

ADRIAN ROGERS

LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



1 S A M U E L

These transcripts are taken straight from live audio recordings of Adrian Rogers during his tenure as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. As such some of the transcripts may contain stutters, stammers, transcription errors, and other authentic remarks as would be common in a live setting.

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How to Raise Godly Children

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 9, 1993

Main Scripture Text: 1 Samuel 1:2, 10–17

“And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.”

1 SAMUEL 1:11

Outline

Introduction

- I. Hannah’s Motherly Instinct and the Power of Priority
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Introduction

Be finding, please, in God’s Word, 1 Samuel—1 Samuel chapter 1. Today, we’re talking on this subject: “How to Raise Godly Children”—“How to Raise Godly Kids,” if you prefer.

Sometimes you speak to a woman, and you might say to her in the course of the conversation, “And, what do you do?” And, she may say, “Oh, I’m just a mother; I’m just a homemaker—that’s all.” What an understatement—“*just* a mother, just a homemaker.” I want to say without any stutter, without any stammer, without any equivocation, without any apology, without hesitation, and without any exaggeration: the most powerful class of people on this earth are mothers. I mean that with all of my heart. That is not a sentimental thought; that’s not just a thought for Mother’s Day. Well, it has been said, “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.” The man may be the head of the home; the mother is the heart of the home.

Now, in 1 Samuel chapter 1, we’re going to meet a mother whose name was Hannah. And today, if your name is Ann or Annie, you’re named after this woman, and you’re honored to be named after her, because the name *Hannah* means “gracious.”

And, what a gracious woman she was! In my estimation, Hannah was a “maximum mom,” but it wasn’t easy for her to be a maximum mom because she did not live in ideal circumstances. And, you don’t have to be in an ideal circumstance to be a maximum mother. As a matter of fact, Hannah lived in time when polygamy was permitted, and it was tolerated (at least in that day). And, she was one of two wives. The other wife had two children. She had no children, and she was heartbroken. And, on top of that, she was ridiculed and taunted by the other woman that was her adversary. She prayed, and God gave her children. And, the first child God gave her was a man named Samuel, who became one of the greatest prophets in all of Israel.

And, in the story of Hannah, and in her prayer, and in her ministry to that boy, I want you to see today some principles. These are some principles that I want to give to every mother here—and, for that matter, to all of us—“How to Raise Godly Children.” Now, these principles come right out of the Word of God. Now, there are several things I want you to notice about Hannah.

I. Hannah’s Motherly Instinct and the Power of Priority

The first thing I want you to notice about Hannah is her motherly instinct and the power of priority—the power of priority. Look, if you will, in verse 2—the last part of verse 2: “*Hannah had no children*” (1 Samuel 1:2). Then, look in verse 10: “*And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept [sorely]*” (1 Samuel 1:10). That is, she was heartbroken. Why was she heartbroken? Because she didn’t have a baby, and she wanted a baby.

Right away, I want you to see the instinct that God put in her heart, and the priority that was there, and the power of that priority. There is something drastically wrong in America today, when we are raising a generation of ladies who have no desires to be mothers. The Bible says in Psalm 127, “*[Little children] are [the] heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward*” (Psalm 127:3). The Bible declares in Psalm 128, verse 3—speaking of a man who is blessed, the Bible says, “*[And] thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold...thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD*” (Psalm 128:3–4).

Do you have God’s priority for your priority, or do you say, “Well, my priority is to exercise my talents, my gifts; I want to be somebody in today’s world”? There is something basically wrong in America when we have to look upon children as burdens rather than blessings. Say, “Amen.” It is true. There is something basically wrong. I’m going to tell you something else: there is something drastically wrong when little babies are killed in their mother’s wombs—drastically wrong. You see, the safest place on this earth ought to be the mother’s womb, but many times it is the most dangerous.

My heart goes out to those ladies who want to have children and cannot have them,

those who are not blessed with the ability to bear children. But oh, those who are married and do not have children for selfish reasons or for other reasons—I feel sorry for you. You are missing a blessing. You say, “Children today—they cost so much. They’re so much time. They’re so much trouble. Children will make a rich man poor.” Oh, no—they make a poor man rich. The rich man can’t take his money to Heaven. I’m taking all my children to Heaven.

Now friend, listen to me—listen to me: I want you to see, first of all, her instinct—her instinct—and the power of priority. Her motherly instinct was to have a child, and she said, “O God—O God—give me a baby.”

II. Hannah’s Motherly Intercession and the Power of Prayer

Now, here’s the second thing I want you to see: not only her motherly instinct, but I want you to see her motherly intercession and the power of prayer—the power of prayer. Look, if you will, in verse 10: “*And she was in bitterness of...the LORD*”—“*she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept [sorely]*” (1 Samuel 1:10). Do you know when you began to raise godly children? Before they’re born and before they’re conceived—that’s when you begin to raise godly children. Before she had conceived, she’s down on her knees praying, and her prayer was one of desperation. And, she prayed and said, “O God, I want You to give to me a baby.” God answered her prayer. Samuel was born because of her prayer.

I was thinking of all the children who’ve been born in the Bible we read about who were born as an answer to prayer, born of women who heretofore could not have had children. Sarah waited until 90 years of age to have a baby. As a result of prayer and faith, she gave birth to a child. His name was Isaac, who blessed the world. Rachel—I have a granddaughter named Rachel. Rachel prayed and said, “[O God,] give me children, or...I die” (Genesis 30:1). And, God heard her prayer, and her son was Joseph, who delivered the nation of Israel. Manoah’s wife was barren, but touched by faith and the hand of God, she conceived, brought forth a son whose name was Samson, who was a mighty judge in Israel. Ruth was not only childless, but she was a widow. But, she prayed, and God enabled her to conceive. And, she gave birth to a son who was Obed, and Obed was the grandfather of King David and is in the line and the lineage of the Savior. Because she prayed—Elizabeth was a woman stricken in years, a woman who’d not had a child—and Elizabeth prayed, and God gave Elizabeth a child. And, the name of that child was John (John the Baptist), and Jesus said of that child, “There was not a greater born of woman than John the Baptist” (Matthew 11:11)—born because the mother said, “O God, I want a child.”

And, here, in the Old Testament, is Hannah—Hannah praying and asking God, saying, “O God, please—please, God—give me a child.” Samuel was born, who was a

great prophet in Israel; perhaps the most well-known person between Moses and David was the little boy who was born.

Oh, I tell you something, friend: we need more children who are born in answer to prayer. That was a good place for an “amen.” We need more people who are born in answer to prayer. And again, I want to come back to the tragedy of abortion. When there are mothers who are praying and asking God for children, the others are taking the blessing of the Lord and putting God’s blessing to death. We’re praying, “God, why don’t You give us a cure for cancer? God, isn’t there some answer to the AIDS problem? O God, what are we going to do about the problem of this thing or that thing in our world today? God, why don’t You send us an answer?” Maybe God might say, “I did send you an answer: I gave you a child, and that child had the answer to that problem; and you killed that child in its mother’s womb.” “O God, why don’t You send us a prophet? Why don’t You send somebody to lead the nation?” God did send a prophet, and his name was Samuel.

III. Hannah’s Motherly Intention and the Power of Purpose

Now, there’s a third thing I want you to see: not only do I want you to see her motherly instincts and the power of priority, and not only do I want you to see her motherly intercession and the power of prayer, but I want you to see her motherly intention and the power of purpose. Why did she want a child? Look in verse 11: “*And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of [thy] handmaid, and remember me, and not forget [thy] handmaid, but wilt give unto [thy] handmaid a...child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of [my] life, and there shall no razor come upon his head*” (1 Samuel 1:11).

Now, what was her purpose? She said, “O God, I want a child, and I want that child to glorify You.” Now, here’s the principle—the principle is clear: that we should see every child as a gift from God and, therefore, as a gift to be given back to God. Hannah said, “God, if You’ll give me this baby, Lord, I’ll give him back to You, and I’ll give him back to You to be a Nazarite.” That’s what she meant when she said, “*No razor [shall] come upon his head*” (1 Samuel 1:11). In Numbers chapter 6 and verse 5, here’s what is the vow of a Nazarite: “*All the days of the vow of his separation...shall no razor come upon his head: until the days...fulfilled, in...which he separateth himself unto the LORD*” (Numbers 6:5). Now, what that meant was simply this: she was saying, “O God, if You will give me a boy, I will give that boy back to You.” And, evidently, that prayer had been put in her heart, because God answered the prayer. And remember, *the prayer that gets to Heaven is the prayer that starts in Heaven*. She was praying, and God the Holy Spirit prompted her to pray this particular prayer.

Do you know why many mothers are failing to raise godly children? They do not

have the power of purpose. What is your purpose for your child? What do you want for your child? Mothers, what is the prayer for your child? Is it for health, success, popularity, fame, wealth? Is that what you pray for your child? Do you think that if your son, that brilliant boy of yours, were to become a minister, it'd be a waste of time? Or, a missionary, who would bury his life overseas somewhere where no one would ever hear of him—do you think that, perhaps, would be a tragic waste? Maybe that's the reason that God is not hearing your prayer: maybe you don't have a priority; maybe you don't have a purpose for your child.

Do you think perhaps if Hannah had prayed, "O God, give me a baby, but Lord, I just want him to have a life of ease and luxury. I want him to be well known, and I want to bask in the sunlight of his fame," do you think that prayer would have been answered? James says in James chapter 4: "*[we] ask, and receive not, because [we] ask amiss, that [we might] consume it upon [our] lusts*" (James 4:3). Do you remember that scripture that I read to you a few moments ago in Psalm 127 that says, "*The fruit of the womb is [God's] reward*" (Psalm 127:3)? That Psalm goes on to say, "*As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are the children of [one's] youth*" (Psalm 127:4). What are arrows for? Arrows are to be shot at the enemy, and every child that God gives you is to be an arrow shot against Satan's kingdom. That's what Hannah was praying for.

What are your ambitions for your children? Do you know what my ambition for my children is? I can give it to you from the Word of God, from 3 John and verse 4: "*I have no greater joy than to [know] my children walk in [the] truth*" (3 John 1:4). That's it; I have no greater joy. I cannot tell you the times when I would awaken in the morning, early in the morning, to find my darling precious wife out on her knees praying for her children, interceding. Joyce and I, almost every day of our lives, sit at the breakfast table and join our hands together and pray for our children. I don't remember ever that we've asked God to make them wealthy. I don't remember ever that we've asked God to make them successful. I don't remember ever that we've asked God to make them famous. But, I can tell you that we have prayed that they would be used of God, that they would walk in the truth. And, I know that's what Hannah wanted. Hannah said, "God, if You'll give me a child—if You'll give me a child—God, he will be used for You."

"I have no greater joy than to [know] that my children walk in [the] truth" (3 John 1:4). I don't care whether they're well known or not known. I don't care whether they're rich or in poverty. I'd rather them have enough. I'd rather them be healthy—of course I had—but my great joy, my great desire, for my children, and that of my precious wife, is that they walk in the truth. I love that song that says this:

*Give of [thy] sons to bear the message glorious;
Give of [thy] wealth to speed them on their way;
Pour out your [souls] for them in prayer victorious,*

And all [thou spendest, Jesus] will repay.

—MARY ANN THOMPSON

Amen.

IV. Hannah's Motherly Intensity and the Power of Persistence

Here's a fourth thing I want you to see about Hannah: I want you to see not only her intention, but I want you to see her intensity and the power of persistence. Do you think that she just uttered one little prayer and that was it? Begin reading in verse 12: "*And it came to pass, as she continued praying*"—underscore that—"as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth"—that is, "he took notice her lips were moving"—"*[And] Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard*"—here's Hannah. She's praying, and her mouth is moving; but you can't hear the words coming out—"therefore Eli thought that she had been [drunk]. And Eli said unto her, *How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. Count not [thy] handmaid [to be] a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. [And] Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him*" (1 Samuel 1:12–17). Here was a woman who prayed with such intensity that old Eli thought she was drunk. Eli thought that perhaps she had been lingering at wine, but what she was doing was praying, and praying, and praying, and praying, and pouring out her soul to Almighty God.

I said I'm going to talk to you about how to rear godly children. There's no decision you can make in this service or any service, there are no facts that you can get, there are no techniques that you can assimilate that will take the place of persistence—the power of persistence. There will be times where you think you've lost it. There will be times when you think it's over, you've failed—that is, unless you're Bob Sorrell and you've got a little sweet daughter. Poor Bob, poor benighted soul—he doesn't know anything. He had one precious little girl, LeAnn, sweet as honey—most of that's because of Buna, not Bob. But anyway, I tell you what: you'd have to know some of these creatures from another world that God gave us.

And, I can remember back when we were raising our two eldest back in the sixties, it was like riding a bucking bronco. I mean, everything was pulling at them. That's when the Beatles were coming along, and all of these outward influences. And oh, day after day, line upon line, precept upon precept, prayer upon prayer, chastisement upon chastisement, love upon love, it had to be done day in and day out, and day in and day out, and day in and day out.

And, here is Hannah persisting in prayer. And, if you will read this chapter, not only

did she pray here, but you read, as you continue to read in chapter 2 (1 Samuel 2)—boy, when you read the prayer of Hannah in chapter 2, I want to tell you this woman was a mighty woman in prayer. If I had a need and Hannah was around, after reading that prayer again in chapter 2, I would say, “Dear Hannah, if you could just pray for me... I wish you would just pray for me.” Hannah knew how to wait on God.

Isaiah chapter 40, verse 31: *“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength”* (Isaiah 40:31). Psalm 37, verse 7: *“Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him”* (Psalm 37:7). Psalm 27, verse 14: *“Wait on the LORD: [and] be of good courage”* (Psalm 27:14). Psalm 34, verse 4: *“I sought the LORD, and he heard me”* (Psalm 34:4). Jeremiah 29, verse 12: *“Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all [of] your heart”* (Jeremiah 29:12–13). Ephesians 6, verse 18: *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit”* (Ephesians 6:18). Luke 18:1: *“And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”* Here was a woman—here was a woman—who got hold of God, and she would not let go.

“Now,” you say, “Pastor Rogers, I don’t have a baby. If I prayed like Hannah prayed, would you guarantee that God would give me a baby?” No, I can’t guarantee that. That may not be God’s plan for you—that may not be God’s plan for you. And, if it’s not God’s plan, then you must pray until you know the will of God. But, in persistent prayer God’s will is found and God’s will is done. God had a special plan for precious Hannah, but that plan, I am convinced, would have never have come to pass had she not prayed and gotten hold of God.

And so, you see her motherly instincts and the power of priority. You see, my friend, her motherly intercession and the power of prayer. You see her motherly intention and the power of purpose. You see her motherly intensity and power of persistency, as she is praying and praying and does not stop. There’s no cheap way, there’s no easy way, there’s no lazy way to raise godly kids. That’s a fact. It is well worth it.

V. Hannah’s Motherly Influence and the Power of Persuasion

Now, here’s the last thing I want you to see: I want you to see her motherly influence and the power of persuasion—the power of persuasion. Look, if you will, in chapter 1, verse 21: *“And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and his vow. But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever”* (1 Samuel 1:21–22). It’s very obvious Hannah had some priorities, and out of that priority was this: “I’m going to stay with this child in these formative years because ‘well begun is half done.’”

You know, a father has an influence on a child, but the mother makes the deepest impression on a child, especially in that child's infancy. And, here was a woman who changed the course of history—literally, changed the course of history. Look over, if you will, in chapter 3, and look in verse 19: *“And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and [he] let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD”* (1 Samuel 3:19–20).

Well, where did this begin? Well, it began in the heart of this mother. She stayed with him. She rocked him. She loved him. She sang to him. Look, if you will, in chapter 2, verse 18: *“But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen [coat]. Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice”* (1 Samuel 2:18–19). Not only did she teach him at her knee, not only did she visit him and teach him when he was there with Eli, but she did little deeds of love and kindness for him. She sewed little coats and garments for him and brought them to him. All of these things were in her heart and in her mind, as she's trying to influence this child for the Lord.

I look at my own children, and I say, “What influence did my sermons have?” And, to tell you the truth, I don't think a whole lot. I think they enjoyed my sermons, but I really believe that the greatest influence in the life of my children is the life that Joyce and I have lived before them. And, I would tighten the focus a little bit more, and I would say the greatest influence on the life of the children has been the influence of their godly mother. I believe that; that's not just rhetoric to sound good.

And, I think of men whose lives have been influenced by their mother. I think of the former pastor of this church, Dr. Robert G. Lee, and I think of the many times he made reference to his godly mother and the influence that she had on him. I think of the great Abraham Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln said, “All that I am and all that I ever hope to be I owe to my angel mother.” I've had the privilege to sit down face to face with the past president of the United States, talk with him and pray with him. George Bush looked me in the eye and told me what his godly mother meant to him. And then, with deep conviction, said, “If she's not in Heaven, no one is in Heaven.” I think of Augustine, the great theologian, whose mother, Monica, prayed for him and prayed him into the Kingdom. I think of John Wesley. I think of Charles Wesley. What an influence the world owes to the Wesleys, the founders of Methodism. But, the biographer said it was not John and Charles, but it was Susanna, their mother, who was the mother of Methodism.

Thank God for Dr. Billy Graham, but Dr. Billy Graham said this, speaking of his mother, and I quote: “She was one of the most beautiful women I've ever known, and she instilled in me a love for the Bible even when it didn't seem to interest me. She began to read to my brothers and sisters from devotionals, and many times I thought

them extremely boring. Although the testimony of my mother's life helped mold and taught me how to live, the testimony of her last days gave me insight in how to die."

Let me tell you another story, however: a certain boy's mother was a very dominating person. She was a very selfish person. She displayed no affection for any one. She'd been married three times. Her second husband divorced her. The problem was abuse: she was abusing him. The child never knew any love, and he never knew any discipline. That mother said to that child, "Don't call me when I'm at work. I don't want you pestering me." Now, the boy had a good IQ, but he dropped out of high school. He joined the Marines, but he failed in the Marines and got a dishonorable discharge. He had no skills. He had not been helped. He'd not been encouraged by a mother. There wasn't anything he could do, seemingly. He couldn't even get a driver's license. He traveled to a foreign country, and met a woman over there, and married that woman. After a while, she got sick of him and left him. He begged her to come back. About the only thing he knew how to do was shoot a rifle. One day, he decided he would use that talent. November the 22nd, 1963, from a book storage building in Dallas, Texas, Lee Harvey Oswald shot the President of the United States, John Fitzgerald Kennedy. And, maybe, at last, he got the attention that he'd wanted since his child—he got the attention that he'd wanted since a child.

Conclusion

What is the power of a godly mother? Now, listen very carefully, and I'm finished. Listen carefully: there are five things I pray the Holy Spirit will burn into your heart. Mothers, listen—listen. Here they are: the power of priority, the power of prayer, the power of purpose, the power of persistence, and the power of persuasion. All of those are the power of a mother that make a mother an incredibly powerful mother.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. If you're a mother right now, would you begin to pray that God would get things in focus? If you are not a mother but you're a girl and looking forward to marriage, would you pray that God would get your priorities right and that you would see the things that really count? If you're a mother or a father—you've got children that have failed—would you ask God to give you a fresh start and give you wisdom as to how to restore the years the locust have eaten? You say, "Pastor, if my children have done wrong, does it mean definitely that I've failed?" No—no. Even the most godly mother, even the most godly father, is not guaranteed godly children. You must have a desire for your children and a goal for yourself. Your desire for your children is that they be godly children; your goal is that you be a godly parent.

If you are not a Christian, if you're not saved, in order to do the things that we've talked about, you need Jesus in your heart and in your life, and I want to pray for you.

Father, I pray now that You would bless these who are making decisions, who are making priorities, for saying, "God, forgive me where I failed, and give me a fresh start." And, Lord God, I pray for those today who need Jesus, who've not been saved, that today they might come to know Him as their Lord and Savior. In Jesus' holy name. Amen.

A Magnificent Mother

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 11, 1997

Main Scripture Text: 1 Samuel 1;10–28

“For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there.”

1 SAMUEL 1:27–28

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you find 1 Samuel chapter 1? And, when you’ve found it, look up here. And, I want to make a statement to you, and I believe this statement to be true; and here is the statement: mothers are perhaps the most powerful and influential force on the face of the earth. Let me say it again: mothers, perhaps, are the most powerful and influential class of persons upon the face of the earth.

Now, we are in difficulty today in America, and the problem in America is that we’re like a ship lost at sea without a rudder, without a compass, on a dark and stormy night. The anchor is gone. What is the anchor? What holds the home? It is motherhood. And, there is a war against motherhood in America; the result—immorality, adultery, fornication, homosexuality, militant feminism, juvenile delinquency—all of this can be traced back to the homicide of the home that comes by the neglect of motherhood. It is true that the head of the home is the father, but it is equally true that the heart of the home is the mother.

Now, we are going to look at a mother. I introduce you to a wonderful woman. Her name is Hannah—Hannah. As a matter of fact, if your name is Ann, Annie, Anna, actually, you are named after this woman. Her name means “gracious,” and she was a gracious lady. Now, Hannah didn’t have it easy. She lived in a time when things were

very, very difficult, and don't get the idea that she was a maximum mother because she had an easy life. As a matter of fact, polygamy was tolerated in Hannah's day, and her husband had more than one wife. And, Hannah was barren; she didn't have any children. The other wife mocked her, and scorned her, and put her down because she was barren. Her heart cried out to God that she might have a baby, and she wanted a preacher boy. She wanted a baby that she could raise for God and give back to God. And, I believe that she is a picture for all of us today of a maximum mother.

And, I want to give you some principles from God's Word. And, if you're a mamma today, or a grandmamma, or want to be a mamma one of these days, I want to give you five principles, and I pray God that these principles will be written upon your heart, because they come out of the life of Hannah, but they also come out of the Word of God. And, I want to say another word. You say, "Well, Pastor, I am not a mother, nor will I ever be a mother, because I am a man." All right, the principles will apply to you. They will apply to a man, a woman, and they will apply not only to being a maximum mom, but being a maximum anything—a maximum anything—if you're going to be something for God. But, particularly, today, we want to think about these principles as they apply to motherhood and as they give us some guidelines for raising, in this generation, godly kids—godly kids. Are you ready for these principles?

I. The Principle of Priority

Principle number one is the principle of priority—the principle of priority. Hannah had her priorities right. The desire of her heart was that she would have a child. Look, if you will, in chapter 1, verse 10: it speaks of her as she's praying, and it says, "*And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look [upon] the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget [thy] handmaid, but [will] give unto [thy] handmaid a man child*" (1 Samuel 1:10–11). "O God, I want a baby. O God, this is the desire of my heart." She had a God-given instinct to have a child, and that instinct was put in her heart by Almighty God, because she knew what the Bible teaches over and over again that children are a blessing and an unmistakable gift from God.

Put in your margin "Psalm 127 and verse 3": "*Lo, children are [the] heritage [from] the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward*" (Psalm 127:3)—a blessing, not a burden. Notice how God describes the husband in Psalm 128, verses 3 and 4: "*Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD*" (Psalm 128:3–4). Let me tell you something: there is something basically wrong in America when little children are looked upon as burdens rather than blessings—burdens rather than blessings. And, not only is there something basically wrong, but

friend, there is something drastically wrong when little babies are being put to death in their mother's womb. That breaks my heart. The womb, as we saw in that beautiful depiction just a few moments, ought to be the safest place on earth; and now, for many babies, it is becoming the most dangerous place on earth.

Now, let me say clearly that my heart goes out to those of you who would love to have children and cannot for whatever reason. God knows your heart, and God knows that you would love to have children if you could. But, to those of you who can and refuse because you want more of this world's goods—you want more freedom—oh, I want to tell you, you are missing an incredible blessing. “But,” you say, “Pastor, I might have to quit my job. We might have to sell one of our automobiles. We might not be able to take the vacation that we want to take. If we had children, those children would make us poor.” Listen carefully: *children don't make rich people poor; they make poor people rich*—they make poor people rich. That is a blessing. Joyce and I all this weekend have just been rejoicing to have our dear, dear children with us.

What made Hannah such a great woman is that she had a priority. She did not think it was less than the best to be a mother. But, this was the prayer of her heart. And so, the principle is of a magnificent priority. That's the first principle.

II. The Principle of Prayer

Second principle: The principle of magnificent prayer, because, when you get your priorities lined up, then your prayers line up behind those priorities. And, notice in verse 10: “*And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD*” (1 Samuel 1:10). The first principle—priority; the second principle—prayer. When do you begin to raise your children? When do you begin to pray for your children? Not after they are born—before they're born; not after they're conceived—before they are conceived. Children ought to come in an answer to prayer. Here is Hannah; she is praying with all of her heart. Look in verse 10: “*And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD*” (1 Samuel 1:10). She is saying, “O God, I must have a child.” She is desperate for a child.

I was studying and thinking about all of the women in the Bible who were barren. And, God took these barren women, and in grace, God gave them a child; and their child blessed and changed the world. Sarah was barren until she was 90 years of age. But, she met the Lord, and God blessed her, and she had a son; and that son's name was Isaac, and he has blessed the world. Rachel—I have a granddaughter named Rachel sitting up here in the front right now—Rachel prayed, and she said, “[*Lord,*] *give me children, or...I die*” (Genesis 30:1). And, God heard her prayer, and God gave her a son. His name was Joseph. You want a blessing? Read the story of Joseph, a child that was born in answer to prayer. Ruth, who was barren, wanted a child, found mercy, and

God gave her a child. His name was Obed, and Obed was the grandfather of King David, from whose line the Messiah came, in answer to prayer. Elizabeth did not have a child, and Elizabeth prayed and said, “O God, I want a child.” And, God answered her prayer, and God gave her John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus, the one of whom Jesus said, “Of those born of woman, not a greater is John the Baptist” (Matthew 11:11). What a blessing that God gave Elizabeth John the Baptist! And now, we come to Hannah, who prayed. And, God gave to Hannah little Samuel—little Samuel—the greatest individual in the Old Testament between Moses and King David because she prayed and said, “God—God—I want a baby that I can give back to you.” There is the principle of prayer.

Oh, friend, would you not agree that we need more children in this world that are born in answer to prayer and then given back to God in prayer before they are born? Would you not agree that that is true? Oh, the tragedy of unwanted children—the tragedy! What would the world be like without Isaac? What would the world be like without Joseph? What would the world have been like without John the Baptist? What would the world have been like without Samuel? I wonder. We’re praying, “God, give us an answer to cancer.” We’re saying, “God, give us some cure for the dread disease AIDS. O God, help us in this problem and that problem.” How do you know but what God sent that answer, and that little life was snuffed out in his mother’s womb? How do you know but what God had some great world leader, some person, some great prophet, another Billy Graham, but that little baby was unwanted, not conceived, or obliterated?

III. The Principle of Purpose

Now, here’s the third principle. What’s the first principle? Who can remember? Priority—good. Second principle is prayer, because your prayers line up with your priority. She was a magnificent mom. And, she had a magnificent priority, and she had a magnificent prayer. Now, watch: she had a magnificent purpose. You see, your prayer and your priorities determine your purpose. And so, notice what her purpose was. Look in verse 11: *“And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look upon the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but will give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head”* (1 Samuel 1:11).

What does that mean—*“no razor come upon his head”* (1 Samuel 1:11)? Well, you have to understand the Old Testament. That meant that she was going to give him to be a Nazarite. Now, the Nazarites were a special group of persons who had been given over to God in a very special way. You might put in your margin “Numbers chapter 6 and verse 5.” It speaks of how these Nazarites were to be raised, and the Bible says,

“All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto the LORD, he shall be holy, and...let the locks of the hair...grow [down]”—or, “let the hair of his head”—“the locks of the hair of his head grow” (Numbers 6:5). Now, what was she saying, in effect? “I want a holy child. I want a child separated unto the Lord.” What is the principle? If the child is a gift of God, if the child has come from God, then that child must be given back to God.

Did God hear her prayer? Hannah said, “Lord, if You will give him to me, I will give him back to You.” That prayer must have been in the will of God. That prayer must have been put in the heart of Hannah, because God heard that prayer and God answered that prayer. Now, if you pray and ask God to give you a child, then your prayers must follow that child, and you must have a purpose for your child. Do you know why so many prayers are unanswered? People say, “Well, I pray for my child, and God just doesn’t seem to hear my prayer for my child.” Well, let me ask you a question: What are you praying? What are you praying for your child? What is your desire for your children? Now, you think about it: What do you want out of your child? What do you want for your child? What are you praying for? Health, success, popularity, fame—is that what you want for your child? I hope your child has those things, but is that your priority for your child?

