished on guilty criminals deserving nothing but wrath and damnation.

Thus, the half-reconciliation between David and Absalom is given in stark contrast to the full and true reconciliation we have been given in Christ. In Christ, true mercy is freely offered, for true justice has been fully satisfied. Christ has shed his blood. Atonement has been made for sinners. If you are in Christ, justice is not your accuser
anymore, but rather your defendant and advocate. Instead of pleading her case against you, she pleads on your behalf. Christ has satisfied all her requirements, having shed His precious blood in your stead. Your sin was imputed to Christ. He was not actually a sinner, but He bore His Father's wrath in full because your sin had been imputed to Him. In the same way, Christ's very righteousness is imputed to all who belong to Him. They are not actually fully righteous, just as Christ was not actually a sinner. But just as your sin was imputed to Him, so too His righteousness has been imputed to you. Mercy triumphs because justice has been satisfied.

The grace that God extends also carries with it certain signs and marks that are lacking in the account of David and Absalom. Sorrow over sin is a mark that precedes a sinner's reconciliation with God in Christ. A life of worship, awe, reverence, and humble submission to God follow after wherever true reconciliation has taken place. Without true contrition and repentance of sin there is no evidence of genuine conversion, and without the testimony of a holy life following ones profession of faith there is no evidence of true reconciliation with God. In Absalom we see neither. We see no sorrow over sin. And we know that his life certainly does not go on to be characterized by a holy and humble walk with God.

By contrast, when Christ saves a man, He always cultivates within him the sorrow that leads to repentance. Further, true saving faith always produces a life characterized by the fruit of the Spirit and a humble walk with God on the narrow path. Moreover, because justice was truly satisfied, Christ will never treat one of His prodigals who comes back to Him as David treated Absalom. In Christ there is no half mercy. There is no quasi-reconciliation. There is forgiveness so full, that we are if possible, more reconciled and at peace with God than Adam was before he disobeyed in the garden.

There is a story that might help demonstrate the kind of rich reconciliation with which we have been received in Christ. Imagine if a man had a daughter who was engaged to be married. During the engagement, it was discovered that the groom-to-be had been involving himself in a sexual relationship with another woman. The family is devastated. But in the end, though there is indeed deep hurt to be worked through, true forgiveness is extended to the offender,

47The Scriptures are clear here: Mark 1:15; Romans 6:16; 8:13; Ephesians 5:5; Hebrews 12:14; 1 John 3:9-10, etc.
and the two are married. This is not the kind of reconciliation that forgives and then sends away, as David did to Absalom. This is the kind that restores an offender to sit again with the family at birthday parties and to feast together on holidays. And this is what we have gained in Christ. Our Lord has not just forgiven us for our countless sins and then sent us away from His presence. He has brought us back to His house, to sit and feast regularly with Him at His table. This is the reconciliation that we have been given in Christ.
Absalom’s conspiracy to overthrow his father’s kingdom in chapter 15 points us both backwards and forwards in Scripture. As we look back in redemptive history, the first thing that may come to mind was the trickery of the serpent in the garden. It was Absalom’s secret whisperings to the sons of Israel that turned their hearts away from the king, and was this not just a pattern of the first deception that brought sin and death into the world? As we read of Absalom’s treachery we may think likewise of the revolt of the sons of Korah. These were not only leaders in Israel but called “men of renown” (Numbers 16:2), who rose up against Moses in the wilderness, seeking to usurp his authority. Perhaps we are similarly reminded of the conspiracy of Abimelech, another son of a faithful leader of God’s people, Gideon the judge of Israel. Pretending to have the best interests of God’s people at heart, he slaughtered all seventy of his brothers, and set himself up as king—only in the end to destroy the very people that had crowned him to reign over them.

Just as the wickedness of Absalom points back in redemptive history, so too does the faithfulness of the servants of David. We read for example in chapter 15 of David’s words to Ittai the Gittite and the faithful response he gives back to his king. David encourages him to go back to Absalom. After all, he is a foreigner (a Philistine from Gath) and had just recently been joined in allegiance to David. But with firm resolve he answers his new king: “As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely wherever my lord the king may be, whether for death or for life, there also your servant will be” (v21). These bold words from the mouth of a foreigner may remind us of another foreigner who spoke similar words before him. For when Naomi counseled Ruth the Moabitess to go back to her house and her gods, she likewise declared, “Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the Lord do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me” (Ruth 1:16-17).

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But the fateful events of Absalom’s attempt to dethrone his father in 2 Samuel 15 don’t only point backwards in redemptive history. They also point forwards. For as king David flees Jerusalem, we read that he and those with him cross over the brook Kidron before ascending to the Mount of Olives. It was these very footsteps that were traced by our Lord Jesus on the night of His sufferings. We read in John 18:1 that He crossed the ravine of Kidron with His disciples following the last supper. Scripture tells us in Matthew 26:30 that they then proceeded to the Mount of Olives, where Jesus told His disciples they would all fall away. Thus, the sufferings of David would be a forepicture of the sufferings of the Messiah. The story of Absalom’s conspiracy would point forward to the conspiracy of the Jews against their own Messiah-King.

We have seen then that there is a vital connection between the sufferings of David and those of Christ. We have shown that the events of Absalom’s conspiracy against the king were a picture of another conspiracy that would seek to usurp the very King of glory. But these events do more than just point back to the past and look forward to Christ. We are living characters in this story. Satan still does today what he did from the beginning. Just as Absalom would whisper lies into the ears of the sons of Israel, so he continues to whisper lies today into the ears of the faithful. His plan of attack remains the same. There was not a shred of truth in Absalom’s words to the Israelites. His whisperings were full of deceit, and designed to steal their hearts away from the king. Saints, what are the lies he whispers in your ears? Don’t believe him. None of his words are true; he designs only to steal your hearts away from Christ. In the hour of temptation we must, as Richard Sibbes would say, “believe Christ rather than the devil. Believe truth from truth itself. Harken not to a liar, an enemy, and a murderer.”

Sadly, Absalom is not only a picture of Satan. There are other whisperers today who would likewise seek to draw away the hearts of the saints. We noted earlier, in our reflection on chapter 13, Paul’s shocking declaration in his farewell address to the elders at Ephesus, “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert...” (Acts 20:29-31). Paul is saying that even from among the leaders of this church in Ephesus, the men that

49 The Bruised Reed, p61.
Paul had himself trained, there were in fact savage wolves who would soon show their true colors. Just like Absalom of old, they would seek to dethrone Christ himself, speaking perverse things in order to draw away the disciples (from Christ) to follow them. This is a frightful thing; and if Paul testified this would happen even among the men he himself had trained, should we think ourselves exempt? Let us give sober heed to Paul's word of exhortation then, “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock” (Acts 20:28). This admonition does not place leaders of Christ's church as above this warning, rather on the contrary this warning is given by the Holy Spirit especially to them. We must be on guard first for ourselves. We must be ever watchful over our own hearts. We must be ever suspicious of our thoughts and motives. If we think ourselves above these exhortations we are already in great danger. Experience has attested to the truth of the Scriptures, that pride comes before a fall. It has been well said, "Weakness, with watchfulness will stand, when strength with too much confidence fails.”

Ministers must also be watchful over the flock. We learn a valuable lesson here through David's complete neglect to confront the sin of Absalom in chapter 13: unconfronted sin and church discipline left unexercised will lead to absolute disaster. Iniquity must be checked; sin must be confronted.

It is one thing to follow Christ when doing so brings worldly blessing and prosperity, but we need to ask ourselves what our reaction will be when following the Lord means taking on His sufferings? It was one thing to be the servant of David when he lived in a cedar palace, it is quite another to be his servant as he crosses the Kidron. It is one thing to follow Christ into fame and recognition; it is another to follow Him into places of confusion and humiliation. When the scribe came up to Jesus and told Him that he would follow Him wherever He went, the reply to him was, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Matthew 8:20). The implication was clear: If Christ had nowhere to lay His head, then neither would He. Rightly spoken then, are Bonhoeffer's words: “the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.”

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50 Ibid, p96.
51 The Cost of Discipleship, p89.
allegiance to David (v20). If this be true then, so also must the application of this truth mentioned earlier in Bonhoeffer's book, *The Cost of Discipleship*: “The only man who has the right to say that he is justified by grace alone is the man who has left all to follow Christ.”

Have we like David's servants left all to follow Christ? Have we like Moses turned our back on all the treasures of Egypt that we might share in the sufferings of Jesus? The writer of Hebrews admonishes us, “So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come” (13:13-14). Have we borne the reproach of Christ? Have we humbly submitted to the weight of whatever crosses it has pleased Him to lay on our shoulders? May God give us great grace, that we might be found on the last day to be those whose lives declared with Ittai the Gittite: “As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely wherever my lord the king may be, whether for death or for life, there also your servant will be.”

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32Ibid, p51.
2 Samuel 16 recounts the sufferings and exile of king David under the coup of his son Absalom. This chapter describes in some detail the actions and character of a few particular individuals, and by the Spirit, we can from them glean much by way of spiritual application:

Ziba. We were earlier introduced to Ziba, the former servant of king Saul, who David reinstated to serve Mephibosheth—to cultivate his land and bring in the produce for him. Now he appears once more here in chapter 16, but Mephibosheth is not with him. According to Ziba, Mephibosheth stayed in Jerusalem during David's exile; his heart was never with David and rejoiced at the sufferings of the one who had replaced his grandfather on the throne. Ziba comes to David bearing gifts—donkey's for the king's household, two hundred loaves of bread, raisin clusters, summer fruits, and even a jug of wine. But we learn later the truth about Ziba (19:25-27). He honored David greatly with his lips; he lavished gifts upon the king in his hour of suffering. But his food was the bread of deceit; his wine was pressed with poisoned grapes. Through his sweet words and bountiful gifts, Ziba is only using David as a means for profit. In David's hour of distress Ziba sees a chance for his own advancement. Ziba is an angel on the outside, but a devil on the inside. Absalom plotted against his own father openly; Ziba does so in secret. Absalom stole his father's goods by force, Ziba does so by deceit. Like the health and wealth preachers of today, Ziba saw David's sufferings as an opportunity for gain. He is rightly named "plantation," for it was upon an earthly plantation that his heart was ever set and his eyes continually fixed. He followed in the footsteps of his father Balaam, who pretended to bless Israel, but as soon as the right price was named, gladly counseled Balak how they might be seduced away from the Lord (2 Peter 2:15). Others would come after him. Gehazi would later run after Namaan with a heart full of greed and lips of deceit, to sell his soul for a small earthly treasure. Judas would likewise be forever remembered as the one who, while pretending loyal friendship, saw the sufferings of the king of glory as a means to gain a few pieces of silver. Oh Ziba, have you sold your very soul for a few acres of land? Even had you gained the whole
world through your deceit, would you do so at the cost of your soul? I wish you could tell us now, Ziba, was it really worth it? For if you left this world unrepentant, we tremble to meditate upon where you have spent only the first few thousand years of eternity. How I wish you could come back and warn those who are now following in your steps, to forsake their sins and run to Christ. May we take great warning and learn from those who have gone before us.

Shimei. Ziba had deceived David, but Shimei openly curses him. Ziba saw David's sufferings as a means for his own gain; Shimei saw the sufferings of the king as an opportunity to revel in his hatred for him. Perhaps half-stunned himself that the king refuses to put him to death on the spot, Shimei gains all the greater confidence and boldness in attacking king David, his servants, and his family. He is shameless. The more patient David is, the more angry Shimei seems to become. The kindness of God leads some to repentance, but it leads others to hatred. We don't know whether Shimei knew about the incident with Bathsheba; whether he had any true grounds for his accusations. Surely his claims are at least completely groundless concerning David's rise to the throne. But it seems very probable that Shimei hated king David entirely without cause. Certainly it was so with our Lord; and continues to be so. Why do some today rage in their hatred against Christ, as the Jews did earlier, and as Shimei groundlessly rages here in hatred for David? With the breath that God himself gives them they curse God. They shake their fists at Him using the hands that He himself created. Like a rabid dog they attack their Master for no reason whatsoever. Even as the food comes to them daily they growl and bite the very hand that provides all their needs. I suppose they hate Him simply for who He is. They hate the Light because they love the darkness (John 3:19). Men hate and rage against Christ for the same reason the Jews did, because He testifies to the truth (John 8:40, 44). And it is the truth itself that they hate. The Jews thought they had defeated Christ when they were able to nail Him to the cross. They didn't realize that no one took His life; He gave it up of His own accord. While they raged against Him, He loved them, prayed and wept for them. In love He gave up His life, as they in hatred took it. And even now, as modern Shimei's curse and rage against God, He continues not only to give them breath and provide for their needs, but to hold out the precious gift of salvation. Oh, may some come to their senses, repent of their raging, and throw themselves into the arms of the Savior.


**Hushai.** Ziba pretended to be a friend to David, while truly a foe. Hushai pretends to be a foe to David, while truly his friend. Hushai would have rather suffered with David in the open wilderness outside Jerusalem, but David sends him back to the palace. He is like the former demoniac of Gerasene, who wanted to follow the Lord with the twelve, but was told by Christ that he would be more effective as His witness back in his own hometown (Mark 5:19). King David told faithful Hushai to go back to the palace and serve him there. His special calling is incredibly important; for it would be Hushai's counsel that would bring king David back to Jerusalem, as we will see. Though he would serve David from the palace, it was no easy calling that was given to him. Hushai's position is extremely dangerous. He would surely have paid with his life had Absalom found out his true intentions. Indeed, it was much more dangerous for Hushai in the king's house than outside of it.

We learn from Hushai that there are some among Christ's followers who can be of best use for Him in the palace. Daniel is another example. Daniel would have been foolish to leave his post of serving and converting the kings of the entire known world for any other work. Through Daniel's time in the palace the gospel was spread to the ends of the earth more powerfully and exponentially than ever it was before (see Daniel 4:1-3ff; 6:25-27). Daniel made an impact on eternity like perhaps no other Old Testament saint. But he was not a pastor or a preacher; he was a government official. Full time Christian ministry is not the only place for a man of God to make an incredible impact for the kingdom of Christ. Our Lord Jesus is calling some to use the position He has already placed them in for His kingdom and glory. Our world needs William Wilberforce's to stay in politics; we need Keith Green's to use their incredible gifts in music for Christ; we need Eric Little's to represent their Master and use the earthly platforms God has given them to preach Christ to the world. Only one was sent back to the king's house perhaps to instruct us that the call to serve Christ in the palace is not the call that the Lord gives to many. Sometimes Christ calls us to walk away from the palace, as it was with Moses. But whether staying in the palace or forsaking it, like Hushai before David, we need to look to Christ and follow only where He leads us, wherever it might be, and whatever the cost.
Ahithophel. How can a man embody both the essence of wisdom and folly at the same time? How can a man who possesses such wisdom fall prey to the kind of folly we see in chapter 17? Because of the decisions made in the last few days of his life, Ahithophel the wise will now be forever remembered as Ahithophel the foolish. The wisdom he had for so many years used for the kingdom of God, he now uses against His anointed in joining himself with Absalom. In one day he threw away an entire life of faithful service. Having lived until probable old age so many years as a servant of Christ, he forfeits his name and reputation, his labor, and his reward, just days before stepping into eternity. Ahithophel was a counselor of unworldly wisdom for great kings of the earth, but who will counsel him? His wisdom taught princes in the royal palace, but he could not teach himself. Let his folly forever be branded upon our memories. Let us never forget what true wisdom really is: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10). In departing from the fear of the Lord, Ahithophel's wisdom is outmatched by the simple faith of an unnamed and most likely uneducated maidservant who was wise enough to fear the Lord (v17). Though in this upside-down world, men may praise some who are alleged to possess brilliance of thought and surpassing intellect, eternity will expose their pomp as nothing but folly, while the wisdom of little girls such as this one will shine forever like the stars of the heavens. This greatly delighted our Lord Jesus, who prayed thus to the Father: “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight” (Matthew 11:25-26). To be wise is to fear Christ; to be wise is to live for the kingdom of God; to be wise is to invest in eternity and lay up treasures in heaven. Any so-called wisdom that strays from the narrow path that leads to life is utter folly to those whose eyes have seen the King. Let those who think themselves wiser than God continue to write books and give lectures on the kind of critical scholarship that calls His own Word into question. Let them form their associations, as the Jesus Seminar has, proudly declaring to the world that according to their superior
expertise, the Bible cannot be trusted as the holy and inerrant Word of God. In eternity they will come bowing down before uneducated maidservants, poor slum kids in India, the mentally impaired, and the not yet poddy-trained children of the world who have trusted in Christ, declaring that these were the ones who possessed true wisdom, and themselves only folly (Isaiah 45:23-24; 60:14). And have no doubt about it, they will also bow their knee to Christ, professing Him Lord of all (Philippians 2:10), as we have mentioned before, whether voluntarily or by force. Even if voluntarily, their eternal destiny has already been sealed; the door of the ark has been closed, and the opportunity to repent is past. How men continue to live in such folly, never fearing the day they will have to stand before the Lion of Judah is beyond me. Let he who has an ear to hear, take solemn note of Ahithophel's life, and save himself from incurring the same fate.