Did you know that there are many people who feel it would be a tragedy if God were to make a missionary out of their child? A tragedy! They feel like it would be a waste if God were to call that child into the ministry. I can remember people, Brother Bob, talking to my parents, trying to encourage my parents to encourage me not to go into the ministry, because they said, “It’ll be a waste—it’ll be a waste. I mean, why, he could be something—he could do something. Don’t let him just squander his life.” How many of you are praying, “God, make my son important, make my daughter famous”? Oh, we have such twisted priorities. Do you know what my desire is for my children? My desire, my prayer, for my children—and Joyce joins me in this—is found in 3 John, verse 4: *“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in [the] truth”* (3 John 1:4). That’s it: *“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in [the] truth”* (3 John 1:4). I have chosen as a life verse, *“The generation of the upright shall be blessed”—[and] his seed shall be mighty upon [the] earth”* (Psalm 112:2).

Rather than asking that your children be rich, rather than asking that your children be famous, rather than asking that your children achieve, let me give you a prayer to pray for your children. Now, you’ll find it right in the Word of God. It’s an incredible thing to pray out of the Bible, because you know your prayer is in the will of God if it comes out of the Word of God. Here’s a great prayer that any body can pray for their child. If you want to know how to pray for your child, I’m going to read it to you. Put it down in the margin: Ephesians 3, verses 14 through 21. Here was Paul’s prayer for the church

at Ephesus, but what a prayer for a dad or a mom to pray for a child! *“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you”*—Steve, that He would grant you; Gayle, that He would grant you; Janice, that He would grant you; David—*“according to his riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God”* (Ephesians 3:14–19). Isn’t that a good prayer to pray for your children?

You see, the reason that so many times our prayers are not answered for our children is we are just not praying the right prayers for them. And, James says, *“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that [you might] consume it upon your lusts”* (James 4:3). Hannah had a purpose. Her purpose was, “God, I want a child that will serve You.”

Now, you can’t make your child serve God. Joyce and I have goals for ourselves; we have desires for our children. What is the difference between a goal and a desire? Never set a goal for somebody else. You’ll make a big mistake if you set a goal for somebody else. The only person you can ever set a goal for is you. You have desires for others. Our desire is for godly children. Our goal is to be godly parents. You see that? I cannot say that my children will be godly. I pray that my children will be godly. I say that and pray that I will be a godly dad. Have desires for your children; have goals for yourself. Say, “By God’s grace, I will be a magnificent mom like Hannah was, a woman of grace.” And so, here is what she prayed: “Lord, I want him to serve You—I want him to serve You.”

Do you know what Joyce and I do every morning that we are together? (Virtually every morning—there may be some time when some emergency or something comes up.) But, we sit at the breakfast table, and we hold hands; and we pray for each of you by name—by name—every day—many days, morning and evening, over and over and over again. We are not praying that you’re going to be rich. We are not praying that you’re going to be famous. We are praying that you will know and love God with all of your heart. That’s what we want out of the Lord. Let me say a word to you mamas:

*Give of thy sons to bear the message glorious;
Give of thy wealth to speed them on their way;
Pour out [your souls] for them in prayer victorious;
[And all that thou spendest Jesus will repay].*

—MARY A. THOMPSON

First principle: priority—“God, give me a child.” Second principle: prayer—he was

prayed for before he was born, after he was born. Third principle: purpose—"I want him to serve You. God, I want him to be separated unto You."

IV. The Principle of Persistence

Fourth principle: persistence—persistence. Begin now, reading in verse 12: *"And it came to pass, as she"—what?—"continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought [that she'd] been drunken. And Eli said unto her"—now, Eli was the priest—"Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. Count not thine handmaid [as] a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad. And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the LORD remembered her. Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the LORD"* (1 Samuel 1:12–20).

Now, not only did she pray for him before he was born, but she continued to pray for him after he was born in dark days. What is the principle? Here's the principle: no matter how dark, how desolate, how difficult, pray and keep on praying. I've seen that precious girl that I'm married to called Joyce pray you children through so many things. I have seen her pray with unwavering determination, and wait on God, and ask God over and over again. We are told to wait on God. That's persistence. Isaiah 40, verse 31: *"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength"* (Isaiah 40:31). Psalm 37 and verse 7: *"Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him"* (Psalm 37:7). Psalm 27, verse 14: *"Wait on the LORD: be of good courage"* (Psalm 27:14). Over and over again, we're told in God's Word to wait upon the Lord. Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 18: *"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance"* (Ephesians 6:18). You've got to keep on praying.

Now, let me say this: because of her perseverance, her sorrow was turned to gladness. Now, if you've been praying for a child, and you say, "Pastor, you're not preaching to me this morning. I want a baby. I can't have a baby. We've been to the fertility doctors. We've done all we can do. I want a baby, and this sermon is doing nothing but breaking my heart and making me feel guilty," well, I don't want to do that,

because it may be indeed that God has another plan for you. And, if God does, you just persist in prayer 'till you know God's will for your life. But, pray. Keep on persisting. Some of the godliest people in the Bible were not able to have children.

But, God gave to this woman, because of her persistence, a little baby boy. Do you know what she named him? Samuel. Do you know what *Samuel* means? It means "asked of the Lord"—"he is my little answer to prayer." And, Joyce and I have continued to pray for our children after they were born. If you want to see something of Hannah's prayer life for him after he was born, just read the second chapter (1 Samuel 2). I don't have time to do it because time is running out, but just read the second chapter; and you'll find out that she was a mighty mother, a magnificent mother, because she knew the power of priority, she knew the power of prayer, she knew the power of purpose, she knew the power of persistence.

V. The Principle of Persuasion

Now, here's the fifth one—and, by the way, listen, this will all apply to dads; this will all apply to any godly person in any godly situation. You take those things, and they apply everywhere, so this sermon is for everybody—but here's the fifth of these principles that made this woman a magnificent mother. Are you ready for it? It is the principle of persuasion—persuasion. Now, you pray with all of your heart, you get your priority right, you get your prayer right, you get your purpose right, you get your persistence right—and then you began to do what you alone can do to persuade that child for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look, if you will, in 1 Samuel 1, beginning in verse 21: and the Bible says, "*And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and his vow. But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned*"—do you see what she's doing here? She's saying, "Now look, there are some things that people think are very important. I've got something more important"—"*and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever*"—and then, look, if you will, in verse 23—"*And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou [hath] weaned him; only the LORD establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him. And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a [skin] of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD*"—wasn't she a wise woman to have such priority, to make sacrifices, to bring him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh?—"and the child was young. And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli. And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD. For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I have asked of him.

Therefore...have [I] lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there” (1 Samuel 1:21–28).

Who worshiped the Lord there? That baby has now become a child. She has built into this child. She said to her husband, “All right, go if you’re going, but I’m staying with this baby—I’m staying with this baby. This is my baby. I am giving this baby nursing and suckling. I am taking care of this child. Now, I am bringing my child to the house of God, and I’m teaching my child, ‘Jesus loves me, this I know / For the Bible tells me so’ (Anna Bartlett Warner). And, I’m not going to let any body else do it, and I’m not going to let anything else keep me from doing it. This is my baby. I’m going to persuade this child.” And then, when she had this little baby, she treasured every moment that she had, because these were tender years and these were formative years.

I thought of a verse in the New Testament—when Paul talked to a young man named Timothy, and he said to him in 2 Timothy 1:5: *“When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and [in] thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded...in thee also.”* Timothy had a grandmother who had a little girl named Eunice, and she would rock that little girl Eunice and say, “Eunice, Jesus loves you—Eunice, Jesus loves you.” And, Eunice had a little boy named Timothy: “Timothy, Jesus loves you.” They may not have called Him Jesus until they knew the Old Testament fulfillment, but they talked to him about Jehovah God; and Jesus is Jehovah. It wasn’t easy. She had to work.

A father has influence on a child, but the deepest impression is made by a mother. And, she was so persuasive, this woman, that she changed—listen—Hannah—listen—Hannah changed the course of history. And, you know something that eats my lunch, makes me very hot? You ask a woman, “What do you do?” “Well, I’m a *da-da-da-da-da-da*.” You ask another woman. “I’m just a housewife and a mother.” Just a housewife and mother! Did I hear you? “Just a housewife, a homemaker, and a mother.” Don’t you dare let these feminists take that out of your heart. There is nothing greater than to raise a baby for Jesus Christ. Oh, they’ve done a job on us today!

Never underestimate the power of a mother. A former pastor of this church, Dr. Robert G. Lee—I’ve heard him speak so many times about his darling mother, the influence that he had on her. Abraham Lincoln said, “All that I am or ever hope to be I owe to my angel mother.” I talked and prayed with the past President of the United States, George Bush—talked to him about his personal salvation, his relationship to Christ, and prayed with him about that. And, he looked me in the eyes, and he said, “I want to tell you, my mother—my mother—was the most godly person I’ve ever known,” and told me about the influence that his mother had upon his life. Augustine, that great believer and theologian, was a renegade boy, but he could not escape the prayers of his mother, Monica. John and Charles Wesley, out of whose hearts and minds came the

Methodist Church, had a mother whose name was Susanna. If you want to know who the Mother of Methodism, is it was Susanna—Susanna—who raised those children for Jesus Christ. I've read what Dr. Billy Graham had to say about his godly mother. Oh, the power of persuasion!

Conclusion

I wish I had more time, but I want to tell you a true story; and I'm finished. A boy had a mother. This mother—this is a true story—she was a dominating mother. She had no time or love for any one else but herself. She was married three times. Her second husband divorced her—listen—because she abused him. This little boy, when he was a child, never experienced love; he never experienced discipline. He was neglected, shoved around, and overlooked. His mother told him, “Don't you ever bother me when I'm at work. I don't want you pestering me.” He was totally rejected. This little boy had a high IQ, but he dropped out of high school. He joined the Marines; he was given a dishonorable discharge. He had no talent; he had no skills. He couldn't even maintain a driver's license. He went to a foreign country. There, he met a foreign woman. He married her. The marriage began to fail. She left him. He had the sense that he was a failure—all of life about him was a failure. He begged her to come back. Finally, she did come back. He returned to the United States.

The only talent that this young man had was the talent of handling a rifle. He learned that in the Marines. And, on November 22, 1963, he took his rifle and his ability to the third story of a book storage building in Dallas, Texas, to fire three shots that changed the course of a nation. His name you already know—Lee Harvey Oswald. I wonder if things would not have been different if Lee Harvey Oswald had a mother who knew Jesus, and had taken that precious little boy into her heart and into her arms, and had sung to him, “Jesus Loves Me.” I wonder if things would have been different if she'd said, “Lee, you call Mamma any time you need to call me. Sweetheart, you are more important than this job. You're the most precious thing on this earth to me.” Do you know what children need? ABC: **a**cceptance, **b**elonging, and **c**onfidence. That's what they need. Thank God for magnificent mothers, and may God help you to be one.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Lord Jesus, I pray that You will seal this message to my heart and to our hearts. And Lord, I pray that many today will give their hearts to our wonderful Savior, in whose name I pray. Amen.

Now, look at me—look at me. These principles—folks, these principles—they apply; and if you're a dad, they apply—priority, prayer, purpose, persistence, persuasion. If you're a businessman, they apply. If you are a preacher, they apply. They apply in all of life. But, you know where it all begins? It all begins with a heart for God. That's what Hannah had—to know God. Do you know Him? Are you saved? Could you say, “Pastor

Rogers, I absolutely know—I absolutely know—if I died today, I would go straight to Heaven, because I have repented of my sin; I have received by faith the Lord Jesus Christ into my heart. God has forgiven my sin. The Holy Spirit has come into me. I have been born again. Every sin is forgiven. God’s Spirit bears witness with mine that I’m a child of God, and I know, should Jesus come today or should I die today, I’m going straight to Heaven”? If you don’t know that, you can know it—and you can know it today by receiving the Lord Jesus.

In a moment, we’re going to sing an invitational hymn. In a moment, the ministers of our church are going to stand at the head of each of these aisles. In a moment, I’m going to ask you to do something wonderful, and that is to leave your seat and come forward. And, by your coming forward, let it be known that you’re not ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ; let it be known by your coming forward that today you are trusting Him and giving your heart to Him.

How to Turn Religion into Reality

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 13, 1988

Main Scripture Text: 1 Samuel 4–6; 2 Samuel 6

“And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again.”

1 SAMUEL 4:5

Outline

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Introduction

Turn with me, please, to 1 Samuel chapter 4, and it will be necessary tonight that you keep the Holy Scripture open in your hands, because we're going to look at a lot of passages here in the Samuel materials. I want to say to you, dear friend, that the world has been cursed by religion. Most people think that we need more religion. Well, I want to say that most Americans are religious, but we're in deep, deep trouble. And, as a matter of fact, all over the world there are wars over religion. Families are divided over religion. Nations are divided over religion. Religion never really helped anybody. Religion is man's effort to somehow make himself acceptable to God. Now, Bible salvation and religion are not the same. Bible salvation is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is time that people stopped enduring religion and began to enjoy salvation. I want to talk to you tonight about how to turn religion into reality—how to enjoy the presence of God. Many people know about God, but they don't know God. Many people pray at God, but they don't talk with God, and Jesus Christ is not a bright

living reality. All they have is religion. All they have is a form of godliness, but they have denied the power thereof. (2 Timothy 3:5)

First Samuel chapter 4—I begin in verse 1: *“And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer...the Philistines pitched in Aphek. And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten [against] the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men. And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh [among] us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies. So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again.”* (1 Samuel 4:1–5)

Now, let me just talk to you a moment about that ark. We’re going to have a little “ark-eology” right here, and I want to tell you about that ark. That ark in the Old Testament was a symbol of the presence of God with His people. Now, when we’re talking about the ark, we’re not talking about the boat that Noah sailed on; we’re talking about a piece of furniture, a treasure chest of blessing that was called an ark. Roughly speaking, it was about the size of this pulpit. It was four feet long, two feet high, two feet wide. And, that ark had on one side a golden cherub, an angel, and on the other side of that ark was a golden cherub. And, the top was a solid slab of gold, and that solid slab of gold was called the mercy seat.

Inside that treasure chest, there were three articles. There was a rod; it was Aaron’s rod that was put in there. And, it was an old, dry stick, but God had miraculously caused that stick to bud, and blossom, and bear fruit after it was dead. It was a type, a picture, of the resurrection of Christ. It was in that treasure chest. Also in that treasure chest was a golden pot of manna—that miraculous bread that God had fed the children of Israel with when they were in the wilderness journey. They picked up some of it, put it in the golden pot—put that in the Ark of the Covenant. Also in the Ark of the Covenant were the tables of stones on which the Ten Commandments were written. These were in the Ark of the Covenant. Now, all of those represent the Lord Jesus Christ. A rod stands for authority, and that rod that budded speaks of the rule of the risen Christ. And then, that manna speaks of the resources of the risen Christ. And, the Ten Commandments speak of the righteousness of the risen Christ. All in that treasure chest.

On the top, I say, was a slab of gold, representing the glory of God. And, they took

the blood sacrifices, and they sprinkled the blood sacrifice on that gold on the Ark of the Covenant. And, when the sin was atoned and Christ was enthroned, that's all pictured there. There was an effulgence of glory that dwelt between those two angels called the "Shekinah glory of God." That is, the very presence of God was localized there in that ark. That ark was a very significant piece of furniture. It represented to them in the Old Testament what Jesus Christ represents to us. As that ark was in the holy of holies, Jesus Christ is in us, in the holy of holies in us, in our spirit. They had a tabernacle, but we are His temple. In the Old Testament, God had a temple for His people. In the New Testament, He has a people for His temple. And, the Holy Spirit of God dwells in us and makes Christ real in us, just as that ark was in the tabernacle so long ago. And so, when you read these Old Testament passages of Scripture and you read about the ark, I want you to think about the reality of God. I want you to think about the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ with His people.

Now, you know that God gave them that treasure chest, and it led them through the wilderness. And, when they were about to go into their Canaan, God did a wonderful thing: the priest took that ark out into the middle of the river, and—the River Jordan—and when the priest took that ark into the River Jordan, it stopped the waters of Jordan. The waters of Jordan just piled up on one side and went down on the other side, and there was a dry place. And, that ark just stopped right in the middle of the river, and it let the people of God through. And, and, Joshua said, "Now, just keep your eyes on the ark." It is the ark that led the people right on into the land of Canaan. When they got into the land of Canaan, there was Jericho. And, Joshua said to the priests, "Take the ark of the covenant and walk around that city seven times bearing the ark and blowing the trumpets." (Joshua 6:4) And, you remember—on the seventh day, they walked around seven times, and the wall came a' tumbling down. (Joshua 6:20) It was the presence of God that gave them the victory. And, as we go on through, the people of Israel moved into a time that we call "the time of the judges." They had learned that there was power—supernatural power—in the presence of God with His people. So, when they would go into battle, they would take the ark and put the Ark of the Covenant out in front of them, representing Jesus—the power of God, the presence of God—fighting their battles and giving them what we would call today "victory in Jesus."

But now, wait a moment—they did not always have victory with the ark. Something happened. And, I want to tell you now how to enjoy the presence of God and how to turn religion into reality. I've just read a passage of Scripture here in 1 Samuel chapter 4, verses 1 through 5, that tell how Israel and the Philistines were in a battle at Ebenezer. And, the battle was going poorly for the people of Israel. As a matter of fact, they had—they had—lost quite a few people in this battle. They thought, "Well, we've lost four thousand men." Look in verse 2. They said, "We better do something." And so,

they said—somebody said, “I have an idea: Why don’t we go back to Shiloh, get the Ark of the Covenant, and bring the Ark of the Covenant into the battle? And, we’ll just use the Ark of the Covenant to protect us.” And so, they went to get the Ark of the Covenant to lead them into battle.

I. God Cannot Be Used

Well, let’s find out what happened. We’re in chapter 4; let’s read in verse 10: and the Bible says, “*And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very [very] great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.*” (1 Samuel 4:10–11) Now, they said, “We’re going to get this ark. This ark is going to lead us to victory. Go to Shiloh. Get the ark. Put it out in front of us, and we’re going to have victory.” Well, they had already lost four thousand men. They got the ark, and they lost thirty thousand men. And, not only did they lose thirty thousand men; they also lost the ark. The Philistines captured the ark of God.

Now, here’s the first lesson I want to give you, ladies and gentlemen: God will not be used. Put that in your heart; put that in your mind: God will not be used. Do you know what these people were doing? They weren’t honoring the Lord; they were trying to use the Lord. They said, “Hey, we’re in a mess. We’re losing the battle. Run—go get the ark.” God was not their first thought; God was their last resort.

I heard about a woman—somebody said, “Where did you meet your husband?” She said, “I met my husband at a travel agency. He was the last resort.”

Now, this is the way—this is the way—these people felt about God. They thought, “Well, if we can just simply get God on our side, if we can use God, then—then—we’ll have the victory.”

Now, I’m afraid today that that is what most religion is rooted in and based in—people who are trying to use God, carnal people who think somehow they can get God on their side. God is not going to be on your side. Some people say, “Well, God is my copilot.” He’s not about to be your copilot. There are some people—say, “God and I are partners in business.” He’s not about to be the partner of your business. My dear friend, He is L-O-R-D—Lord, Lord. And, so many people want to try to use God.

Now, God was teaching these people so long ago He’s not going to be used. You’re not going to go get God and bring Him into your battles and let Him fight your battles for you without honoring Him, and without glorifying Him, and without giving Him first thought. You say, “Well, why did God let His people fail?” I’ll tell you why God let His people fail: God will not cover up the sins of the saints to protect His glory. You wonder why we’ve had so many television evangelists and so many pastors and other religious leaders to go down. We say, “God, why don’t you do something? Why don’t you, God,

keep all of this from coming out?” My dear friend, God caused it to come out—God caused it to come out. Listen, God did it to show that He will have nothing to do with unholiness. God gets more glory by the defeat of a carnal people than by their victory. And, our Lord here was ensuring the defeat of these carnal people. Without the ark of God they lost four thousand. They brought the ark of God in, and they lost thirty thousand people. And, God was saying something, and I think all of us need to learn it—that God will not be used.

Now, I want to speak a word to preacher boys who are here. We have many of these seminary students who are here tonight. One of the greatest dangers in the life of any seminarian is that he wants to use God. There’s hardly a young man who does not want to be successful; and so, he thinks, you know, “If I would get Spirit-filled, then I would be a strong preacher.” So, he says, “O God, would you fill me?” The Holy Spirit says, “Why should I fill you?” “Because I want to preach your Word; I want to preach the Word of God. I want to be a successful preacher.” The Holy Spirit says, “I’m not interested.” Somebody else says, “Well, Holy Spirit of God, fill me because I want to live a holy life.” The Holy Spirit says, “I’m not interested.” Somebody else says, “Well, Holy Spirit of God, fill me so I can understand the Word of God.” He says, “I’m not interested.” “Well, Holy Spirit of God, fill me so I can be a soul winner.” He says, “I’m still not interested.” “Well, Holy Spirit of God, fill me because I want Jesus Christ glorified in my life whether I succeed or not. By life or by death, I want Christ glorified.” The Holy Spirit says, “Is that what you want? That’s what I want, too. Let’s get together.” My dear friend, He will fill you, and He says, “By the way, I’ll help you to preach. And, by the way, I’ll make you a Bible student. And, by the way, I’ll help you to live a holy life. And, by the way, I’ll help you to be a soul winner—only that God may be glorified.”

I’ll tell you, everybody wants to be successful, even in religious work. These people wanted to be successful. They got the idea that somehow they could bring God into it. And, God will not be used—that’s the first thing I want you to learn.

II. God Cannot Be Captured

Now, there’s something else I want you to learn: not only will God not be used, but secondly, I want you to know that God can’t be captured—God can’t be captured.

Now, the Philistines took the Ark of the Covenant. That was a tremendous mistake. Look in 1 Samuel now, chapter 5, and read in verse 1: “*And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod*”—now, Ashdod was one of the five Philistine cities—“*[And] when the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon*”—Dagon was their fish god—“*[they] set it by Dagon. And when they [at] Ashdod [rose] early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again*”—you

know, if you have religion and you don't have reality, you have to keep propping your god up—*“And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; [and] only the stump of Dagon was left to him. [Neither] therefore neither the [priest] of Dagon, nor any [who] came into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day.”* (1 Samuel 5:1–5) They got afraid to go in there.

And then, just go on down to verse 10. We're going to skip some material: *“Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron”—that's another Philistine city—“And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people. [And] so they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.”* (1 Samuel 5:10–11)

Now, ladies and gentlemen, the Philistines captured the ark of God. They took the treasure chest of blessing, and they said, “Now, we've got their God. We've got their God on our side.” When they took that Ark of the Covenant into their midst, it caused them calamity upon calamity. They had a hot potato on their hands, and they wanted to get rid of it. Finally, if you were to continue to read, you'll find out that they got this plan. Here's the way they decided they're going to get rid of the Ark of the Covenant: they built a new cart; they took two milk cows, and they hitched those milk cows to that cart; they put the Ark of the Covenant on that cart, and they just headed it down the road, and let it go, and just kissed it goodbye. Well, the Ark of the Covenant went on down to a place called Bethshemesh. And, when it got down to Bethshemesh, the men of Bethshemesh saw it coming, and they said, “Oh, look! Isn't this wonderful? Look what we've got.” They went out and got the Ark of the Covenant, and they lifted the lid to look in; and more than fifty thousand of them were smitten with death. They said, “We can't get rid of this thing fast enough. It is doing us no good; it's only doing us harm.”

Now, dear friend, what is God telling us? First of all, God is telling us that He won't be used. Secondly, God is telling us that He won't be captured. You'd be amazed how many people think that they can capture God—how many people think that somehow they can borrow somebody else's religion, somebody else's god. We see a church that has a particular program. We say, “Boy, we're going to get their program.” And, they have a particular music, and we say, “We're going to get their music.” They have a particular organization. We say, “We're going to get their organization.” They have a particular pastor or worker, and we say, “We're going to get their worker. And then, we're going to have what they have.” My dear friend, God is showing us that He cannot

be captured; He cannot be borrowed. There's no such thing as secondhand religion. Secondhand religion always causes calamity.

You can read the same thing over there in the New Testament in the nineteenth chapter of Acts. There were seven men—seven sons—of a man named Sceva. And, they decided that they were going to cast the demon out of a man. This man was a demon-possessed man. And so, they took this man and began to do their incantations over him. They began to say their words and command the demon to come out of this demon-possessed man. And, by the way, dear friend, I do believe in demons; I believe in the reality of demons. And, they were trying to cast the demons out of this man. And, the Bible says that this man was filled with supernatural power, and he turned on those seven men, and beat them, and bruised them, and stripped the clothes from them. (Acts 19:16) And, they fled from him, half-dead and naked.) The man turned on seven of them. Now, watch this: when they tried to cast the devil out of this man, this is what they said: “*We adjure you by Jesus*”—now, listen to this—“*whom Paul [preaches]*” (Acts 19:13)—“come out of him.” Did you hear that? “In the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches.” They didn't know Jesus; they just knew about Jesus. All they knew was He was the Jesus that Paul preached. All they had was secondhand religion. They didn't say, “In the name of Jesus whom I know,” but “in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches.”

I want to tell you, my dear friend, you can't steal my God. I can't steal your God. You can't borrow somebody else's God. You can't capture God. You can't take somebody else's religion as your own. You're going to have to say, “In the name of Jesus whom I know.” Anybody who borrows somebody else's religion is borrowing trouble. God, my dear friend, cannot be captured.

III. God Cannot Be Managed

Now, I want to tell you, God can't be used. God can't be captured. Well, most of us know that. But, I'll tell you a third thing most of us don't know, and it is this: that God cannot be managed—God cannot be managed.

I want you to go now to 2 Samuel chapter 6 and see what David did—David made a tremendous mistake—2 Samuel chapter 6. King David has become the king of Israel, and David knows that he cannot be a successful king without the power of God. Give him credit for that. David longed for the reality of God in his life. David wanted the conscious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in his life. And, David had now learned that the Ark of the Covenant—finally, the Philistines had gotten rid of the Ark of the Covenant—and David knows now that the Ark of the Covenant is in the house of a man named Abinadab. And, David is saying to himself, “I want the presence of God in my life. I want the presence of God in my ministry.” So, he set out to get the ark of God.

Now, give him credit for the right motivation, but he did the right thing the wrong way. His plan seemed so reasonable and so good, but it had a fatal flaw.

Let's read now in 2 Samuel 6, verse 1: *"Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him [unto] Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims"*—that is God's Shekinah glory dwelling there between those two angels—*"And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove"*—or, drove—*"the new cart. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark. And David and all [of] the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals."* (2 Samuel 6:1–5)

Now, it sounds like he wants a very good thing: he wants the ark. He wants it for the right motive, for the right reason: for the glory of God. He gets a brand-new cart—nothing's going to be too good for his God. He gets his two best drivers—very good, reliable men. Then, he gets his very best musicians, because he wants to give God glory and he wants to give God honor. I mean, what more could you ask? Here he seems to have it all: he's got a right motive; he's got a good plan; he's got good organization; he's got a great music program. He's doing it all, but he's about to have great calamity. There was one thing wrong with what he was doing, and it made everything wrong: he was bringing the ark of God on a cart, and the Bible had strictly given direction as to how the ark of God was to be carried. You can read it in Exodus chapter 25 when you get home. Let me just tell you basically what happened. If this were the ark, God said, "I want you to put a ring on this corner and a ring on this corner, a ring on this corner and a ring on this corner. And then, there are some long rods, some golden rods—there are some rods that are covered with gold—that'll slide through those rings on this side and on that side. And then, the ark is to be carried on the shoulders of certain priests, holy men of God, men that have been set aside and sanctified to carry that ark." And, God made it very plain the way that it was to be done.

Now, what happened? What happened is this: that there came a calamity. Look in verse 6: *"And when [there] came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah"*—that's one of the drivers—*"put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it"*—that is, one of the oxen stumbled, or hit a rough spot, and the ark shook. Now, Uzzah, evidently thinking perhaps the ark is going to fall off the cart, turns around to stabilize the ark. Now, notice verse 7—*"And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of [the Lord]."*

And David was displeased”—here’s...David’s got a pout on—*“because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perezuzzah to this day. And David was afraid of the LORD that day.”* (2 Samuel 6:6–9) Now, when it says he’s afraid of the Lord, it’s not talking about the holy fear of God that all of us ought to have; it is talking about a carnal fear, a craving fear, a negative attitude to God. And, I want you to see what David did: David just gave up. He said, *“How”*—*“how”*—*“shall the ark of the LORD come to me?”* (2 Samuel 6:9) David now is discouraged, and he’s afraid of God. He started out to do a good thing, but he did a good thing a bad way.

Now, you say, “Well, God was a cruel God to kill that man Uzzah, because Uzzah, after all, was only trying to do right. He was only trying to keep the ark from falling.” My dear friend, God had given a solemn warning concerning that ark, and it was this: that it was not to be touched in that manner. As a matter of fact, let me read to you what the Bible says in Numbers chapter 4, verse 15: God is showing how these holy vessels are to be carried, and He says, *“And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all [of] the vessels of the sanctuary”*—that would include the ark—*“as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it...they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath [and] the tabernacle of the congregation.”* (Numbers 4:15) God says, “Don’t touch it. Don’t do it. You’re going to die.”