David crosses the Jordan having been warned by his faithful friend Hushai. It begins to become apparent that there are only two groups of people: those who are with Absalom, and those who are with David. There are only two sources of allegiance; there is no middle ground. To not be with David was to side with Absalom; to not side with Absalom was to make a bold declaration that your allegiance belonged to David. To not take a stand with David was to automatically side with Absalom. So too, our Lord has said, “He who is not with Me is against Me” (Luke 11:23). Friends, might I ask you to whom your allegiance belongs? Is your allegiance with Christ? Just as it was here, there is no middle ground for us. Either our allegiance is to Christ or it is elsewhere. Have you left all to follow Christ? Do you hate all in comparison with Him? Does He truly have your full and unreserved allegiance? One evidence the Scriptures give of possessing genuine saving faith is sharing in the sufferings of Christ. It was those who shared in David's sufferings that proved themselves to be his true servants. So too, it is those who share now in Christ's sufferings that prove themselves to be truly His. Romans 8:16-17 says, “The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.” It is only those who suffer together with Him that will be glorified together with Him. Does our life prove that our allegiance truly belongs to Christ?
The followers of David are different than we might expect. And his enemies are different than we would have thought. Absalom, his own son, leads the army forward to pursue and kill his own father. The author of 2 Samuel goes to some lengths to make us understand that it is none other than the son of David's sister, Amasa, that is heading the attack against his own uncle (see 1 Chronicles 2:16-17). It is David's own family that seeks to drive him away. And in the wilderness it is strangers and foreigners who come to his aid. Shobi is the son of the late king of Ammon in Rabbah—the city that David had destroyed just a few chapters before (12:26ff). Machir had been the one who had taken care of Mephibosheth (9:4), which may have meant there was a connection between his family and the house of Saul. It is these men, along with Barzillai the Gileadite, who bring to David provisions of food and necessities for lodging.

Likewise it is not always those we expect that prove themselves servants of Christ. Just as David's own family members rejected him, Jesus' own kinsmen rejected their Messiah, in like manner driving Him away from their nation. Generally speaking, it has not been the Jews who have embraced Christ, but the Gentiles that have received the Jewish Messiah with open arms. Or, at times, it is sadly church-goers, attending services religiously, yet never truly embracing Christ; while others from atheistic or unitarian families gladly receive Him upon hearing the message of the gospel. We must not be those who presume that we are His servants simply because we attend church or have been baptized; we must all receive the baptism of the heart—by the Spirit—if we are to belong to Him. We must be born again. There's a story told of an unconverted man who at times would attend a church. One day he invited the pastor over to his house. There was something hanging on the wall in a frame, and the pastor asked what it was. So the man said, “Oh, that is my baptismal certificate.” The pastor said, “Ah, your baptismal certificate. Very good! Tell me, when are you going to cash it in?” When are you going to cash it in? When will you truly embrace the Savior and the incredible gift that has been offered to you in Christ? As Scripture says: “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you” (James 4:8-10).
Here we have the outworking of what we had read in the last chapter: “For the Lord had ordained to thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the Lord might bring calamity on Absalom” (17:14). Absalom had rebelled against his father and attempted to steal his throne; but his kingdom is put down faster than it had risen up. It doesn't seem that he reigns even a few days before his glory is turned to shame. Should not his monument be a solemn warning to us? He seemed to have all of Israel on his side, but David had the Lord on his side. Can a few kittens stand their ground against a roaring lion? Will men triumph over the Almighty? “For the Lord of hosts will have a day of reckoning against everyone who is proud and lofty and against everyone who is lifted up, that he may be abased...The pride of man will be humbled and the loftiness of men will be abased; and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day” (Isaiah 2:12, 17).

Absalom dies an excruciating and shameful death. He is left hanging by his head from a great oak in the forest for some time; evidently with such force that his neck had jammed into the tree branches. As he dangled there alone, no doubt he knew what was coming, yet he was forced to wait, brooding over what death would feel like. Each passing minute must have felt like an eternity. Finally Joab comes and thrusts three spears through his heart. But death still lingers in him; so his armor bearers finally finish the job. Perhaps the most tragic and sober thought of all though, is that Absalom had just begun his torments. Eternity is indeed a long time.

Absalom had constructed a grande monument for himself—unparalleled in honor and glory. From the place it is mentioned in the text (v18), it seems that Absalom planned for this monument to serve as his future burial place. “The proud and ambitious Absalom,” notes Joseph Hall, “thought it would be injustice to mankind if he suffered the memory of his grandeur to perish.” But instead of at the site of his magnificent epitaph, Absalom's body is cast into an unnamed pit in the wilderness, not only far from Jerusalem, but outside the bounds of the promised land. Further, Absalom's

53Hall, Scripture History, p151.
body is buried under a heap of stones, as the body of Achan, the
troubler of Israel, had been years earlier in the days of Joshua. Yes,
Absalom would be remembered; but not as he had hoped. Absalom’s painful and shameful end is a reminder for us of the fate
of all who would continue in rebellion against Christ. And their end
is also no less certain. That Christ will not indeed reign in the end
over all for eternity is not one possible option among many. This is
not a picture of what may happen to those who reject Christ; it is a
picture of what certainly will. And whether our rebellion is overt (as
with Absalom) or hidden in our hearts (as with Ziba), the soldier
rightly said to Joab, “there is nothing hidden from the king” (v13).
Nothing is hidden from Christ.

This chapter points us to the coming judgement; the day when the
wicked will be recompensed for their evil deeds, as Absalom was.
But it is also the day that Christ’s servants will be rewarded for their
labors of love, and works of faith done in Christ’s name. The writer
of Hebrews reminds us that our God “is a rewarer of those who
seek Him” (11:6). Jesus takes careful note not just of deeds done in
wickedness, but those done in faithfulness. And the reward of the
righteous is no less certain than the punishment of the wicked. Joab
told Ahimaaz that there would be no reward for his news; and he told
him rightly. David gives no rewards in this chapter. But in Christ,
nothing done in love for His sake will be lost. Moses and Nehemiah
were among those who had their faces set like flint upon the promise
that their labors of love would neither be in vain nor go unrewarded
(Nehemiah 5:19; Hebrews 11:26). Along with David himself they
clung tightly to the promise, “Surely there is a reward for the
righteous” (Psalm 58:11). I will quote here at length a section from
the book, His Precious Bride:

I know it’s not necessarily popular to speak of rewards in glory
because of fears of what that doctrine could lead to. But Jesus is
not ashamed to speak this way. He wants us to know that keeping
ourselves pure for Him matters. That here we will know Him in
increasing levels of intimacy and it will multiply our joy forever
with Him at our union together. “And whoever in the name of a
disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water
to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward” (Matthew
10:42). “Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you,
and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the
Son of Man. Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your
reward is great in heaven” (Lk.22-23). The beloved apostle in the context of his love-sufferings for his Savior says, “For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day” (2Tim.1:12). Every little penny we store up for Him will return a thousand fold. Nothing you suffer or endure for Jesus’ sake will ever be lost. He has a book, remember: “Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heart it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name” (Mal.3:16). The Scriptures teach us that the way we live our lives here will impact the level of joy we can experience with Jesus now and forever. In glory every cup will be full and running over. . .but how we long and fight here for purity as His bride will determine just how big that cup will be. Will it be a tea cup? A bucket perhaps? Or will it be a swimming pool? Or an ocean?. . .Or a galaxy? “I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown” (Rev.3:11).

I believe there is one more application from the text. We have mentioned the death of Absalom. There is something in us that rejoices as we read of it. It is sobering, but it is also satisfying, isn’t it, that justice was done? We know that the righteous should be rewarded, and the wicked should be punished, and so we are glad when we read that justice was served. Yes, God is a God of justice. He loves justice, and He will judge justly. Absalom died for his own wickedness. He got what was coming to him. We even perhaps wonder why David is so deeply stirred over his son—we (at least I)–want to tell David to get over it, that his son got exactly what he deserved. But what we need to remember, is that every single one of us is as guilty before God as Absalom. You and I are just like him. Just like Absalom we stand before God as guilty criminals with blood on our hands. We have rebelled against Him and have hated and broken His law times without number. We stand before a God who loves justice and will do justly, and justice in our case demands that we be thrown into hell forever. Perhaps it is a shock to some of us to realize that this is exactly what God could have done. Indeed, the Father did not have to send His Son. But Jesus came, the Lamb of God. He came for guilty rebels like Absalom; like you and me.

54Pp95-96.
Behold the One who gave His life and shed His blood for those who hated Him, mocked Him, spit up Him and crucified Him. So that worthless rebel criminals like Absalom might go free, it was Christ who was hung on a tree, in our stead. It was Christ who was pierced through, and made to endure torment beyond what we have the ability to grasp. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’—in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” (Galatians 3:13-14).

Alas! and did my Saviour bleed,
And did my Sovereign die!
Would he devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I!

Was it for crimes that I had done
He groaned upon the tree!
Amazing pity! grace unknown!
And love beyond degree!

Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut his glories in,
When Christ, the mighty Maker, died
For man the creature's sin.

Thus might I hide my blushing face
While his dear cross appears;
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness,
And melt mine eyes in tears.

But drops of grief can ne'er repay
The debt of love I owe;
Here, Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis all that I can do.
I am reminded as I read through chapter 19 of my desperate need of the illumination of the Holy Spirit to help me understand the sacred text before us. There are things here that are not easy to understand. It is an important reminder to us, that we need to study the Word of God on our knees. I am grateful for the constant reminder of my Old Testament professor at seminary, Dr. Jay Sklar, who would remind us every class, “Start with the Bible, not with the commentary.”

I believe this chapter first teaches us the Biblical truth that we should never hesitate to run back to Christ after we have stumbled into sin. Though it is not clear who were the first ones to receive David back to Jerusalem (comparing vv11-12 and vv41-43), one thing is apparent: Both Israel in the north and Judah in the south had been guilty of joining together with Absalom against David, and they felt great shame about it (v10,12). It was this shame that caused them to hesitate to bring David back. It was the same kind of shame that led our first parents, after they had sinned in the garden, to hide from the presence of the Lord, instead of running to Him. It was because of this shame for sin and betrayal that Joseph's brothers were “dismayed at his presence” after he revealed himself to them in Egypt. Can anyone imagine the shame that Peter must have felt when he heard the crow of the rooster, and realizing what he had just done, for the searching eyes of his Savior to have met his (Luke 22:60-61)? There is a shame in sin that makes us want to run away from God instead of run to Him. So David doesn't wait for the offenders to come back to him to assure them of his forgiveness. As Joseph comforted and spoke tender words to his brothers so many years before, David sends words of reassurance and pardon to the ones who had risen up against him. Not only does he deal in mercy with those who had made themselves his enemies, but he is the one to first come to them, to assure them of his entire forgiveness. He wants them to know that they don't have to be afraid, that he will receive them back again. It was these words that turned the hearts of the men of Judah back to him (v14).
And it is these words of assurance that turn our hearts back to Christ. Like Israel and Judah, we are guilty of great sin before our God. We have disobeyed Him, we have rebelled against Him, and naturally we don't want to go back. We know that He is the great Judge and we are guilty. We are ashamed of ourselves and we hesitate to return to Him. But Christ has not waited for us to go back to Him. He has in His Word given us all the assurance of heaven. We don't have to fear; He is waiting for us with open arms. Just as God was plotting good for Joseph's brothers even as they plotted evil against him (Genesis 45:7), so too though we have sinned against God, His heart is full of mercy towards us. As David's heart went out to the rebellious Absalom, so too Christ's heart goes out to guilty sinners. He longs for the return of His prodigal sons. Through His Word He is crying out to you and I in a thousand ways: “I don't care what you've done. I don't care who you've become. Just come home.”

Your God has given you every assurance that you don't have to be afraid to go back to Him: “I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud and your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you” (Isaiah 44:22). You may be a prodigal who has lived your whole life in rebellion. His heart breaks for you and His arms are open wide for you; O come home! “The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come'” (Revelation 22:17). You may be a believer struggling with shame for past sin. He says to you: “For this is like the days of Noah to Me, when I swore that the waters of Noah would not flood the earth again; so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you nor will I rebuke you. For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken” (Isaiah 54:9-10). Christ has died not only for your sins' punishment, but also for its shame. Don't be afraid to go back to Him. His love is fresh (Revelation 1:5), and His arms are open.

We now turn to address our attention on a few more characters in our present chapter:

Shimei. There is indeed another beautiful picture of the gospel here. As we are like Israel and Judah, so we are very much like Shimei. We were once enemies (see 16:5-14), but in Christ, we have now been reconciled and wholly forgiven.

There is a beautiful story from the life of Adoniram Judson that reminds me of David's kind dealings with Shimei. He endured

55 Taken from a sermon by Paul Washer, a brother I've learned and benefited much from.
incredible difficulty as the first missionary to Burma, but all the more when war broke out between England and his new country. He was assumed to be a spy and promptly put in prison; his wife was left to look after the young children under brutal conditions. She would go to the house of a certain Burmese politician regularly to plead the cause of her husband. He treated her with horrid cruelty, once even taking away the umbrella that guarded her from the scorching heat. Fast forward to the end of the war. After the terms of peace were settled, there was a celebration on an English ship for the English and Burmese generals and leaders. Because Adoniram assisted with translation in the war, he was there with his wife; and so was this man. They sat at the same table. Adoniram’s wife in passing told an English general about this man and what he had done to them. The man became afraid as he noticed the look of anger that came over the face of the English general as she spoke to him about what this man had done to them. He knew she was speaking about him. But when she noticed he was becoming concerned, she leaned over and warmly reassured him in Burmese, “Don’t be afraid. They won’t hurt you.”

This is in effect what David says to Shimei (v23), and it is the message of the gospel. We have wronged Him; we have cursed Him; we have hated, mistreated, and rebelled against Him. But when we come back to Christ confessing our transgressions, He tells us not to fear, swearing to us that we will not be put to death for our sins. It was for this very reason that Christ himself was put to death in our stead. But we also need to mention here that if one has never come to the point of realizing that he has offended God the same way that Shimei had offended king David, he needs to seriously question the reality of his Christian profession. For there can be no true healing where there has first been no cutting of the heart by the Spirit.

Mephibosheth. If Shimei is a picture for us of justification, then Mephibosheth is one of regeneration. Just as the saints are forgiven criminal-sinners like Shimei, so too they are new creatures like Mephibosheth. It seems that almost everything we see evidenced in Mephibosheth in verses 24 through 30 echoes one of the beatitudes of Matthew 5:3-12. He had mourned the exile of the king (v24); he shows himself to be poor in spirit (v28), incredibly meek (v27,28), persecuted (v27), as well as pure in heart and merciful towards the man that had deceived him, slandered him to the king, and stole half of his property (v30). Thus, Mephibosheth evidences the attributes
of one who has truly been born of the Spirit, a new creature in Christ. Have we tasted this new birth firsthand?

**Barzillai.** Those who belong to Christ are forgiven criminals as Shimei, they are regenerated new creatures as Mephibosheth, and they also have a profession that is proven by their works, as with Barzillai. It was this man, among others, who had given food and lodging to David and his men in the wilderness. His loyalty to David was not shown with his words but by his actions. The genuineness of his faith was proven not by his lips but his life. Though believers are never justified by their works, they surely will not be saved without them. We have this truth clearly in James, that faith with no fruit is no true faith at all (2:14-26). James had learned from our Lord Jesus himself that the good tree always produces good fruit. John the Baptist had taught the same truth in his preaching: “The axe is already laid a the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Matthew 3:10). The tender apostle John tells us likewise in Revelation that it will be according to our deeds that we are judged on the last day (Revelation 20:12). As Thomas Watson has said, “If we do not imitate His life, we cannot be saved by His death.” Martin Lloyd-Jones put it well, “the opposite to trusting to your works is not to do nothing, it is to do everything but not to put your trust in any of it.” The ones who will be condemned are those who think their lives are full of good deeds, and think those good deeds will save them (Matthew 7:21-23). They are mistaken on both accounts. On the other hand, those who belong to Christ put no trust in their works, yet their lives are full of them (Matthew 25:31-46). Barzillai in his kindness to David thus proves the reality of his faith. As our Lord has said, “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me” (John 14:21).