Now, God had already given warning. Now, if Uzzah did not know, may I tell you he certainly should have known, because he was in a serious business, handling holy things? May I say something to you right now? I’m talking on the point that God cannot be managed. We know that God will not be used. We know that God cannot be captured, and God cannot be managed. You better be doubly careful that you don’t lay unholy hands on holy things. Listen to me, my dear friend: so many of us are doing exactly that—we’re laying unholy hands on holy things.

Now, let me illustrate what I’m talking about. In the New Testament, there’s nothing more holy, in my estimation, than the Lord’s Supper—nothing more holy than the Lord’s Supper. I would tremble to take the Lord’s Supper into my hands with unholy hands. I think I’d rather play with forked lightning than to do that. When a person does that, my dear friend, he is inviting the judgment of a righteous and a holy God. As a matter of fact, Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 30 that some were sick and some were dead in the Corinthian church because they had laid unholy hands on holy things. (1 Corinthians 11:30)

And so, here’s what has happened now. Here’s a man named Uzzah that has died. David starts out to minister life, and he ministers death. Now, why—why, why—did David do this? How did David ever get the idea of carrying the ark of God on a new cart? Where did he get that idea? I’ll tell you where he got that idea: he got that idea

from the Philistines. Remember that I told you that the Philistines sent the ark of God away on a new cart? They got two cows to carry that ark. And, David says, “Well, that’s the way the Philistines did it. That seems like that would be a good way for us to do it.” And, David took Philistine philosophy into the service of God, and rather than ministering life, he ministered death. He’s trying to manage the things of God. The Bible says he consulted with his friends. (1 Chronicles 13:1) Rather than going to God and getting God’s directions, he consulted, he borrowed from the world, and he brought, my dear friend, judgment and death.

Now, the reason that many of us fail in our churches today is that we have taken Philistine philosophy. God is not going to be managed. It seems to me that the world—the world—is conforming the Church more than the Church is transforming the world. We see Philistine philosophy in so many ways. Sometimes we take the music of the Philistines into our churches, and we take ungodly rock music and just superimpose a few religious words and use Philistine music to haul the ark of God. But, He’s not going to allow it to be done that way, my dear friend. We take worldly philosophy... Let me tell you something that’s moving in the Christian world today: it’s feminism—feminism. Now, in the world today, we’re saying that men and women are equal. As a matter of fact, men and women are equal. Of course, I hope you understand that. In Christ, there’s neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, bond nor free—all are one in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Galatians 3:28) But, men and women are not the same.

Now, you see, don’t, see, don’t put sameness and equality—don’t make them synonyms. Men and women are different, and God made them different. And, God has given certain assignments to women, and God has given certain assignments to men. But, you see, we’ve had this feminism that has come into the churches of our Lord through the world. It is a Philistine philosophy; it is not a Bible philosophy. And so, now, churches today are beginning to ordain women as pastors. Now, they didn’t get that from the Bible; they got it from the world. As a matter of fact, the Bible says that a pastor is to be the husband of one wife. (1 Timothy 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6) Now, that’s very hard for a woman to do. It makes it very plain. And, as a matter of fact, the Bible says that a pastor is to be one who rules his own house well. For it says, *“If [he] know not how to [take care of] his own house, how shall he take care of the [house] of God?”* (1 Timothy 3:5) That is, a pastor is to be to the church what a father is to his family. If you made a woman the head or the leader of a church, you might as well make her the head of the family. But, the Bible teaches that the husband is the head of the family. That doesn’t mean that the husband is better than the wife—not at all. It’s not to say that there’s anything wrong with a cart. It’s, just simply, God said, “That’s not my way. I told you how to—I told you how—to bring that ark in there. And, I have a way; I have a plan.” And, we’re not God. We better find out what God wants.

You pass some of these supermarkets, and they—I appreciate the spirit of this—but they say, “Attend the church of your choice.” Well, listen, folks, who are we—God? We’d better attend the church of God’s choice. I mean, we’d better find out what God says. I mean, we don’t just think up something we want to believe and then try to find some religion to match it. You see, listen, God can’t be managed. Here was David. David now is simply trying to manage God. He’s simply saying, “Well, here’s a good way to do it. I’m going to get a cart.” And, he tries to do a good thing in a bad way, and God will not allow it to happen.

IV. God Can Be Enjoyed

Now, let me give you the fourth and final thing I want to say to you. I’ve told you that God won’t be used. You’re not going to be able to run and get God as a last resort. Religion might try to do that, but you can’t do that. I’m telling you, God can’t be captured. You can’t use somebody else’s religion. I’m telling you something else—that God can’t be managed. You’re not going to be able to take your Philistine philosophy and somehow manage holy God. But, I’ll tell you what God can be: God can be enjoyed—God can be enjoyed.

Now, let’s see, one good thing about David was that David could learn. So, in chapter 6 now, verse 11—look, if you will—2 Samuel chapter 6, verse 11: *“And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obededom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obededom, and all his household. And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obededom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. [And] so David went [in] and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obededom into the city of David with gladness.”* (2 Samuel 6:11–12) Thank God—God blessed Obededom. Obededom, evidently, was a good man. He enjoyed the presence of God. The ark of God was there. Obededom had enough sense to know how to turn religion into reality, and God was there.

Now, there are a lot of people like David who are somewhat afraid of God and discouraged who need to see the reality of Christ in your life; they need to see the reality of Christ in my life, because, dear friend, they need God, and you and I are the best advertisement that can possibly be given to want God, to need God, to receive God. And so, David says, “Why should Obededom have all of those blessings and I not have them? Why should God be localized in Obededom’s house? I want God not only to bless Obededom; I want God to bless all of my people.” So, David says, “I’m going to go again—I’m going to go again and bring the ark of God.”

And now, he brings the ark of God, and let me show you what he does. Now, watch very carefully. Let me show you how the ark of God comes this time. Look, if you will, in verse 13: *“And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six*

paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings.” (2 Samuel 6:13) Underscore that phrase, *“they that bare the ark of the LORD.”* (2 Samuel 6:13) No longer is the ark of the Lord now on a cart; now it’s being carried exactly as God said. Now folks, when all else fails, read the directions, okay? Now, they are bearing the ark of the Lord exactly as God had clearly said.

A. **Simple Obedience**

What is the first step in enjoying the presence of God and turning religion into reality? It is simple obedience—simple obedience, simple obedience. Oh, listen, Jesus said, *“He that hath my [Word], and keepeth [it], he it is that [loves] me: and he that [loves] me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him”* (John 14:21)—“He that has my Word and keeps it.” My friend, there is no substitute for obedience. Obey the Lord if you want to know the reality of God.

B. **A Sacrificial Spirit**

And, that simple obedience turned quickly into a sacrificial spirit. Look in verse 13: *“And...when [he’d]...gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings.”* (2 Samuel 6:13) This brings me to say what I said about our offering this morning: my dear friend, if the offering were taken and just simply consumed, if it were used for nothing but the glory of God, it would have been worth it. Here David just simply takes oxen—very expensive oxen. It would be like burning up six Mercedes-Benzes. He took six oxen. And, these... *“He sacrificed oxen and fatlings.”* (2 Samuel 6:13) I don’t know how many—and, and, right there. You see, simple obedience always leads to a sacrificial spirit.

C. **Sweet Joy**

And, that led to sweet joy. Look, if you will now, in verse 14: *“And David danced before the LORD with all his might.”*—can’t you see ol’ King David leaping, and dancing, and praising God because now Jesus is real to him? He—*“danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded [in] a linen ephod.”* (2 Samuel 6:14) That means he had a linen shirt-jacket on—not the regal robes of a king, but just plain linen wrapped around him. It doesn’t mean that he was indecent, but he just simply is wearing very common clothing right now. He’s wearing a linen ephod. And, here is the king. He sees the ark coming. He’s so happy. He’s doing it God’s way. He sacrifices these oxen. And, here comes the ark, and David is saying, “Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!” And, he’s leaping and dancing. He’s so full of joy unspeakable that he can’t keep both feet on the ground. And, that always leads to spiritual...

D. **Spiritual Worship**

Well, let’s continue to read here on through verse 15: *“[And] so David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the*

trumpet”—trumpeters, you’ve been around a long time—“*And...the ark of the LORD came into the city of David*”—“*and as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David*”—“*Michal Saul’s daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart*”—now listen, they... And, I’ll refer to that in another—“*And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings [for] the LORD.*” (2 Samuel 6:15–17) There was, my dear friend, spiritual worship.

E. **Shared Blessings**

Now, notice what happened as a result of all of that. There were shared blessings: “*And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts. And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well [as] to the women*”—“*as well to the women*”—“*as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed every one to his house.*” (2 Samuel 6:18–19) I mean, dear friend, it was a celebration. There was joy. Anybody who can read this can see that there’s “*joy unspeakable and full of glory*” (1 Peter 1:8) in the camp—except for one.

At this moment, there was a woman named Michal. Michal’s looking out the window, and she sees David leaping, and dancing, and praising God. And, her heart is filled with contempt. Who is Michal? Michal is David’s wife, and she is King Saul’s daughter. She is the daughter of a king and the wife of a king. She is the First Lady, and she’s got—she’s overloaded with—dignity. And, she lived a very reserved and a very dignified life. And so, when David comes in the door... Here’s David. He’s so happy he doesn’t know what to do. I mean, he’s enjoying the presence of God, and God is very real to him. And, when he walks in, Michal greets him with sarcasm. I want you to listen to the sarcasm in verse 20: “*Then David returned to bless his household*”—oh, he wanted to bless Michal, and God wants to bless you, my friend. But, you might be like Michal and not get a blessing. And, listen—“*And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day*”—she just...she’s just so full of sarcasm—“*How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself! And David said [to] Michal, It was [done] before the LORD, which chose me before [my] father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD*”—“*people of the LORD*”—“*over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD*”—that means “*Therefore will I exult before the Lord*”—“*And I will yet be more vile than thus*”—he’s saying, “*Michal, you think it’s bad? It’s going to get worse—*“*and [!]*

will be base in [thine] own sight: and of the [handmaidens] which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour”—now, notice verse 23—“Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death.” (2 Samuel 6:20–23)

Now, let me tell you something, dear friend: if you get happy in Jesus—I mean, really happy in Jesus—if Jesus Christ is real to you—if you become what the world calls a “fanatic,” a “fool,” a “freak” for Jesus Christ—you’re going to make somebody mad; you’re going to make somebody angry. Do you know the way to make some people angry? Just get happy. Did you ever read Dr. Seuss? Do you remember the Grinch? The Grinch, if he saw anybody happy, he bit himself. Now, there are a lot of people just like that Grinch: they can’t stand to see anybody happy. Michal could not stand to see David happy in the Lord.

Now, what was her problem? Her problem was pride. And so, when David comes in, she just has a bucket of cold water just to throw on David. There are a lot of people—and some of them perhaps are members of Bellevue—who would like to turn Bellevue Baptist Church into a mausoleum. I mean, they don’t want laughter. They don’t like spirited music. They don’t like open fellowship. They don’t like genuine joy. They don’t like freedom in worship. They want liturgy. They want dignity. They’re like Michal. But, they don’t know the difference between dignity and rigor mortis. I mean, listen—listen—Michal’s problem, pure and simple, was pride—pride. She had religion, but she didn’t have reality. David had reality, and it brought them into conflict. And, there are always people in every service who want everything to be done so orderly, and so quietly, and so smoothly—every service is to be like a funeral, and everything is to be so quiet, and every word that the pastor says is to be so measured and careful.

I heard of one woman who was listening to a pastor preach, and the pastor was not a very eloquent man, just a plain-speaking man. And, in the midst of his sermon, he spoke of someone’s pants. She met him at the door, and she said, “You should never have said, ‘pants.’” He said, “What should I have said?” She said, “You should have said, ‘trousers.’” “Oh,” he said, “well, next time I’ll try to say, ‘trousers’ rather than ‘pants.’” He said, “Do you remember anything else I said?” She said, “No.” He said, “Well, if hadn’t have said, ‘pants’ you wouldn’t have gotten anything out of the message.”

Now, there are people just like that. I mean, there are people, dear friend, who want everything formal.

Now, I believe there’s a time for formalism. I believe there’s a time for liturgy. I believe there’s a time for ritual. But, my dear friend, don’t you be one of those ecclesiastical spoilsports that looks down your nose when people get excited and exuberant about the Lord Jesus Christ. Very frankly, you’ve got a problem, and I want to tell you what your problem is: it is P-R-I-D-E.

I want to tell you something else. You listen to me. I've been preaching the gospel for a long time. I've found one thing: people do not get saved, ordinarily, in a very formal service. Did you know that? Did you know that? Formalism is the death knell of evangelism. As a matter of fact, so many times a woman will pray for her husband and say, "God, I want you to save my husband." And, she will beg her husband to come to church. And finally, she'll get him to come, and he'll say, "Well, I'll just go that one time, but don't ever ask me to come again." And, he goes to church, and he sits down there in the back and looks at the preacher under his eyebrows. I've seen them do that to me many times, you know—like "go ahead and get it over with." And, he's counting all the light bulbs in the ceiling, and he's doing all this sort of stuff, and checking things off on the bulletin. As soon as it gets done, he checks it off. And then the preacher comes out, and he stands up and gives some dry dissertation and the choir stands up and sings something in Latin—sounds like a couple of calves dying in a hailstorm. He can't wait to get out of there. And, he won't come back.

But I'll tell you, you let a man get in a service like we had this morning, or music like we've had tonight or this morning, and he sees the joy of the Lord Jesus on people's faces; you let the man of God stand behind the desk of God, take up the book of God, and with the Spirit of God preach the Christ of God, and let the people say amen. And let the choir sing with the joy of Jesus on their face and let the people enjoy the Lord Jesus Christ, and he's going to look around and he's going to say, "These folks believe that stuff." Before long, he'll be believing it, too.

My dear friend, I want to tell you something. You listen to me: formalism is the death knell of evangelism. I'm not against proper formalism; I'm not against good high music; I'm not against the kind of music that we did last Sunday when we sang Beethoven—wonderful, wonderful.

But, you know what David said? David said, "I got so happy I couldn't help it. I was leaping and dancing," and he said, "It was to God I did it—it was to God I did it." Michal said, "I don't like it." He said—in verse 22, he said, "The handmaidens—they liked it." (2 Samuel 6:22) I'm going to tell you something, friend: these religious snobs may not like it, but the ordinary folks will. We're here to reach the ordinary folks. Did you know that? We're here to reach the ordinary folks; we're here to reach the common folks.

Every now and then, people want the preacher to preach deeper—deeper. And, you know, I didn't just fall off a load of pumpkins. I could preach—listen—I could go down deep, and stay down long, and come up dry if I wanted to. And, I know some of you theologians would meet me at the door, and you'd say, "Adrian, that was great." Well, look, you go study for yourself somewhere. I mean, you already know it all anyway. And, you know, I am convinced—you listen to me—I am convinced that most preaching in some of these dead churches is preached from one theologian to another theologian,

and down here are the people. And, I'm convinced, Jim, the same thing happens in church music sometimes: a minister of music will go talk to another minister of music—say, “What did you do last Sunday?” “Oh, we did a Latin so-and-so,” or, “We did a German requiem.” “Oh, well, you wait until you hear what we're going to do!” And, they're just doing music—pride—back and forth from one minister of music to another. And, down there are the people whose hearts are hungry for God. And, David was leaping and dancing, and he said, “You may not understand it, and Michal, you may not like it, but God is real to me—God is real to me. And, those handmaidens—they will understand what it's all about.” (2 Samuel 6:22)

My dear friend, I'm telling you, what is needed in America is reality—reality, not formalism. There is a place for great music There is a place for ritual. There is a place for all of that. But, I'll tell you something else: there's a place for joy, and there's a place for enthusiasm, and there's a place for tears, and there's a place for shouts, and there's a place for praise to the glory of God! And, dear friend, you listen to me: when God is real, you're not going to put Him in a bottle.

Let me tell you about God. Now, you listen—listen: I'm not talking about cheerleader enthusiasm. David had already tried that. He had everything rigged up the first time when he was hauling the ark on a Philistine cart. I'm talking about the reality of God. I'm talking about when God does it, when you just overflow, and it's real—it's real. That's what we need in America today.

Conclusion

My friend, God will not be used, and God can't be captured; and God will not be managed, but He can sure be enjoyed if we'll just trust Him and obey Him. The great need in America today is for churches who have the conscious presence of Jesus symbolized by that ark.

Let's bow in prayer. Have you had the spirit of a Michal? Why don't you rebuke that spirit and say, “God, I want the spirit of David. I want reality”? Have you been trying to use God? Have you been trying to steal somebody else's God? Secondhand religion? Think maybe you can capture Adrian's God? Have you been trying to manage God—make God fit into your plans?

O God, O God, help us, as a church, not to have carnal excitement or deadly formalism. But God, may we have spiritual reality. May Jesus Christ be real in this place. And Lord, in those times when we're to be quiet before you, help us to be quiet. In those times, dear Lord, when we are to overflow with praise, help us to overflow with praise. Father God, keep us from sin and keep us from error, and be real to us. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

The Ruin of a Christian

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 19, 1995

Main Scripture Text: 1 Samuel 9:1-2

“Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish...And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he.”

1 SAMUEL 9:1–2

Outline

Introduction

- I. Self-Determination
- II. Stubborn Disobedience
- III. Fighting Against God
- IV. Cooperating with the Devil
- V. Self-Destruction

Conclusion

- A. Circumstances Cannot Make or Break You
- B. Be Careful Not to Do Good in the Flesh
- C. There Can Be No Success Without Disobedience
- D. Success Does Not Mean Success Always
- E. No One Is Immune to the Deceiving and Deadening Power of Sin

Introduction

Find in the Old Testament 1 Samuel chapter 9; and when you've found it, look up here. Let me tell you something that bothers me deeply, and that is to see a young man—or a young woman, for that matter—gifted, godly, and graced, who start out so well and wonderful in life and then they end in degradation. Their lives somehow seem to disintegrate and fall apart. I'm thinking of so many. I'm thinking of some members of this church, some who had such a wonderful start, and to look at them you would just love them, and stand in awe, and say, “How wonderful is that young man! How blessed is that lady!” And, they do so well for a while; and then, they begin to go downhill, and they begin to disintegrate. And, not only do they just become cold spiritually, but sometimes it goes beyond apathy—it goes into depravity and destructiveness, and it is so sad. I'm thinking of a young man right now that I dearly love that could almost be a prime

example of what we're going to study. The title of our study tonight is "The Ruin of a Christian."

What happens to some people to cause them—those who were so gifted, and so blessed, and so graced—to end up in such a dismal way? Well, we're going to talk tonight about a young man named Saul. No one ever had a better start or a sadder finish than the young man Saul. When you meet him—when you first meet Saul in the Bible—you're going to find out that he was handsome, he was winsome, he was courteous, he was thoughtful, full of vigor. That's the way he started. But, when you trace him through the Bible, you're going to find out that in his last days, he was a bitter, murderous, envious, wicked, nasty old man. What happened to him?

We've had Sidlow Baxter in our pulpit here. He's a godly old man. But, Sidlow Baxter said this about Saul: "In some ways, he's very big; in others, very little. In some ways, he is commandingly handsome; and in others, decidedly ugly. All in one, he is a giant and a dwarf, a hero and a renegade, a king and a slave, a prophet and a reprobate, a man God anointed and a man Satan possessed." How do you explain it? What happened to him? And, what happens to so many?

I. Self-Determination

Well, first of all, I want you to see why I say that he never had a better start. I want you to see the native manhood that was in this man. Look, if you will, in verses 1 and 2:

"Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. And he had a son"—now, he had a nice daddy, too, evidently—"whose name was Saul, a choice young man"—just underscore that—"a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people" (1 Samuel 9:1–2).

Now, what does all of this say, in a nutshell? This young man, with a godly dad, was a man among men. He was tall—head and shoulders above other people. He was handsome, goodly. As a matter of fact, today, Hollywood would love to have him. They'd had made a movie star out of him. He had health. He had height. He had handsomeness. He had it all. And, you would think that, with all of that going for him, that he might be prone to swagger a little bit, to be arrogant—but not so. Oh, what a humble man he was! Look, if you will, in chapter 9, verse 15—and the Bible says that Samuel came to Saul to make him king over Israel: *"[And] the LORD had told Samuel in his ear"—"in his ear"—"a day before Saul came, saying, To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me"* (1 Samuel 9:15–16).

So, God told the prophet Samuel, “Saul is your man. Go after Saul and anoint Saul.”

But now, when Samuel comes to Saul, Saul doesn't say, “Well, boy, you really found the right man!” Notice in verse 21: *“And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite”—“a Benjamite”—“of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family [is] the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?”*—look how humble he is. He feels unworthy for the job, and he's a man that didn't send out any campaign posters to say, “Make me king.” As a matter of fact, he was a man who just kind of retired from publicity. Look in verse 22—*“And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them to sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which were about thirty persons”* (1 Samuel 9:21–22). Saul didn't want to sit with the big shots. Samuel had to make him go up there. He's just shrinking back; he's not trying to promote himself at all.

And yet, he's so handsome and tall. And, he is chosen of God, and he has a mighty Spirit upon him—the Spirit of God comes upon him. Look in chapter 10, verse 1: *“Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be [the] captain over his inheritance?”* (1 Samuel 10:1). Here was a man anointed of God with a holy anointing; and because of that, the Holy Spirit came upon him in great power. Look in verses 6 and 7—this is chapter 10, verses 6 and 7: *“And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man. And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou [shalt] do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee”* (1 Samuel 10:6–7). How would you like to be around this man? Handsome, tall, strong, of good heritage, chosen of God, humble, retiring, self-effacing, anointed with the Spirit of God? What a man—what a man!

And, he seemed to have such a loving, magnanimous attitude toward other people. Look in chapter, 10, verse 26. Here's an episode in this whole thing. There were some who didn't like Saul. Look, if you will, in verse 26: *“And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched. But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought [him] no presents. But he held his peace”* (1 Samuel 10:26–27). Saul didn't talk back to them. They despised him; they shot out the lip at him.

And then, go on over, if you will, to chapter 11, verses 12 and 13: *“And the people said unto Samuel, Who is [this] that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death”*—he's talking about these same men who shot out the lip at Saul—*“And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for to day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel”* (1 Samuel 11:12–13). One word from Saul, and these men would have been put to death. But, Saul is loving his enemies. He's doing good to those that hate him. He is blessing those that despise him. What great strength

was shown in the restraint that this man had! He had the power to have these men put to death because they'd spoken against the king and against God's anointed.

And, besides that, he was a man that other men loved, and other men wanted to follow him. Go back to chapter 10, and look, if you will, in verse 26: *"And Saul...went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched"* (1 Samuel 10:26). I love that. You know, I believe that God's given me a band of men here at Bellevue whose heart God has touched. That's what makes Bellevue the great church that it is. And, Saul had these men who said, "Saul, you're our leader, and we're your men. You're anointed of God, and God has touched our hearts to follow you." Now folks, you're going to have to admit that this was an incredible man.

And, besides that, God had given him a spiritual mentor. God had given him Samuel to guide him and lead him. Look in chapter 10 and verse 25: *"Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his own house"* (1 Samuel 10:25).

Now, here's Samuel. Samuel is telling Saul what he ought to do, what he ought not to do. Samuel is a man who's a prophet of God, and God spoke to Samuel directly. And, Samuel said, "Now Saul, God's chosen you. God's given you the kingdom. God's putting His Spirit upon you. God has gifted you. You have native ability. God's got some men who are going to follow you, and here's God's plan." And, Saul wrote it down. He had a plan, Brother Bob. He had the whole thing. What a mentor—to have his own personal prophet of God to lead him!

On top of that, God made him king. Go back to chapter 10, verse 1—look at it: the Bible says, *"The LORD hath anointed thee to be captive over his inheritance"* (1 Samuel 10:1). Here was a man who was given an assignment to be the king, the shepherd over the most wonderful nation on earth. What an opportunity—to be Israel's king; I mean, to bless the nation that was to bless the world!

Do you know, some people have great opportunity, but they don't have the ability. Some people have great ability, but they don't have the opportunity. Saul had both ability and opportunity. He came at such a time when there were Philistines oppressing the people. God wanted to deliver the people, and so God took this man—God equipped this man. He was a man in a million. He had an opportunity in a million. No man ever had a better start; no man ever had a sadder finish. What happened? How did this man unravel? How did he self-destruct? What happened? Could it happen to you? Why does it happen to some people? It's a good question. Let's see if we can find out what happened.

He begins to get away from God slowly. And, at first, what he does doesn't seem quite so bad. But look, if you will, in chapter 13, beginning in verse 5, and I'm going to

read through verse 14: *“And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen”—now folks, that some battle array come against you—“and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, [toward] eastward from Bethaven”—that is, here are all these people, and they encamped there against Israel—“[And] when the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in the rocks, and in high places... And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling”—that is, he’s their leader, and they’re following him—“And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed”—now, Samuel had given him a battle plan. He said, “Now Saul, stay there seven days”—“but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering. And it came to pass...as soon as [he’d] made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him. And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering. And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever” (1 Samuel 13:5–13).*

“Pastor, what does all that mean?” It simply means this: that Saul began to operate in the flesh. He began to do holy things with his own native ability, by his own wit, by his own wisdom, by his own imagination.

Now, how does God get a good man? Sometimes you’ll see a minister who falls into sin. And, I mean, this man was a gifted, godly man, used of God. And, if the devil ever said to that man, “I’m going to get you to commit adultery,” that man would say, “No way” If the devil were ever to say, “I’m going to make a drunkard out of you,” he’d say, “Oh, no, so you’re not going to do that.” If the devil were ever going to say to him, “I’ll make you a gambling addict,” or, “I will have you get into deep, dark sin—the sins of the flesh: adultery, fornication, drugs, drunkenness,” that preacher, that man of God, that Sunday School teacher, that deacon, would say, “There is no way possible you’re going to get me to do bad in the flesh. I’m just not going to do it.” So, the devil says, “I think he’s right. I don’t think I can get him to do bad in the flesh, but I think I do know what I can get him to do: I think I can get him to do good in the flesh.” Hello! “I think I can get

him to do good in the flesh. I'll get him to minister in the flesh. I'll get him to sing in the flesh. Play in the flesh in the orchestra. I'll get him to administrate in the flesh, to do good from his own strength."

You know, some folks can do pretty good in the flesh. Some people can preach in the flesh. Now, I'm not talking about "the flesh"—I'm not talking about skin and bones. I'm talking about that old nature, that fleshly nature, that... Without depending upon God, the flesh can sing a good song. The flesh can teach a good lesson. The flesh can give a big gift. The flesh can lead a strong program. The flesh can have a big choir program or pastor a big church. Flesh can do all of that. And, for a while, everybody will say, "Hey, boy, it's going good. Isn't he gifted? Isn't he wonderful, *ta-da-ta-da-ta-da?*" And, he's doing it all. He's not doing bad in the flesh; he's doing good in the flesh, but he's in the flesh. That's what Saul was doing: he was out of the will of God doing holy things, doing it of his own wit, will, and ingenuity—not doing bad; doing good in the flesh. But, let me tell you something: once the devil got him to do good in the flesh, it wasn't long before the devil got him to do bad in the flesh, because that which is flesh is flesh. And, all Satan wants to do is just to move you into that area of the flesh. He doesn't care whether you're in the flesh in church or in the gutter. You're in his domain when you stop operating in the Spirit and begin to operate in the flesh. That's what happened to Saul, and Samuel said, "Saul, you've been so foolish" (1 Samuel 13:13).

Sometimes we see a man, and it just seems like he just falls suddenly. And, somebody says, "Look how far he fell." No, you don't know how low he was living. I mean, he was ministering. He was doing all these things. Or, she was teaching. Or, this person was a deacon. Or, this person was a ladies worker. The devil's very clever, isn't he? So, he takes this man—this anointed man, this gifted man—and he induces him to run ahead of God and act foolishly. So, first of all, you see, here's a man in self-determination, doing spiritual things with the wit, the will, the ingenuity, of the flesh.

II. Stubborn Disobedience

Now, step number two...and, by the way, there are five steps here. Number one: self-determination—running ahead of God. Number two: stubborn disobedience. Look, if you will now, in chapter 15. Saul is given a command by Samuel, and that is that he is to utterly destroy a tribe of people called the Amalekites. Now look, if you will, in 1 Samuel chapter 15—the first three verses: "*Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king...over Israel*"—"to be king over his people"—"over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. [For] thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and

suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass” (1 Samuel 15:1–3). Now, God said, “These people are to be eradicated. They’re to be wiped off the face of the earth.” You say, “Well, is that cruel?” It would have been cruel if I had commanded it or you commanded it, but God commanded it. Here was a righteous judgment of Almighty God.

The Amalekites were a cancer in the human race. Historians tell us they were a bandit race. They had run roughshod over other nations, slaughtering and raping and torturing. They left a trail of blood wherever they went. What they could not carry away they destroyed. They had no use for monuments or sacred symbols. They always oppressed weaker people. They would ambush them. They would rape the women. They would impale men squirming on stakes. They would cut off pieces of living flesh and fling it in the air to taunt Israel’s God. They would knock out the teeth of their victims. They were demon worshippers. When God said that they were to be destroyed, in a sense, it was merciful, for He kept them from committing more sin. He kept others from their idolatrous influence. And, even the little children that would die, at least, would go to Heaven rather than being raised in that kind of a demon-inspired place. So, God said to Saul, “Just decimate them.”

But now, what does Saul do? You’re in chapter 15. Let me just tell you the story and then jump in. Saul goes out there, and rather than doing what God tells him to do, he spares King Agag, who was the King of the Amalekites. And, he takes the best of the sheep and the best of the oxen that God had said to destroy, and he saves them alive. Now, when Samuel again comes on the scene, Samuel asks this question. Look at it, if you will, in 1 Samuel 15: he says to him—he said, “Did you do what the Lord told you to do?” (1 Samuel 15:19). And, verse 20: *“And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been...destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal. And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD?”*—here’s one the great verses in all of the Bible—*“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat or rams”*—and here’s one of the great warnings in the Bible—*“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king”* (1 Samuel 15:20–23).

Now, sin is never static. Here’s Saul. First of all, he begins to do good things in the flesh. He’s running ahead of God. Now, secondly, he is deliberately and stubbornly disobeying God. God had told him clearly and plainly what to do, and he refused to do it. Now, here’s a man still operating in the flesh. What Saul said—listen: “I’m not going to destroy these sheep. I’m going to offer them to God.” It sounded reasonable. It

sounded logical. It sounded economical, and it even sounded spiritual. But, there's one thing that God will never accept for disobedience, and that is an alibi or an excuse. And so, here is Saul now, first of all, running ahead of God in the flesh—secondly, now, deliberately disobeying God, deliberately breaking a command of God. But, it's going to get worse.

III. Fighting Against God

The next thing you find this man doing is now he's fighting against God. First of all, he runs ahead of God. Secondly, he disobeys God. But now, he's moving downward. Look, if you will, in chapter 16, if you will, and let's begin about verse 11. There's so much material here. God, now, has said, "I don't want Saul to be king any more. I'm going to get another king." And so, look in chapter 16, verse 11: *"And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are [there] here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither"*—Samuel is looking for a new king, and he's asking Jesse to bring his sons in—*"And he sent, and brought him in"*—that is, the youngest son—*"Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look [upon]. And the LORD said, Arise, and anoint him: for this is he. [And] Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him"*—that's David—*"in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward"* (1 Samuel 16:11–13). So now, David is God's anointed king. But now, notice verse 14: *"But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him"* (1 Samuel 16:14). Now, here's a man not just simply failing to be anointed, but an evil spirit.

Now, the Bible says that evil spirit was from the Lord. That might bring you some theological difficulty, but it means that here is a man who has rejected God and rejected that which is right. And now, God Himself is sending to this man as righteous judgment strong delusion. And, notice now, in chapter 18, David is the anointed king—and in chapter 18, verse 6: *"And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all [of the] cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?"* (1 Samuel 18:6–8). And now, great jealousy is beginning in the heart of this man, and he begins to hate God's anointed.

And, he now sends out a decree that young David is to be hunted; he's to be put to death. Look, if you will, in verse 11: *"And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite*

David even to the wall with it” (1 Samuel 18:11). Now folks, David was God’s anointed. Here was Saul who at first, in the flesh, is just running ahead of God. Now, he’s disobeying God. Now, he is fighting against God. Now, he’s trying to destroy God’s anointed. Now, he is against Almighty God. But, it’s not finished yet; downward it goes.

IV. Cooperating with the Devil

The next step is not fighting against God; the next step is cooperating with the devil. Go over to chapter 28, and look at this. Turn to it; it’s worth turning to. Remember how Samuel said that *“[disobedience] is as the sin of witchcraft” (1 Samuel 15:23)?* When you disobey, you put yourself in the devil’s territory. And, before long, you’re going to find yourself conniving with the devil and connecting with the devil. In 1 Samuel 28 and verse 7: *“Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit”—do you know what a familiar spirit is? That’s a demon—“that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor” (1 Samuel 28:7).* This woman was a witch! And now, this mighty man—this man that we saw that had it all going for him—is now trafficking with the underworld. He’s taking counsel from Hell. He’s gone from ignoring God to disobeying God to fighting God to cooperating with the devil. How can it be?

V. Self-Destruction

Final chapter: Look in chapter 31, the final chapter in his life—that is, chapter 31, verses 1 through 4: *“Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan” (1 Samuel 31:1–2).* And then, verse 3: *“And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers. Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell [on] it” (1 Samuel 31:3–4).* His son, beloved Jonathan, is dead. His faithful men, that band of men whose hearts God had touched—they’re all in retreat. The vile, wicked enemies of Israel—they have a high hand. And, this man—this man who had such a start—now dies by his own hand, falls on his own sword—self-destruction.

Conclusion

Well, that’s the story. Won’t you admit that no man ever had a better start and no man ever had a sadder ending? I’m finished, but I want to give you five things to think about—one, two, three, four, five—just like this.

A. **Circumstances Cannot Make or Break You**

Here's the first one I want you to think about: circumstances cannot make you, and circumstances cannot break you. If circumstances could have made a man, Saul would have made it. No man ever had better circumstances. If circumstances could break a man, David never would have made it. But, David did make it, and Saul didn't. So, don't you, if you are in good circumstances, throw back your shoulders and think you're always going to just sail along high, wide, and handsome. And, if circumstances seem to be against you, if God be for you, it doesn't matter (Romans 8:31).

B. **Be Careful Not to Do Good in the Flesh**

Number two: Be very careful that you don't find yourself doing good in the flesh. As a matter of fact, I think that's the heart of the whole message: not doing bad in the flesh, doing good in the flesh, doing what you do "for God" with the native raw ability that you have, rather than being sensitive and waiting on God.

C. **There Can Be No Success Without Disobedience**

Number three: There can be no success without obedience. Disobedience is not only disobedience; it is rebellion and witchcraft. Treat sin as sin will treat you. Sin will have no mercy on you. Don't you have mercy on your sin.

D. **Success Does Not Mean Success Always**

Next: Success now does not mean success always. My ambition is to finish well. If you're running a race, no matter how far ahead you may be, you'll lose if you quit running. Success now does not mean success always. Maybe you're in the flesh, and you still think you're successful. Or, maybe you're in the Spirit, and you think it will be automatic. The Apostle Paul—not a greater man than the Apostle Paul—the Apostle Paul said, "I keep my body—I keep it in subjection: lest when I preach to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Corinthians 9:27).

E. **No One Is Immune to the Deceiving and Deadening Power of Sin**

No one is immune to the deceiving and deadening power of sin, and nobody who is self-willed can be Spirit-filled. Big lesson for us, folks.

Let's bow in prayer. Father God, I pray that you will help us all that we might walk with you in humility, that we might serve you with joy and gladness, in the strength of the Spirit, and to obey you, Lord, in all things. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Now, look up here. We're going to sing tonight an invitational hymn. Tonight, if you'd like to receive Christ as your personal Savior—if you'd like to be a child of God; to know that your sin is forgiven, to be a partaker of the divine nature; to know that Heaven is your home, God is your Father, Christ is your Savior, Lord, and elder brother—if you would like that, I'm going to ask you tonight to leave your seat and come forward. And,

let your coming forward be your way of saying, “Tonight, I’m giving my heart to Jesus Christ.” There’ll be a minister standing there at the head of each of these aisles. Tell that minister that you want to be saved, or tell him that you’re trusting Jesus and He has already saved you, whatever the need is. If you’re already saved and coming to make it public, just tell him. If you still need to be saved, tell him. We’ll take an open Bible and guide you in this decision. Others of you tonight may want to place your membership here; and so, you come at the same time, and you tell the minister, “I’m already saved, but I want to place my membership at Bellevue.” And, we’ll tell you how you may become a member here.

Let’s stand together as we sing.

Live Like a King in Victory

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 17, 1982

Main Scripture Text: 1 Samuel 17:3–46

“This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.”

1 SAMUEL 17:46

Outline

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Introduction

I want you to find 1 Samuel chapter 17 please—1 Samuel chapter 17. We’re going to be thinking about some highlights in the life of David under a series entitled, “Live Like a

King.” We’re going to be talking about, I suppose, the best-known story in the life of David. And, from here on, you’ll probably have to use your Bibles a little more, because most of us know this story that we’re beginning with—and it is the story of David and Goliath, because we’re going to be dealing tonight with how to handle the giants in your life.

We all have some giants. We all have some giant-sized problems, some king-sized problems, some ugly and some cruel giants that have threatened us and threatened our loved ones, Goliath-like problems. And, many people who are listening to me tonight are living lives of quiet desperation because of some problem in their life. The giants of temptation, giants of fear, giants of jealousy, giants of covertness, discouragement, heartbreak, financial reverse—problems, real problems—that’s what we’re talking about. God’s plan for His people is victory—always and in every circumstance. *“Thanks be unto God, [who causes] us [always] to triumph in Christ [Jesus].”* (2 Corinthians 2:14) And, in all these things we are more than conquerors—super-conquerors—through Him that loved us.

Now, let’s begin reading chapter 17, verse 3: *“And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and there was a valley between them. And there went out a champion out of the [army] of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. And he had [a] helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver’s beam; and his spear’s head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him. And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come...to set your battle in array? am [I] not...a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. [And] if he be able to fight with me, and...kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us. And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.”* (1 Samuel 17:3–10)

Now, since the nursery school and since your early days in Sunday School, you know the story of David and Goliath. David is now just a youngster, just a boy—hadn’t even started to shave yet. The Bible says later on in this chapter, *“He was...ruddy, and of a fair countenance.”* (1 Samuel 17:42) I take that to mean he had a little peach fuzz on his chin—just a strapping teenage boy. And, his brothers had gone off to battle. It seemed like the perpetual enemy of Israel were the Philistines. And David, like any red-blooded American boy, wanted to see that battle. He had to stay home and take care of the sheep, but David’s daddy said, “The boys need something to eat, and they need

some home cooking.” And, they sent David as a messenger there to carry food and carry provisions to his brothers. And, he was all excited, as any red-blooded person would be, I suppose, wanting to get out there where the action was, especially as a boy, and expecting to see a fight. And, when he got out there, there was no fighting at all, just a shouting match—and even the other side was doing most of the shouting.

He looked over there across the valley. There was the biggest man he had ever seen. His height was somewhere between nine feet and eleven feet in height. Some people say he was almost ten feet tall; some say he was over eleven. I know today the NBA or these others would like to have this man. He was big. He was the Incredible Hulk of his day. He was the original Bigfoot. He was big, real big. And, he is over there cursing, and swearing, and defying the armies of Israel. The Bible tells us he was dressed in armor, and it was brass. (1 Samuel 17:5–6) And, in my imagination, I can see that polished brass as it glistens in the sunlight. He must have been an awesome sight. He’s lifting his big fists like hands to the heavens. And, he’s cursing God, and he’s blaspheming God. And, he is defying the armies of Israel. He’s saying, in effect, “You cowards! You weaklings! Send somebody over here to fight me—just one man. Winner takes all. He defeats me—we’ll lay down our arms and surrender. If I take him, the battle is ours. Winner takes all.”

David wondered, “Why doesn’t somebody go over and put that guy to sleep?” No one was going—not even big King Saul. No one was going. You see, they were looking at the thing from a human perspective. As they looked at the situation and they saw Goliath over there, they were terrified. And, their basic thought was—when they looked at this giant, they thought, “Oh, we can’t go. Who could fight him? Look how much bigger he is than we are.” But, David looked at him, and do you know what David thought? David said, “Look how much smaller he is than God is.” So, David decided he would go. Armed in the power of Almighty God, David, with that sling and with those five smooth stones, went out and won the victory, killed Goliath, cut his head off with Goliath’s own sword.

Now, you know that story, but now I want us to look in that story and see how it applies to me, how it applies to you. What do we learn today in this twentieth century for twentieth-century giant killers? Three things I see as I look at this passage—of course, there are many other things. But, one thing I see is a vicious enemy—a vicious enemy: Goliath. The second thing I see is a vicarious encounter: the battle was fought by one on behalf of them all. And, the third thing I see is a victorious example, something that I can use in my own life.

I. A Vicious Enemy

And, see if you can see those three things with me today, as we think, first of all, about

a vicious enemy. I believe that Goliath of Gath is an Old Testament picture, a symbol, an illustration of Satan himself. Let me tell you why I believe that.

A. **His Measure**

First of all, look at his measure, beginning in verse 4: *“And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. And he had [a] helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of [his] coat was five thousand shekels of brass. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass [upon] his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver’s beam; and his spear’s head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him.”* (1 Samuel 17:4–7) Have you ever noticed the use of the number six there? He’s six cubits and a span high. In verses 5 and 6, he has six pieces of armor. (1 Samuel 17:5–6) His spearhead weighs, in verse 7, six hundred shekels. (1 Samuel 17:7) Now, you know that, in the Bible, the devil’s superman, of which, in a sense, Goliath could picture, is what? 666. I see his measure. Here he is described in these terms.

B. **His Might**

But, not only his measure; I see his might. Look again in verse 4: *“there went out a champion.”* (1 Samuel 17:4) This speaks of his power. He was a superman, a mighty man, a powerful person. And again, this reminds me of the power of the enemy. *“We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, [and] powers.”* (Ephesians 6:12)

C. **His Manner**

And, not only do I see his measure; I see his might—I see his manner. Look, if you will, in verse 10 of this chapter: *“And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day.”* (1 Samuel 17:10) How arrogant he was! How defiant he was! How rebellious he was against the things of God! And, what fear he was causing! And, Satan today, like Goliath of old, is making more noise than perhaps ever before, and saints are folding up when they ought to be standing up, because of the arrogance of our enemy.

D. **His Motive**

What was his motive? To destroy the work of God. Look at it again in verse 10: the Bible says, *“I defy the armies of Israel this day.”* (1 Samuel 17:10) That is, “I am against the people of God, and the things of God, and the work of God,” as the devil has always been. He was a very sinister enemy. Look in verse 16, if you will. In verse 16, the Bible says, *“And the Philistine drew near morning and evening, and presented himself forty days.”* (1 Samuel 17:16) You know what forty is in the Bible? Forty is the number of testing. Moses was in the wilderness for forty years—Israel, when they wandered

through the wilderness for forty years. Christ was tempted of the devil, or fasted forty days in the wilderness and was tempted. Forty, in the Bible, is the number of testing—the number of temptation, of trial. And, here is Goliath, who pictures the devil, our enemy, who's testing, trying, sifting, and fighting the people of God. And so, the first thing I see is a vicious enemy.

II. A Vicarious Encounter

Second thing I see is a vicarious encounter. I want you to notice how the battle lines were drawn that day. Look, if you will, in verse 8: *“And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you”*—not a group of men, just a man, one man—*“choose...a man for you, and let him come down to me.”* (1 Samuel 17:8) And, in verse 10: *“give me a man, that we may fight together.”* (1 Samuel 17:10) One man was to fight for all. Not only, therefore, do I believe that Goliath of Gath is a picture of Satan, but I believe that David is a picture of our Savior. I believe here we have a prefiguring of the Lord Jesus Christ, who fought for us a vicarious encounter with Satan himself. Vicarious means “in our place,” “one standing in the place of another.” Here David stood for them all that day, just as the Lord Jesus went to bloody Calvary and stood for me and stood for you on that day—a vicarious encounter.

Let me tell you why I believe that David pictures the Lord Jesus. He pictures the Lord Jesus so much in the Bible that sometimes in the Bible Jesus is called David. Did you know that? And, the Bible calls Jesus *“my servant David,”* (Ezekiel 34:24) because David is so much like, in many ways, his greater Son, the Lord Jesus.

A. The Sanctified One

Let me show you what I'm talking about. Go back to 1 Samuel chapter 16 now, and look, if you will, in verse 13. You see, something had happened to this young man. He had been anointed to be the king of Israel. He was just a lad. But, you remember the story when the prophet Samuel was to come and anoint David as king. Saul was the king, but he wasn't the king that God had really wanted. *“Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him”*—David—*“in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward.”* (1 Samuel 16:13) David was anointed with oil (symbolizing the Holy Spirit), and the Holy Spirit came upon him and set him aside. He wasn't an ordinary man; he was like our Lord, a sanctified man, though our Lord sanctified in such a greater way than even David.

B. The Sent One

But, not only was he the sanctified one—look, if you will, here in this seventeenth chapter, and you're going to find out that he was the sent one. Look in chapter 17, verse

17: *“And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp of thy brethren”* (1 Samuel 17:17)—sent by the father with bread for the brethren. That’s Jesus—sent by the Father with bread for His brethren. *“I am the bread of life”* (John 6:35)—is the Lord Jesus. Jesus is pictured here, I think, perhaps in a shadow, perhaps only faintly. But, I think, as I look as these sacred pages, that every one of us, every time, every place we look ought to find Jesus somewhere standing in the shadows. I believe the whole Bible somehow, some way, is about the Lord Jesus, and I’d rather see Him too much in the Bible than see Him too little in the Bible.

C. The Scorned One

I want to tell you David was that sanctified one. David was that sent one. David was that scorned one. Look, if you will, in verse 28. What happened when David got there? Did they receive him with love and gladness? *“And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab’s anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle”*—now, I want you to notice the scorn with which his brother treated him when he came that day. He wasn’t received lovingly and kindly. Continue to read—*“And David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause? And he turned from him toward another, and spake after the same manner: and the people answered him again after the former manner.”* (1 Samuel 17:28–30) What does that mean? It means that when young David came with a cause, with a mission, for the Father and for the glory of God, he was scorned, he was ridiculed, he was looked down upon, because the Lord Jesus *“is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”* (Isaiah 53:3) *“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”* (John 1:11)

D. The Saving One

Young David—young David—the sanctified one; young David, the sent one; young David, the scorned one; but, young David, the saving one. It was David that fought the battle that day. It was David that went against Goliath of Gath, and it was David that singlehandedly won a battle. One man vicariously fought and won the battle for them all there that day, so that’s the second thing I see.

III. A Victorious Example

First of all, a vicious enemy; secondly, a vicarious encounter; thirdly, a victorious example, because not only did the Lord Jesus, when He was here in the days of His flesh, win the battle against our archenemy, the devil, but He gave us an example, that

we should walk in His steps. And, as Jesus fought that battle so long ago, there is a continuing battle. In a sense, it's already won; and yet, in a sense, it needs to be fought day by day. You say, "That sounds like confusion." Well, we don't fight for victory; we fight from victory, but we fight anyway. The victory has been won at Calvary, and that's the reason that we can win it day by day, practically, right now.

Now, I want you to just imagine the giant in your life. Is it lust? Is it envy? Is it materialism? Is it laziness? Is it fear? Is it greed? Is it hatred? Is it doubt? What is it? What is it that stands between you and God's will for your life and the joy, the victory, that God wants you to have? There's victory in Jesus, and there is a victorious example in this story so that you can live like a king. Are you ready? The three principles that are here:

A. The Principle of Persistence

First of all, there is a principle of persistence. Any battle is going to be won by those who are persistent. I want you to look, if you will, in verse 32 of this chapter—chapter 17 and verse 32: *"And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine."* (1 Samuel 17:32) David purposed in his heart he would do it, and when he purposed in his heart, he was not deterred by anything.

1. The Dismay of Others

There was the dismay of others. Others were frightened. Look, if you will, in verse 11—chapter 17, verse 11: *"When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid."* (1 Samuel 17:11) And, look, if you will, in verse 24: *"And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid."* (1 Samuel 17:24) You know, fear is infectious, but David wasn't daunted by their fear. You see, in your battle, you're going to find that you're surrounded by a bunch of cowards, a bunch of weak-kneed people, a bunch of people who feel it really cannot be done. And, if you're not careful, their fear's going to infect you. And, the marvelous thing about David is this: that he was persistent in the face of the dismay of others. The fear of man made Saul a coward. The fear of God made David a hero. David had his eyes upon God, and, therefore, he was filled with a purpose. There was a persistence in spite of the dismay of others.

2. The Disdain of Others

Look, if you will, in verse 28: *"And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?"* (1 Samuel 17:28) Can you hear him as he curls the lip in disdain? "Sonny boy, this is for the big boys here. You don't have any right down here. Get on back there in the

wilderness. Go on back there with those few sheep.” And, not only was there dismay; there was disdain. They looked down upon David; they are going to look down upon you. Did you know that the devil has laughed many a man out of victory—that people just sneer at us, and we fold up and just run away? They laughed at little David, and doubtless, their laughter cut him to the quick. But, he refused to let up, or back up, or shut up. How about you?

Some of you are in high school. Are you going to let somebody ridicule you for your faith? Are you going to carry your Bible to school? Are you going to bow your head and thank God for your food there in the lunch hall just like you would at home? Are you going to stand up for the Lord Jesus when someone else takes His name in vain? Are you afraid what they might think?

3. The Discouragement of Others

Little David had a purpose. Look, if you will, in verse 33: *“And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine.”* (1 Samuel 17:33) Who was that that said that? That was Saul. And, who was Saul? He was the king—and more than the king: he was a warrior; he was an expert. Of course, the classic example or definition of an expert: an “ex” is a has-been, and a “spurt” is a grip under pressure. But, he was an expert, and he said, “It can’t be done.”

I want to tell you, when you get ready to live for God, and when you get ready to get out of the boat with both feet, or when you get ready to take a smooth stone and a sling and cross that valley against your Goliath, you are going to face those same three enemies. You’re going to face those who are in despair: they’re going to be howling, “Calamity!” You’re going to face those with disdain: they’re going to be laughing at you. And, you’re going to face those with discouragement, saying, “It can’t be done.” You’re going to face the same thing little David faced. We all face it. We all face it every day. And, you better learn to close these people out, and get alone with God, and get in the secret counsel halls of the Almighty, and get your eyes on God, or you’re going to lose the battle. You listen to what these people say can’t be done. You listen to these people say, “You haven’t got what it takes to do it.” They laugh at you; they ridicule you, and the rest of them are scared to death themselves. You’re not going to win the battle.

I believe one of the reasons that David was mighty for God was that he spent time alone with God. We were over there in Israel, and I watched a shepherd have a transistor radio up to his ear. I thought, “Oh boy, if David had had one of those, we wouldn’t have the twenty-third psalm.” He had his eyes on God: “The Lord is my shield, my strength, my buffer.” (Psalm 28:7) I don’t care what Saul says. I don’t care what Eliab says. I don’t care what anybody says. I want to know what God says.

And so, there was a purpose—the principle of persistence: I will go. You know why some of you don’t win the battle? You never show up. You don’t even say, “I want to do

it.” You know, one man was bragging about what a great Christian he was. He said, “I’m not afraid of the devil.” That’s not even a question, ladies and gentlemen. Is the devil afraid of you? Is the devil afraid of you? The Bible says, “*Resist the devil...[he’s to] flee from [us].*” (James 4:7)

B. **The Principle of Progression**

All right, but now, there’s another principle. Not only was there the principle of persistence, or purpose—either way you want to put it—but there was also another principle: there was the principle of progression. I want you to look, if you will, in verses 34–37 of this same chapter. Now, Saul said to David, “You can’t do it.” “*And David said unto Saul*”—in verse 34—“*Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.*” (1 Samuel 17:34–36) Now, what is the principle here? It’s the principle of progression. You see, David, before he fought Goliath, fought a lion and a bear, and he won those victories. And, because he had won those victories, he was ready for another victory. You see, David had learned to go from victory unto victory. And, before Jesus met and defeated Satan at Calvary, He met and defeated Satan in the wilderness. And, Jesus had gone from victory unto victory, and Jesus met Satan in private in the wilderness so that He might meet him in public at Calvary.

Now, this brings up another point: the reason that some of us are not winning our big battle is that we aren’t winning our little battles. And, the Bible says, “*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in [that which is] much.*” (Luke 16:10) And, some of you are not going to be ready when the Incredible Hulk comes along, because you haven’t been being faithful in those little things. You see, if you want to know what a man is made out of, watch him in the little things.

Joyce and I do our morning devotions out of a little book called *Our Daily Bread* by M. R. DeHaan. Do you get that? It’s great; it’s free, but send them some money. But anyway, it’s a good little booklet from The Radio Bible Class. A couple of days ago, or maybe it was yesterday morning, we were reading the story there of a man who worked in a bank office, and he was a clerk at a bank; and he was due for a promotion, Brother Tommy. But, he was in the cafeteria line—I suppose at the commissary of the bank. He did not know that the bank president was behind him. He picked up a pack of butter that would cost just a few cents and slid it under a piece of bread so he wouldn’t have to pay for it at the checkout line—just a few cents, but the president of that bank looking over his shoulder thought, “If that man cannot be trusted with something like this, I cannot

give him the promotion I wanted to give him.” And, he did not get the promotion for a few pennies, a little bit of butter. He lost. He was not faithful in that which was least, and so who would give him that which is much and make him ruler over things that really count? I wonder how many times God has had to pass us by for the same kind of reason. You see, God could use a David because the first time, it’s just a little sheep out there. But, he’s a shepherd—says, “I’m going to take care of my sheep. One little lamb—maybe daddy wouldn’t have known, maybe no one else would know, but I’m going to be faithful in that which is least.” He slew a lion, and he slew a bear, and when time came for Goliath, he slew him.

Can I talk on money a little bit? Thank you. Okay, let me tell you something, folks: tithing is kindergarten stuff—kindergarten stuff. Now, if you can’t trust God with a dime out of a dollar, what are you going to do when you meet Goliath? What are you going to do when the real problems come, when the big ones come? Don’t think you’ve arrived when you’ve done that. That’s the ABCs; that’s the kindergarten. What I’m trying to tell you is this: that we need to trust God in the small things. There’s a principle of purpose: I’m going to do it. There’s a principle of progression: you be faithful where you are; you be faithful in that which is small and that which is least, and God will help you to be faithful in that which is much.

C. **The Principle of Power**

Now, there’s one last principle, and I’m going to be finished in this victorious example. There’s also a principle of power. Now, David did not go against Goliath in spite of his purpose and in spite of his progression without any power. He had tremendous power. And, what was his power?

Let’s begin reading in verse 38, as we continue to read here: *“And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put [on a] helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him. And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd’s bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine. And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield went before him. And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field”*—that is, “Sonny boy, when I get my hands on you, I’m going to break you in little pieces and feed you to the

pigeons”—*“Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.”* (1 Samuel 17:38–46)

And, in those verses, the principle of power is delineated. What was the power that rested upon this man? What enabled a teenage boy—the sanctified, sent, and saving one—to do what he did?

1. There Must Be a Powerful Method

First of all, he had powerful methods. He refused King Saul’s armor. King Saul was a huge man—much taller than I. David was an ordinary-sized man. They put all this armor on little David, and there he is—he’s just a boy anyway; hadn’t even grown. And, here’s this great big breastplate, and here’s this heavy sword and this shield sitting lopsided. I had to play football one time with a helmet a couple of sizes too big—that’s tough. Here’s little ol’ David out there. My goodness! He said, “Take it off. I can’t use it.” Then, he went back to his proven methods.

What does this tell us? It tells us, ladies and gentlemen, that when we fight Satan, we cannot use unsanctified armor. The Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 4: *“the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.”* (2 Corinthians 10:4) You’re not going to overcome Satan with psychology. You’re not going to overcome Satan with the power of positive thinking. You’re not going to overcome Satan with education. You’re not going to overcome Satan with money. You’re not going to out-organize him. You’re not going to out-publicize him. Do you know the saddest thing, I believe, in our city and our nation? Our many churches wearing the armor of Madison Avenue, trying to outdo the devil. The world can out-world us every time. And, had David put on armor just like old Goliath had, David would have been ignominiously defeated. *“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.”* (2 Corinthians 10:4) We have the shield of faith; we have the sword of the Spirit, and we have the armor of righteousness. (Ephesians 6:16–17) And so, there must be a powerful method.

2. There Must Be a Powerful Master

There must be a powerful Master. Look down: *“Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.”* (1 Samuel 17:45) You see, David came in the power of a name. Did you know that we, as Christians, come against Satan in the power of a name? It’s the name of

Jesus. The devil's not afraid of the name Adrian. He's not even afraid of the name Tommy. He's not afraid of the name Dale. But oh, the name of Jesus—the name of Jesus! *"I come to thee in the name of [Jesus]."* (1 Samuel 17:45)

You see, the Bible says Jesus said, *"If [you] ask any thing in my name, I will do it."* (John 14:14) We can come if we have the right method; we put aside this unsanctified armor; take *"the whole armour of God, that [we] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil"* (Ephesians 6:11); and if we come not in our name, but in the name of Jesus, and come against Satan, our Goliath, and say, "Satan, I, as God's man, come against you in the name of Jesus." You say, "Well, sure, he says that. That's what I would expect him to say." Friend, if there's anything that I've learned in my ministry, it's the power of the name of Jesus. And, when there are times when I don't even know what to pray, I just bow my head and repeat, "Jesus is Lord" over and over again—"Jesus is Lord."