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56 From his *Beatitudes*, p54.
57 *Spiritual Depression*, p211.
The treacherous dealings of Israel towards their king should strike us as strange. We recall from the days of Samuel and the judges how badly the people longed for a king to rule over them. It is as if they thought that having a king would make them happy. Though David is certainly not without his faults, he is a man after God's own heart; though he stumbles, he does seek to lead the people in righteousness. One would think that the people would be more than happy with David's rule over them, especially having been made to first experience the bloody and abhorrent reign of Saul. Indeed, for generations to come, God's people would look back on the rule of David (and Solomon) as the epitome of the glory days of Israel. But a brief skimming over 2 Samuel will remind us quickly that the best glory days on earth are still wracked with the curse of the fall. We are keenly reminded that this world, even in its sweetest days of glory, will never be our home.

But we also have here a word of solemn warning. Israel's rebellion now twice in a row against their king means to teach us more than just about sin in general. We mentioned in chapter 15 the revolt of Korah in the wilderness during the days of Moses. But Scripture instructs us that this particular revolt against God's appointed authority had been just one symptom of a much bigger problem. Paul tells us very soberly of these things in 1 Corinthians 10: “For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness” (vv1-5; see also Hebrews 3:12-19). In other words, most of those in that first generation that Moses led out of Egypt were not saved. They were part of what we call the visible church. They were Old Testament church-goers, so to speak. But most of them did not truly know the Lord. And we are beginning to see many of the same characteristics in the people over whom David ruled. The sons of Israel were the people of God; the
descendants of Abraham. But their back-to-back revolts against king David make us wonder if these are just symptoms of a much bigger problem. Paul, quoting Isaiah, makes clear that on the whole this was indeed the case: “Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved” (Romans 9:27).

The application for us is not just to judge or be grieved over the nation of Israel. It’s for us to examine our own hearts. Yes, there were only a few truly saved among the Old Testament church. But could it also be that there will only be relatively few saved among the New Testament church? Jesus declares that it will be “many” on the day of judgement who call Him by the name of “Lord,” who never truly knew Him (Matthew 7:22). Again our Lord pleaded with the church-goers of His day in Luke 13:24, “Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.” That is, many will seek to enter paradise who will be turned away because they never knew the Lord. The sobering thing is that these are not Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, or Atheists. Rather, they are professing Christians who went to church and sung songs about Jesus, but never truly knew Him.

We have read that some of the king's enemies were outwardly opposed to David, such as Absalom and Sheba. But we have also seen than some are secret enemies. Ziba pretended to be the friend of David. Likewise, even Joab, the commander of David's army, is now showing more and more of his true colors. When accused by the woman from Abel of swallowing up the inheritance of the Lord (the city they were besieging), his reply is, “Far be it, far be it from me that I should swallow up or destroy!” But righteousness is vindicated by her deeds; and Joab's actions speak louder than his words. He seems to fight for David outwardly, but his life is beginning to show itself to be characterized by disobedience, murder, and deceit, more than humble obedience to his king. In like manner, some of those who will be cast away from the presence of the Lord will include even leaders in the church and missionaries. We know this because in our passage in Matthew 7, the ones that the Lord turns away are those who apparently had healed others miraculously in Jesus' name and cast out demons. Friends, let us make our calling and election sure. Let us not be those who eat and drink in His presence and hear His teaching but never submit our lives to Him.
It is worthy of note that while many within the people of God rebelled against kind David, some of his most faithful followers were foreigner Gentiles. We read earlier about faithful Ittai the Gittite in chapter 15, but we didn't touch upon the Cherethites and Pelethites who were mentioned along with him there. They are mentioned again here in our present chapter, in verse 7. These are two Gentile nations who had given their allegiance to David. The Cherethites are Cretans who had migrated to Palestine; the Pelethites are some who had lived in the territory of (and were perhaps related to) the Philistines. These are those who go up with Joab's men to put down the revolt led by Sheba. Thus, if Israel will rebel against their king and reject the anointed son of Jesse, the Lord will draw warriors for David and worshippers for Himself even from among Gentile dogs. How amazing is it that today our churches are filled not with Israelites, but Gentiles! How incredible that it is now the Gentiles who are ministering to the Lord as priests and Levites! Yet this was foretold long ago by Scripture. Isaiah looked forward to us and prophesied of the day when Gentiles would be sending out missionaries to other Gentiles (Isaiah 66:18-21).

But God is not done with the Jews. We are reminded here, that the very purpose of the Cherethites and Pelethites was to put down Sheba's revolt in northern Israel, and thus to reinstate David as king over Israel. The Gentiles were joined to David while his own people rejected him; but it was only that David might reign again over Israel. It was through their faithful labor on the battlefield that all Israel would be brought back to their king. We see this story played-out all over the Scriptures. Consider the story of Joseph. His own kinsmen, Israel, rejected him, which led to his being raised up as ruler over a foreign people. Joseph saves this foreign people from famine and death, but this was in order that his own brothers, the sons of Israel, might later also be gathered to him and delivered from the famine. The same picture is given in Ruth. Naomi and her husband leave the promised land; and through this departure Ruth the foreigner joins herself to the people of God. Later in the story we read how Ruth the Gentile foreigner likewise then becomes a blessing to Naomi the Jew. It is the same story in Daniel and Israel's exile from their land under Babylonian reign. Because of continual disobedience, the Jews are exiled from their land, the land of Canaan, and taken away in captivity to Babylon. But it is through these events, and through Daniel's ministry there, that Gentile kings are then brought to their
knees before the Messiah, in such a way that the gospel is spread forth among the nations in ways unparalleled previously in redemptive history.\footnote{See Daniel 4:1-3, 34-37; 6:25-28; Ezra 1:1-4; 6:1-12.} And it is through this salvation among the Gentiles that the Jews again receive the blessing, for it is Gentile kings that send them back to their land to rebuild the temple of the Lord. This is none other than the truth of Romans 11. The Jews have presently rejected their Messiah, the Lord Jesus. But the day is approaching (and we should hasten its coming through prayer and preaching), when they will be stirred up through the work of God among the Gentiles and return to the Savior in massive numbers, just as the sons of Israel return again to David here in our passage in chapter 20.\footnote{See especially Romans 11:12, 15, and 26. For further study, refer especially to Iain Murray’s discussion of Romans 11 in his book, The Puritan Hope.}

Sheba had fled to a city in the extreme north of Palestine called Abel Beth-maacah, which can be translated either as “meadow of the house of maacah (oppression),” or, “transitoriness of the house of oppression.” The latter is a fitting name for Sheba and his campaign. Just like Absalom’s previous revolt, his rebellion is put down just as quickly as it had risen up. Joab and the men besiege the city in order to get to Sheba. We mentioned above the wise woman from the city, who goes out to speak with Joab. Whether the leaders of the city had previously known about Sheba and were intentionally protecting him, or whether there was some ignorance about the matter is not entirely clear from the text, though the former might make more sense. One thing is clear though. The people of the city had an important decision to make. To embrace Sheba as a friend meant to make themselves enemies of the king. Having spoken with Joab, the woman proceeds to reason with the people of the city. Sheba’s head is promptly sent over the wall, and the city is spared.

What application is there here for us? We are told by Scripture that we cannot be friends with both God and the world. We cannot be on good terms with both Christ and our sin. To embrace our sin as a friend is to make ourselves enemies of God. As the gentle apostle John testifies, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth” (1 John 1:6). And again a few verses later “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the
Father is not in him.” (1 John 1:15). It is the one who declares a holy war upon sin that proves himself a true child of God (Romans 8:13).

Finally, we have in this chapter by way of example a teaching on the importance of church discipline. David knew that to let Sheba go would have hazardous effects on the kingdom. His revolt had to be stopped; his sin had to be dealt with. In the Old Testament, the various sins and offenses that were punished with the death penalty (such as idolatry and sexual immorality), in the New Testament are to be dealt with under church discipline. There is a difference in the specific punishment, but the principle remains the same. In the Old Testament, punishment for certain sins resulted in stoning. In the New Testament, the same sins will result in excommunication (if there is continued unrepentance of the individual). Church discipline is one of the three required marks of the church according to the Reformers. They taught that a true church was one in which the Word was rightly preached, the sacraments were properly administered, and church discipline was appropriately exercised. Proper discipline in the church is commanded by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 18:15-20. Church discipline vindicates the glory of Christ and His name among outsiders, purifies His church, acts as a warning for all, and is ultimately for the good also of the offender. May God give the leaders of His church grace and courage to be those who, like the Gentile warriors in David's army, are zealous for the purity of the bride of Christ.

As we begin our reflection on chapter 21, it seems good to include a brief word on the importance of study for present and future ministers and preachers of the gospel. Biblical scholars can sometimes fall prey to the tragedy of spending most of their time studying almost everything but the Bible. “In our day,” lamented Arthur Pink, “even students of theology leave those fruitful fields [of the Scriptures] to glean elsewhere. Many of them are wasting their time reading through almost countless volumes treating of the authorship of the Pentateuch, instead of pouring over the sacred pages themselves. They prefer to wade through the polluted streams which the higher critics have dug, rather than drink from the pure river of the Water of Life.”

Scripture declares that God's Word itself is the only thing given to teach for the preacher of the gospel; and the Lord has bound Himself in solemn promises only to those preachers who give due time to studying His sacred text. The Lord laments through the prophet Jeremiah, “But if they had stood in My council, then they would have announced My words to My people, and would have turned them back from their evil way and from the evil of their deeds” (23:22). We have been given only one weapon, the holy Word of God. It is His Word alone that is like a double-edged sword. It is the studying of God's Word, along with prayer, that should take up nearly all the time of the faithful minister of the gospel (Acts 6:4); for every verse contains truth profitable for salvation (2 Timothy 3:16). “There is such a thing as maintaining a transient popularity,” said A.W. Alexander, “and having a little usefulness, without any deep study; but this fire of straw soon burns out, this cistern soon fails. The preacher who is constantly pouring out, and seldom pouring in, can pour but a little while. The grand point is this: there must be perpetual acquisition. This is the secret of preaching.” He goes on to say, “To declare God's truth so as to save souls, is a business which angels might covet: acquire the habit of regarding your work in this light.”

Now let's get to the text.

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61 Pink, Gleanings from Exodus, p186.

62 From The Banner of Truth Magazine V1, pp242-3, 245.
We read that, “David sought the presence of the Lord” (v1). And so ought we to do, especially in times of spiritual famine or discipline from God. But if this was an automatic response, it took David years of training to get there. The expert soldier trains for years so that when he is in the heat of battle he might respond as he ought. Just as with study, prayer is hard work. Let us train ourselves, disciplining ourselves for the purpose of godliness (1 Timothy 4:7). Hebrews 12 instructs us as believers in times of discipline to neither “regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,” nor to “faint when you are reproved by Him” (v5). We are not to regard it lightly; we are not to leave His fatherly discipline unconsidered; we are to seek His face, to inquire of Him if there be any hidden sin in us, to go to Him as David did to the Lord. But on the other hand, as believers we are never to faint under the hand of God's discipline; we are not to be discouraged, nor to despair, “For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives” (Hebrews 12:6). Had David never sought the Lord, he perhaps would never have had an answer from God. It is when the king seeks the presence of the Lord that the reason for the famine is revealed is to him: “It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he put the Gibeonites to death” (v1).

An in-depth study of the Gibeonites through the Scriptures is what we need to understand more fully the implications of the chapter before us. It may be recalled that they are the ones who came craftily to Israel after Jericho and Ai had been conquered in Joshua chapter nine. They claimed to come from a land very far away; they had heard God was with Israel, and they requested of the sons of Israel to enter into a covenant with them. Israel did not consult the Lord in prayer about the matter; he who hastens his steps errors; and thus Israel bound themselves in covenant to the Gibeonites, only to find out a few days later that they actually lived within the land God had given to Israel.

The Gibeonites are referred to here as Amorites (v2), but in Joshua they are twice called Hivites (9:7; 11:19). Whether they are Amorites or Hivites is not extremely important; perhaps during the four hundred years or so that had passed since the events in Joshua they were a mix of both. The significant thing though, is that God had commanded Israel to destroy these people, not only because He promised their land to them, but because of their great wickedness
(Genesis 15:16). A corrupt nation which should have been struck down with the sword (Deuteronomy 20:17), they had, under Joshua, been yoked together with in solemn covenant. God takes covenants very seriously. Oaths exchanged on earth are oaths made before God. The Gibeonites were then made servants to the sons of Israel, drawing their water and cutting their wood (Joshua 9:16-17). Later, after the land had been fully subdued, the Gibeonites settled in the city called after their name, which had also been designated as a city set aside for the Levites (Joshua 21:17). There is one more important detail about this city that we must mention. Gibeon was the place where the tabernacle was residing during the time of David's kingship (see 1 Chronicles 21:29)! It is amazing, and perhaps a forepicture of later times (in which we now live), that under David's reign the tabernacle of God dwelt among the Gentiles!

We don't know exactly why or how Saul was attempting to annihilate the Gibeonites. In any case, the blood of the Gibeonites had risen up before God. Perhaps Saul had tried to excuse his actions as permissible because of the deceitful way the Gibeonites had cut their covenant with Israel. Perhaps he had reasoned that God had earlier commanded to destroy these people—covenant or no covenant. Or perhaps Saul had deemed his actions acceptable because, after all, four hundred years had passed since the days of Joshua. But Saul was dead wrong. The God of heaven shows no partiality. The God of the Bible keeps His Word, and He expects His people to keep theirs. Thus, Saul breaks the covenant with the Gibeonites, but David refuses to break the covenant he had made with the father of Mephibosheth (v7).

The events of chapter 21 are a beautiful and precious picture of the gospel in several ways. Let us humbly attempt to draw them out, looking to the Spirit for help. In short, the summary of the events in verses 1 through 9 is this: innocent princes are given into the hands of the Gentiles to be hung by them in order to atone for the sin of their father and covenant head (Saul) in breaking a solemn covenant made before God. This was in order to remove the curse from God's

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63 Amorite here in some measure relates to all the Canaanites whom the Lord would drive out because of their evil (Deut.9:4).

64 David had led up the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem in chapter 6, but the tabernacle and its furnishings were still at Gibeon until later when Solomon's temple was finished.

65 It may have been connected with the events of 1 Samuel 22 and the slaying of the priests at Nob, but this is not certain.
people as well as to give justice to the Gentiles. Does this not sound familiar?

Saul had sinned greatly; and his sin had been imputed to the land. Saul's sin did not just affect him, but hurled the whole nation into great guilt before God. So it was with Adam. His sin did not only make him guilty, but all his posterity; for we have all sinned in Adam; we are guilty in his guilt. Those who are given over into the hands of the Gibeonites to be hung, are innocent men. It was not their sin for which they give their lives, but the sin of their father Saul. Was it not the same with the Lord Jesus? The innocent was hung on the hill of Golgotha, and He was hung for the sin of the guilty. Further, these seven men are princes. It is possible that the five sons of Merab were actually raised by David's own wife Michal in the palace; those of his own household. In like manner, to save Gentile-strangers, God the Father sent His own precious Son, His beloved One, His Prince, to bear the weight of the wrath of God for our sins. To remove the curse from God's people (Galatians 3:13-14), and that justice might be brought to the Gentiles (Matthew 12:18), God's own dear Son was given over unto death.

Why does all this take place? It is to make atonement (v3). Atonement involved first a vindicating of God's justice; and for upholding justice towards the Gibeonites. There had been grievous offenses committed; and sin must be propitiated with blood. The atonement was thus to satisfy justice, but it was also for the sake of God's people. For the land had been languishing with the famine for three years (v1). It was only when the rain fell again that the men's bodies were taken away and buried (v10), as a mark that God was pleased again and would no longer withhold His blessing. Where justice is compromised there can be no blessing from God. But now justice had been upheld; atonement had been made. To preserve many alive during the famine of Joseph, God raised up a man to give bread to the world. But here, innocent men are raised up on the

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66See Romans 5.