3. There Must Be a Powerful Motive

Now, let me go on and tell you one other thing about this power, and then I'll be finished. First of all, there was this purpose. Then, there was this progression; and then, there was this power. Power what? A powerful method, a powerful Master, and a powerful motive. Look, if you will, in verse 46. What was the motive of David that day? David said, *"This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth"*—and here was his motive—*"that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel"* (1 Samuel 17:46)—not that there's a David in the camp, but there's a God in Israel. His motive was for the glory of God, and that's why he won the battle.

You know that some of you want to win the battle, but your motive is wrong? You've got a financial problem, but you don't want to get a whip for the glory of God. You just want more money in the bank. Some of you have got a social problem. You don't want a whip for the glory of God; you just want to be happy. You see, look, when we get serious about wanting God to be glorified, then God's going to move. When we get the right method, when we get the right Master, when we get the right motive, we've got power. There's power—there's power—in a sanctified, Spirit-filled person, who says, "It doesn't matter whether I live or die so long as God is glorified."

You want to be filled with the Holy Spirit? You reduce all your goals and your aims to one thing: that Jesus be glorified, and you will automatically be filled with the Spirit. Somebody says, "O Lord, fill me so I'll be a great preacher." The Holy Spirit says, "I'm not interested." "O Lord, fill me so I can be a soul winner." The Holy Spirit says, "I couldn't care less." "Holy Spirit, fill me so I can live a clean life." The Holy Spirit says, "Ho hum." "Holy Spirit, fill me, that Jesus will be glorified." "Oh, you want Jesus

glorified? So do I. I'll fill you. Incidentally, I may make you a preacher, and help you live a clean life, and make you a prayer warrior, and all those other things, but not as an end in themselves—only that Jesus would be gloried.”

Conclusion

Is that what you want? There is a principle, ladies and gentlemen—a purpose. Have you made it? There are those who are going to laugh you out of it. There are those who are going to discourage you. There are those themselves that are going to be so afraid they say, “Can’t be done.” There’s a principle of progression. You may not have a Goliath out there. It may be that person that dented your fender when you get out to the parking lot. How you going to treat him? Or, that fella that picked up your topcoat—what are you going to say about that? Listen, if you’re not going to handle those things, what are you going to do when the big ones get here? It’s the principle of progression. Then, there’s a principle of power: the right method, the right Master, the right motive.

The Principles of the Blood Covenant

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 18, 1979

Main Scripture Text: 1 Samuel 18

“Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.”

1 SAMUEL 18:3

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Introduction

Be finding please in your Bibles 1 Samuel chapter 18—1 Samuel chapter 18. I really

don't know of any subject in the Bible that excites my heart and causes me to want to walk around Zion and count all the towers more than the subject that we're going to be looking at this morning. Now more than two years ago we studied together the blood covenant. And as I was meditating on it this past week, and as I was thinking about it the Lord just impressed upon my heart how rich and how full of meat and how profound the principles of the blood covenant are. And so today again we're going to study together the principles of the blood covenant. I begin reading here a very interesting passage of Scripture that deals with the covenant in 1 Samuel 18 and verse 1: *"And it came to pass, when he had made an end to speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan"—that is, Saul's son—"was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him"—that is, Jonathan loved David—"as his own soul. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant..."—just underscore that phrase—"Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul"* (1 Samuel 18:1–3).

I reiterate, I emphasize, I underscore, with all of the unction and function and emotion of my soul, that one of the greatest concepts that you can ever learn is the concept of covenant, of blood covenant. Now what was a covenant? A covenant was an unbreakable commitment of one man to another man or one woman to another woman, one person to another person. It dealt with an unbreakable partnership. And blood covenant has been practiced from time immemorial in the oldest tribes upon the face of this earth. And no one who entered into a covenant with another person would enter into that covenant lightly because of the grave consequences and because of the deep implication of that covenant.

Now here's the way that, often, ancient people would symbolize the fact that they had entered into a covenant. First of all, one would remove his coat and give it to the other person, which symbolized, because we're in covenant together, my possessions are your possessions. And then that person would take up his weapon—perhaps his bow, his arrow, his spear, whatever he might have—and he would give to the other person a weapon which symbolized, "My power is your power; my strength is your strength." And then they would do something else. They would take a sharp knife and make an incision many times there upon the wrist, and each of these persons who were entering the covenant would make an incision. For the word that is translated in our Bible "covenant" comes from a root word which means "to cut"—"to cut." And the word *covenant* is translated in some Bibles "blood covenant," because blood was involved when a covenant was made.

And so the one person would make a cut upon his wrist, and the other person would make a cut upon his wrist, and then those two hands would be joined together and lifted to heaven while the blood would co-mingle, which was a sign that, "we are now joined

together in such a way that not only are my possessions your possessions, and not only is my power your power, but my person is mingled with your person.” There is a sharing of personhood itself. And when people entered into that kind of covenant, when human beings entered into that kind of covenant, that meant that they were closer together than any human relations. Closer were people in covenant than people who were brothers by birth. Closer than relatives were those that we’re in blood covenant with.

And once people entered into that covenant, then they started using a new terminology. A part of that new terminology is a word called *lovingkindness*—*lovingkindness*—which is a covenant word. And it’s a very beautiful, poetic sounding phrase, but what *lovingkindness* means is this: that I will faithfully discharge to you the deeds and the responsibilities of the covenant, no matter what it costs me and no matter how I feel; I am bound to you by an attitude called lovingkindness. I will always show lovingkindness to you and yours.

And people who entered into this covenant had a new term for themselves: They were now called *friends*. Now we use the *friend* very lightly. Some times we will write a letter to a person and we don’t even know them, and we will begin this way, “Dear friend.” But in this day that word *friend* was not used as lightly as we use our word *friend* today. As a matter of fact, it was used 10,000 times more strongly. The word *friend* was given to those who were in covenant relationship.

Do you remember that scripture that says, “*There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother*” (Proverbs 18:24)? That’s referring to people who have become friends in the covenant sense of the word: even closer than human relationship, even closer than that. “*There is a friend*”—a covenant friend—“*[who] sticketh closer than a brother.*” And a covenant relationship not only belongs to those who make the covenant, but it is also extends to their friends and to their family. And so having said that by way of introduction, I want us to notice three things about the principles of the blood covenant that are going to bless and thrill your heart. First of all, I want you to see the importance of the blood covenant. Secondly, I want you to see an illustration of the blood covenant. Thirdly, I would like for you to see and enjoy the implications of the blood covenant.

I. The Importance of the Blood Covenant

Now first of all, what is the importance of the blood covenant? Now if you think I am overestimating the importance of the blood covenant, I could not possibly overestimate the importance of the blood covenant.

A. It Is the Subject of the Bible

You see, it is what the Bible is all about. It is important, number one, because it is the subject of the Bible. Now your Bible has two great divisions in it: the Old Testament and the New Testament. But the word *testament* means “covenant.” It is the old covenant

and the new covenant. All of the Bible is about covenant. That's exactly what it's all about: the old covenant and new covenant. It is the subject of the Bible. Do you remember when Jesus was having that memorial supper with His disciples and Jesus took the cup and he said, "*This cup is the new [covenant] in my blood*" (Luke 22:20)? It is "*the new testament.*" It is "*the new [covenant] in my blood.*" So it's very important, number one, because it is the subject of the Bible, from cover to cover. Or as the country preacher would say, "From civer to civer." All the way through. It is the subject of covenant.

B. It Is the Strength of the Believer

Now not only is it the subject of the Bible, but it is therefore the strength of the believer. The believer's strength, the believer's security, the believer's victory comes to the one who learns what his covenant rights are. If you want to get victory, if you want to have strength, have that strength in your covenant rights that belong to you. Satan certainly doesn't want you to understand the principles of the blood covenant.

C. It Is the Secret of Blessing

And since it is the subject of the Bible, and since it deals with the strength of the believer, no wonder it is the secret of blessing. Oh, how important is the blood covenant! You see, your relationship with our Lord is based on the principles of the blood covenant.

II. The Illustration of the Blood Covenant

Now I want to move quickly on. We've talked about the importance of it. Now let me talk to you about the illustration of it. We've already read this scripture. I want to read it again and continue to read. Now remember here in 1 Samuel chapter 18 we're talking about a covenant, and I want for the sake of emphasis to reread the first several verses: "*And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him*"—that is, David— "*as his own soul. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. Then Jonathan and David*"—watch it now— "*made a covenant, because he loved him*"—David— "*as his own soul.*" Let's just stop right there.

A. The Covenant of David and Jonathan

Actually, we could read this: "Jonathan and David cut a blood covenant." That's what the word means: "to cut a covenant." They made a blood covenant.

1. There Was a Sharing of Personhood

Why? Because he loved him as his own soul. Their souls were knit together. There was what we call the sharing of personhood, the highest, deepest commitment that people could make. There was a sharing of personhood. Remember the word *soul* means "life."

There was a sharing of personhood.

2. There Was a Sharing of Possessions

But I want you to notice in verse 4 there was a sharing of possessions: *“And Jonathan stripped himself out of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David,”*—this was Jonathan’s way of saying to David, “David, all that I have now belongs to you.” And this robe symbolizes, not only is there the co-mingling of personhood, but because of that, there is the co-mingling of possessions.

3. There Was a Sharing of Power

And then continue to read in verse 4—*“and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle”* (1 Samuel 18:4), which was what he hung his implements of war upon, the belt that he wore around him. And what was that a sharing of? A sharing of his power. A way of saying, “David, my weapons are your weapons. David, my protection is your protection. My strength is your strength. We have entered into a solemn covenant. And all that I am and all that I hope to be is committed to you. And David, I am now closer to you than I am to anyone else on the face of this earth.”

And here was Jonathan, who was the king’s son, a prince, who was heir to the throne, but now he knows that David is God’s appointed man to be the king of Israel, and Jonathan, rather than taking the throne rights that would normally come to him, advocated in favor of David and yielded all of his rights and all of his ambitions to David.

B. The Conflict of David and Saul

Now we’re talking about the illustration of the blood covenant. And we’ve seen the covenant of David and Jonathan. Now I want you to see the conflict of David and Saul. Saul was the king of Israel. David was God’s chosen king to succeed him. And therefore Saul was insanely jealous of David. And he has but one desire in his mind and that is to kill David. Look, if you will now, in 1 Samuel chapter 19 and verses 1 and 2: *“And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David. But Jonathan Saul’s son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hid thyself”* (1 Samuel 19:1–2).

Notice what is happening now. Jonathan is closer to David than his own father. And Saul is seeking to kill David. And the word goes out through the kingdom. All of our kingdom’s ambitions are reduced to one; all of our priorities are reduced to one: Kill David, kill David, kill David. Saul is insane with jealousy over David, yet Jonathan is in a covenant relationship with David and he is protecting David. But finally after David is hunted like a wild animal on the hills of Judea, Saul and Jonathan are both slain and put to death by the Philistines. And David does become the anointed king over Israel.

C. The Confrontation of David and Mephibosheth

Now we've notice the covenant of David and Jonathan, we have noticed the conflict of David and Saul; now I want you to notice the confrontation of David and Mephibosheth. That's hard to say, but oh, how rich it is in blessing! Turn now, please, to 2 Samuel chapter 9—2 Samuel chapter 9—and turn your blesser on, because you're about to get blessed. Second Samuel chapter 9—remember now that Saul is dead, and Jonathan is dead, and David is the king, and he is the virtual ruler over all of the land. And we take up our reading here in 2 Samuel chapter 9 and verse 1: *“And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul”*—when he uttered those words, I imagine that people thought, “Uh huh, it is about time. It is going to start now. The bloodbath is about to start. David is going to find anybody who belonged to the house of Saul and David is about to put that person to death.” And David says, “Is there any body that is left of the house of Saul.” “Wait a minute: What did he say?”—*“that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan’s sake? And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he. And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet. And the king said unto him, Where is he? ...Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lodebar. Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant!”* (2 Samuel 9:1–6).

Now Saul and Jonathan are slain. We've already said that. And when Saul and Jonathan are slain, there was a blind panic in the house of Saul. People were afraid because they were thinking that David is going to come now with blood in his eyes and with revenge in his heart and absolutely obliterate the house of Saul. There was a nursemaid who had charge of Jonathan's son, Saul's grandson, a young baby named Mephibosheth. When she found that David was king, she ran into the palace and picked up little baby Mephibosheth, wrapped him in a shawl, and was running out to hide the baby somewhere. And in her hurry, she tripped and fell, and she fell with her weight upon that child. And the child's legs were twisted and maimed and crippled. And that child, young Mephibosheth, for the rest of his life was lame in his feet, not able to walk, not able to get along.

Well, she picked this child up and she took him to a place on the backside of nowhere. She took him to some dusty, dingy, dirty hideout, a place called Lodebar. The very name means “a place in the pasture.” And there on the backside of nowhere this little exile prince is raised. He lives out there, living in squalor, living in filth, living as a cripple, an exiled prince, living away from everything, hiding out from David, fearing

David and hating David, and living in the place of no pasture.

And now David comes upon the scene. David says, “Is there anyone left of the house of Saul?” What fear must have gone through the hearts and minds of those people when David said that! But David removed the fear. Look again in chapter 9, verse 1: *“And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness...”*—now remember that word *kindness*. It’s a blood covenant word—*“that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake.”* You see, I am in a blood covenant with Jonathan. And is there anybody of the house of Saul that I may show kindness, not for their sake, but for Jonathan’s sake? And so they say, “Yes, there is a young man whose name is Mephibosheth. And he lives down in Lodebar.”

Can you imagine Mephibosheth when he sees the messenger of David coming? Can you imagine what his thoughts were living down there in the dusty hideaway as he drags his withered limbs to the window and he looks out? And he looks out and he sees the king’s ambassadors coming. He sees the king’s entourage coming, and he says, “This is it.” They say, “Mephibosheth, get ready. David wants to see you.” They picked him up and carried him to David. And there is David, the mighty warrior; there is David, the conquering king. And Mephibosheth falls on his face before David. And he does obeisance and reverence to David. He says, “This is it. He’s found me.” I can hear him as he says, “All right, David, get it over with. But please be merciful; make it quick. Kill me, David.” David says, “No, Mephibosheth; I’m not here to kill you. I am here to bless you. I am here to show you lovingkindness.”

Look in verse 7—chapter 9, verse 7—2 Samuel 9, verse 7: *“And David said unto him, Fear not...”*—can you imagine the words? Here’s Mephibosheth on the ground, quaking, trembling before David—*“And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father’s sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am? Then the king called to Ziba, Saul’s servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master’s son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house. Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in fruits, that thy master’s son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master’s son shall eat bread alway at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king’s sons. And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Micha. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth. So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king’s table; and was lame on both his feet”* (2 Samuel 9:7–13).

Now you just can't imagine. Here was Mephibosheth waiting for the blow to fall. And David says with that kingly smile on his face, "Mephibosheth, don't be afraid. Mephibosheth, I want to restore your lost inheritance. Number two, Mephibosheth, I want you to come and dine at my table. Number three, Mephibosheth, I want you to be to me as my very own son." Put yourself in Mephibosheth's place. He can't take it in. He says, "You don't mean it. How could you show kindness to such a one as I am? Why," he says, "I'm a dead dog. I don't deserve it. I have hated you. I have cursed you. I've despised you. I have fled from you. How can you do this?" And David says, "Now Mephibosheth, you'd better get it real clear. I'm not doing this, Mephibosheth, because you're worthy. I am doing this for Jonathan's sake. I am showing you kindness for Jonathan's sake. I made a blood covenant with your father Jonathan, and I am showing you this kindness not for your sake; I am doing it for Jonathan's sake."

Now Mephibosheth had a decision he had to make at that moment. Would he also ratify the covenant? Would he continue to be a rebel? Would he continue to hate David? Or would he make a radical decision? Would he by faith accept the terms of the covenant, and would he respond to David as David had responded to him? He knew that if he did he would have to now love David, and he knew also that he would have to die to the old way that he lived and live now to a new way and become a new man. And that's exactly what he did.

And what a transformation there was! Think what happened to Mephibosheth and think what happened in a day. Yesterday, he was living in exile, living in a dusty, dingy, dirty dugout, eating out of a filthy tin cup; and today he is a prince. Today, he awakened the morning sleeping on silken sheets. Today, when people come in, they bow before him, servants, and they say, "Are you awake, my Lord? Would you like a cup of tea before you go down to breakfast, my Lord Mephibosheth? Here is a towel for your back, my Lord Mephibosheth." He can't take it in. He goes down to breakfast and there is breakfast with the table set. And there is the table set. And there is the silver and the gold ornament on the table. There is the sparkling white tablecloth. And there are the king's most intimates sitting around the table. And there are the king's sons, and they say, "Here, Mephibosheth, sit here where the king's sons will sit and enjoy this breakfast." And there he is sitting right next to David, sharing the breakfast.

After a while, he gets to feeling at home, and he turns over to David and he says, "Would you pass the marmalade, please?" And David gets the marmalade and passes it. And I imagine that Mephibosheth looks down and sees on his wrist the incision, the mark of covenant. And he remembers one more time, "Oh, I don't deserve this. I'm not worthy of it at all. But I am enjoying it. I can't believe it. I am enjoying kindness for Jonathan's sake; not for my sake, but for what another did for me in my place. Hallelujah! I don't believe it, I can't explain it, but thank God I can't deny it. It is

happening to me. Glory hallelujah! What a transformation!”

III. The Implications of the Blood Covenant

Now let me go on and mention the third thing I want to mention this morning. That’s the illustration of the blood covenant. Now I want to mention the implications. And those of you who are Bible scholars are already way out ahead of me, because you know how this applies to our lives. God put this story over there in the Old Testament to illustrate to us the wonderful, glorious New Testament truth that we need to learn. Because you see, when the Lord Jesus Christ instituted the memorial supper—we call it the Lord’s Supper—Jesus said, in Luke chapter 22, *“This cup is the new [covenant] in my blood.”* “This is my blood covenant,” Jesus is saying, “and I am entering with you into a blood covenant.”

You see, 2,000 ago, Jesus our Savior entered into a blood covenant with God the Father on behalf of all of the sons of Adam. You see, actually Jesus cut a covenant for us with His own blood. Did you know that on the cross the blood of man and the blood of God were mingled? You know that? What kind of blood flowed through the veins of the Lord Jesus? Well, it was the blood of God. You read there in Acts the twentieth chapter the Bible speaks of *“the church of God, which he”—God—“hath purchased with his own blood”* (Acts 20:28). Whose blood coursed through the veins of the Lord Jesus Christ? God’s blood. And yet it was the blood of man, because Jesus was made a man, like unto man.

Oh, listen to me! Pay attention! It is the mystery of mysteries. The Lord Jesus Christ was as much God as though He were not man at all. God of very God, yet He was as much man as though He were not God at all. He was not half God and half man. He wasn’t all God and no man. He was not all man and no God. He was the God-man. *“Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh”* (1 Timothy 3:16). And when the Lord Jesus Christ had those marks of the covenant put in His hands and in His feet, and when that blood was shed, the blood of God and man, in a strange way, cut a covenant, were mingled together, and the Lord Jesus Christ in a very strange way cut a covenant for all of the sons of Adam. He said, “This cup is the new testament in my blood. It is the covenant of blood which is for you.”

And I want you to see how the Lord Jesus Christ represents David who cut the covenant, and God the Father who cut the covenant, but I want you to see how Mephibosheth represents the lost sinner.

A. Mephibosheth Pictures the Lost Sinner

You see, Mephibosheth is a picture of you. You think about Mephibosheth.

1. Mephibosheth Was an Enemy by Birth

First of all, he was an enemy by birth. And so are we. The Bible says we are *“by nature the children of wrath”* (Ephesians 2:3).

2. Mephibosheth Was Crippled by the Fall

But not only was Mephibosheth an enemy by birth; Mephibosheth was crippled by the fall. You remember how that nurse fell with him and he was crippled through the fall of another? You and I have been crippled through the fall. We are moral cripples, and we are mental cripples, and we are spiritual cripples.

3. Mephibosheth Was Living in Exile

But I want you to go on further. Here was Mephibosheth who was living in exile, one who was meant to be king and meant to reign, a prince. But he is living on the backside of nowhere. Why? Because he pictures the lost sinner. Do you know what unsaved people are doing today? Living in exile. They are living in the place of no pasture. They are on the backside of nowhere, down in Lodebar, drinking from their tin cup. The Bible says that God made man to have dominion and to rule (Genesis 1:26–28). But man lost the inheritance, and he lost it through sin, and he’s been displaced, and he’s been robbed of his throne and of his inheritance.

4. Mephibosheth Was Under the Sentence of Death

But not only this, but he was also under the sentence of death—Mephibosheth was. That’s what he meant when he said, *“Why should you show kindness to such a dead dog as I am?”* Every unsaved man, every boy or girl without Christ, is under the sentence of death. We are, ladies and gentlemen, like Mephibosheth. We are distanced. We are dethroned. We are disgraced. We are doomed. Mephibosheth is a picture of the lost sinner.

B. David Pictures the Lord

Now see how David pictures the Lord. Why would God show mercy to me? Why would God have mercy on such a dead dog as I am? Well I want to show you why. Turn to Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 32: *“And be ye kind...”*—there’s our word—*“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God”*—now watch this—*“for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you”* (Ephesians 4:32). Why does God forgive me? Because I am worthy? No, I am a dead dog. Because I deserve it? No, I’m a rebel. Because I first loved Him? No, I feared Him. Why does God forgive me? Listen: *“Be ye kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”* Because of the blood covenant of the Lord Jesus Christ I am forgiven.

Go back again to 2 Samuel chapter 9 and verse 1, and compare Ephesians 4:32: *“And David said, Is there yet any that is yet left of the house of Saul, that I may shew*

him kindness for Jonathan's sake"—"for Jonathan's sake." "Even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Now you see, dear friend, we are brought in, not because of what we have done, but because somebody made a blood covenant for us. Oh, hallelujah! What we have in the Lord Jesus!

Go back again to 2 Samuel chapter 9. Let's look at it a little more carefully—2 Samuel chapter 9—and let's just see what we receive when we receive the Lord Jesus. Let's just see what is ours when we enter into covenant with Him. Look at it.

1. The King's Forgiveness

First of all, there is the king's forgiveness. Look in verse 7: "*And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake.*" There is the king's forgiveness. No longer does David have any animosity: no revenge, no rage, just lovingkindness.

2. The King's Fellowship

But not only is there the king's forgiveness; there is also the king's fellowship. Look in the last part of verse 7—and it goes on to say, "*And thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.*" "You are going to eat at my table." Look at the last part of verse 10: "*Thy master's son shall eat bread alway at my table.*" Look at verse 11: "*Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commandeth his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons.*" He just keeps saying it. Look at verse 13, the last part of it: "*For he did eat continually at the king's table.*"

Four times the Holy Spirit put that in the Bible: "He shall eat at the king's table," "at the king's table," "at the king's table." Why is that? Friend, the most intimate relationship of fellowship is to eat together, to share a meal. And when you're invited to eat at the king's table, that's something. Listen. I don't care what your politics are, if you are ever invited to a special dinner at the White House, you'll never get finished telling your friends about it. But here is someone who eats at the king's table morning, noon and night. He eats at the king's table continually. It speaks to us of the most intimate fellowship.

You see, the most important thing, friend, is not getting your sins forgiven. That just gets you ready for the most important thing. After you get your sins forgiven, you can sit down as one of the king's sons at the king's table and say, "Pass the biscuits." How wonderful that is! The most intimate fellowship.

Can't you see old Mephibosheth sitting there, and here are all the high muckety mucks in the kingdom, and there are the king's sons, and there is Mephibosheth sitting there? And listen. He was lame, he was crippled, but you couldn't tell it when he was sitting there at the table. Because all you could see was the waist up. And those

crippled feet were under that beautiful, gleaming white tablecloth, hidden. You see, not only does God forgive you—He covers. And how beautiful it is! There he is sitting there at the table—looks just like everybody else, one of the king’s sons, having fellowship.

3. The King’s Fortune

But not only did he have the king’s forgiveness, and not only did he have the king’s fellowship, but he had the king’s fortune. Look in verse 9: *“Then the king called to Ziba, Saul’s servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master’s son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house. Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master’s son may have food to eat.”* Here he is. He inherits all of the fabulous wealth of king Saul. It all belongs to him. He has inherited it. He has it. You see, friend, when you get saved, your inheritance is restored. Have you ever read that scripture where Jesus promised the meek shall inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5)? You see, we’ve lost our inheritance. You try being meek today and see what you get. Well, don’t worry about it: You’re going to get it.

4. The King’s Family

The meek will inherit the earth, because you see, when we entered into covenant with our Lord, there is the King’s forgiveness, there is the king’s fellowship, there is the king’s fortune. but wait a minute, the best is still yet to come. Look in verse 11: *“Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king’s sons.”* Not only the king’s forgiveness, and the king’s fellowship, and the king’s fortune, but the king’s family. *“He shall eat at my table, as one of my sons.”* “I am taking him into my family.”

Can you imagine that people like us, dead dogs like us, can become children of God? Can you take that in? *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God”* (1 John 3:1). Sons of God! Royal blue bloods, heirs of Christ, joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ! How wonderful to rest in that lovingkindness!

That’s what salvation is, dear friend. Once I was an outcast, once a sinner, once a rebel, once living in disgrace, once living in poverty, ruined and crippled, and the next day I’m seated in heavenly places, banqueting with the king, a child of the king, with numerous servants. You say, “What kind of servants?” Angels who are ministering servants, ministering to me. You know when we hear that, when we discover that, my first thought is, “I’m not worthy.” And I ‘m absolutely correct. It’s not for me. God hath forgiven me for Christ’s sake. Isn’t that beautiful. “Is there any that I may show kindness to for Jonathan’s sake? I’m not doing it for you, Mephibosheth.” “God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven us.” The Lord Jesus entered into a blood covenant for me and for you.

I will tell you what will happen to you when you first get saved. You will have a real confrontation with the devil, and he will come to argue with you, and the devil will tell you, “You are not worthy.” Now don’t argue with him, and I’ll tell you why: because you’ll lose, because you are not. Don’t argue with him. Just point him to the blood covenant. And from there on, his argument is with the Lord, and not with you. Just point him to the blood covenant. Just say, “You’re right. I’m not worthy. But it’s wonderful. Ha! Ha! And I’m enjoying all this not because of anything I’ve done, but something my Savior did at the cross.” *“This cup is the new testament”—the new covenant—“in my blood.”* “Is there any that I may show kindness for Jonathan’s sake?” *“God for Christ’s sake”—for Christ’s sake—“hath forgiven you.”*

Conclusion

Isn’t it great that folks like that can have the king’s forgiveness, and the king’s fellowship, and the king’s fortune, and the king’s family, because Christ our Lord made a blood covenant with us? Let me give you this verse and I’m finished, or almost finished. Psalm 25, verse 14: *“The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant”* (Psalm 25:14). *“The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.”*

When you understand the covenant, no longer do you become a slave to fear. Sometimes you feel unworthy. That doesn’t make any difference. It doesn’t make any difference at all. The covenant is kept no matter how you feel about it. He will never break His covenant. Oh, quit living by the tyranny of feeling; just live by the covenant. It doesn’t matter whether you are worthy or not. Christianity is not based upon your ability. It is not your responsibility. It is your response to His ability. That’s what Christianity is. Jesus cut a covenant for you. And there is no longer any need for you to live like a beggar and die like a pauper when you can walk on this earth as one of the king’s sons because of the blood covenant. Hallelujah for that! Now Mephibosheth had a decision he had to make, and he heard about the blood covenant, and he had to agree to it and by faith enter into it. And that’s exactly the same decision that I’m going to ask you to make today with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Blood Covenant: Good News for Dead Dogs

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 20, 1997

Main Scripture Text: 1 Samuel 18:1–4; 19:1–2

“Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.”

1 SAMUEL 18:3

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Introduction

First Samuel chapter 18—and in just a moment, we’re going to read from that passage. But, I want to say that many Christians talk and sing better than they live. They speak of

victory, but how many truly victorious Christians do you know? Many are folding up when they ought to be standing up. And, rather than being victors, they seem to be victims. Somebody wrote these words:

*A tiger met a lion as they sat beside a pool
Said the tiger to the lion, "Why are you roaring like a fool?"
"That's not foolish," said the lion with a twinkle in his eyes.
They call me the king of all beasts because I advertise.
A rabbit heard them talking, ran home like a streak.
He thought he'd try the lion's plan, but his roar was just a squeak.
A fox came to investigate, had luncheon in the woods,
And so, my friend, when you advertise, be sure you've got the goods.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Now, many of us are talking better than we're living, and our roar is more like a squeak. There is a concept—a blessed, wonderful, glorious concept—that if you can get down into your heart, printed indelibly upon your soul, it will radically, dramatically, eternally change your life. That concept is the blood covenant. And, I'm going to be speaking to you today about the blood covenant. The title of the message: "The Blood Covenant: Good News for Dead Dogs." You'll understand that part later on. "The Blood Covenant: Good News for Dead Dogs."

Begin in verse 1: "*And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him*"—that is, "David"—"*as his own soul. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant*"—and some translations give it "a blood covenant," because the very word *covenant* here comes from a root which means "to cut"—"*Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul*" (1 Samuel 18:1–3).

I. The Concept of the Blood Covenant

I want you to think with me, first of all, about what I want to call "the concept"—"the concept"—"of the blood covenant." The blood covenant has been practiced by almost all primitive tribes since history began.

Now, how is a blood covenant made between two individuals? Two individuals who would love one another, be committed to one another, and want to enter into trust with one another would make a covenant called a "blood covenant." They would make an incision upon their right wrist—each would do this. The blood would begin to flow, and then they would put their wrists together to comingle their blood. And then, they would join their right hands together and lift those hands to Heaven. They were now in covenant. They would take a solemn vow that they would be blood brothers—closer

than fleshly brothers. Their very lives would be mingled. Genesis 9, verse 4 tells us that “the life of the flesh is in the blood” (Genesis 9:4). They are now blood brothers, committed to one another in trust and covenant—a blood covenant.

You’ve seen it many times if you used to see the old cowboy movies, where the cowboy—perhaps, the white man and the red man—after many times of war, would finally come to the place where they’d say, “We want peace.” And, I’ve seen that as I was a boy—used to go to the Saturday afternoon movies and watch the cowboy movies, where they would cut their wrists, and they would mingle their blood. It has been practiced by tribes almost since time began. Often, when a blood covenant was made, they would take black powder and rub it in that wound there on the wrist, so when the wound is healed, there is still a mark there. It was called “the mark of the covenant.”

A new terminology is being used now—a new attitude for brothers who are in blood covenant. It is called “lovingkindness”—“lovingkindness.” And, blood brothers now have a new term: they’re called “friends.” Now, we use the word *friend* very lightly, but the word *friend* was not used lightly in the Bible. As a matter of fact, when the Bible says that Abraham was a friend of God (2 Chronicles 20:7), that meant that Abraham was in covenant with God. God made a blood covenant with Abraham. You know, the Bible says, “*There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother*” (Proverbs 18:24), and this is the concept of the covenant: we are now brothers. And, the terms of the covenant would extend beyond the man and the other man. It would extend to the family. It would extend to the offspring. It would extend to the progeny of those two. And, if they would accept and ratify the covenant, they would come under the covenant that was made by others on their behalf.

Now, we’re talking about the concept of the blood covenant, and I want to tell you why it is so important. I am saying that if you learn the blood covenant, it will radically and dramatically change your lives.

A. **It Is the Subject of the Bible**

Number one: It is the subject of the Bible. All of the Bible is divided into two parts. Is that not true? The Old Testament and the New Testament—right? Well, the word *testament* and the word *covenant* are the same word. It is the “Old Covenant” and the “New Covenant.” All of the Bible is about blood covenant. Somebody has well said, “There is a scarlet thread that runs through all of the Bible that is the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Cut the Bible anywhere, and it will bleed.” It is about covenant—the old covenant and the new covenant. And so, it is the subject of the Bible.

Remember when the Lord Jesus was instituting that wonderful feast that we have called “the Lord’s Supper”? He said there in Luke chapter 22—holding up the cup, He

says, *“This cup is the new testament in my blood”* (Luke 22:20). Literally, He said, *“This cup is the new [covenant] in my blood”* (Luke 22:20). This cup represents a blood covenant. It is the subject of the Bible.

B. It Is the Secret of Blessing

It is the secret of blessing. All of the promises in the Bible are really covenant promises. The Bible says in Psalm 25 and verse 14: *“The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew [him] his covenant”* (Psalm 25:14). The subject of the Bible is the secret of blessing.

C. It Is the Source of Boldness

It is the source of boldness. When you understand who you are and what you have in the blood covenant, it gives you an incredible boldness. No longer are you mastered by the tyranny of feelings, the fickleness of emotions. Now, you can stand on fact. You can stand on covenant. You can stand on something that will give you great boldness in the faith of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That’s the concept of the covenant.

II. The Condition of the Covenant

Now, I want you to think with me, secondly, about the condition of the covenant—how the people enter into covenant. Well, we’re going to find something about this covenant here. Let me just give you the background. Saul is the King of Israel. Young David is God’s next appointed and anointed king. He comes on the scene, and he has killed Goliath with his sling. This little shepherd boy has killed Goliath. Now, David, as you know, is an Old Testament picture of David’s greater son, the Lord Jesus. David came from Bethlehem with fresh anointing upon him, chosen of God, sent by his father on behalf of his brethren down into the valley of death. And there, singlehandedly, little David defeated Goliath, who is a picture of Satan’s superman. One man won the battle for them all—a vicarious victory. That was the victory that David won with the anointing of Almighty God on him. He killed Goliath and cut off Goliath’s head with Goliath’s sword. He, *“through death...[destroyed] him that [hath] the power of death, that is, the devil”* (Hebrews 2:14).

And now, he is come from that victory—young David. Saul recognizes God’s hand upon him; everybody else recognizes God’s hand upon him. Jonathan, who is Saul’s son—Saul is the king; Jonathan is the crown prince—Jonathan, legally, is next in line for the throne. But, Jonathan knows there’s one to whom the throne belongs, and that is David. Jonathan sees David, and the Bible says that *“Jonathan loves David as he loved his own soul”* (1 Samuel 18:1). The prince, the heir to the throne, now sees David, and he now yields his life over to David and enters into a blood covenant with David. He sees the beauty of this son of Jesse—David, *“the chiefest [of] ten thousand”* (Song of

Solomon 5:10)—and he makes a covenant with him.

Begin to look, if you will, please, in verse 3: the Bible says, “*Jonathan and David made a covenant*”—a blood covenant—“*because he loved him as his own soul*”—now, watch this—“*[And] Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle*” (1 Samuel 18:3–4). Now, I want you to see the symbolism, now, of this covenant.

A. He Gave His Robe (Position)

First of all, Jonathan gives to David his robe. It was the robe that a prince would wear. It set Jonathan apart. It was the robe of the king’s son. It represented his position in life. He now gives that to David; this mark of a king’s son he now gives to David. He says, “I want people to see David and not myself in that position. David, here is my robe.” And, that ought to be true of all of us: we ought to bow the knee to David’s greater son, the Lord Jesus, and say, “Lord, all, any, position I have in life belongs to you.”

B. He Gave His Other Garments (Possession)

But, not only did he give his robe; he gave his other garments. That speaks of his possessions. Not only position, but possession, belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. He’s saying, “David, all that I have, all that I own, is at your disposal. Why, David, if it had not been for you, I wouldn’t have anything at all, anyway. We would’ve lost the battle. The Philistines would’ve destroyed us all. It all belongs to you, David. I can trust you with it. I lay it at your feet.”

C. He Gave His Sword (Protection)

And then, this verse says that he gave him his sword (1 Samuel 18:4). He presented his sword to David—now, not only position, and possession, but protection. We all think we have a right to defend ourselves—we have the right to protect ourselves. But, he yields this over to David, and he says, “Now David, here is my sword; I give it to you. I look to you for protection, and I will protect you, David.”

D. He Gave His Bow (Power)

And then, he gave David his bow. This is not only a weapon of protection, but a weapon of offense. It speaks of his power. Jonathan was a warrior—a mighty warrior. He was good with his bow, but he gives that to David. The ability of his hands and the courage of his heart he lays at the feet of David.

All of this is just simply a way of saying that when people enter into a covenant one with another, position, possession, protection, power is shared now. What belongs to you belongs to me; what belongs to me belongs to you. We are one; we are now blood brothers.

III. The Consequences of the Covenant

Let's move on, thirdly—we've talked about the concept and the conditions that are here—let's talk about the consequences of this covenant. And then, we're going to tighten the focus, and we're going to see how that applies to you, so your roar will be more than a squeak, so you will not be just a lunch for Satan's fox. What does this mean to us? Is this just ancient history? Oh, no. All of the Bible is about covenant—the "Old Covenant," the "New Covenant." Jesus said of His blood, "*This cup is the new [covenant] in my blood*" (Luke 22:20).

Well, here's what happened. Let me tell you the story. We're talking, now, about the consequences of the blood covenant. Now, people have begun to praise David, and they were singing songs. The ladies were saying, "Yes, Saul has slain his thousands, but David—he has slain his tens of thousands." People began to praise David, and old King Saul is eaten up with jealousy and envy. And, the Bible says he began to eye at David. Look, if you will, in chapter 19, verses 1 and 2: and I think we can pick it up, and it says, "*And Saul spake unto Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David*"—David now is Public Enemy No. 1, but Jonathan... Remember that Jonathan is in covenant with David; and now, Jonathan has a closer relationship with David than he has with his own father in the flesh—"*But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David...Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed [for] thyself until the morning, and abide in [the] secret place, and hide thyself*" (1 Samuel 19:1–2), because David and Jonathan are in covenant together. Saul, eaten with jealousy, brings all of the focus of the kingdom to one point: "find David, and kill David." And, young David is hunted like a wild animal upon the hills and the mountains of Israel.

Finally, however, Saul and Jonathan both are killed by the Philistines. Remember that David was God's chosen, God's anointed, and God's appointed king. Now, David comes to the throne. Remember, the one who had been the Public Enemy No. 1, the one that all the people in the kingdom under king Saul were commissioned to kill, is now the king, just as Jesus will one day be King over this world, amen? He's now the king. There is blind panic in the kingdom: "why, now that David has come he's going to begin a purge, and it's going to start with the family of Saul."

Now, Saul was the king, Jonathan the son, and Jonathan had a son who was Saul's grandson; he was in the royal nursery—a little baby. When the nurse—the head nurse in the nursery—found out that David was now king... She knows the way of royal despots; she knows that David will come and slaughter this little innocent baby—at least, that's what she thinks. So, she runs into the royal nursery; she picks up the little baby. I've never heard a baby with this name. I've heard a lot of baby names from the Bible. But, this little baby's name was Mephibosheth—does any body know a little baby

named Mephibosheth? There may be one—but a little baby named Mephibosheth. She runs into the nursery, takes Mephibosheth out of the crib, and she runs to hide him. She loves this little baby boy, but she's a large, a corpulent, woman. In her blind panic, she stumbles and falls, and she falls on this little baby; and his little legs are twisted and crushed. There's no orthopedic surgeon there. There's no one to straighten his little limbs; and so, this little baby is now crippled.

She takes the little baby, however, in her bosom, and she goes out to the backside of nowhere, out to a dusty, dingy, dirty hideaway, a place called Lodebar, which literally means “no pasture.” It must have been a desolate place to be named “the place of no pasture.” And so, there, little Mephibosheth, the royal prince, now without a throne, is raised crippled on the backside of nowhere, eating dust, breathing dust, dragging his dead limbs behind him as he grows up. And, the whole time this little boy grows up, he's been taught two things: “David will kill you if he gets you. So, number one, you are to fear David; number two, you are to hate David.” Jonathan's son, with whom David has made covenant, fears David; he hates David. He is a prince living in exile, the grandson of the king, fearing David and hating David. He doesn't know that David has made a covenant with his own father.

Now, David comes to the throne. Turn, if you will, to 2 Samuel, and let's look in verse 9 for a moment. Remember, now, the situation: Mephibosheth is hiding out; David is king. And now, I set the stage. Imagine this. Second Samuel chapter 9—let's read the first three verses: “*And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul...?*” (2 Samuel 9:1). Let's just stop right there. At that moment, can you imagine what they were thinking? “Well, here it comes. I was wondering when the purge would begin.” “Is there any body left of the house of Saul?” (2 Samuel 9:1). They knew what was about to happen—so they thought—but they were not ready for the rest of this sentence.

Look at it: “*Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness*”—kindness! Remember what we said—that *lovingkindness* is a covenant word?—“*that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake? And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he. And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan [has] yet a son, which is lame on his feet. And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, [he's] in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lodebar. Then...David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lodebar*” (2 Samuel 9:1–5). David sent and fetched him. David got a posse. He got a contingent. He got some soldiers, some servants, whoever—said, “Go get Mephibosheth.” Mephibosheth is there. I can see him in the cabin; I can see him hiding there. I can see the royal

entourage coming up in front of his house. He says, “Oh, no! This is it,” as he drags his crippled legs to the window. “This is it—this is it! He’s found me!” The knock on the door... There’s nowhere to hide in that little cottage. “Are you Mephibosheth?” “Yes.” “Come, David wants you. Come.” And, they bring him to David.

Can you imagine what must’ve been going through the heart of Mephibosheth? I mean, all of his life he’s been told that David wants to kill him; all of his life he’s been told to hate David and fear David. And so, they bring him, and look now in verse 6: “[And] when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant!”—he’s there like a bird in a trap. He’s there prostrate on his face before the king, trembling, knowing that the sentence of death is upon him—“And David [says]”—look in verse 7—“Fear not”—oh, can you imagine these words?—“Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father’s sake, and [I] will restore [to] thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually” (2 Samuel 9:6–7). Now, David said, “Now Mephibosheth, don’t be afraid. Listen, I want to restore your inheritance. Mephibosheth, I want you to come and eat with me at my table with the king’s sons. Mephibosheth, I want you to be like my son.” Mephibosheth cannot... He can’t take it in.

Now, you’re going to understand why I call this “good news for dead dogs.” Look in verse 8 here: “And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I...?” (2 Samuel 9:8). “Who am I? Why would you do this? Why would you restore mine inheritance? Why would you invite me to eat at your table? Why would you adopt me into your family and treat me as your son? Why? I’m a dead dog! I’m under the sentence of death. My household has been the enemy of your household.” David says to Mephibosheth, “Mephibosheth, I want you to understand this: I’m not doing this for you; I’m doing it for your father, Jonathan. I am in a blood covenant with your father. We are blood brothers. There is a blood covenant. Do you want to ratify that covenant, Mephibosheth? Do you want to trust in that covenant, Mephibosheth? Do you? It’ll take a change of mind: there’ll be repentance. It’ll take faith: you must believe the covenant. But if, by repentance and faith, you will ratify that covenant I have made with your father for you, then I’ll restore your inheritance, I’ll have fellowship with you, I’ll treat you as my son.” Folks, that’s good news for a dead dog, amen? That is good news for a dead dog.

Now, Mephibosheth can hardly take it in, but he did the wise thing: he ratified the covenant; he took the one that he used to hate and now loves, and he becomes now a part of the family of faith, coming under the blood covenant that Jonathan and David had made. And so, when he says, “I accept—I accept. King David, I accept what you did on my behalf,” what a transformation! He’s brought now into the royal palace. Last

night, he slept on the filthy mat. This morning, he awakens on silken sheets. Last night, he breathed and ate dust. Today, he bathes in a marble bath with perfumed soaps. Last night, he was dressed in rags. This morning, he's dressed in royal robes. Last night, he had no servants. This morning, they awaken him: "Good morning, my lord, Mephibosheth. Would Mephibosheth like his bath this morning? Which robe would Mephibosheth like to wear this morning? What would my lord, Mephibosheth, like for breakfast this morning? The king's sons are awaiting you, Mephibosheth, for breakfast." He comes down to breakfast, and there is that table groaning with food. There is the king at the head of the table; there are the king's sons. And, Mephibosheth sits down and puts those crippled limbs under that linen—white linen—tablecloth, sits up there as one of the king's sons. He looks around, and he says, "I don't deserve this, and I can't explain this; but I'm going to enjoy this. Pass the marmalade." And, I just imagine that when that is passed, he looks over there at David's wrist, and there on David's wrist is a black mark. It is the mark of the covenant, a wound in his wrist, because David had entered into a blood covenant. And, he received, now, the benefits of that covenant. What a transformation!

Have you already made the connection? Have you already seen how God wants us to be saved so much and enjoy our salvation so much that He has put wonderful illustrations in the Bible? And, this is, of those, the most glorious, so we can understand a little more what Jesus meant when He held up that ruby red cup with the fruit of the vine, and He says, "This cup is the blood covenant in my name. This cup is the blood covenant, the new testament, in my name" (Luke 22:20). And, in this ancient story, you see three things pictured:

A. We See the Savior Pictured

Number one: You see the Savior pictured, because you know why Jesus left Heaven and came to this earth? To make a blood covenant—to make a blood covenant. The Lord Jesus upon that cross, when He shed His blood, was making a blood covenant with Almighty God and the sons of Adam. That's what He was doing: He was making a blood covenant. On that cross, the blood of God and the blood of man were mingled. On the cross, the blood of God and the blood of man were mingled. Jesus was as much God as if He were not man at all; Jesus was as much man as if He were not God at all. And, on that cross, the blood of God and the blood of man were mingled in a blood covenant.

You say, "Now, wait a minute, Pastor. God doesn't have blood." He did when Jesus was on this earth. The Apostle Paul told the Ephesian elders "*to feed the church of God*"—"the church of God"—"*which he hath purchased with his own blood*" (Acts 20:28). That blood was the blood of God and the blood of man, and the blood of God

and the blood of man were mingled there on that cross. And, the Lord Jesus Christ is our Savior. We see the Savior pictured.

B. We See the Sinner Pictured

But, not only do we see the Savior pictured; we see the sinner pictured, because Mephibosheth, friend, he represents you—he represents me. Think about it.

1. He Was Deformed

Number one: He was deformed; he was crippled by a fall. All of us are. By birth, by nature, by choice, by practice, because of Adam's fall in the Garden of Eden, all of us have been crippled. We are spiritually deformed. Why, Mephibosheth was so crippled, had he wanted to come, he could not have come. But, he didn't want to come. He had to be sought. He had to be brought. He had to be taught. And, so did you—so did you!

2. He Was Dethroned

He was deformed; he was dethroned. He was made to be a prince; he was a pauper. You see, when God created man, He made man to rule, to reign, to have dominion, but man has forfeited that.

3. He Was Dead

Not only was he deformed, not only was he dethroned; but friend, he was dead—he was dead. Mephibosheth was dead. Oh, he was breathing, but he knew the sentence of death was upon him. That's why he called himself "a dead dog." He said, "Why should you look upon such a dead dog as I?" (2 Samuel 9:8). And friend, without the Lord Jesus, you're a dead dog—you are a dead dog. A dog is an unclean animal, and the sentence of death is upon all of us, for the Bible says, "*The soul that sinneth, it shall [surely] die*" (Ezekiel 18:4; Ezekiel 18:20). "*For the wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). "*And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*" (James 1:15).

4. He Was Deceived

Here he was—here he was—deformed, dethroned, dead, and deceived—deceived. He thought David was his enemy. The very one who wanted to bless him, the very one who wanted to love him, the very one who wanted to restore his lost inheritance was the very one that he was running from. Do you know that God has to catch us in order to save us? Did you know that? Did you know that the Bible says, "*There is none that seeketh after God...no, not one*" (Romans 3:11–12)? Did you know that? Did you know that man is born with an inbred fear and hatred of God? It comes all the way down from the master liar, Satan himself. And, there are some of you who are listening to me today, who are running and hiding from God, the One who loves you—the One who loves you.

I spoke to a man a while back. That man hated God. I said, "Sir, why do you hate God?" He said, "I'll tell you why I hate God: God ruined my family." His wife had gotten into a cult and had left him. I talked to this dear man for a while, and I said, "Sir, you

don't hate God." He said, "Yes I do. I hate Him." I said, "You don't know enough about Him to hate Him." I said, "You're so deceived. That's not the God of the Bible," but that was the caricature of God he had in his mind, a negativism about Almighty God. I shared Jesus with him; he got saved. That man put a bear hug on me—almost broke my back. He said, "Mister, I'll never forget you. Thank you." Oh, friend, the devil wants you to think negatively about God.

C. We See Salvation Pictured

You see, the Savior is pictured in this story; the sinner is pictured in this story, and salvation is pictured in this story. What is the salvation?

5. He Received the King's Forgiveness

The salvation is that, when we receive the Lord, we have, first of all, the King's forgiveness. David said, "Don't be afraid" (2 Samuel 9:7). You see, God forgives us. Why does God forgive us? Listen to Ephesians chapter 4, verse 32—listen to it. Well, let me say, before I say that verse, that David said to Mephibosheth, "Mephibosheth, I am doing this for Jonathan's sake"—you got that?—"I'm doing this for Jonathan's sake" (2 Samuel 9:7). Now, listen to Ephesians chapter 4, verse 32: "*Be ye kind...tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*" (Ephesians 4:32). You see, God's in a covenant with His own Son, the Lord Jesus, who made a covenant with all the sons of Adam on that cross. And, why does God forgive me? Why do I have the King's forgiveness? I don't have the King's forgiveness because I deserve it, but because Jesus died for me. Amen?

6. He Inherited the King's Fortune

But, not only did he get the king's forgiveness; friend, he got the king's fortune. He said, "I am going to restore to you the inheritance that is due to you" (2 Samuel 9:7). Friend, when you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, you are incredibly wealthy. You have treasure laid up in Heaven. The Bible says, "*The meek shall inherit the earth*" (Psalm 37:11). We're "*heirs of God, and joint-heirs with [the Lord Jesus] Christ*" (Romans 8:17) because we're in blood covenant.

7. He Enjoyed the King's Fellowship

Not only do you have that forgiveness and that fortune, but you have fellowship. In this passage, in verse 7, he says, "You'll eat at my table continually" (2 Samuel 9:7). In verse 10, he says, "You will eat bread always at my table" (2 Samuel 9:10). In verse 11, "*Eat at my table*" (2 Samuel 9:11). In verse 13, he says, "*Eat continually at the king's table*" (2 Samuel 9:13). How many times does he have to say it for you to get the idea? Jesus said, "If you'll open the door, I'll sup with you, and you with Me" (Revelation 3:20). The fellowship of the King—the fellowship of the King. The most intimate fellowship is at the table, and here he's saying—listen—"if you'll ratify the covenant, you'll have

forgiveness. If you'll ratify the covenant, you'll have a fortune. If you'll ratify the covenant, you'll have fellowship."

8. He Joined the King's Family

And then, last of all, he says, "You'll eat at my table as one of the king's sons. You'll have a family—a new family" (2 Samuel 9:11). I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God. Why? I'll tell you why: because Jesus went to Calvary—that's why. And, God has shown me mercy for His dear sake.

Yes, I'm a dead dog. The devil will come to you sometimes, and the devil will tell you, "You are not worthy." Don't argue with him, because you'll lose the argument. Don't argue with him. Point him to the blood covenant, and step out of the argument—just step out of the argument. Say, "Listen, it's not because of anything I've done—I am a dead dog—because of Jesus, because of the blood covenant." The next time you come to the Lord's Table and you hold up that cup, remember that Jesus said, "*This is the new [covenant] in my blood, which is shed for you*" (Luke 22:20).

Conclusion

Isn't that wonderful news? Now friend, I'm telling you, that's good news for dead dogs. Amen? Praise God! And, there are some of you here today that God has been having to catch. He's gone down to Lodebar, where you've been, to bring you—to teach you—the blood covenant.

Let's bow in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Oh, my precious friend, God loves you. Christ died for you. There's a blood covenant made for you. Will you ratify the covenant in repentance and faith? Why don't you pray this way if you've never been saved? Let's get it saved, once and for all, now and forever, right now. Would you pray this way? "Dear God"—just pray it from your heart—"Dear God, I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, thank You for dying for me. Thank You for making a covenant with God the Father on my behalf with Your precious blood. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for paying my sin debt on the cross. Thank You, Savior. Now, Lord Jesus, right now, this moment, I open my heart, and I receive You this moment, as my Lord and Savior, right now. Thank You, thank You, thank You for saving me. Begin now, Lord, to make me what You want me to be, because You've redeemed me by Your blood. And, help me, Jesus, never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen."

The Blood Covenant

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 30, 2003

Main Scripture Text: 1 Samuel 18:3

“Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.”

1 SAMUEL 18:3

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Biblical Principle of the Blood Covenant
 - II. The Steadfast Promise of the Blood Covenant
 - III. The Saving Power of the Blood Covenant
- Conclusion

Introduction

Well, we're coming into the Christmas season, and I'm beginning today a series of messages entitled "God in Human Flesh." We're going to be talking about the Lord Jesus in the coming Sundays, and today also. And, today, I want you to find an Old Testament passage of Scripture, 1 Samuel, chapter 18, and, in a moment, we're going to be reading verse 3.

The Lord Jesus came in the flesh to make for us a blood covenant, and what we're about to read here is the story of the blood covenant. And you need to understand the blood covenant, because it has been my observation that most Christians talk better than they walk. They are not living in victory. They boast of victory, they sing of victory, but their lives are not victorious.

*A tiger met a lion as they sat beside a pool
Said the tiger to the lion, "Why are you roaring like a fool?"
"That's not foolish," said the lion, with a twinkle in his eyes,
"They call me the king of all beasts because I advertise."
A rabbit heard them talking, ran home like a streak.
He thought he'd try the lion's plan, but his roar was just a squeak.
A fox came to investigate, had his luncheon in the woods,
And so, my friend, when you advertise, be sure you've got the goods.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Now, there are a lot of Christians who are advertising, but they have more in the

showcase than they have in the warehouse. They don't have the goods, and their so-called roar is just a squeak of a little rabbit. How would you like to have the goods? How would you like to live up to what we profess and what we sing about? Well, if you want to do that, you need to learn what I'm going to call the blood covenant.

First Samuel chapter 18 and verse 3—look at it. “Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he—that is, Jonathan—loved him—that is, David—as his own soul.” Now, we're talking about God in human flesh. And God in human flesh came to make a blood covenant for you and for me.

I. The Biblical Principle of the Blood Covenant

There are three things I want to lay upon your heart that I want you to do. First of all, I want you to understand the blood covenant as a biblical principle—understand the blood covenant as a biblical principle. Now, the Bible says that Jonathan and David made a covenant. The word *covenant* comes from a root word which means to cut, and it literally has the idea of a blood covenant. And many of us have known about the blood covenant since we were kids when we used to go to the movies and see the old westerns where the cowboy and the Indian would make a covenant. Now, the cowboys and Indians would be fighting. And then there came a time when the cowboy and the Indian chief would get together and they'd decide there'd be no more war, and so they're going to make a covenant. And what they would do, each one would make an incision on his right wrist until the blood would ooze out. The cowboy would cut himself, the Indian would cut himself, and then they would join their hands together, and let the blood mingle, and lift them to heaven in a promise and a covenant there will be no more war. We are now what? Blood brothers. You understand that. Blood brothers. It was a co-mingling of lives that the Bible teaches that the life of the flesh is in the blood. And now, this blood covenant is something that the cowboys got from their forefathers, and the Indians got from their forefathers. It goes all the way back to Bible times. Now, many times, after they would make a covenant, they would take something like black powder, sometimes gun powder, and rub it in the wound. And so, when the wound would heal, the scar would be very evident there. That scar would be called the mark of the covenant, and it would be very evident that you could see it from there on. And then, those who were in covenant were called friends.

Now, we use the word friend today very lightly, very loosely, but the word friend in the Bible was a very significant word. For example, in the Bible, Abraham was in covenant with God. And what was Abraham called? The friend of God. And there's a new attitude that comes for those who are in covenant one with another. That attitude in the Bible is called lovingkindness. Never forget it—lovingkindness. Remember David said to God, “Lord, have mercy upon me according unto thy lovingkindness.” Now, what

does lovingkindness mean? Lovingkindness means, I will do you good, regardless, because we are in covenant together. You can call upon me as your friend, and I will show you lovingkindness, because we are now blood brothers. We have made together a blood covenant. And now this covenant not only is between the two who make the covenant, but it is also continues down to their offspring. The children of those in covenant are a part of the covenant. If they will ratify the covenant, it can be a part of them.

Now, I said what we need to do is to understand the blood covenant as a biblical principle. Let me tell you something. Listen very carefully. The blood covenant is the subject of the Bible. That's what the whole Bible is about—blood covenant. Our Bible is divided into two halves. What? The Old Testament and the New Testament. Now, friend, listen. The word testament and the word covenant are the same word. It is the old covenant and the new covenant. That's what the whole Bible is about. It is the subject of the Bible.

And not only is it the subject of the Bible; friend, it is the secret of blessing. All of the promises in the Bible are covenant promises. The Bible says, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." When the Lord Jesus Christ met with His disciples for that last supper, He said in Luke 22, verse 20: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you." It's the blood covenant. When we come to the Lord's table, we are celebrating the blood covenant: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you." It's the subject of the Bible; friend, is the secret blessing. Now, listen.