67This conclusion is drawn by a few commentators, especially because in most Hebrew manuscripts the name given in verse 8 is not Merab but Michal. We know though, that Michal had no sons. And we are told that Merab was indeed the wife of Adriel, not Michal, in 1 Samuel 18:19. One likely possibility then, is that Merab was the natural mother, but these five sons were raised not by her but by David's wife Michal.

68See Ezekiel 37:25.
mountain of Gibeah to give their very lives for the salvation of the many.

All these things point us to our Lord Jesus Christ. For He was given over into the hands of the Gentiles to uphold the justice of God (Romans 3:25-26). He was given over unto death to bring justice to the Gentiles: “Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.” We also read in Isaiah 49:8, “And I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people, to restore the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages.” Isaiah looked forward to Christ when he wrote once again in another place, “By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?” (53:8). There was much time that had elapsed between Saul's sin and its atonement. So too, Christ was given over as a sacrifice of atonement long after the guilt of sin had entered the world. We are told in the text that the men were given over at the beginning of barley harvest, which was the time in the Jewish calendar for the celebration of the Passover and first fruits. These feasts themselves pointed to Christ's sufferings and resurrection; for Christ suffered on the day of Passover and was raised on the day of the first-fruits. It was clearly the death of these men that opened the way again for God's blessing on the land, as evidenced by the first-fruit of the rainfall in verse ten. There is a reminder here of when Moses struck the rock in the wilderness; for it was only then that living water poured forth for the people. Similarly, on the cross the Father struck the Son, and the fresh rainfall of God's blessing poured out upon the many. “But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

David had made a covenant with Jonathan, the son of Saul. He had promised Jonathan that he would deal in lovingkindness with his descendants (in 1 Samuel 20:15). Because of this covenant, Mephibosheth is spared. Likewise, God the Father has made promises to Christ and all who belong to Him. And the blood of

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70See Leviticus 23:9-14. The first-fruit celebration took place on the 16th day of Nisan, on the third day after Passover.
71Exodus 17.
Jesus is His guarantee that His Word will never, ever be broken: “For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken” (Isaiah 54:10).

Just like Saul, our hands are covered with the blood of our sins. Justice cries out against us. But friends, in Jesus Christ there is full atonement and the blessing of God for guilty sinners like you and like me. The blessing is in Jesus Christ, and in His cross alone. In the Old Testament tabernacle, the first thing the people would encounter as they entered the door into outer court was the alter of atonement. There was no way to God's presence in the holy place without going through the alter. Sin must be dealt with if there is to be true fellowship with God. The good news is that, “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Jesus was accursed that we might be blessed: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account” (Romans 4:7-8).

Let me end with a final application. Even as believers at times there needs to be reconciliation with each other if we want to enjoy unhindered communion with God. It was only after Saul's sin had been dealt with that God was “moved by prayer for the land” (v14). Sin must be dealt with vertically (with God) before it can be dealt with horizontally (with man). But it is also true as believers that sin left undealt with horizontally effects our relationship with God. We cannot enjoy full and sweet fellowship with God if there are relationships here that remain unreconciled. In the sermon on the mount our Lord instructed us, “Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering” (Matthew 5:23-24). So also Peter admonishes us, “You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered” (1 Peter 3:7). A husband not honoring his wife as he ought can certainly hinder his prayers, for God is not pleased. “God takes His stand in His own congregation; He judges in the midst of the rulers. How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Vindicate the weak and fatherless; do justice
to the afflicted and destitute. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them out of the hand of the wicked” (Psalm 82:1-4). Just as there must be heavenly reconciliation before there can be any true reconciliation in our earthly relationships, so too for believers there must be earthly reconciliation if we want to enjoy full, untapped sweetness in our fellowship with Christ.

Part 2, Verses 15-22

God had promised David that He would subdue all his enemies (1 Chronicles 17:10). But that didn't mean there wouldn't be any war. The war, in fact, was the means God would most often use to bring about what He had promised. It was the same for David that it had been with Joshua who had led the people into the land of Canaan, to possess it so many years before. Joshua was given incredible promises. His campaign cannot fail. Going with him were all the promises the Lord had made for hundreds of years to the patriarchs. Even more, the God of heaven had sworn to him personally, “Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses” (Joshua 1:3). But the promises were bound inseparably together with the people going forward. Indeed, charging the battle field was the means God would use to give them possession of the land of promise. And so it was with David. God had made him precious promises, but the battle field was often the means by which those promises were fulfilled.

There are some things we don't know about the text. Did these events take place chronologically as they appear before us? Or had these battles taken place earlier (see 1 Chronicles 20)? There is also the question of the identity of the man called Goliath in verse 19. Wasn't Goliath already dead? These are not unimportant questions, but perhaps it is better to spend our time on what we do know rather than speculate about what we don't. Whenever these events took place, the Holy Spirit was pleased to put them here in our text, in connection with the previous passage. As for Goliath, either he is the giant's brother (see 1 Chronicles 20:5), one of his sons called by his name (v22), or an entirely different Philistine warrior.

The Christian life is a war. If you find it any differently, you are in a fearful place, for the true soldier of Christ is constantly at battle. There are enemies on the outside. Satan wants to destroy us, and he has had thousands of years of practice. We are surrounded by a
world that serves and loves him. We are like soldiers making our way through the mine fields. There are traps all around; at times some of our dearest friends fall to the ground dead right before our eyes. Other times we ourselves become entangled in barbwire snares; some of which are so deadly we must leave behind a hand or a foot to escape with our lives.

As if this were not enough, there are enemies on the inside. The believer is constantly at war with his own sin. Though new creatures in Christ, our hearts are still infected with that awful disease we inherited from our father Adam. The death blow has been dealt at the cross. But just like a snake can do much damage even after its head has been severed; or just like a branch having been freshly cut is as good as dead but will take time to be fully drained of its life-sap, so it is with the Christian. His indwelling sin and remaining corruptions must be fought against till his dying breath. To let our guard down for one moment is to give ground to the enemy. Our motives deceive us; our hearts deceive us. The Christian hates his sin and is constantly at war with it. Not only in his outer appearance, but in the secret places of his heart, he belongs wholly to the Lord. The true Christian wages war against his sin because it is truly his most hated enemy. Just like David, believers are given wonderful promises of victory. But the victory comes through the battle. There is no victory without it, for Scripture declares, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

David and his men fought the Philistines because they were at war with Israel (v15). David and his fellow soldiers went out against the Philistines to protect the people. When he was a boy, David delivered his father's sheep from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear. Now, as the shepherd of Israel, he delivers God's people from those who would attack them. Before, he delivered sheep from the wild beasts of the wilderness; now he delivers Christ's sheep from the sons of Ammon and the Philistines. David must not only protect the sheep from the foreign enemies on the outside, but from those on the inside; such as Absalom and Shimei. And he learned the hard way that he must at times protect them even from himself. We remember here once again what Paul declared to the elders at Ephesus: "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." (Acts 20:28). Indeed, the calling to the ministry of the gospel is a serious
and weighty calling. What would we think of a king that wouldn't protect his people? Even the wicked and ungodly kings of the pagans fought to defend their people. What would we think of David if he sat in his palace and let the Philistines attack the Lord's inheritance? But to be a minister of the gospel is a much greater and weightier responsibility, for the eternal souls of men are entrusted to our care. John Flavel rightly said, “The labours of the ministry are fitly compared to the toil of men in harvest, to the labours of a woman in travail, and to the agonies of soldiers in the extremity of a battle. We must watch when others sleep.” The seasoned minister continued, “It is a less hazard, to put an ignorant rustic into a chemist's shop, to compound and prepare medicines for men's bodies, than to trust a man, destitute both of faithfulness and prudence, with the dispensation of Christ's ordinances to men's souls.” Truly it is a weighty and solemn undertaking to shepherd the souls of men.

How are we to fight the good fight? With what weapons? We are not told in detail here, but we are given instruction in other portions of the sacred pages of God's holy Word. The Word of God is our chief weapon of attack against the powers and principalities that wage war against us. Our Savior showed us by example in the wilderness how to fight off the attacks of the evil one, drawing His sword from its sheath with the words, “It is written...” With the sword of the Spirit we are able to fight off temptation. With the promises of God we are equipped to fight off discouragement and despair. Too often we fall in battle because our sword is left undrawn in its sheath.

Secondly, we fight the fight of faith through prayer. We have this example also in our Lord Jesus, who often would draw away to the mountain or some other secluded place for communion with the Father. He knew He needed it; and we are not stronger than He. It was as He was praying that the Spirit descended upon our Lord at His baptism (Luke 3:21); and it was after spending much time in prayer in the wilderness that He returned again to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14). In many ways, prayer is a preventative of evil. If we spent more time on our knees, we would find ourselves stronger and more prepared in the hour of attack. It is through prayer that the armor of God is to be employed (see Ephesians 6:18). We have not because we ask not. The branch that

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abides not in the vine will soon wither up. It is through prayer that we are enabled to walk and live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This brings us to our third weapon: we are to fight our battles by the Spirit. There is indeed an intimate connection in our Lord's earthly ministry between all these three—prayer, power, and the Spirit. This is also hinted at even in the furnishings and activity of the tabernacle; for the incense was to be burned on the altar at the same time that the lamps were trimmed (Exodus 30:7). So too, we are filled with the Spirit through prayer: "How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" (Luke 11:13). But we are not only filled with the Spirit through prayer, we are also commanded to pray "in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:18). The Spirit is absolutely essential in our fight against sin, for Scripture declares that it is by the Spirit that we are to put to death the deeds of the body (Romans 8:13).

We also need each other in our waging war against sin. We see this in our present passage, for David grew weary. We have every reason to think that David would have been a dead man without valiant Abishai coming to his aid. And where would David have been without Nathan the prophet? Though David was king, he was not above needing help. When the author of Hebrews speaks of the deceitfulness of sin, the primary means he mentions in guarding against it is to "encourage one another day after day" (Hebrews 3:13). The testimony of the Scriptures as well as our own experience have proven the folly of neglecting or rejecting this precious means that God has given us in waging our war against sin.

Lastly, we are to fight the good fight of faith by keeping our eyes on the reward given for faithful service. We have mentioned this earlier; we repeat in brief here. It was because Moses had his eyes fixed on the reward, that he was enabled to flee all the passing pleasures of the land of Egypt (Hebrews 11:26). We trust it was not without reason that our Lord spoke much of reward for faithful service. It has been well said: "The true minister lives less for the present than the future. He has eternity in his eye...He lives and acts, he preaches and prays, for eternity. And millions of ages hence, his life and actions, his sermons and his prayers, may be remembered by millions of beings beside himself, with unutterable joy or grief." What John Flavel spoke in addressing ministers of the gospel in

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particular is a wonderful word for all believers: “O sirs! We serve a good Master. He keeps an exact account of all your fervent prayers, of all your instructive and persuasive sermons; and all your sighs, groans, and pantings, with every tear and drop of sweat, are placed like marginal notes [beside] your labours in his book, in order to a full reward.”75

74From Dana’s, *Importance of Seriousness to the Christian Minister*, quoted in *Banner of Truth Magazine* V1 p238.

75From Flavel's *The Character of a Complete Evangelical Pastor Drawn By Christ*, quoted in *Banner of Truth Magazine* V1 p251.
David's song before us in chapter 22 can also be found recorded in Psalm 18. The Psalms are poetry for the soul and healing for the heart. They are filled with the familiar experiences of fellow saints struggling with sin and trials in their passing through the wilderness of this world. There is not empty eloquence but depth of soul. We can sing along with David about the power and majesty of God. And if we have been Christians long enough, we can also sit and weep with him in the darkness, broken by sin, confused, or feeling utterly abandoned. The Christian life is full of seasons. There is the fair sunshine of the summer, but there are also frozen winter months of the soul, where life is hid in the root.

As we read through Psalms like this one though, I believe there is one thing we tend to forget, that is especially good to keep in mind: the Psalms are packed full of rich theology. One of the reasons the Psalms are so beautifully rich is that they combine real life with sound doctrine. They tell us of the agonies and joys of life. But in the midst of it they preach to us about who God is and what He has done; they exhort us to look to Christ in our trouble, and encourage us with the promises He has made to His people. The Psalms are here for our comfort. And that comfort is most fully extracted to the degree that we tap into and apply the rich truths that are given to us therein. Now to our text.

First, we learn from this song, who are those that the Lord saves. We have the answer in verses 28 and 51. We read in verse 51, the last verse of the chapter, that the Lord gives deliverance and shows lovingkindness “to David and his descendants forever.” The descendants of David are to be taken as the descendants of Abraham are in Romans 4 and Galatians 3; they are the spiritual descendants of David. The ones God delivers are those who trust by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone for salvation. They are not merely physical descendants of David or Abraham. The Pharisees wrongly presumed upon the grace of God, judging themselves safe because they were the physical descendants of Abraham. Our Lord told them plainly, “I know that you are Abraham’s descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you” (John
8:37). Who are the ones that the Lord delivers? Only those who come to the Messiah for forgiveness and cleansing.

We see also from our text that it is “an afflicted people” that the Lord saves (v37). Christ’s people are an afflicted people. The health and wealth gospel of today was not the reality that Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Job, Naomi, Isaiah, Jeremiah or Ezekiel lived in, to name a few. Though David in this song sings about the Lord’s deliverance, let us not forget that his life was permeated with affliction.

One of the things we can tend to slip into in reading the Psalms is generalizing them—reading them without really thinking about what they really mean. For instance, Psalm 121:6-7 says, “The sun will not smite you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul.” Is this a literal promise? Is God really telling us in His Word that bad things won’t happen to us? I remember the day when I read this Psalm at the breakfast table with Seth and Karen Anderson, dear friends of mine. Yet, later that same afternoon, Joshua, their young son was struggling in the back seat of the car because the sun was beating down on him through the window! What is the Lord really promising there? To tap into the riches of the Psalms, we need to meditate deeply, past generalities, probing into what God’s Word is really promising to His children.

John Piper, for instance, has noted rightly the paradox, and correctly drawn out what is actually being promised in Luke 21:16-18: “But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, and you will be hated by all because of My name. Yet not a hair of your head will perish.” How can that be? Some of Jesus’ disciples will be killed, yet not a hair of their head will perish? The deliverance talked about in the sacred text is not a mere physical deliverance from evil. There is something much more important in view. Similarly, the deliverance Paul talked about in Philippians 1:19-20 was more than a mere physical deliverance.

Believers are not promised to be kept from trials. Paul’s primary message to the churches he planted in Galatia was, in fact, “through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). Believers are not protected with a shield that never allows hardships and trials to come their way. But they are protected with a shield that never allows to pass through what is not the absolute best for them. They are protected with the shield of their Father’s sovereignty, and
the shield of His goodness. We may one day be asked to shed our blood for Christ, as many have in the past and many still are today in certain parts of the world. But not a hair of our head will perish. If you are asked to do this, it is only because this is the absolute best thing that could ever happen to you; it is for your fullest joy, and the utmost glory of Christ. Nothing gets past the shield of His sovereignty and goodness to His children.

We learn also from this song, why it is that the Lord saves. In verse 20 we read, “He rescued me, because He delighted in me.” It is a precious thing to meditate on the pleasures of God as revealed in the Scriptures. It is a wonderful study to examine what are the things that God delights in doing. We have been made in the image of the One who does what He enjoys. God does not save His people because He should, or because He has to, or because He ought to. He saves His people from their sins because it gives Him great pleasure to do so. We read in Jeremiah 32:41, “I will rejoice over them to do them good and will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul.” Micah 7:18 tells us that the Lord pardons iniquity and passes over the sins of His people “because He delights in unchanging love.” Jesus told His disciples in Luke 12:32, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.” Paul likewise wrote in the Spirit to the Philippians, “it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (2:13). In Ephesians 1, the very curtains of God's supreme motives in salvation are drawn back, as it were, as we read: “in love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention [Lit. good pleasure] of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace.” Why does God save His people? He does it in love, for His glory, and according to His good pleasure.

We learn next from this song, when it is that the Lord saves. We read in our text in verse 4, “I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.” Then again in verse 7 David writes, “In my distress I called upon the Lord, yes, I cried to my God; and from his temple He heard my voice, and my cry for help came into His ears.” It is when we pray that God acts. I suppose God may choose to act whether we pray or not, but He has bound Himself to act when we pray. Revival in the church is born through prayers and pleadings. In Ezekiel 36:37-38 the Lord gives His people a solemn promise: “This also I will let the house of Israel
ask Me to do for them: I will increase their men like a flock. Like the flock for sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts, so will the waste cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they will know that I am the Lord.” Isaiah beckons us, “You who remind the Lord, take no rest for yourselves; and give Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth” (62:6-7). It was when the sons of Israel called upon the Lord that He sent Moses to deliver them. It was when God's people called upon the Lord that He raised up deliverers to save them from their oppressors in the days of the judges (Judges 3:15; 4:3; 6:7; 10:10). It was while Moses was calling upon the name of the Lord in Exodus 34 that the Lord showed him His glory. It was as Peter was praying on the roof that he received a precious revelation from Christ. It was as Daniel was pouring out his heart to God in prayer that he likewise was given unique wisdom concerning the coming of Christ (9:20ff). This also holds true for conversion. It is when men call upon Christ that they are saved (Romans 10:13; Isaiah 55:6-7). We read in Psalm 107 of the Lord's response when men in all different kinds of dangers cry out to Him: “Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble; He saved them out of their distresses” (vv13, 19, 28). The Lord denies salvation to none who call upon Him. Christ sent away none who came to Him (John 6:37), though many went away of their own accord.

What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!

O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness;
take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge,
take it to the Lord in prayer.

Do your friends despise, forsake you?
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In His arms He’ll take and shield you;
you will find a solace there.

Blessed Savior, Thou hast promised
Thou wilt all our burdens bear!
May we ever, Lord, be bringing
all to Thee in earnest prayer.

Soon in glory bright unclouded
there will be no need for prayer!
Rapture, praise and endless worship
will be our sweet portion there.

We learn lastly from this song, what it is that the Lord saves from.
Here we get back to what we were referring to at the beginning.
David writes about how God has saved him from all his enemies.
Surely among the enemies in David’s mind when he wrote would be
Saul, the Philistines, Absalom, Shimei, and others. But we are wrong
if this is all we say about David's enemies. We quoted David
Murray's words earlier,\textsuperscript{76} but they are well worth repeating here:

“One of the great shibboleths of modern hermeneutics is that we
must not allow for any interpretation that goes beyond the
original understanding of the original writer and his audience.
Now, of course, the original understanding of the writer is
important and we should investigate it. However, we must
remember that there is a divine author behind the human writer.

\textsuperscript{76}In the Introduction, on p.27.
Calvin highlights this when he frequently speaks of the 'intention of the Holy Spirit' or the 'intention of God.'

The New Testament gives us the insight we need to understand the fuller meaning of who David's enemies were. Zacharias' prophecy in Luke 1:68-79 teaches us how we should understand the enemies of David in 2 Samuel 22. We read in Luke 1:71, “Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us.” This is nearly a quote from 2 Samuel 22:18, “He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too strong for me.” But Zacharias is clearly not talking about Saul or the Philistines. He is glorying in the covenant of grace, which would find fulfillment in Christ. And the enemies from which God would deliver His people in the covenant of grace are the power of sin in this life and the punishment of sin in the next. David himself alludes to the former in verse 33, “He sets the blameless in His way.” In Christ, David had been set free from the bondage of sin. God had placed him on the narrow path that leads to life. And it is this same truth that Zacharias would later sing of in Luke 1:74-75: “To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.” He is declaring that the coming Messiah would set His people free from their slavery to sin, that they might serve Him with holiness of life and purity of heart. This Messiah would also set His people free from the punishment of sin in the next life. For Zacharias in the same prophecy calls Him, “a horn of salvation” (Luke 1:69), referring back to 2 Samuel 22:3. The horn was a symbol of strength; and thus we are here told that the Messiah himself is the strength of His people's salvation. Christ has set His people free from all their enemies. Believers in Jesus are set free from their slavery to sin in this life (John 8:34-36) and the punishment of sin in the next (John 8:51). How then shall we live? The apostle John gives us only one word of application: “Little children, guard yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21).
One of the most influential people in the life of the great missionary Adoniram Judson was a college friend by the name of Jacob Eames. He was a deist, and it was through his influence that Adoniram began to drift away from the church and from Christ. But if Eames' life was the greatest catalyst in driving Adoniram away from Christ, it was his death that was the greatest influence in bringing him back. He was passing through a town and stopped to stay at an inn. He was told there was only one room, and it happened to be right next to the room of a man suffering from a dreadful sickness. He didn't realize what he was agreeing to when he took the room. The whole night he was kept up by the agonizing cries and terrible shrieks coming from the room next door. He asked the innkeeper the next morning what had happened to the man, and was told that he had died. Perhaps out of respect for the dead he happened to ask the name of the man; and he was told that it was Jacob Eames.

The death-bed is the most terrible place in the world for the wicked. For those who have resisted Christ, the death-bed is at its best the end of worldly pleasures and kingdoms; at its worst the beginning of eternal torments. It is the place where the wicked must cast away all their earthly possessions they had for so long stored up for themselves. They cannot take them where they are going. It is the place where their earthly sun sets and an eternal darkness begins. There is no hope for the wicked on their death-bed. All their joys and worldly pleasures are behind them; the lake of burning fire lies before them. There is only an eternity of torment and misery ahead of them! They must now face the God they had hated and spurned all their life. It has been well said that in the Bible there is one “death-bed” conversion (the thief on the cross next to Jesus) to give hope to any in that condition to yet give up their sins and turn to Christ, but only one to teach us never to presume on the grace of God. There are, perhaps, some in their younger years who suppose they can live a life of wickedness and just repent on their death-bed. But how many, I wonder, in their last days, as they lay on their beds, will find that their hearts are harder than ever? How many will find
themselves unable and unwilling to repent? Had they forgotten that repentance is a precious gift given by God to those whom He chooses (Acts 5:31)? All their lives they have scorned His wisdom, now wisdom laughs at them (Proverbs 1:26). They thought they could outsmart God; they are now faced with the eternal consequences of a life of folly. How tragic is the death of the wicked! Oh friends! Truly, now is the time for salvation! “Today if you hear His voice do not harden your hearts” (Hebrews 4:7)! Don’t play games with the Holy Spirit! Run to Christ now, while the gate of the city of refuge is still open! Make not the same fatal mistake of the Pharisees! How sober and fearful are our Lord’s words to them: “I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin” (John 6:21).

What a contrast is the death-bed of the godly!! Instead of cries of bitter sorrow and distress, David sings praises to his God. David speaks not of the setting of the sun, but of its rising, for there is nothing but hope awaiting him. He had stored up his treasures in heaven with Christ; now he goes home to receive the reward of grace and the crown of glory. For David, death is just the beginning of hope; the sun is only just beginning to shine. David had not been a perfect man; he had not lived a sinless life. He deserved the wrath of God just as any other man, and he knew it. But he had trusted in the coming Messiah to take away all his sin. Because of the shout of triumph that would later sing from Christ’s tomb, David could have a song of praise on his lips as he entered his.

Indeed, David preaches to us about eternity through his song in chapter 23. It is a similar message to Psalm 1 and Isaiah 66. There are only two possible places we will spend it (vv5-6); and eternity is forever. It hurts our finger to touch the burning stove for a moment. Imagine being forced to touch it for an entire twenty seconds. But friends, eternity never stops. Think of a mountain made of sand. Imagine a bird, one grain at a time, transplanting that mountain a thousand miles away. The time it would take is unfathomable; but at some point, though hundreds of thousands of years later, there would be an end. There is no end to eternity. And we can know now where we will spend it. It is as simple as this: “He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life” (1 John 5:12). God’s Word tells us there is forgiveness through Jesus Christ. If we believe on Christ and repent of our sins, Scripture tells us that we can have an absolute assurance that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13). It was indeed this confidence that put a song on
David's mouth as he departed this life: "Truly is not my house so with God? For He has made an everlasting covenant with me, ordered in all things, and secured; for all my salvation and all my desire" (v5). How sweet this is! That God would not only send His Son to take the punishment for our sins on the cross, but that He would give us the comfort of having such an assurance in this life is truly amazing!

The thrust of David's song is a celebration of God's rich covenant faithfulness. God had made special promises to David, and David knew God well enough to know that what He had promised was as good as done: "Will He not indeed make it grow?" (v5). We learn in other parts of Scripture more about the meaning behind David's references to the sun in verses 4 and 5. In Psalm 89, a song celebrating the covenant that God had made with David, we read, "My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David, His descendants shall endure forever and his throne as the sun before Me, it shall be established forever like the moon, and the witness in the sky is faithful" (vv34-37). The sun is a picture of permanence. Just as the sun comes up every day without fail, so too God's promises would not fail. The same language is used in Jeremiah 33 in speaking about the new covenant in Christ: "Thus says the Lord, If you can break My covenant for the day and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant so that he will not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levitical priests, My ministers. . .If My covenant for day and night stand not, and the fixed patterns of heaven and earth I have not established, then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant" (vv20-21, 25).

It might seem strange to us at first that God would pick the sun and moon as signs of permanence, especially since we are told that one day the heavens and earth will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10). But the sun and moon are not just arbitrary; there is a reason Scripture makes mention of these to describe the permanence of His covenant in Christ. When we hear these words we are meant to be reminded of another covenant; another time when there was "sunshine after rain" (v4). We are meant to think back to the words God had spoken to Noah after the waters of the flood. On that day the Lord solemnly promised Noah, "While the earth remains, seedtime and
harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (8:22). God established the fixed patterns of the sun and moon, day and night, as an example, for the sake of showing us how secure and how lasting the covenant of grace would be in Jesus Christ. Just as sure as God has established the fixed patterns of the universe, so God will save those who trust in Christ. God wants His children to know how unchangeable His promises are to them. These verses also allude once again to Zacharias' prophecy in Luke 1:67-79, in which we are told that one reason God saves His people is in order that they “might serve Him without fear” (v74).

Our cup of blessing overflows (Psalm 23:5) because Christ drank down the bottomless cup of God's wrath on the cross in our place. If you have trusted in Christ, God wants you to serve Him without fear of judgment. He wants you to sing every day the way that David sang on his death-bed.

**Part 2, Verses 8-39**

In verses 8 through 39 of 2 Samuel chapter 23 we have the record of the mighty men of king David. These are the front-line warriors of the kingdom of God. Oh, to be numbered among them! Films and books are filled with fictional stories of great adventures, kingdoms conquered, and bold stands taken at great costs. But truly, these are only cheap imitations of the true reality of the soldier of Christ. Upon our lives do the angels of heaven look with envy. The battles we fight are in the name of Christ Jesus who has sent us; and their outcomes will send ripple effects into eternity forever. Courageous warriors in the military may save lives for another few years on earth, but we are saving lives and souls for eternity. The labors of the Christian soldier of Christ will be recorded in the Lamb's book forever; their stories will ring throughout eternity. Their risks taken and temptations fought will neither be forgotten nor be in vain.

Who are these men? Their backgrounds seem to be as diverse as their names. Some, like David, are from the tribe of Judah (Elhanan, Ira the son of Ikkesh, Mebunnai the Hushathite, Maharai and Heleb the Netophathites, Paarai the Arbite, and Ira and Gareb the Ithrites). Some are from Benjamin, the tribe of Saul (Abiezer the Anathothite, Zalmon the Ahohite, Azmaveth the Barhumite, Naharai the Beerothite; Ittai the son of Ribai was even from Saul's home town, Gibeah). Some of these men come from a line of faithful, valiant warriors, as Benaiah, “the son of Jehoida, the son of a valiant man of
Kabzeel, who had done mighty deeds” (v20). Benaiah didn't come from nowhere. As Timothy in the New Testament, he seems to have been taught from a young age what it meant to live as a soldier of Christ. Others seem to have left their pagan backgrounds and joined themselves to the God of Israel, as with Igal of Zobah, a Gentile nation; Zelek the Ammonite; and Uriah the Hittite. Christ calls His soldiers from all sorts of religious backgrounds.

True soldiers of Christ will be the first to acknowledge that their victories are wholly of the Lord. We see this throughout the passage. Eleazar fought off the Philistines, but it was the Lord who through him brought about the victory (v10). Similarly, Shammah took his life in his hand to defend the plot of land from the Philistines, but the Lord was the one who gave victory that day (v12). Even in the names of David's mighty men this is evident. The names of individuals in the Old Testament are often extremely significant. Eleazar's name proclaims, “God has helped.” Benaiah's name (vv20,30) means, “Jehovah builds,” reminding us of the truth of Psalm 127:1, “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.” Elhanan's name (v24) cries out, “God has shown mercy.” Eliphelet's name (v34) asserts, “God is deliverance.” Our victories are of the Lord, and Him alone.

God alone is the hero. We are starkly reminded of this as our eyes fall upon the final verse in the chapter. The last soldier to be named is, “Uriah the Hittite” (v39). These were brave men who fought for their king. But just as with all of them, even their king was a sinner who desperately needed the Savior. It has been rightly said that there are no great men of God; only pathetic and weak men who serve a great God. This truth rings throughout the Scriptures. Abraham at times had great faith, at other times his faith massively falters. Even Moses the meek in a moment of pride put himself forth as an equal with God (Numbers 20:10). Peter the bold in a moment of weakness falls before a servant girl. Even faithful John the Baptist, who was called by our Lord the greatest among men, faltered in faith from within the walls of his prison cell (Luke 7:19). In the process of sanctification, Jesus is constantly showing us how weak we are. By and by we come to understand that if we don't struggle with any particular sin, it is only due to the grace of God, and not our own spiritual vigor. For we come to learn from hard experience that when He removes that grace for but a moment, we fall instantly. We are
indeed strongest when we know ourselves to be weak. The Rev. Thomas Jones puts it much better than I can:

A hard lesson. How often have we failed, where we had the greatest confidence; and fallen, where we thought ourselves most secure; enemies we disdained overcame us, temptations we thought light of have thrown us down. To be sensible of our own weakness, is the way to be strong; none will trust God but those who cannot trust themselves; none lean on Christ, till they feel themselves sinking.⁷⁸

We see here that there are no “great men of God,” that God alone is the hero. At the same time, we see from our passage that the Lord brought about these victories when men took a stand. God did not deliver His people from their enemies apart from using human instruments. The Lord saved His people when Eleazar took a stand for Christ. God delivered His people when Shammah took his stand in that plot of lentils at the risk of his life, when all others had fled. The Lord brought about salvation for Israel when David, trusting in his God, ran to the battle line with just a sling in his hand and a few stones from the brook. It is also evident from the passage that David placed these honored men in these positions because of their proven faithfulness. Not every soldier was given the privilege of being among David’s troop of mighty men. And only three were given the great honor of being set apart even from the thirty. Indeed, it is those who prove themselves faithful with little that the Lord will begin to entrust with more (Luke 16:11; Matthew 25:29). The soldier of Christ readily acknowledges that God alone is the hero. But he also knows that God brings about mighty victories when weak men put their trust in a all-powerful God, take Him at His Word, and put their armor on. God alone can bring the victory, but His victories are brought about when men take a stand.

I remember just before beginning at college I was told a story that greatly influenced the choices I would make over the next four years. The summer before I started classes, another student had finished and was graduating. He was asked something along the lines of how his time in college had been used for the kingdom of Christ? He wasn't able to give much of a reply. I remember being greatly stirred. I wanted to be able to give a much different answer after those four years.

⁷⁸Notes from a sermon, When I am Weak, Then I am Strong, from Banner of Truth Magazine V1, p70.
Friends, we will never be great men of God. We will never be super-hero Christians, nor are we supposed to be. We glorify God in and through our weaknesses. We come to Him as empty vessels desperate for the filling of His Spirit. We come to Him as the disciples with a few loaves of bread and fish, helpless to do anything. As Rutherford says, “All that I can do is to hold out a lame faith to Christ like a beggar holding out a stump, instead of an arm or leg, and cry, ‘Lord Jesus, work a miracle!’” But let us be those who trust in a great God. And trusting in the Lord, let us hold out our stump in faith upon a great Savior. The disciples were helpless to feed the 5,000, but the Lord told them to bring the nothing they had to Him (Matthew 14:18). He would work the miracle. But He would use them as His instruments.

The farmer doesn’t expect to harvest wheat if he hasn’t planted the seed. The Lord’s word to us in 2 Corinthians 9:6 is both an exhortation and a promise: “Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” What stories will be written of our generation? What stands for Christ will be remembered throughout eternity? The Rev. J.W. Alexander reminded his fellow ministers, “The day is near when your whole ministerial life will seem to you very short in retrospect.” The days are flying by. Are we redeeming the time? We are fellow-workers with God. We are indeed a weak and fickle people; but we have a Mighty Savior—and we have been given the Holy Spirit. Let us be those who by that Spirit—and through the grace He so lavishly pours upon us—and in the love without which all our best labors are vain and meaningless, prove ourselves to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

79Letters of Samuel Rutherford, p56.