It is the source of boldness. When you understand the blood covenant, when you understand who you are and what you have in the Lord Jesus Christ, from then on, no longer do you live under the tyranny of your emotions. No longer, friend, are you bound to your feelings, but now you can stand with boldness with the blood covenant.

Now, there were some solemn symbols of the covenant. You're there, if you have your Bibles open to 1 Samuel chapter 18. We read a few verses. Let's read some more: "And it came to pass—I'm reading verse 1—that when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David—now they have become soul mates—and Jonathan loved him as his own soul—the word soul literally means life—And Saul took him...—that is, David—took him that day, and would let him go no more to his father's house." That is, King Saul, who was Jonathan's father, said, "David, I want you to be my son also. You come to my house." And then, notice in verse 3: "Then Jonathan and David made a covenant—we've already read that. That actually, literally, means, cut a covenant—because he—Jonathan—loved him as his own soul—now watch this. We're talking about the symbols of the covenant—And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments,

even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.”

Now, you have to get the background. Saul is the king. Jonathan is the king’s son. Therefore, Jonathan is the heir to the throne, very much like the crown prince of England. But Jonathan loves David. He admires David. David has come fresh from Bethlehem over with a victory over Goliath. He has come fresh from the father. He has the oil, the fresh oil of anointing, upon him, and Jonathan knows that David is God’s anointed and appointed king. He knows that David is really the rightful heir to the throne, even though Jonathan is the king’s son. And when Jonathan sees the beauty of David, he wants to yield his life over to David, and he makes a blood covenant with David, and then he symbolizes it.

Now, notice, first of all, he gave David his robe. Do you see that there in verse 4, that he gave David himself, he stripped himself of his robe? His robe is what marked Jonathan out as the king’s son. It speaks of his position. And he is saying, “I am yielding my position over to you. I want David in my place.” And that ought to be true of every follower of the Lord Jesus Christ with whom we are in blood covenant. That is, “Lord, I yield my position in life over to You.”

But not only did Jonathan give David his robe; he also gave him his garments—that is, his clothing. Now, the robe spoke of his position, his clothing spoke of his possessions. The Bible says, in chapter 18, verse 4, he stripped himself of his garments, even, and gave those also, to David, because what he is saying to David is, “David, I’m in covenant with you, and all that I have belongs to you, because if it were not for you, I really wouldn’t have anything. You won the victory for me.” What he was saying is, “David paid it all, and all to him I owe,” just like we sing, “Jesus paid it all, and all to Him I owe.”

But not only did he give his robe, which speaks of his position, and not only did he give his garments, which spoke of his possessions; he gave his sword and his bow. Look at it again in verse 4: “to his sword, and his bow, and his girdle.” His girdle is what he hung his weapons on. Now, when he gave his sword and his bow to David, what he is saying is, “This represents my power—my power. I know how to use this bow, but I have no longer any right to self-defense. I yield that over to you. And, David, your battles are my battles. My weapons of war now belong to you. My position is yours. My possessions are yours. My power is yours. I give it over to you. We are now blood brothers.” That’s what the covenant meant. And now they are in covenant, because covenant and commitment—listen—covenant and commitment go hand-in-hand. Now, what we’re talking about now is the biblical principle of the blood covenant. Let’s move to the second point. Are you ready? All right, now, listen.

II. The Steadfast Promise of the Blood Covenant

I want you to not only understand that principle, but I want you to see how the blood covenant is a steadfast promise—emphasis on the word *steadfast*. That is, when you're in covenant, that is an unbreakable covenant. Now, let me tell you what has happened. At first, Saul loved David, but then, when David received so much praise, Saul became insane with jealousy, and now Saul the king wants to kill David. And so there goes out a royal edict that David is to be killed. Now, Jonathan hears about that, and Jonathan tells David, he says, "David, you hide yourself. My father wants to kill you." Just go to the 19th chapter, and look, if you will, in verses 1 and 2: "Then Saul spake to Jonathan, his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David. But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David; and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul, my father, seeketh to kill thee; now, therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself." Now, remember now that Jonathan is in a closer relationship to David than he is to his own natural father, just as we in Christ are closer many times to our brothers and sisters in Christ than we are to those who are natural members of our family. And so, Jonathan says, "David, my father wants to kill you. Hide yourself." And, if you read that story now, David is hunted like a wild partridge on the hills of Judea. And Saul is out there, and all of the emphasis of the kingdom is put to a narrow focus—find David, kill David; find David, kill David; find David, kill David. And David now is fleeing for his life. But there's a battle, and Saul and Jonathan are both slain, and David, who is God's anointed and appointed king, comes to the kingdom. He is now appointed king. When this happens, there is blind panic in the kingdom. Can you imagine? Up until this point, everybody is saying, "Find David, kill David, kill David, kill David." And now David is the king, and they're wondering, when now is the retaliation about to begin? When is the retribution about to begin? When is David going to take vengeance on his enemies? Now, in the change of kingdoms, there's panic, I say, in the royal household, and there's a nurse there who sees Jonathan's son. Now, remember that David has made a covenant with Jonathan. This nurse in the royal nursery chamber sees this little baby boy there. His name a strange name; I've never heard a child named this name—Mephibosheth. Hard to say, even—Mephibosheth. That's the name of this little baby. Now, remember this little baby is in the nursery. He is Jonathan's son, and Jonathan and David are in blood covenant together, but now Jonathan is dead, and David is the king. This nurse, all she knows is that there's another king. He's going to come, and he's going to take vengeance. So she takes the little baby out of the crib, and begins to run to hide the baby. Now, she's a very heavy woman. She trips and falls, and her body falls on this little baby, and the little baby's legs get twisted beneath the weight, and he's crippled. There's no orthopedic surgeon there to set the little limbs and make them straight. And so, she runs with this child, now crippled, but she wants to hide

him from David and from the vengeance that David would have, and she goes out to a place—the name of that place is Lodebar, which literally means a place of no pasture. You can use your imagination. It was a dry, dusty, dingy hideaway on the backside of nowhere, because she's trying to hide this little baby. And this baby grows up crippled.

“Why am I here, nurse?” “You're here because there's somebody trying to kill you.” “Why am I crippled?” “Because we were running from him.” “What's going to happen?” “You just better hope he never finds you.” And there he is growing up with this lesson—fear David, hate David; fear David, hate David. And there he is dragging his crippled limbs behind him, eating dust, breathing dust, drinking from a tin cup—a prince in exile.

And now David is the king. And then, David says something extremely interesting. David knows that he must fulfill the covenant that he has made with Jonathan, so look, if you will now, in 2 Samuel this time. Just fast forward to 2 Samuel chapter 9, and notice these amazing words. Now, David is now the king. Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, is in exile. “And David said...—I'm reading 2 Samuel chapter 9, verse 1—And David said, Is there any yet that is left of the house of Saul—now here's the key word; watch it—that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake. And there was of the house of Saul a servant, whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Siba? And he said, Thy servant is he. And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul...—about this time they were thinking, uh oh, there it comes. I was wondering when the purge would begin—is there not any left of the house of Saul—but now listen to this—that I may show the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet.” Now, David wants to show kindness, the kindness of God, to Mephibosheth. He's never met him before, but he is in covenant with Mephibosheth's father, Jonathan. And so, David says, “Go fetch him. Go bring him.” And so they send a royal entourage, the king's horses, the king's men, out to Lodebar.

I can see Mephibosheth, as he drags his crippled limbs to the window and he looks out. There are the king's men. There are the king's horses. There it all is. And he says, “Oh, he's found me.” They come push open the door. “Are you Mephibosheth?” “Yes.” “Come.” “Why?” “The king wants you.” He says, “This is it. I've had it.” He's brought before King David. He casts his crutches aside. He falls on his face, and he begins to tremble like a bird in a trap caught. And there he is on the floor, and David says to him with a note of love in his voice—look, if you will, in 2 Samuel 9, verse 7: “And David said unto him, Fear not; fear not; for I will surely show thee kindness—now watch this—for Jonathan thy father's sake, and I will restore unto thee all the land of Saul, thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.” Here's what he said to this man who's expecting death: “I want to restore your inheritance. I want you to dine at my table. I want you to be like my son.” When Mephibosheth hears this, he can hardly take it in. He

can't understand it. Look in verse 8: "And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I? "I am a dead dog. I am as good as death. Why would you want to give me back my inheritance? Why would you want me to eat at your table? Why would you want me to be as your son?" I can imagine David explaining it and saying to him, "Now, Mephibosheth, I want you to understand it's not a matter of your worthiness. As a matter of fact, I'm not even doing this for your sake. I'm doing this for the sake of your father, Jonathan. I am in a blood covenant with Jonathan. I am bound by a blood covenant.

Now, at this moment, Mephibosheth has a decision to make. He, up until this point, had seen David as the king, as an enemy, and as a threat, and he's been running from him. Now, he has a decision to make. If he wants to, he can ratify the covenant. No longer is David an enemy; now David is a friend. No longer is he out of fellowship with David; he's in fellowship with David. No longer is he running from David; he is running to David. He must change his mind about David, and he must accept the covenant by faith. Now, notice. He must change his mind about David, and he must accept the covenant by faith. Do you know what that is? It's the terms of salvation in the New Testament—repentance and faith. Repentance means a change of mind. When we change our mind, we take a new king into our lives, and His name is Jesus.

Now, of course, Mephibosheth ratified the covenant, something he had to learn about. Once he ratified the covenant, there is a transformation that takes place. I want you to see the transformation. Look, if you will, in 2 Samuel chapter 9, beginning in verse 9: "Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son—that is, to Mephibosheth—all that pertaineth to Saul and to all his house—that is, I'm giving him all of the wealth that his grandfather king had—Thou, therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him—just take care of all of this land that belongs to him now—and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master's son may have food to eat; but Mephibosheth, thy master's son, shall eat bread always at my table. Now, Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants."

Can you imagine the transformation? See what a day brought forth. Yesterday he was living in Lodebar: dry and dusty on the backside of nowhere, dragging his crippled limbs behind him, eating and breathing dust, and now, this morning, he awakens on silken sheets. He's in the palace. He has servants who are coming, saying to him, "Would Mephibosheth like to awaken this morning? Is my lord Mephibosheth ready for his bath this morning? What would my lord Mephibosheth like for breakfast this morning? The king and his sons are waiting for you to breakfast. You're coming to breakfast in the palace." Mephibosheth can hardly take it in. There he is now in the palace, now a king's son. He comes down to breakfast, and there's the king. He's sitting on the right hand of the king. There are the king's sons. There's that table groaning with

food. There's that white linen tablecloth, and his limbs are under the tablecloth, can't even be seen at all. He's sitting there with the rest of them. Mephibosheth is thinking, "I can't understand this. I don't deserve this. Yet, it's because of a blood covenant. It is a covenant that my father made with David. I can't completely understand it, but I can't deny it. Here I am. Pass the biscuits!" And, as David passes the bread to Mephibosheth, there's a scar on David's wrist, the mark of the covenant, and it dawns on him the power of a blood covenant. What a transformation takes place.

The next time, dear friend, we have the Lord's Supper, you'll understand what Jesus said, "Likewise, also the cup after supper, saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you."

III. The Saving Power of the Blood Covenant

Now, here's the third and final thing I want to lay upon your heart, what I want you to do. I want you this Christmas season to understand the saving power of the blood covenant. God was made flesh that there might be a blood covenant with you. The Savior is pictured. Two thousand years ago, Jesus entered into a blood covenant with God the Father for the sons and daughters of Adam. On the cross, a blood covenant was made. You say, "Who was on that cross?" God and man—God and man. The blood of God and the blood of man were mingled on the cross. You say, "But God doesn't have blood." He did when Jesus was on this earth. Acts chapter 20, Paul told the Ephesian elders, "Feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood"—with God's own blood. The blood that coursed through that infant in Mary's womb was the blood of God, because He was the virgin-born Son of God. And we're going to talk about that next week. But Jesus was man also. He called Himself the Son of man. He was a human—as fully human as if He were not God at all; as fully God as if He were not human at all. And, on that cross, when that blood flowed, there was a covenant being made between God and man. The blood of God and the blood of a human were mingled there upon that cross. The Savior is pictured here in this story.

But not only is the Savior pictured; the sinner is pictured. Mephibosheth, friend, pictures you. He pictures Adrian. Think of him. He was deformed. How was he deformed? He was crippled by a fall. We're all crippled by the fall. When Adam fell, we fell with him. Mephibosheth was so crippled that he could not come. He had to be found. He had to be sought. He had to be brought. He had to be taught. So, with all of us. Friend, thank God that God sought us, just as David sought Mephibosheth. He was deformed. He was dethroned. He was heir to a kingdom, but he'd lost his kingdom. God created man to rule and to reign here upon this earth. We were meant to rule, but we lost our inheritance. Not only was he deformed, not only was he dethroned, but he was dead. He was as good as dead. The sentence of death was upon him, for he said, "Why

should you look upon such a dead dog as I am?" Listen to me, my precious friend: without Jesus, you are a dead dog! "The wages of sin is death." "The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die." Mephibosheth—deformed, dethroned, dead, and deceived. Why was he deceived? Well, he feared David. He hated David. He thought David was his enemy, when David was really his friend. Why? Because he was in ignorance. He didn't understand the blood covenant.

I was on an airplane one time. I sat down beside a man. He got on with a cupful of alcoholic beverage. I don't know why they let him on the plane with it. I could tell he was a little loud, a little belligerent, so I just thought I'd be quiet and wait for my moment. I was reading a book by Vance Havner called, *Repent or Else*, and after a while he started a conversation. He said, "Is that a true book?" I said, "What do you mean a true book?" He said, "What is that about—*Repent or Else*?" I said, "Well, it's a book about God. It tells us, if we don't repent of our sins, we're going to die and go to hell." He said, "God—God. Mister." He lifted his voice. He said, "Let me tell you what I think about God." He said, "Let me tell you what I think about the devil, and let me tell you what I think about everybody else." And, by this time, everybody in the plane was looking at the two of us. And he says, "God." He said, "I hate Him." He said, "The devil, I don't care for him." And he said, "I don't care for anybody else." He said, "There's my god right there," and he held up that cup of whiskey. He said, "That's my god." And he said, "as far as he is concerned—talking about God—he can go to..."—and I'm not going to finish the sentence because there are children are here. And he said, "As far as the devil is concerned, he can go to the same place." And he said, "As far as all these people are concerned, they can go to the same place." And he said, "I'm going to drink this till I die, and that's where I'm going." I thought I'd better be quiet for a while. I waited till he settled down. His name was Montoya. And I said, "You don't hate God." He said, "Yes, I do." I said, "No, you don't." He said, "How do you know I don't hate God?" I said, "You don't know enough about Him to hate Him." You see, what had happened to this man. He told me his wife had gotten into a false cult. The members of that false cult had told him because he was not a member of that false cult that she should leave him and take the children also. And that was the God, the caricature of the God, that he knew, which wasn't the God of the Bible at all. I said, "Mister, you don't hate God. You hate your idea of God. Let me draw a picture of you." And I got a yellow pad, and began to doodle, and make some circles, and talked about body, soul, and spirit, and then I talked about how Jesus died, and so forth. Before we got off that plane, he prayed and asked Christ into his heart. We got off in the Phoenix airport. He found me, and put a bear hug on me, and said, "Mister, I love you; I love you," because he'd found Christ, found the Savior. I thought so much of the story of Mephibosheth. Here was a man that thought he hated God. He thought God was his enemy. And there are people like this who come to

church, and they listen to a preacher preach, and they find themselves running from God, and fearing God, and afraid of God. God is love. God loves you, and God has made with His Son, the Lord Jesus, a blood covenant on your behalf.

Now, let me show you one other thing. Salvation is also pictured—and I've got to hurry. Now, notice what our salvation is. What do we have? Well, remember, friend, that our salvation is because of what Jesus did. Remember what David said? "Is there any left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness—now, listen to this—for Jonathan's sake?" Remember that— "that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake." What does Ephesians chapter 4, verse 32, tell us? "Be ye kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another—now, listen—even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." See. Are you getting it now? "Even as God for Christ's sake hath forgive you." You're not worthy. I'm not worthy. We're dead dogs. We're deformed. We're under the sentence of death. We're fearing God, and hating God. But God is in a covenant with His Son, the Lord Jesus, and God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us. It's not a matter of our worthiness.

Notice what Mephibosheth had now. He had the king's forgiveness. Rather than judgment, he has a fortune restored. He had the king's fellowship. If you were to read 2 Samuel 8 and 2 Samuel 9, four times he says, "I want you to sit at my table, Mephibosheth." Remember that every time we come to the Lord's Table. Remember that we don't come to mourn a corpse; we come to fellowship with a friend. We come to the Lord's Table to eat with a person in the most intimate fellowship that human beings can have. And he said here that "he shall eat at my table continually" as one of the king's sons—continual and intimate. We have the king's fortune. He says, "Restore to him everything of his rightful inheritance."

Ladies and gentlemen, because of the blood covenant, the meek shall inherit the earth. God gave it to Adam. Adam lost it. Jesus has restored it. We're heirs of God and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only do we have the king's forgiveness, not only do we have the king's fortune, not only do we have the king's fellowship, but, friend, we're in the king's family. David said, "Mephibosheth, I want you to be like one of my sons." "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

Conclusion

Now, look at me. Now, I must make an application and close. Do you know what the devil will tell you sometimes? The devil will tell you, "You are not worthy." Don't argue with him. You'll lose the argument. You're not worthy. Point him to the blood covenant, and back out of the argument, and let him take up his argument with Almighty God and the blood covenant. You say, "Well, I don't feel it." It's not a matter of your feelings; it's a

matter of the blood covenant. “Well,” you say, “sometimes I fail.” We all do. Come with the blood covenant, and remind God of His lovingkindness: “have mercy upon me according unto thy loving kindness.” Friend, when you’re in the blood covenant, enjoy the fellowship of His person. Share the wealth of His possessions. And rest in the shadow of His protection.

Aren’t you glad for the blood covenant? Aren’t you glad? Well, now, why Christmas? Why Christmas? Because, friend, Jesus came to earth to shed His blood to make a blood covenant, that we might enjoy what we have with our Lord.

Would you bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. And while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, remember Mephibosheth. When he was faced with the love of God, he had to believe and ratify the covenant. He had to take David as his king, now. There’s a change of kings. He had to yield to David. Are you willing to yield to Jesus? That’s called repentance and faith—repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. That’s what saves. Turn from your sin, and put your faith in Jesus. Do it now. Let me lead you in prayer. Would you pray this prayer: Dear God, I am a sinner, and I’m lost, and I need to be saved. Father God, I’m so grateful that Jesus shed His blood for me, and I know, God, that You will forgive me for Jesus’ sake, because of His shed blood, and because of the covenant made at Calvary. Now, Lord Jesus, just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me, O Lamb of God, I come to Thee. I come. I do. Amen.

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer and really meant it, you cannot be ashamed of Jesus. The mark that you mean it is that you’re willing to make it public. He hung naked on a cross for you before a bigger crowd than this. And I’m going to ask you today to do the most wonderful thing you could do to show that you’re ratifying the covenant, by coming forward. Standing at the head of each of these aisles will be a minister of this church to welcome you. “Well, Pastor Rogers, I’ve never done that before. What would I say? What do I do?” Just say, “I’m trusting Jesus.” That’s simple enough. A minister will be waiting here to receive you. Well, what will happen? Well, we’ll rejoice. We’ll give you some Scripture to stand on, answer any further questions that we can answer, and seal it with you in prayer. It’ll be one of the greatest things you could do, and be the best Christmas you ever had, because you’ll be in the blood covenant.

Five Minutes After Death

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 10, 1991

Main Scripture Text: 1 Samuel 20:3

*“...but truly as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth,
there is but a step between me and death.”*

1 SAMUEL 20:3

Outline

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3. The Unsaved Will Be There

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G. Hell Is a Place of Burning

II. You Could Go to Heaven

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B. Do I Have to Wait for the Resurrection to Go to Heaven?

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F. What Are We Going to Do in Heaven?

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Conclusion

Introduction

Take God's Word—would you please?—and turn to the Old Testament text. I want you to turn, please, to 1 Samuel chapter 20. And, we're going to look at a portion of verse 3—1 Samuel chapter 20 and the last part of verse 3. Now, I want you to take your pen or your pencil, and as I read that, if you have your own Bible, I would suggest that you underline it and personalize it. It says this: *“there is but a step between me and death”*

(1 Samuel 20:3). I wonder if you realize that is true. Death is only a faint heartbeat away—only a heartbeat, only a step. Put your hand up there—do you feel that little heartbeat? That’s all there is between you and death—only a step.

Some people in a community where I used to pastor, on their way home from church, five of them—*just like that*—had their lives snuffed out in an automobile accident. Another lady, Jim, that you and I knew at Merritt Island—what a gracious, beautiful lady! I’ve told you about this before, but I can’t get it out of my mind. Her name was Dorothy. She stood there on Sunday morning, and shook my hand, and went out, and said, “Pastor, that was a great sermon. Oh, and isn’t Jesus wonderful? See you tonight, Pastor.” She went over that 520 Causeway bridge, and another car, coming from the opposite direction on the wrong side of the road, hit her. I doubt she ever knew what hit her until she discovered in heaven what it was. There is but a step between me and death.

Somebody said that “every preacher ought to preach as a dying man would preach to dying men.” This may be the last sermon I will ever preach; it may be the last one you will ever hear on this Earth. There is but a step between me and death. The most amazing time that you will spend, I believe, will be the first five minutes after you die.

*Loved ones will weep o’er my silent face,
Dear ones will clasp me in sad embrace.
Shadows and darkness will fill the place,
Five minutes after I die.*

*Faces that sorrow I will not see,
Voices that murmur will not reach me
But where, oh where will my spirit be?
Five minutes after I die.*

...

*Naught to repair the good I lack
Fixed to the goal of my chosen track,
No room to repent, no turning back
Five minutes after I die.*

*Mated [forever] with my chosen throng
Long is eternity, O so long
Then woe is me if my soul be wrong,
Five minutes after I die*

—BETTY STILLION SHINN

I. You Could Go to Hell

What will happen five minutes after you die? Well, my dear friend, if you die outside the Lord Jesus Christ, five minutes after you die, you will be in hell. You say, “I don’t believe in hell.” You will five minutes after you die—you will. I don’t enjoy preaching about hell; I have to make myself preach on hell. I don’t want to preach on hell. I don’t like preaching on the subject of hell. But, to be honest, with a God who has called me, and this Bible that I say I believe, and to be fair to those who hear who hear me, I must preach on the subject of hell.

We’ve come to the day and the age in which hell has become a byword. It’s slipped more and more into our entertainment media. It’s nothing to hear those on television use the word *hell* in a careless, flippant way. If you really wanted to criticize a preacher and make him seem small, narrow, bigoted, uneducated, a “fun-damn-mentalist”—too much fun, too much damn, and not enough mental—you would say he is what? A “hellfire preacher”—isn’t that right?—“He’s one of those hellfire preachers.”

Who do you think is behind the idea of belittling the idea of hell? The devil himself, because the devil knows that people who do not believe in hell, of course, are not going to seek a Savior. So, the Bible says in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 4: *“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not”* (2 Corinthians 4:4). My friend, I must tell you with all of the clarity that I can muster: there is a hell. And, it makes no difference if all of the scholars, and all of the so-called theologians, and scientists, and artists, and statesmen, and politicians, and musicians, and all of the teachers on this Earth were to say, “There is no hell”—that would not change the Word of God.

The Bible says in 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 25: *“But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you”* (1 Peter 1:25). People have always scoffed when the Word of God comes to judgment. Do you know why? The Bible says, *“Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things”* (Proverbs 28:5). I’ve said it often before: I believe that if the Supreme Court of the United States of America could vote on it, they would outlaw hell as cruel and unusual punishment.

Men scoffed at Noah when God said He would destroy the world with a flood. The Bible tells us in Genesis chapter 7 and verse 22: *“All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died”* (Genesis 7:22). And, all of their mockery and their protestations did not keep the flood from coming. Men scoffed at Lot, when God had warned Lot that He was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. But, the Bible clearly and plainly teaches in Genesis chapter 19, verses 24: *“Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven”* (Genesis 19:24). And, the scoffing did not keep the brimstone and the fire from falling.

Men scoffed at Daniel, the prophet Daniel, when Daniel warned that the Medes and the Persians were coming to overcome Babylon. But, the Bible tells us in Daniel chapter 5 and verse 30: *“In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain”* (Daniel 5:30). You see, my dear friend, scoffing, and mocking, and ridiculing does not take away with the idea of hell.

I’m told that some soldiers on the battlefield asked their chaplain, “Chaplain, do you believe in hell?” He said, “I certainly do, but why did you ask?” They said, “It’s very simple with us.” They said, “If there is a hell and you don’t believe in it, we certainly don’t want you for a chaplain; and if there is no hell, we don’t need any chaplain.” My dear friend, there is a hell.

Now, what is hell going to be like? Well, I want to take the Word of God and tell you from the Word of God what the Bible says that hell will be like. Now, when I read these scriptures, you’re going to say to me, “Adrian, are these scriptures literal, or are they figurative?” Well, dear friend, rather than arguing about whether we’re going to take them literally or figuratively, may I suggest that we take them seriously? Whatever it is that God is saying, I’m going to preach it just like God wrote it. And, one day, when I meet the Lord, I’d much rather Him say, “Adrian, you took My Word too literally” than to have Him say, “Adrian, you explained away My Word when you had no right to do so.” So, I’m just going to preach it exactly as I find it written in the Word of God.

What is this place called “hell”? What’s it going to be like?

A. **Hell Is a Place of Vile Associations**

May I tell you, first of all, it’s going to be a place of vile—vile—associations. You think of the people who are going to be in hell. For example, take your Bible and turn to Revelation chapter 21 and verse 8. And here, God gives a roll call of the damned, those people who are going to be in hell. And, I want to read this verse because there are many people who joke and laugh, and they say, “Well, heaven for climate, but hell for company.” That’s what Mark Twain used to say, and everybody got a laugh out of it. Well, who is going to be the company in hell? The Bible says, *“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death”* (Revelation 21:8). You’ll have plenty of company all right, and this is the company.

You say, “Well, I’m not as bad as those people.” Well, dear friend, if you’re not a believer, you head the list. Number one on the list is the fearful and the unbelieving. There is no greater sin than to aim the gun of unbelief at Christ on the cross and pull the trigger. *“He that believeth not God hath made him a liar”* (1 John 5:10). There is no greater sin than to fail to love God. For the first and greatest commandment is *“thou*

shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37). Don't tell me you're not a bad sinner if you don't love God and trust Him and believe in Him. My dear friend, if you refuse the Lord Jesus Christ, you'll spend eternity in hell with all of these. And, those of you who've been talking about hypocrites—"I don't want to be a member of the church because there are so many hypocrites"—well, dear friend, I want to tell you, you'll spend all eternity with every hypocrite that ever lived if you refuse the Lord Jesus Christ.

Who will be there?

1. Satan Will Be There

Well, Satan will be there. Satan is not in hell yet, but Satan will be in hell. He's going to be cast into hell, for Jesus said that hell was *"prepared for the devil and his angels"* (Matthew 25:41). Revelation chapter 20 and verse 10—look at it: the Bible says, *"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone"* (Revelation 20:10). Satan is not in hell yet; he's going to hell. And, when he goes, he's going to get a one-way ticket; and when he arrives, he's not going to be the lord of hell, running around with a pitchfork, making people shovel coal. You don't get that from the Word of God. He's not the lord of hell. Jesus Christ is the Lord of heaven, Earth, and hell beneath. He is Lord of lords and King of kings.

2. Every Demon Spirit Will Be There

Who else will be there? Every demon spirit will be there—every foul demon spirit will be there. Second Peter chapter 2 and verse 4 says, *"For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness...to be reserved unto judgment"* (2 Peter 2:4). Fallen angels that have become demon spirits will inhabit hell.

3. The Unsaved Will Be There

It was not prepared for you. God doesn't want you to go there. Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels. But, if you join the devil's crew, you'll end up there. Ungodly people are going to be there—the fearful and the unbelieving.

B. Hell Is a Place of Separation from the Saints of All the Ages

But, not only, my dear friend, is hell going to be a place of vile associations; contrariwise, therefore, hell will be a place of separation from all of the saints of all of the ages. The Bible teaches that those who go to heaven are saved and those who go to hell are lost, and those who are saved are the ones that go to heaven. So, the Bible teaches in Luke chapter 13, verse 28: *"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out"* (Luke 13:28). What does this mean? That God is going to take the godly to heaven. You'll never see them again.