I hope that in our brief study of Samuel we have seen how the gospel story sings its glorious tune throughout the sacred pages of the Old Testament Scriptures. That has been the author's earnest desire and prayer in his meditation and writing. We have seen that these truths are herein often shown not through formal exposition, but through rich illustration, through gospel analogy, and through pictures. This is not unique to the two books of Samuel. Redemption is strikingly illustrated in Israel's exodus from Egypt, crossing the Red Sea, journeying through the barren wilderness, and final entrance into the promised land as they passed through the Jordan River. Not only in the sacrificial system but in the tabernacle itself with all its furnishings, and in all the ceremonial and judicial laws of Leviticus, there are jewels and diamonds of profound gospel truths. Indeed, Jonathan Edwards has rightly said,

Those parts of the Old Testament which are commonly looked upon as containing the least divine instruction, are mines and treasures of gospel-knowledge; and the reason why they are thought to contain so little is, because persons do but superficially read them. The treasures which are hid underneath are not observed. They only look on the top of the ground, and suddenly pass a judgment that there is nothing there. But they never dig into the mine; if they did, they would find it richly stored with what is more valuable than silver and gold, and would be abundantly requited for their pains.81

We have seen the truths of the gospel brought to light in individuals and through the narratives of these precious chapters. And it is no different here, as we come to our final chapter of 2 Samuel. In fact, our chapter here, seen through the humble eyes of faith, and by the illumination of the Spirit, is an incredible climax to all that has gone before. We have in this chapter truths that ought to put our hand to our mouth in humiliation for our sin, and wet our eyes with the apprehension of all that we poor sinners have been given in Jesus Christ.

81Edwards, History of Redemption, Works V1, p571.
Sin is deceitful. We fall into its trap once again, only to remember that it never satisfies us like it promised it would. We are ashamed of ourselves and resolve that we will never again fall prey to its lies. But often, just as quickly as we make resolves it deceives us and we find ourselves coming back to the Lord for forgiveness again. We are just like David, my friends. We are no better than our fathers. The Biblical accounts are very honest about the sins of God's people. This is actually quite different from the Qur'an of Islam. There are similar stories in the Qur'an, but they are altered. In the Qur'an, there is no record of the sins of God's people. Noah doesn't get drunk. Abraham doesn't offer up his wife to the king of the Philistines. Judah's immorality with Tamar is left out of their texts. David's sin with Bathsheba is nowhere to be found, nor his command here to number Israel. I suppose that makes sense. If one believes his position before God is based on his merit and personal righteousness, it must inevitably lead to a massive dumbing down of his sins. What other hope would you have? If your standing before God depends on your personal righteousness, your only hope is to be good enough. And to be good enough you have to be dishonest about how profoundly sinful you really are. But, oh friend! In Christ, we have freedom to be completely honest and expose our deepest sins to the light. For we gladly acknowledge that we are but weak sinners, deserving nothing but the wrath of God. We freely declare that our best deeds merit nothing but hell. We gladly boast in our weaknesses and freely confess the wickedness of our hearts. For our hope is not in our own goodness; our hope is in our Savior. And in Christ, we have been forgiven. Our sins are real, but so is our Savior.

Here we read that the Lord Himself incited David to this act. In the Chronicles account we are told that it was Satan (1 Chronicles 21:1). Those who read the Bible only to find contradictions use verses like these to put their consciences at ease with their life of sin. We need not answer them; first of all because they don't want an answer. There are two ways to ask questions; indeed, there are many who don't want the truth at all. We need not try to defend God to them; God can defend Himself. C.S. Lewis gives the illustration of a zookeeper trying to defend a lion from some who were outside of his cage, making fun of the poor beast. He tried to reason with them, pointing out several good reasons why they ought not jeer at the king of the jungle, but all to no avail. At some point the zookeeper
realized he would do much better just letting the lion defend himself; so he simply opened the cage! Well, if they are looking for contradictions I suppose they would do better with a different text than this one. The answer is simple. It is here much the same way that it was with Job. You remember, it was Satan who tormented Job, but he could do nothing without the permission of God. Satan was like a little puppy on a leash. It was he who plagued Job with the terrible boils, but he could do nothing without God's permission; and he could do no more than what God had decreed. Thus, Job's sufferings were from Satan in one sense, from God in another. The difference of course, was that Satan designed through it all to destroy Job, but God was purging away the dross in his life. As the Master Vinedresser, the Lord was cutting away sick branches, and pruning others that they might bear more fruit. So here, in one sense Satan incited David, in another sense the Lord Himself. Satan in order to destroy, but the Lord in order to turn it into salvation for the many in the end.

There are consequences for our sin. David sinned and the people suffered. Indeed, the wages of David's sin was death. David was crushed with the weight of this reality: "Behold, it is I who have sinned, and it is I who have done wrong; but these sheep, what have they done?" (v17). The people were punished for David's sin. It was David's sin that caused God's judgment to fall upon the people in the form of the pestilence. Behold, a picture of the first Adam, our federal representative. Because of his sin, the plague has come to us all. It was the sin of Adam that brought the pestilence of sin to mankind.

But it is not only Adam who has sinned. Our hands are stained with blood. Yes, the curse has come to us because of Adam. But we have gladly received it, for our deeds testify against us. We have loved the darkness and hated the light. The blame belongs to us just as much as Adam. And there must be punishment for sin. God loves justice, and will not leave the guilty unpunished (Nahum 1:3). We are told in the Chronicles account that it was the destroying angel himself who told Gad to build an alter to the Lord at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (21:18). It is justice that cries out for our blood. There must be an alter built to hold back the plague from the people (v21). The righteous anger of God must be propitiated; the price of sin must be paid; and we stand guilty on ten thousand counts before the Righteous King of Glory. As David was summoned
to that lonely mountain, so the Law of God summons us to make an account. For we are guilty, and the just penalty for our crimes is eternal death.

We are told in 2 Chronicles 3:1 that the location of the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite was none other than Mount Moriah. This was where the Lord had commanded Abraham to take his son, his only son Isaac, and offer him as a sacrifice. Isaac was indeed Abraham's only son. He had waited twenty-five years for his birth, and he loved him more than anything else in the world. But the next morning they arose and journeyed three days to the mountain. He put the wood on his son, and they walked up the mountain together. As the father was about to strike his son, God stopped him. The Lord said,

'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' He said, 'Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.' Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. Abraham called the name of that place The Lord will Provide, as it is said to this day, 'In the mount of the Lord it will be provided.' (Genesis 22:11-14).

You might think Abraham should have called that place, "The Lord did provide." But he called it, "The Lord will provide." Why? We are told further in 2 Chronicles 3:1 that this very location, Mount Moriah, where Abraham had taken his son, and where David here builds the alter to hold back the plague, was also the same place that Solomon would later build the temple. This is the place where sacrifices would be made to the Lord for the sins of the people; where atonement would be offered for the iniquity of the sons of Israel. But Abraham's words looked even past this; they pictured another event that would come long after Solomon, where the Lord would provide. There would be another Father who would lay wood on His one and only beloved Son, who would climb, as many believe, that same mountain. Only in the first century it was called Golgotha.

Redemption is costly (v24) and must be paid with blood. But just as we acknowledge God's justice in sending us to hell forever, something unspeakable happens. We see a lamb in the thicket. Jesus Christ approached to be offered as a sacrifice of atonement. To
hold back the plague of sin, the innocent Lamb of God came to be slain for the guilty! David approached to make atonement for his own sin. But wonder of wonders, Christ approached the cross in order to make atonement for your sin and mine. For my selfishness, for my pride, for my transgressions did He approach. Behold, the Lamb of God. Oh no Lord! “Is it not I who commanded to count the people?” We plead as David did, “I am the one who has sinned and done very wickedly” (1 Chronicles 21:17), “but this Lamb, what has He done?” Take me Oh God! Let not my iniquity be given to Him to bear! Let not Jesus be punished because of my sin! Oh no, Lord! Your own precious Son! Smitten for my transgressions? No, Lord! But on that day, the Christ silently carried His block of wood up the lonely mountain to pay the price for our iniquity. “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” He gave up glory and took damnation upon himself for those who hated and mocked him, in order that you and I might be brought to paradise. He took the cup of wrath from our trembling hands, and in its place gave to us the cup of blessing that had belonged to Him alone. His body was broken for you; and His body was broken by you. Barabbas was released and He was condemned. The innocent Lamb of God has indeed taken away the sins of the world.

Does the Lord's anger still burn against His people as it did in verse 1? Not if you are a believer in Jesus. The plague has been checked. God has taken away His burning anger in Christ. Scripture declares that the Lord will never again be angry with those who have been clothed in the blood of His Son. God’s anger was given to Him instead of those who come to Him in faith, forsaking their sins. Christ drank down the cup of the righteous anger of God, in order that we might never have to taste a drop of it: “For this is like the days of Noah to Me, when I swore that the waters of Noah would not flood the earth again; so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you nor will I rebuke you. . .Therefore, please hear this, you afflicted, who are drunk, but not with wine: thus says your Lord, the Lord, even your God who contends for His people, ‘Behold, I have taken

82 Isaiah 53:5-6, NIV.
out of your hand the cup of reeling, the chalice of My anger; You will never drink it again.” (Isaiah 54:9; 51:21-22).
An Epilogue
I remember once driving through some farmland in the southern States. As we drove, I noticed that there were several barns that had rotted away and become unusable. Apparently they had not been used for decades, and had decayed over time. The thought hit me, that the reason these barns were now ruined to the point of being totally unusable, was simply neglect. There appeared no signs of a great fire; it wasn't a massive earthquake that leveled these buildings to the ground. Rather, it was pure neglect that brought these once beautiful and functional barns to ruin. They had simply not been cared for.

The same can be said of a man's life, and of a ministry. It is indeed neglect that almost destroys David and his kingdom twice. It happened once before with Absalom. He never confronted his son about what he did to his brother. Even when he brought him back to the land, he said nothing. And David here once again almost has the kingdom stolen away from him and from Solomon in the same way. We are told in verse 6 that David had never confronted his son Adonijah about his actions. We don't know exactly what David should have confronted him about. Did David actually know what he was going to do that day? Or were there other inklings that David had picked up in Adonijah's words and actions? We don't know for sure. But we do know that David was negligent in confronting his son with his sin, and that it almost did irreparable damage in the closing days of David's life. It is sad that it seems David wasn't the best model of a father. Like Eli, and even Samuel before him, and his own son Solomon who would later follow in his father's footsteps, it seems that David puts the people before his own family. May God give us much grace to care for our own lambs first.

A believer can never rest from a holy watchfulness, both in himself and in others. This must be especially true of a minister of the gospel (Acts 20:28). He is a watchman. He must watch when others sleep. It seems that David first became slack in watching for himself; this then led to a sleepiness in his watch over the kingdom. To David's credit, he never had a sexual relationship with Abishag. But what was she even doing there? Apparently, as one commentator conjectured, none of David's six wives could give off heat any longer.
While David was being pampered by Abishag, he nearly has the kingdom stolen away from him again. If it is not more obvious sins that will dull our spiritual sensitivities, it is the more subtle things that Satan will use to destroy the work of God. If David can't be enticed to fall into a pit of grievous sin, he might still be lulled away to sleep, as Lucy was to the piping of Mr. Tumnus. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Be on the alert” (1 Corinthians 16:13). The Lord Jesus himself told His disciples, “What I say to you I say to all, ‘Be on the alert.”’ (Mark 13:37). When He came back to them in the garden they had fallen asleep. Truly, we must fight to keep a watchfulness, for the whole world would sing us to sleep with its poison lullaby’s.

If the fight were contingent upon us, Satan would triumph and we would be overwhelmingly defeated. Thanks be to God that we have providence and sovereign power on our side. Though David is found drowsy, Christ will be victorious. His promise cannot fail, Solomon will sit on the throne. The church may grow sleepy, yet Christ will reign. He will get glory for Himself, though it be despite His people.

Yet, if it were not for Nathan’s watchfulness (once again), we know not what would have happened that day. It is true, that the Lord’s providence guides His people. But is it not also true that He uses means to accomplish His chosen ends? The Lord was victorious this day because He works all things after the counsel of His will. Yet equally as true, Solomon sat on the throne of David that night because Nathan was watchful. Are we? “Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit. Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them.” (Luke 12:35-37).

Absalom had tried to steal away what belonged rightfully to his father; here Adonijah tries to steal away what rightfully belonged to his brother. His eye is on the crown. It seems he would seek the kingdom at any cost; it seems he would give up his soul if it meant gaining the world. Some seek an earthly kingdom openly as Adonijah does. But others would seek a kingdom in a much more subtle way.

83 In the first of C.S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia.
E.M. Bounds wrote some very sobering words of admonition concerning personal ambition even in the ministry:

Personal ambition is one of the greatest hindrances to the Christian life and especially to preaching — because it is born of *SELF* and nurtured by *pride*. It manifests itself in various ways: the desire to be a great preacher, to have the first place, to be a leader, or to secure places of honor or profit — it veils itself under many disguises. It is christened with the surname "laudable", and comes into the church, then works its selfish, worldly schemes. A person may be a Christian by name and a church member, but if he is driven by personal ambition, he is an infidel at heart and worldly!

Personal ambition destroys the foundation of Christian character, by making faith impossible. Faith roots itself in the soil where selfish and worldly growths have been destroyed. "*How can you believe,* says Christ, *who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only?*" (John 5:44). In this statement is shown the impossibility of blending faith with the desire to receive honor from men. The entrance of this alluring element of human honor, draws the heart from the honor that comes from God and sweeps away the foundations of faith. When the eye seeks things other than God, when the heart desires things other than God — this is personal ambition. No man can serve these two masters; no man can combine the ends of *SELF* — and of God. He may think he can; he may seem to do so; but no one can perform this spiritual impossibility.

I believe we would do well as saints, and especially as ministers, in keeping ourselves from this snare, to set constantly before us the cry of John the Baptist: “*He must increase, but I must decrease*” (John 3:30). It reminds us where our true place really is. Another Scripture that has personally helped me is the resolve of the Psalmist, “*I hate every false way*” (Psalm 119:128). It is when we stop hating our secret sins that we stop putting them to death. Let us be those who never grow weary of crucifying our uprising sins of ambition and the love of praise.

The events recorded in this chapter are remarkably similar to what Paul wrote about the last days. I believe the historical events that took place the day of Solomon's coronation also serve as a pattern for us of events yet to come. Paul told the Thessalonians that there would be a man of lawlessness who would exalt himself (as in 1 Kings 1:5); in effect proclaiming himself to be King. But his celebration will be
short lived; his reign will come to an end in an instant. The Lord will slay him “with the breath of His mouth and bring [him] to an end by the appearance of His coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

Let us then take heart. Adonijah’s uprising lasts but a day in our text, but our whole lives may be spent surrounded by those who would rise up against Christ. We may spend a lifetime having to live in vanity fair, listening to the music of the world, dwelling among those who act as though there were no king already anointed over Jerusalem. As Christ tarries, men will mock and revel, insult and persecute the followers of the Messiah. The world will ever continue to pretend there is no King Jesus who reigns over the nations. But as those at Adonijah’s feast were suddenly terrified at the sound of a trumpet, there will one day with certainty be heard another trumpet blast. Christ will come to those who have eagerly waited for Him. The meek will inherit the earth. Those who have followed the Lamb will reign with Christ forever, and all who have mocked will come bowing at His feet. Take courage, people of God. Don’t lose heart; don’t grow weary. Jesus is coming soon. The day is fast approaching when, at the Father’s command, Christ will come to usher in His kingdom, to shatter His enemies (see 1 Kings 2), and to speak those precious words to all those who have waited for Him, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”
After the events in chapter 21 (which we dealt with in 2 Samuel 24), David declares that the threshing floor of Ornan (or Araunah) the Jebusite will be the place of the future temple of the Lord. This would be the place that the Lord had spoken of to Moses so many years before, in Deuteronomy 12 (verses 5, 7, 11, 14, 18, and 26). The Lord's Word had been very clear on this: His people were not to sacrifice to Him at just any place, but the place that He Himself would choose. They were not to worship Him just any way they wanted; He would be worshipped in the way that He commanded them. Many years later, the Lord Jesus would tell a woman from Samaria what this was to signify. The temple would pass away with time but the same principle remains: “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. . .But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:21, 23-24).

It is an amazing thing to realize that the majority of those who had the privilege of being part of building the temple were foreigners. We see this in our text in verses 2 and 4. The foreigners of verse 2 are elaborated on in 2 Chronicles 2:17-18; where we are told that Solomon assigned over 150,000 foreigners living in Israel to the work. Moreover, it is a man sent from Tyre who does the work for the inner furnishings of the temple (2 Chronicles 2:13-14). Perhaps this shouldn't surprise us if we think again upon the dwelling places of the tabernacle and ark during David's time. For after the ark was captured by the Philistines in 1 Samuel 4, it returns to stay at Kiriath-Jearim, a Gibeonite (Hivite) city within Israel for twenty years (1 Samuel 6:21; 7:2; Joshua 9:17). Later, after the outbreak against Uzzah, it resides three months at the house of Obed-edom, a Philistine who had become a worshipper of the God of Israel (2 Samuel 6:11). The tabernacle itself initially under Eli was at Shiloh of Ephraim, but after Eli's death it was moved to Gibeon (another city of the Hivites), where it was entrusted to the care of that Gentile city all the days of David (1 Chronicles 21:29; Joshua 9:17). We have
already noted that the temple would be built upon the land of Ornan, the Gentile Jebusite. Reflecting on these things Jonathan Edwards wrote,

“David built the altar in the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, on Gentile ground; which is agreeable to what the prophecies represent of the church of the Messiah being erected in Gentile lands, and being made up of those that had been sinners. . .Solomon made a covenant with the king of Tyre, and the servants of the king of Tyre were associated with the servants of Solomon in the building of the temple; which is agreeable to the prophecies of the Messiah’s being a light to the Gentiles and covenant of the people; and the Gentiles being associated with the Jews and becoming one people with them; and their coming and building in the temple of the Lord.”

We have seen throughout our study that the Old Testament Scriptures are full of rich pictures, analogies, and types of Christ and the gospel. This is no less true here in 1 Chronicles 22. David’s charge to Solomon is rich with gospel meaning. His words to Solomon first point us back to Joshua 1, and the charge the Lord gave to Joshua there on the bank of the Jordan. The parallel between David’s charge to Solomon in our present chapter and the charge the Lord had earlier given to Joshua is striking: “Arise, cross this Jordan. . .Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you. . .Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.” For both Joshua and Solomon, there was a great task before them, but God had made promises. The land was subdued, and God had promised His presence would be with them to give them victory. But though God had promised success, yet this success was also contingent upon these two men rising up. For Joshua it meant crossing the Jordan and fighting the Canaanites. For Solomon it meant arising and putting his hand to work on the temple. For us it means taking the gospel to every tribe, tongue, and nation under heaven.


85Compare also the creation mandate in Genesis 1:28, and the Lord's charge to rebuild the temple in Haggai 1 and 2!
When the risen Christ gave His last charge to the disciples in Matthew 28, this wasn't some new thing. The command Jesus there gave to His church was merely the fulfillment of the picture which had been spoken earlier to Joshua. It was the reality of the shadow that had been given to Solomon. David tells Solomon, “there is no limit” to the materials, and that “the land is subdued” (v18). Indeed, there was nothing Solomon lacked, for David had laid up in materials what some estimate to be somewhere around one billion dollars. Christ has declared to His church that, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18). What does this mean? He is telling us that the strong man has been bound. Because of His atoning death and resurrection, the gates of Hades will not be able to stand. He has accomplished salvation, and He has through His blood bought for Himself a people. They will come, they must come when they hear His voice. Christ's work on the cross and rising from the dead has guaranteed that at the hearing of the gospel, His sheep will come. When we preach, when we witness, when we utter words of gospel truth, we can do so with all confidence, for there is no “maybe” involved! Just as the demonstration of the power of God set free the captive Israelites from their bondage to slavery in Egypt (Exodus 9:16; Psalm 77:15), so too the gospel is the power of God for salvation, setting men free from their sin (Romans 1:16). The gospel is a living seed that will always accomplish its purposes in those whom God himself has chosen and purchased with the precious blood of the Lamb. Friends, we don't have to rely on our eloquence or winsomeness when we tell our unbelieving friends (or strangers we meet) about Christ. Go forth and preach with confidence, for the land is subdued before you, the strong man has been bound. Some will indeed scoff at Christ and insult His messengers, but Christ's sheep will hear His voice and come.

David likewise reminded Solomon that the Lord would be with Him (vv11, 16; 28:20). So too, Christ has given us the promise of His presence. But for Solomon, these promises were bound inseparably with the command that had been given to him. David thus charged Solomon: “build the house of the Lord your God. . .Be strong and courageous. . .Arise and work. . .arise, therefore, and build the sanctuary of the Lord God.” David had laid up everything that was needed to build the temple of the Lord. But Solomon was to build it. He had been given an incredible privilege. And so have we. Friends, we are stewards, and we will one day given an account. All that we have been given is His—the money, our time, our health, our natural
abilities and spiritual gifts, everything that we have has been given to us by Him, and that for one purpose. Jesus has a bride that He has bled for, and we are the ones He has sent to bring her home:

Jesus has a bride. And it would do us good to remind ourselves often of this, that His bride is still out there. She is in darkness, she is in prison, she is being beaten and starving and cut and bruised and molested by Satan. “I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd” (Jn.10:16). Jesus says, “I must bring them also.” I don't think we hear the longing in His voice. Or maybe we don't care to hear it.

What would we endure—or better yet, what are we enduring for His bride, so precious to Jesus? Are we even willing to give up one meal for her? To tell Him we don't want to rest or eat and be comfortable until she is safe and to plead with Him that He would bring her home? Am I willing to plead with Him by sleeping even one night outside my comfortable mosquito net here? The vast majority aren't willing to give up even one hour a week to pray for her at the prayer meeting. I guess we're just too busy. How we spend our time, how much money we are giving to Christ's cause in the world, how we are crying out for her in our prayers shows us where our hearts really are.  

We are told that it was at great pains that David laid up these riches for the house of God (v14). It seems that though David was king, yet he didn't live as a king. Though he was rich, yet for the sake of the house of God he became poor. He was investing in eternity at great personal cost. Are we? Oh Jesus, infuse us with Your passion.

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86His Precious Bride, pp121-122.
We saw in 1 Chronicles 22 that David's charge to his son Solomon is a rich picture for us of the charge that Christ has given to each one of us as His disciples. Solomon was given the weighty command to build the temple of the Lord; and we have similarly been given the command to take the gospel to all creation. Once again, this must move us to consider, are we truly doing this? Is this really the heartbeat of our lives and everything we do? Is this the grande purpose for which we live? Are we consumed with zeal for His house (Psalm 69:9)? Is it our very food to do the will of the Father and accomplish His work (John 4:34)?

But the first and foremost charge that David gives his son Solomon in our present text is not about doing anything. The first word of admonition that David gives to his son is recorded in 1 Chronicles 28:9: “As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts.” Indeed, Solomon had much work ahead of him. But David knew that the work that was the most important—without which nothing would matter—was the work of his son keeping guard over his own heart. At the end of the day, what God required of Solomon was not to do great things for Him (as if God needed anything)—it was for Solomon to know the Lord; and to serve Him with a whole heart and willing mind.

We are far too prone to become Pharisees, trying to impress or please God by doing things for Him. God doesn't need our service. And God doesn't want our service if it's done in this way. What God wanted the most from Solomon, and what God wants the most from you and from me, is to know the Lord. Indeed, Solomon would go on to build a grande house for God; a house like no other. But somewhere along the way, Solomon neglected to keep his own heart. Solomon would accomplish great things for God; but his heart ended up growing cold in the process. There are warnings here. What does it really profit us to become successful in the ministry if our hearts become distant from the Lord in the process? What does it profit us to speak or eat or do anything at all if it's not really done for Christ,
and in the Holy Spirit? What does it profit us to sell everything and give to the poor, and even die as martyrs on the mission field, if its not done in love (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)? But it seems that Solomon forgot this. I guess with all the ministry he was doing, the grande work must have occupied all his time, leaving him little or no time to seek refreshment in secret communion with his God. We need to keep at the forefront of our minds the Biblical truth that doing ministry doesn't always glorify God. The word that described what Martha was doing in the kitchen (Luke 10) is the same word used elsewhere in the Scriptures for ministry (in Acts 6:4; 2 Timothy 4:5). Martha was doing ministry; but she wasn't glorifying Jesus. Indeed, we can know for sure that the kind of ministry done in this way will be powerless, fruitless, Christ-less, reward-less, and meaningless. I was very much affected with a quote I read recently from a man who had spent much time as a missionary in the east:

The Christian life is an experience. It is more than simply intellectual understanding of the truth, though that is foundational. It is more than a practical expression of ethics and charity outwardly, though that is an outcome. It is at its heart a relationship with a living Person. Brothers, the heart of the Christian experience is an experiential relationship with a living Person. While the Word of God is the foundation of Christian experience, and while practical love outwardly shown is the outworking and fruit of Christian experience, the heart of real religion and the heart of Christian experience—hear me carefully—is secret communion with the living God . . . So I sense now at this point of my life, if I never preach again, if I never talk to another person again, if I never have the opportunity to go back overseas, I want to know God, and I want to know God in the secret place, and I want the anointing of the Holy Ghost, and I want to see the face of Jesus Christ, and I want to live in the presence of God in prayer, and to know Him and to love Him, and to walk with Him. And if He will touch me there, if He will anoint me there, and if He will fill me there, and if He will meet me there, then I won't care about anything else! That's the only thing I want, the only thing I desire, and that is the purpose, the calling, the ministry that I want to finish with, to be a man that knows God, that sees the face of God.
Only when we truly grasp and own this can we move on to consider David's second charge to his son to build the house of the Lord (vv10,20).

A question emerges as we ponder over the pages of our present chapter: why is it that David seems to repeat himself again here in chapter 28? In 1 Chronicles 22 he told his son Solomon, “Be strong and courageous, do not fear nor be dismayed” (v13). He reminds him that the whole land is subdued before him and there is no limit to the gold and silver he needs to build the temple of the Lord. David exhorts him several times to arise and build the sanctuary of the Lord. Though there is some new material here in this chapter, the thrust of David's message seems to be the same: “Consider now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be courageous and act” (v10). In verse 20 again, “Be strong and courageous, and act; do not fear nor be dismayed.”

Though there may be several applications for us here, I believe this has special application for the calling to the ministry. Truly a minister needs the promises of God just as much as the charge to: “be courageous and act,” for a minister of the gospel has no less of a work before him than Solomon. John Flavel, speaking upon Paul's words in 2 Timothy 4:1-2, declared to his fellow ministers: “We have a solemn charge given us by Christ. The precious and immortal souls of men are committed to us; souls, about which God hath concerned his thoughts form eternity; for the purchase of which Christ hath shed his own blood; for the winning of which he hath put you into this office; at whose hands he will also require and account of them in the great day.” Likewise, Thomas Brooks has said: “Now, a man were better to have all the blood of the world upon him than the blood of one soul. The blood of souls, of all blood, cries loudest and wounds deepest. The lowest, the darkest, and the hottest place in hell will be the sad and dreadful portion of such upon whose skirts the blood of souls shall be found at last. Hence that passage of Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:16, ‘Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel.’ The motto that should be writ upon preachers' study-doors, and on their walls, and on all the books they look on, on the beds they lie on, and on the seats they sit on, etc, should be this: 'The blood of souls, the blood of souls.'”

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87 The Character of a Complete Evangelical Pastor, John Flavel, Banner of Truth Magazine V1, p253.
young ministers who had come to see him with the following sober word of exhortation: “Your work is great, and requires great seriousness. For my own part, I never preached a sermon which, in the composing, did not cost me prayers, with strong cries and tears. I never went up into the pulpit but as if I were going to give an account of myself to God.” Truly, the responsibility of a minister is great.

Solomon seemed to be keenly aware of the greatness of the task before him. We know from 1 Kings 3:7 that though Solomon had been anointed king, yet he felt like a little child considering the massive work he had been entrusted with. Perhaps what Solomon felt was very similar to what Moses struggled with on the mountain of God, when the Lord told him that he was the one who had been chosen to deliver the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt. Moses hesitated because he had been made to taste of his weaknesses. During his time in the wilderness the Lord had shown him how frail he really was. Whereas years earlier he felt himself up to the task, he now trembles before the Lord's calling, keenly aware of his total insufficiency. So here Solomon stands, perhaps wondering in his heart what Paul would later write in 2 Corinthians 2:16 concerning the work of the ministry: “who is adequate for these things?”

Perhaps it is for this reason that David, in the hearing of all the people, not only charges his son to build the sanctuary of the Lord, but reminds him of all the promises that are behind him in his work. He reminds Solomon first, in verses 4 through 6, of the Lord's choosing him. God had chosen the tribe of Judah. In Judah, He had taken David to be king over the people. And the Lord had told David that He had chosen his son Solomon to build the house for His name. In the course of his discourse, David recounts to his son no less than three times that the Lord had indeed chosen him for the great work before him (vv:5-6, 10). Matthew Henry says it best, “David gives Solomon the reason why he should build the temple. Because God named him. Nothing is more powerful to engage us in any service for God, than to know that we are appointed thereto.”

There are few things that can give more vigor to the minister of the gospel than the truth that Christ himself has called him and commissioned him to that great work which is set before him.

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89Quoted from The Puritan View of the Ministry, Murray, Banner of Truth Magazine V1, p264.

90In his concise commentary, on chapter 22:6-16.
David also affectionately tells his son Solomon not to fear or be dismayed, reminding him that the Lord himself is with him. Just as the Lord had been with Moses (Exodus 3:12), as certainly as the Lord had been with Joshua (1:5,9), as truly as the Lord had been with Gideon, and as surely as the Lord had been with David, so the Lord would be with Solomon. This truth is also echoed in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:20), and the same promise thus given to every believer, and to ministers of the gospel in a special way.

And who are the ones that God chooses? Who are the ones that the Lord sends as laborers into His harvest field? Great men of God? Those worthy and deserving of such a calling? Whom did our Lord Jesus appoint to go into all the nations and preach His gospel in Matthew 28:18? Once again, it was the same ones who continued to struggle with remaining unbelief in Matthew 28:17. Here are the apostles, standing before the risen Christ, and yet some of them doubted. And yet these are the ones that Christ commissions as His emissaries. When the Lord uses weak and broken tools to do incredible and marvelous things, nobody will give the credit to the tool. The glory must go to Christ alone. Those who are chosen of God, those who are called into ministry, those who are sent into the harvest fields, are never “great men” of God! They are always weak men desperately in need of the grace of God. Paul wrote to Timothy encouraging him to “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus,” reminding him also, “If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself” (2 Timothy 2:1,13). Paul himself wrote from experience. He knew what it was like to fail in the ministry—to be wracked with weakness and insufficiency. The Christian, and especially the minister, must be absolutely convinced of what David tells Solomon in verse 20: “He will not fail you nor forsake you.” We will drop the ball. We will fail Him. But He will never fail or forsake us. Let us therefore similarly go forth as weak men—but those who are armed with the promises of the Lord, and strong in the faithfulness of our God: “But the lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him” (Psalm 103:17).
It is good to be reminded that the most spiritual things can be done in unholy ways; and the most common things can be done in ways that bring great glory to God. The apostle Paul brings this to light when he says, “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). Missionary work can be done in a way that actually dishonors God, if it is done merely out of a sense of duty or obligation. Preaching can dishonor God, if it is done for the wrong reasons, or without genuine love. Drinking a glass of orange juice can bring much glory to Jesus. Eating a bowl of soup can be done to the glory of God, if it is gobbled down with thankfulness to the Lord. Washing the dishes in the Spirit can be profoundly Christ-exalting.

Our text records how David and all the people give sacrificially to the Lord for the work of the building of the temple (v14). But the Holy Spirit is very keen that we not miss something else about the text. We read throughout the passage that they didn't just give sacrificially; they gave sacrificially with glad and willing hearts (vv6,9,17,22). Paul speaks about the same thing in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. He is collecting funds to help the church in Jerusalem, and he is eager that the Gentile churches help their Jewish brothers and sisters. But he would rather have them not give at all than to give without glad and willing hearts: “Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (9:7). This truth applies not only to our sacrificial giving of our hard-earned money and resources to Christ and His cause in the world. Paul uses very similar language in speaking about preaching the gospel. He says in 1 Corinthians 9:16-17, “For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me.” Paul is here affirming first of all that Christ calls him and all of us to refuse to remain silent. Like Peter and John before the council, we must tell the world that we cannot keep our mouths shut about Christ. Indeed, we cannot be faithful before Him if we are silent before them. But Paul adds that if we fail
to witness “voluntarily,” we have no reward. In other words, if we do not witness out of a willing heart—gladly, cheerfully—but rather because we know we ought to—more out of a sense of duty than love—then there is no reward. We are not only to give to Christ with cheerful, thankful, and willing hearts—but we are to preach Christ to the world in this way. Everything we do as believers is to be done with thankfulness to the Lord, for the glory of the Lord, with the power that He alone gives, in the Spirit, and in love. One might have asked David: “David, don’t you think what you already gave from the spoil of battle was enough?” But the question on David's heart is not how much he has to give. If a man loves his wife, he doesn't ask himself how many roses he has to buy for their anniversary! The question itself reveals something about the heart. God wants us to serve Him gladly.

Where does this kind of heart-attitude come from? In our passage, the people offer sacrificially and willingly because David does so first. In verses 3 through 6 we read that David of his own personal means offers over and above the incredible amount he had already given earlier in 22:14. It is only after this that David addresses the people, asking who would be willing to give to the Lord. We have here a representation of the same reasoning used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 8. In the same context described already above, Paul says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich” (v9). This is the only thing that will stir the heart of the Corinthians, and it is the only thing that will likewise cause us to give and suffer and preach and die with willing hearts. Our eyes must behold afresh all that our King has done. Our hearts must be drawn again to the cross. We must be transformed by the message of the gospel. We stood as guilty criminals before the holy Judge of heaven and earth, with all creation calling out for our condemnation. As a serial murderer stands before a judge whose own daughter was among his victims, so we stood before God Almighty. As the family of his other victims cry out for justice, justice itself cried out for our blood. Then something happened that no man can explain. Jesus came to the earth. “My Father,” He pleaded in the garden, “if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.” But for the first time, heaven was silent. Jesus had given to His disciples the night before the cup of blessing—His own cup He had given to them; taking in exchange the foaming cup of the fierce wrath of God. On the cross, the torments of millions of
infinities of hell were unleashed upon His body in a matter of hours. While guilty Barabbas was released, the innocent Lamb of God was slaughtered. As you and I mocked and laughed at Him, He shed His blood. His body was broken, that we might eat of the Bread of Life. He drank down the bottomless cup of the wrath of God, to the last drop, that you and I might be given the cup of never-ending blessing. It is good to think about these things as we hold the cup of communion wine in our hands (1 Corinthians 11:25). We ought never to forget what cup it is that we hold, what it cost Him to give us, and what cup we should be holding instead. It is the message of the gospel alone, applied afresh to our consciences, that is able to melt our stony hearts and cause us once again to gladly lay before Him our money, our family, and our lives, as a sacrifice of praise.

David does not ask the people to do what he has not done himself. We have seen above that this is exactly how Christ asks of us. But I believe there is another application behind David offering willingly to the Lord first. There is a great need today for living examples. No minister should ever ask his flock to do what he has not himself done first. No minister should ever preach a sermon he has not been deeply branded with himself. As Flavel has said: “Believe it, sirs, all our reading, studying, and preaching, is but trifling hypocrisy, till the things read, studied, and preached, be felt in some degree upon our own heart.” He goes on, “The people have eyes to see how we walk, as well as ears to hear what we say.”91 We ought as ministers to be able to say to our flocks as Paul did to his: “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Paul knew it was not enough to feed the sheep good teaching and sound doctrine. He began his address to the elders at Ephesus in Acts 20 with the words, “You yourselves know.” He didn’t just teach them; he showed them what it meant to live a life consecrated to God (Acts 20:35). Let us never be found as those of whom Augustine spoke, “with their doctrine they build, and with their lives they destroy.”92 Our gospel will go forth with power and in the Holy Spirit only to the extent that our lives bear witness to what we teach. This is especially evident in Paul’s words to the Thessalonians, as he reflects upon his time spent with them. Notice where he says the power came from in his preaching: “for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but

92Quoted from Spurgeon, The Minister’s Self-Watch, p18.
also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake” (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

We learn also in this passage the result of true obedience. We read that, “the people rejoiced because they had offered so willingly” (v9), and, “they ate and drank that day before the Lord with great gladness” (v22). Here we end at the place we began. Eating and drinking before the Lord with sincerity and gladness of heart was a mark of the early church (Acts 2:46). It is a sign of true grace in a soul, and the presence of the Spirit in a church body. It is no small feat, it is no small victory, when an individual, a family, or church can eat and drink with sincerity and thankfulness of heart before the Lord. Gladness in the Lord was what led them to give so sacrificially, and having given, gladness in the Lord was the result of their sacrificial giving.

We will end with one last word of exhortation. It may be that you find yourself unable to give sacrificially and gladly to the Lord because you still have not given your heart to Him. Psalm 110:3 declares, “Your people will offer freely in the day of Your power.” It may be that you are unable to offer yourself freely to God because you have never truly experienced His power. For it is only when a man experiences the regenerating power of God in the new birth, and is given a completely new heart in Christ, that he is able to serve God in spirit and truth, with a whole heart, and to do so willingly. Friend, if you find your heart unwilling to offer itself to God, I encourage you to go to God in the secret place—for He is in the secret place—and ask Him to do for you what you yourself are unable to do. Ask Him to do for you what He has promised to do for all who call upon Him. He is the Living God, and Jesus has made solemn promises to every person who comes to Him asking and seeking forgiveness and repentance (Matthew 7:8). Go to Him, in the secret place, pleading His own promises. He will meet you there.
Appendix:

Outlines of David and Solomon

David as a Type of Christ:

The Life of David:

* David is born in Bethlehem (Jn.7:42), as our Lord.
* His name means, “Beloved one;” he is the one in whom the Lord delights (2Sam.22:20; cf. Is.42:1).
* David is a shepherd; our Lord the Good Shepherd (Ez.37; Jn. 10).
* The anointing of David and the anointing of Christ are similar (1Sam.16).

“David's anointing remarkably agrees with what the prophecies say of the anointing of the Messiah, which speak of him as a being anointed with the Spirit of God. So David was anointed with the Spirit of God, at the same time that he was anointed with oil (1Sam.16:13).”

* David was hated and envied by his brothers (1Sam.17).
* The oppressed, distressed, poor, and afflicted came to David and he became their captain (cf. Luke 4:18-19).
* David was a prophet and a king (Acts 2:29,30); and at times acted as a priest (2Sam.6:17; 2Sam.24:18ff), pointing to the offices of Christ.
* For David, as with Christ, there is suffering before glory.
* Under David the land promised to Abraham was subdued in its fullness (Gen.15:19; Ex.23:31; 2Sam.8).

“David subdued all the remainder of the Canaanites, and the ancient inhabitants of the land, and so perfected what Joshua had begun in giving the people the land.”

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“So that Joshua, that eminent type of Christ, did but begin the work of giving Israel the possession of the promised land; but left it to be finished by that much greater type and ancestor of Christ, even David, who subdued far more of that land than ever Joshua had done. And in this extent of his and Solomon's dominion was some resemblance of the great extent of Christ's kingdom; which is set forth by this very thing: “He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth,” Psalm 72:8."\(^{95}\)

“David subdued all the remainder of the Canaanites, and the ancient inhabitants of the land, and so perfected what Joshua had begun in giving the people the land.”\(^{96}\)

David brought the wealth of the heathen into Jerusalem and, as it were, built the temple with it (2Sam.8:11-12).

**David's kingship was in stages: In the Wilderness and Ziklag, Hebron, and Jerusalem:**

* In the wilderness and at Ziklag (after he had been anointed, but before he was crowned king), David is much in suffering; signifying Jesus' earthly ministry.
* At Hebron he was king—but only over Judah; it was the few who followed him: “Lord, are there many who are entering the kingdom of God?” “Strive to enter through the narrow gate...” It is the remnant that will be saved.
* At Jerusalem he reigned over all and subdued the entirety of the land under him; signifying the time of the golden years of the church to come, and the consummation of the kingdom at Christ's second coming.

**Saul and David: A Picture of the 1st and 2nd Adam:**

*Saul is chosen first as king, but rejected because of his disobedience.


At first we might (as I have) wonder about Saul's sin. What was so bad about it? It doesn't strike us as a big deal, especially in light of that fact that David offers the exact same sacrifices to God (2Sam.6:17; 24:25).

There is an incredible amount of similarity between Adam's sin and Saul's sin:

1. Saul is tested with one command: to wait the appointed 7 days. Samuel's later words make clear that the future of Saul's kingdom was bound together with this test (1Sam.13:13-14).
2. That one command superficially seems a light an insignificant thing (as it was for Adam).
3. Saul fails the test just like his father Adam.
4. Samuel's words to Saul echo the Lord's words to Adam in the garden (1Sam.13:11; Gen.3:13).
5. After Saul sins, he tries to blame Samuel for his failure, just as Adam tried to blame-shift (13:11).
6. Saul's digression appears not gradual but instantaneous. He seems a humble man of God before, and after there seems to be no greater model of wickedness and evil than he. Just as with Adam, one sin led to death, so too Saul's one sin leads to the destruction of his kingdom and his character (13:13-14).
7. Later there is war between the “house of Saul” and the “house of David” (2Sam.3:1), a type of the war between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (Gen.3:15), between the sons of God and the sons of the devil.
8. David for a long time appeared utterly defeated, but in the end there was overwhelming victory. So it was with Christ, who was made to taste the cross before triumphing in resurrection glory.
9. Saul's descendants are punished for his sins (2Sam.21). So too all in Adam will die because of Adam's disobedience (Rom.5:18).

Note:

Sometimes David himself is portrayed as first and second Adam, as in 1 Chronicles 21-22:

* David as first Adam (21:1-17): Because of Adam's sin, death spread to all mankind; and in the same way, it was because of David's sin that the plague breaks out upon the people.
* David as second Adam (21:18ff):
  1. Threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite (2Chron.3:1).
2. Mount Moriah: Location of Abraham and Isaac: “The Lord WILL provide.”
3. Very possibly the same place called Golgotha in the New Testament.

The Reigns of David and Solomon:

David and Solomon: A Picture of God the Father and Christ the Son:

*David had chosen his son Solomon to reign after him long before he was publicly anointed for that office (1Chron.22:9).
*God the Father set Christ on the throne forever (Psalm 2), yet His authority is rejected by some, who would steal the throne from Him and set up their own kingdoms, as Solomon's was by Adonijah (1 Kings 1).
*David the father gives a special mission and task to the son. David charges his son Solomon with a command: to build the house of the Lord. The Father had set apart all that was necessary to build the house, and committed that which was set apart into the care of the Son, that He might accomplish the work given to Him by the Father. Sound familiar?*

1 Kings 7:51, “Thus all the work that King Solomon performed in the house of the Lord was finished. And Solomon brought in the things dedicated by his father David, the silver and the gold and the utensils, and he put them in the treasuries of the house of the Lord.”

John 6:39, “This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.”

John 17:4, “I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.”

David and Solomon: A Picture of Christ in His First and Second Comings:

*David gives the pattern for the temple, but it is finished with Solomon. Also, the temple is finished during the feast of
booths/tabernacles, which is a clear picture of the celebration of the consummation of the kingdom! (1Kings 8:2, 65):

“The building of the temple was a great type of three things, viz. Of Christ, especially his human nature; of the church; and of heaven. The tabernacle seemed rather to represent the church in its movable, changeable state in this world. But that beautiful, glorious, costly structure, the temple, that succeeded the tabernacle, seems especially to represent the church in its glorified state in heaven.”

*The temple was adorned with all sorts of treasures from heathen lands (1Kings 8:26ff; 9:10-11; in comparison with below).

Psalm 72:10-11. “Let the kings of Tarshish and of the islands bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts. And let all kings bow down before him, all nations serve him.”

Isaiah 60:5, 9. “the abundance of the sea will be turned to you, the wealth of the nations will come to you...Surely the coastlands will wait for Me; and the ships of Tarshish will come first, to bring your sons from afar, their silver and their gold with them, for the name of the Lord your God, and for the Holy One of Israel because He has glorified you.”

*David is merciful to his enemies; but they are punished under Solomon. David seems to represent Christ in His first coming as the Lamb of God; Solomon seems to prefigure Christ in His second coming as the fierce Lion of Judah who will punish the enemies of God. In His first coming Christ came to be broken for sinners; at the second coming Christ will come and break unrepentant sinners:

“The beginning of Solomon's reign was a remarkable time of vengeance on the wicked, and such as had been opposers or false friends of David and Solomon.”

* There were many wars during the days of David, but only peace under Solomon's rule (1Chron.23:25).

1Kings 4:25. “So Judah and Israel lived in safety, every man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.”

“Thus God was pleased, in one of Messiah’s ancestors, remarkably to shadow forth the kingdom of Christ and himself reigning in his glory. David, a man of war, a man who had shed much blood, and whose life was full of troubles and conflicts, was a more suitable representation of Christ in his state of humiliation, wherein he was conflicting with his enemies. But Solomon, a man of peace, was a representation more especially of Christ exalted, triumphing and reigning in his kingdom of peace.”

* Solomon’s reign was a time of great feasting and rejoicing in Israel (1Kings 4:20, 22, 23; 8:65).
* Solomon’s throne was of white ivory (1Kings 10:18). So too is Christ’s judgment throne (Revelation 20), the great white throne judgment).
* Picturing our Lord, Solomon ruled as the king of kings:

\[ \text{1Kings 4:21, 24.} \] “Now Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt; they brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life...For he had dominion over everything west of the River, from Tiphsah even to Gaza, over all the kings west of the River; and he had peace on all sides around about him.” (cf. 2Chron.4:26).

* Solomon’s reign began with the blowing of a trumpet (1Kings 1:34, 39), as will Christ’s second coming.
* Solomon’s name signifies “peace,” or “peaceable.” Christ is known as the Prince of peace.

David and Solomon: A Picture of Christ and the Church:

* David’s charge to Solomon and the Great Commission:

\[ \text{See 1Chron.22:6-19; see also 22:6, 13-19.} \] The land has been subdued—All authority has been given to me (v18). Everything that had to be done has been completed (v16). Now arise and work, build the house of God (v16). Behold, God is with you (22:18)!

\[ \text{John 20:21,} \] “as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”

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The Life and Reign of Solomon:

A Picture of Christ in His First Coming:

*Loved by the Lord in a special way; called beloved of the Lord (2Sam.12:24).
*Anointed for his public office by the priest, as Christ was in his baptism by John.
*Clothed with the spirit of wisdom above any other man (1Kings 3:12).
*Appointed by his father for a very special and particular work: to build the temple of God. Solomon finished the work which had been entrusted to him from his father (7:51); and so too Christ both in His earthly ministry of teaching and on the cross finished the work which His Father had given Him (As noted above; see Matt.26:54; Luke 4:18-19; John 6:39; 12:49; 17:4; 19:30; 10:18; 14:31; 18:11).
*Solomon's chose 12 officials (1Kings 4:7); and Christ 12 Apostles.

A Picture of Revival Blessings upon the Church through Outpourings of the Spirit of Christ:

*Compare 10:14-25, Isaiah 11 and Isaiah 60 (in the context of Romans 11). Many throughout church history have held firm to the belief that the Scriptures teach before the second coming of Christ, there will be glory days for the church such as we have never seen. This will happen as the Spirit of God is poured out upon His church in revival (as at Pentecost and different seasons of revival throughout the history of the church); and will culminate in the worldwide revival that will be ushered in following the conversion of the Jews.

A Picture of Christ in His Second Coming (see notes above under David and Solomon)

A Picture of the First Adam:

In his glory:
*For just as Solomon's reign is a beautiful and glorious type of Christ the second Adam in several ways (both in His first and second comings), so too Solomon is a picture of the first Adam. For Solomon was given glory, riches, and blessing
that were incomparable to anyone else, as the first Adam in his state before falling into sin.

_In his fall into sin:_

*Solomon is given here a specific charge of the Lord, to follow His commandments (see also 9:4-5). For Solomon to obey would mean life and an enduring kingdom not only for himself, but for all who would come after him (6:13), just as it was for the first Adam (and to disobey would mean the opposite, as we have in 9:6-9). But just like his father in the garden, Solomon failed to keep the command of the Lord, and in breaking the Lord's command it was not only himself who would suffer—Solomon's sin would result in tearing apart the entire kingdom, as we will later see in 1 Kings chapter 12.