Your godly mother who may have prayed for you—she'll go to heaven, and you'll go to hell. You say, "Could my mother be happy in heaven if I'm in hell?" Absolutely—absolutely. She will be in total bliss in heaven while you're in hell. She will be transformed into the perfect likeness of her Lord. His countenance will be burning with holiness and righteousness, and it will only seem right to her that you, who spurned the Savior, should go to hell. Your mother will pronounce a solemn curse upon your head as you sink into hell. Your little children who prayed for you will say it is natural and it is right that you, who turned from God and refused the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, should go to hell. They will be in heaven. You yourself will be cast out.

C. **Hell Is a Place of Eternal Darkness**

What is hell going to be like? It's a place of vile associations. What is hell going to be like? It is a place of the separation from all that is right and good and beautiful. What will hell be like? Hell is going to be a place my friend, of eternal darkness—of eternal darkness.

Listen to these scriptures. Second Peter chapter 2 and verse 4: the Bible says, "*For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment*" (2 Peter 2:4). What a poignant phrase: "*chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment*" (2 Peter 2:4). The Book of Jude talks about the apostate who will go to hell, and it says of him, "*[He's like a] raging [wave] of the sea, foaming out [his] own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever*"—"the blackness of darkness for ever" (Jude 1:13). Again, listen to this verse—Matthew chapter 8, verse 12: Jesus speaks of those who are going to hell, and He says, "*But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*" (Matthew 8:12).

Those of you who've done, like I have—gone to Carlsbad Cavern, gone down to that inner deep cavern in the very belly of the earth—and they extinguish all of the flashlights, and they say, "If you have an luminous watch, just put your hand over the face of that watch." There's not a light burning; the darkness is so dark, so black, that it seems like you can taste it, touch it, feel it, hold it in your hand. That's the kind of darkness—utter darkness, forever and ever and ever. Can you picture a place where never again will the rays of the sun reach? Never again will you see the twinkle of the stars, never again the luster of the moon.

No matter how dark it gets, we always hope for the morning. I have a preacher friend who went home for Thanksgiving holidays when we were in seminary and had a tragic automobile wreck. His wife and children were killed. His broken and crushed body was there in the hospital, there in Mississippi. And, he was wondering, "Will I ever see the morning?" He said, "Adrian, I cannot explain that night." He said, "All through the night, I

wondered, ‘Will the sun ever come up?’” He said, “I just felt if the sun would come up, then maybe I could endure it.” He said, “After a million eternities, the sun came up that morning.” *“Weeping may endure for a [season], but joy cometh in the morning”* (Psalm 30:5). But, my dear friend, there’s never a morning for those who are in hell.

An evangelist friend of mine, Robert Sumner, told a story of a young man about 14 or 15 years of age who lived in the community where he lived, and he was raised by a wicked and an ungodly daddy. And, this boy was at the point of death; he was going to die. They didn’t know anything about God; they didn’t know anything about the Bible. And, this boy did not know that the soul left the body at death and went either to hell or to heaven. He was afraid of the grave, and afraid of the darkness, and afraid of being put under the dirt. And, he made his poor ignorant daddy promise him—he said, “Daddy, you promise me—promise me—that you’ll put a window on my grave so the sun can come down and touch my body.” And, that father fashioned a window that went right down to the casket so the sun, when it passed over that grave, would shine upon that casket.

But, my dear friend, when you die without Jesus Christ, you will go to a place where no friend or foe can fashion a window that will let in any light. Hell is a place of utter darkness.

D. Hell Is a Place of Eternal Separation from God

I’ll tell you what else it is: my dear friend, hell is a place of eternal separation from God. Spiritual death means separation. Jesus, on the cross, took your separation, and He was separated from God the Father. Mark chapter 15 and verse 34: the Bible says, *“And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”*—Jesus cried—*“which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* (Mark 15:34). Jesus Christ took your sin, my sin, to Calvary. “He became sin for us, Him who knew no sin”—*“[God] hath made to be sin for us”* (2 Corinthians 5:21). And, when He took our sins upon Him, God the Father turned His back upon God the Son. I can’t understand how God forsake God, but at that moment, Jesus walked the burning corridors of the damned. Jesus baptized his soul in hell, and all of the sins of the world were distilled upon Jesus—all of the eternities were compressed upon Jesus. And, Jesus, being infinite, suffered in a finite period of time, which ye, being finite, would suffer in an infinite period of time. And there, Jesus, God the Son, was separated from God the Father. And, my dear friend, if you go to hell, you will be separated eternally from God the Father, and from God the Son, and from God the Holy Spirit.

Listen to 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, verses 7 and following: *“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his*

mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be [separated] with [an] everlasting [separation]" (2 Thessalonians 1:7–9). Death, my dear friend, is not annihilation—when you die, you don't cease to exist—but it is eternal separation.

E. **Hell Is a Place of Memory**

What else is hell? Hell is a place of memory. When you die, you take your memory with you there. Jesus told in Luke chapter 16 about a man who died, and he said, *"In hell he [lifted] up his eyes, being in [torment]"* (Luke 16:23). He asked for a drop of water to cool his tongue. And, Luke chapter 16, verse 25—our Lord said, "remember, remember, remember." You carry your memory with you to hell.

Do you know what you'll remember in hell? You'll remember this service. You'll remember me standing here with this Bible. You'll remember me with this expression on my face. You'll hear the tone of my voice. You'll remember that God put you in a beautiful church auditorium; God allowed you to hear these songs. God had a preacher named Adrian Rogers who stood there with a Bible in one hand and an outstretched hand toward you, and tore his heart out and begged you to be saved. You'll remember. That will be the hell of hell: you'll carry your memory with you. What a shame it will be!

Daniel chapter 12 and verse 2: *"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt"* (Daniel 12:2). Many in America every year commit suicide. Many of them are haunted by the ghost of memory, trying to escape memories. But, my friend, you'll carry your memory with you to hell. And, you listen to me: suicide never solves anything—nothing; it only makes matters worse, whatever they may be. Memories in hell.

F. **Hell Is a Place of Hopelessness**

Also, my friend, hell is a place of hopelessness—hopelessness; it is a place of despair. Listen to this scripture—Revelation chapter 14, verses 10 and following: our Lord is speaking of those who will go to hell, and He says, *"The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation"*—listen to this. I would that every Jehovah's Witness who does not believe in eternal punishment would hear this—*"and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name"* (Revelation 14:10–11). And, our group believes that *hopeless* is the saddest word in the English language. When someone is sick, we always hope they can get well.

I've been to the bedside of people who were supposedly dying. I never tell them, "You're going to die," because I don't know. You may be here tonight with malignancy in

your body and some greedy malady that's eating away at you, and the doctor may be saying to you, "Prepare to die. You can't live." But, my dear friend, he doesn't know everything—he doesn't know everything. Thank God for physicians, but their art is limited. But, God says, "I am the Lord thy God, who healeth all thy diseases" (Exodus 15:26, Psalms 103:3). It's no harder for God to heal a cancer than it is a head cold.

And, my dear friend, you can be sick, and it won't be hopeless. Your business can be reduced to rubble, but it won't be hopeless. Your family can be in shambles, but it is not necessarily hopeless. But, my dear friend, when you go to hell, it is hopeless. There's no way out—no way. The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 11 and verse 7: *"When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth"* (Proverbs 11:7). There is no hope.

G. **Hell Is a Place of Burning**

Seventhly, hell is a place of burning. I left that last on purpose, because when people talk about hell, so many times they laugh at the idea, mock at the idea, and scoff at the idea of hell being a place of burning. My dear friend, may I tell you that Jesus Christ, who was infinite in love, had more to say about hellfire than any other preacher or prophet in the Word of God? And, to say that a man is a "hellfire preacher" is to say that he is like Jesus.

Listen to these words from the lips of infinite love, the Lord Jesus, in Matthew chapter 25, verse 41: *"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"* (Matthew 25:41). Listen to what the Lord Jesus said in Mark chapter 9 and verse 43: *"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched"* (Mark 9:43).

Over seventy texts in the New Testament deal with hell and hellfire; the majority of them, or most of them, were uttered by Jesus Christ. What is Jesus saying when He said, "If your right hand offend you, cut it off: it would be better for you to enter into life maimed than having two hands to go into hell" (Matthew 5:30)? He's not saying that you can be saved by cutting off your hand; He's just trying to warn us of the horrors of hell, and He's saying it would be better to be a crippled saint on your way to heaven than a healthy sinner on your way to hell. That's what He's saying.

Now, my dear friend, I've just given you a few verses telling you what God's Word has to say about hell. You say, "Well, God must be cruel." No, God is not cruel. God doesn't want you to go to hell. *"The Lord is not...willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9)—2 Peter chapter 3, verse 9. God brought you here tonight that you might be warned. God has put the Holy Spirit in your heart to say, "Don't go to hell." God has given this Bible to you to say, "Don't go to hell." God has

put the prayers of this church and the prayer of your mother, and your father, and your brother, and your sister, and your friends, and your neighbors to say, “Don’t go to hell.” God has put this church, Bellevue Baptist Church, and other churches in the land to say, “God doesn’t want you to go to hell.”

Our Father has risen up the blood-stained cross of the Lord Jesus Christ and said, *“If you go to hell, you’ll have to crawl over the bruised, bleeding, broken body to go to hell.”* I don’t want you to go to hell.” *“The Lord is...not willing that any should perish”* (2 Peter 3:9). So, my friend, if you die tonight outside of Christ, I must say with a broken heart, you will go to hell.

II. You Could Go to Heaven

But now, suppose you’re saved. Suppose tonight, as a child of God, with only a step between you and death, you close your eyes in this world. What’s going to happen? You’ll go to heaven. You say, “That’s simplistic.” Well, it’s glorious—it’s glorious. heaven is not a state of mind; my friend, heaven is a real place. More real than Memphis, Tennessee—more real than London, Tokyo, or Baghdad—is the place called heaven. Heaven is so real; it is a place on God’s map. Jesus Christ said—John chapter 14: *“I go to prepare a place for you”* (John 14:2). I’m one of those who believe in such a literal hell. I believe that right now it has a geographic location. Jesus Christ is there in a resurrected body. It is a real place—a real place, as real as Memphis, Tennessee.

A. Where Is Heaven?

I believe I know what direction it is in. I believe that heaven is somewhere in the North. If you’ve been in this church for a while, you’ve heard me say that before. I want to tell you why I believe that: the Bible always speaks of heaven as being “up”—“up.” Well, they say, “Well, those ignoramuses—they believe that heaven is up. But, *up* is *this way* if you live in the United States, but *up* is *that way* if you live in Australia. So, which way is up?” Well, my dear friend, there’s one place that’s always up no matter where you are, and that’s North. It’s not by coincidence of happenstance that people talk about being “up north” or up being North.

Did you know that our entire universe revolves around the North Star? If you were to go out at night, and point a camera toward the North Star, and keep the lens open, the North Star would stay steady, but it would seem as all the other stars would revolve around it.

Did you know that Lucifer evidently believed that the abode of God was in the North? Listen to Isaiah chapter 14, verses 12 and following: *“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my*

throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation”—listen to it, now—*“in the sides of the north”* (Isaiah 14:12–13). When Lucifer said, “I’m going to usurp—or, exalt—myself above the throne of God, the stars of God,” he said, “somewhere there in the sides of the North is where I want to be”—very interesting thing.

When God gave Moses instruction as to how to make the animal sacrifice, He told him how to kill a sacrifice, and then He told him how to pour out the blood. And, He said in Leviticus chapter 1 and verse 11: *“And he shall kill it on the side of the altar northward before the LORD: and the priests, Aaron’s sons, shall sprinkle his blood round about upon the altar”* (Leviticus 1:11)—“on the north side of the altar, toward the Lord.”

Take your Bible, and turn to Psalm 75. Let me show you something here. I want to read verses 6 and 7: *“For promotion cometh neither from the east”—*which way is east here? That’s *this way*, right?—*“nor from the west”*—that’s *this way*—*“nor from the south”*—that’s *this way*—*“But God is the judge”* (Psalm 75:6–7). Which direction did he leave out? The North, where God is. It doesn’t come from that way. It doesn’t come from that way, and it doesn’t come from that way. It comes from that way. *“I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north”* (Isaiah 14:13). *“And he shall kill it on the side of the altar northward before the LORD”* (Leviticus 1:11). All I’m trying to say is, dear friend, somewhere out there is a place called heaven that is a real place, not just a state of mind.

B. Do I Have to Wait for the Resurrection to Go to Heaven?

You say, “Brother Rogers, don’t I have to wait till the resurrection therefore to go there?” Oh, no—you can go there in a body, or you can go there out of a body. It makes no difference. There are people there in their bodies, and there are people there without their bodies. Resurrected bodies are there; our Lord’s body is a resurrected body. Elijah and Enoch went to heaven being translated; their bodies are no longer here upon this earth. Listen to 2 Corinthians chapter 12—the Apostle Paul is giving his testimony of a vision of heaven that he had—2 Corinthians chapter 12, beginning in verse 2: he said, *“I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago”*—now, the man he’s talking about is himself. He said—*“I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)”*—he’s saying, “I had an experience; whether it was out of my body or whether I was in my body, I just don’t know—*“such an one caught up to the third heaven”* (2 Corinthians 12:2). I want you to hear what he’s saying. He’s saying, “Fourteen years ago, I went to heaven.” That’s what he’s saying: “I went to heaven. I was caught up to heaven.” He said, “I don’t know whether I was in my body or out of my body,” which tells me that you can go to heaven in your body or you can go to heaven out of your body. I’m going to

talk to you more about that in just a moment.

You say, “Well, how can people be in body and in spirit at the same time in one place?” Well, Jesus is here tonight in spirit, and we’re here in body. I can be there in heaven in spirit, and He’ll be there in body. You see, my dear friend, whether in the body or out of the body, it makes no difference. And, he says, “Such a one was caught up into paradise” (2 Corinthians 12:4). The third heaven he equates with paradise. Remember, Jesus said to that dying thief, “*Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise*” (Luke 23:43). And, He said, “*How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter*” (2 Corinthians 12:4). God took him to heaven. God showed him all of the glories of heaven and then said, “Paul, you can’t tell any body what you’ve seen.” I tell you from that time... Up until that time, the Apostle Paul wants to stay and willing to go to heaven. After that time, he was only willing to stay and wanting to go to heaven. He said, “*For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better*” (Philippians 1:23). And, the words “far better” means very, very, very much better. “I have a desire to depart and be with Christ” (Philippians 1:23).

C. Are There Three Heavens?

You say, “He says the third heaven. Are there three heavens?” Yes. The first heaven is the atmosphere. The Bible speaks in Genesis of the fowls of the heavens (Genesis 7:23). That’s the air. The second heaven is the stellar heaven. “*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork*” (Psalm 19:1). The third heaven is the abode of God. Someone has beautifully said, “The first heaven we see by day. The second heaven we see by night. The third heaven we see by faith.” I love that. And, my dear friend, the Apostle Paul, in a body or out of a body—he said, “I don’t know. I just went to heaven. And, there I saw things that no one could tell.”

So, that doesn’t bother me. If you ask me after this message tonight, “Adrian, tell me some things about heaven,” and I say, “I don’t know,” and you’ll say, “Well, you’re supposed to know”... No, I’m not supposed to know. I don’t have to know, and you don’t have to know. Will Rogers said, “A man doesn’t show his ignorance by not knowing so much as he does by knowing so much that ain’t so.” And, my dear friend, you don’t have to know everything about heaven. There are things that God has kept from you. Why, if we knew everything about heaven, we wouldn’t look both ways when we cross the street! I mean, we’d be so anxious to get there. Heaven is so wonderful, my dear friend, that God has purposely kept things about heaven from us.

D. When You Die, Do You Go Immediately to Heaven?

Now, if you died tonight, would you go immediately to heaven in your spirit? Of course. There are some people who erroneously teach that the soul sleeps with the body until

the resurrection. Oh, no—it is only the body that sleeps, not the soul. There is no such thing as “soul sleep.” *“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 5:8). Listen, 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 6 and following: the Apostle Paul says, *“Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)”* *Not a one of us has literally seen Jesus. But, he says, “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 5:6–8). So, when a Christian dies, he just moves out of his body right into the presence of the Lord.

I think the best illustration I know of that is when Stephen, who was being stoned, saw the Lord Jesus. And, the Bible tells about Stephen having a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ just before He stepped over into Glory. Acts chapter 7 and verse 56: Stephen, who was being stoned, said, *“Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God”* (Acts 7:56). He had a glimpse into the Glory before he died.

Dr. Robert G. Lee—what a great man of God! Dr. Robert G. Lee, the former pastor of this church, before he died, had a vision of heaven. Hildred, his adoptive daughter, was tending him. He said to her, “Hildred, I have seen heaven!” She said, “Papa, tell me about it.” He said, “It’s beautiful.” He said, “My sermon didn’t do it justice.” Dr. Lee has a sermon called “A Place Called Heaven,” which I think is the greatest sermon ever written on heaven. He said, “My sermon didn’t do it justice.” And, he said, “Hildred, I saw my mother.” And then, he said, “Hildred, I saw Jesus!” She said, “Papa, tell me.” “Oh,” he said, “I can’t tell you; I can’t describe it.” It wasn’t long until he stepped over on the other shore. You say, “Well, he was hallucinating.” I hope that’s what I do just before I go, too.

Oh, my dear friend, listen: when a child of God dies, he goes immediately into the presence of God. Jesus told a dying thief, *“Today shalt thou be with me in paradise”* (Luke 23:43). No waiting and no soul sleep—“goodbye here; hello there,” five minutes after you die.

E. Will We Know Our Loved Ones in Heaven?

You say, “Will we know our loved ones there?” Of course we will. Remember reading about King David, who had that little boy that died? And, David had stained heaven, and David said, “O God, spare the life of my baby. Please, Lord.” But, God took him. David got up and washed, anointed, his head, took food. They said, “We don’t understand it. While the baby was alive, you were fasting and praying and weeping. And now, the baby is gone, and you wash and anoint your head and eat. Why?” He said, “Why should I fast? I cannot bring him back to me. But,” he said, “I will go to him” (2 Samuel 12:15–

23). Of course we'll know one another in heaven.

The Bible teaches we'll know as we're known (1 Corinthians 13:12). You don't really know me. You say, "I know you, Pastor." You know what I let you see, and I know what you let me see. But, won't it be so wonderful when we'll know each other transparently? With all of the sin gone, we'll be transformed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. They needed no introductions. Moses was Moses. Elijah was Elijah. And, when I get to heaven, I'll still be Adrian, and you'll still be Jim Whitmire, Jim. And, we'll have a big time up there. Yes, we'll know one another.

F. What Are We Going to Do in Heaven?

What are we going to do in heaven? Well, we're not going to sit around on a white cloud, wearing a holy robe and plucking a harp. We're going to serve the Lord. Revelation chapter 7, and verse 15 says, *"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them"* (Revelation 7:15). The greatest joy I have on this Earth is serving the Lord. I enjoy preaching the Word of God. I enjoy winning souls. I enjoy Bible study. I enjoy praising the Lord. And oh, how we're going to praise Him when in heaven, with all of the shackles, and the foibles, and the failures, and the inadequacies shriveled away from us!

Revelation chapter 5, and verse 11, Jim, speaks of the music up in heaven (Revelation 5:11). It speaks of the choir, and we're told that the choir will have 100 million voices. You imagine that kind of music. Guess who the best singer will be? That's biblical. *"The last [will] be first"* (Matthew 19:30)—I'll be way ahead of you in this one. That's biblical. We're going to serve the Lord; we're going to sing and praise.

I don't know what we're going to do. Maybe He'll give us a new universe. We're going to rule angels; we're going to judge for our Lord (1 Corinthians 6:3). You say, "Give me the details, Pastor. Will we sleep? What will we eat? How much will we weigh? What age will we be?" I don't know, and you don't know. Revelation chapter 21, verse 4 tells us this much, though: *"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away"* (Revelation 21:4)—no sin, no sorrow, no suffering, no disease, and no doubt. Heaven will be the presence of all that is good, the absence of all that is bad. Heaven will be all that the loving heart of God can conceive and the omnipotent of God can prepare. *"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"* (Romans 8:32).

G. Who Is Going to Heaven?

And, who is going to heaven? The Apostle John had a vision of those saints that came through the Great Tribulation—those Tribulation saints. He said in Revelation chapter 7 and verse 14: *“These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”* (Revelation 7:14). John saw these in heaven: “These are they who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. These are they who have been saved by the blood of the Lord Jesus.” *Heaven is a prepared place for prepared people.*

God doesn't want you to go to hell; God wants you to go to heaven. You walk into a florist shop and see a beautiful flower, or you see a jonquil come up, as it will in a day or a week or so, in your backyard. May I tell you that every flower you see ought to remind you of Jesus? Sharon's fairest rose—Jesus, the lily of the valley (Song of Solomon 2:1)—died that you might not go to hell. You look on the ground and see a stone laying there; every stone that you see ought to remind you of Jesus, the Rock of ages, that sure foundation stone that God sent to keep you from going to hell. Every time you see a river it ought to remind you of God's love in motion. Every time you see a mountain it ought to remind you of God's love piled high. Every time you see a star in the sky it ought to remind you of God's love in diamond. Oh, my dear friend, God loves you, and He doesn't want you to go to hell.

Conclusion

There's a parable, and with this I'm finished. A man came and stood by the gate of heaven and watched those who were trying to get in. One came and knocked at the pearly gate, and the voice on the inside said, “Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?” He said, “I am a moral man.” The voice within said, “What is the password?” He said, “Honesty and decency.” And, the voice from within said, “Depart from me. I never knew you.” Another came and knocked at the pearly gate. The voice from within said, “Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?” This man said, “I am a religious man.” And, the voice said, “What is the password?” He said, “Church membership, and baptism, and attendance.” And, the voice within said, “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. I never knew you.” Another came and knocked at heaven's gate. The voice within said, “Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?” He said, “I am a humanitarian.” He said, “What is the password into heaven?” He said, “Service, and love, and good deeds.” And, the voice from within said, “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. I never knew you.” Finally, one knocked at the gate of heaven. The voice said, “Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?” That one standing in the gate of heaven said, “In my hand, no price I bring, Simply to thy cross I cling.” The voice

within said, “Open wide the gate and let him in, for of such is the Kingdom of heaven.”

Let’s pray. How many in this building tonight could say to me, “Pastor Rogers, I know if I died right now, and you were to ask, ‘Where, oh where, will your spirit be five minutes after you die?’ I know, by God’s grace—hallelujah!—that I would be in heaven”? Tonight is your night of decision. As I have told you, if you refuse the Lord Jesus Christ, you’ll remember this service; it will only increase your judgment. But, if you receive the Lord Jesus, *“though your sins [are] as scarlet, they shall be . . . white as snow; though they [are] red like crimson, they shall be as wool”* (Isaiah 1:18). Tonight, God will forgive you and cleanse you, and every stain, every spot, every blur, every blemish, will be completely taken away. Nothing will be written against your name. Your name will be inscribed in the Lamb’s book of life, and God will save you tonight. And, the God who saved you is the God who will keep you, if you’ll only receive Him by faith, if you’ll only say, “Jesus, come into my heart and save me. I need to be saved. I want to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me, and tonight, like a little child, I trust You.”

You say, “Pastor, I can’t remember all of those words.” Well, you don’t have to use those exact words. You can put it all into one short sentence and say, “Jesus, save me. Just save me, Lord Jesus.” If that’s what you mean, I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, if you’ll ask Him and trust Him, He’ll do just that.

Father, I am praying tonight that many in this building will say “yes” to Christ. In His name I pray. Amen.

Learning to Respect Spiritual Authority

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 16, 1992

Main Scripture Text: 1 Samuel 24

“And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.”

1 SAMUEL 24:6

Outline

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Introduction

Take God's Word and turn to 1 Samuel chapter 24. The title of the message tonight: “Learning to Respect Spiritual Authority.” The greatest victory that you will ever have will be the victory over your own spirit, when your spirit becomes subject to spiritual authority. Now this is an episode in the life of David. David, you know, had victory piled upon victory. When he was a young shepherd a bear came after the flock and David smote the bear and got victory over that bear. And then a lion came and David took that lion by the beard and smote him—that is, by his mane. The lion thought he'd have a David burger but he had a miss-steak. He got ahold of David and David got ahold of him and destroyed him. And then David came against Goliath. I imagine at that time David was just a little stripling lad. The Bible says, “He was ruddy and of a fair countenance”—that is, he had just a little peach fuzz on his chin. And David went out against Goliath of Gath who was over nine feet tall. I couldn't even touch the top of his head without standing on my tiptoes. And David smote Goliath and got a victory over Goliath.

And David was a warrior who knew what it was to win victories on the battlefield. But

in my estimation, the greatest victory that David ever won is the victory that I'm going to read to you about right here. 1 Samuel chapter 24, and I begin in verse 1: "And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, 'Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi.' Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats."

Now here's little David, he's still just a boy. Can you imagine an army of three thousand chosen men coming to seek David at Engedi? If you ever go to Israel, I want you to go to Engedi. You're on the Mount of Olives and you turn east and you go down from the Mount of Olives down towards the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is the lowest spot on earth about thirteen hundred feet below sea level. The Sea itself is about thirteen hundred feet deep. It is a mighty crater in the earth full of leaden poisonous water. But if you go to the Dead Sea and turn right and go about fifteen or twenty miles, you'll come to a place where you'll see some palm trees growing and some date palms. And you'll look off there and you'll see a kind of a green ribbon running up through the mountains and those desolate hills and badlands down there, where it is so hot. You'll see that the land is almost emerald green; it is an oasis. Those springs come out of the mountain and trickle down at a place called Engedi, which means the "spring" or "the hill of the goat."

As you get out of the bus or wherever, you can begin to walk up that watercourse and you'll see the water as it's coming down through those rocks, cascading over those rocks. And as you climb further and further up through the bull rushes there are all kinds of little pathways that you can go through. And the water is so clean and fresh you can just reach down and take a drink of the water. And as you go up further and further you come to crotons where the fern is hanging down, and little pools of water where, if you're down there in the summertime when the heat is about one hundred and five degrees, you'll want to take off your shoes and wade away or perhaps just plunge in and swim a while. And all up in the hillsides there are caves, limestone caves. And in those caves, marauders and bandits would hide and people would live or camp out. And there are wild goats and the wild goats are still there. You can see the wild goats as you go to Engedi. I hope someday that you can do that.

But it was at this place that David was hiding from King Saul. You see King Saul has been eaten up with envy because at first he thought that David was a remarkable young man and was proud of David and wanted David to be a part of his court and his own family. But then later on, King Saul, green eyed with envy, has put out an edict that David is to be killed because the people were singing, and especially the ladies, and saying, "Saul has slain his thousands, David has slain his ten thousands." And so here is mighty Saul, a man who was head and shoulders above other men, a man who was a

towering giant and King over Israel. And all of the focus of the kingdom now is focused down on one goal and that is, find David and kill David.

Now Saul has to go fight the Philistines but when he gets back someone says, “David is down there at Engedi.” So Saul takes three thousand handpicked men to go get little David—to go get David who one day is to be the King of Israel. Now notice in verse 3, “And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet,”—that means he went in to relieve himself—“and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave.” Now David’s already in that cave. Saul doesn’t know it. He’s just seeking a little privacy and so he goes into the cave and that’s the one thing he doesn’t have is privacy. David and his men are already in the cave. Of course, it’s dark in the cave. Saul’s eyes have not become accustomed to the darkness but David and his men are back there pressed against the walls of that cave. “And the men of David said unto him, ‘Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee’. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul’s robe privily.” That is, Saul had his robe lying there on the ground and David comes over there with his razor sharp sword and just cuts a part of that robe off.

Now Saul doesn’t know all this is going on. He thinks he’s in the cave by himself. “And it came to pass afterward, that David’s heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul’s skirt. And he said unto his men, ‘The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord’s anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord’. So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way.” Saul never even knew at this time that this thing had happened. It’s an amazing thing. David will not harm Saul although Saul is seeking for David’s life and David will not allow his people to harm Saul. At that time David fulfilled Proverbs chapter 16:32 which says this: “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.”

You’re going to understand now that David has the opportunity to put to death the man who has sworn to put he, himself, to death. You see to conquer one’s own spirit is greater, according to the Bible, than to take the fortress of a foe. That’s the greatest victory that David ever had. I think the next greatest victory is to do good to your enemies and refuse to take vengeance as the Bible says in Romans chapter 12 verse 21, “Be not overcome of evil but overcome evil with good.”

Now I believe in the last days lawlessness will increase. I believe the message I have tonight is very, very pertinent. As a matter of fact it is something that has made a deep, deep impression on my life and I think has regulated and changed the way that I live as much as any principle in the Bible. Now the principle tonight, if you can grasp it,

will help you in your life. And if you are a parent, I want you to listen very carefully because in these days in which we live it is absolutely necessary that you teach the principle of respect for spiritual authority to your children. It will keep them out of trouble with the law. It will keep them out of trouble with their teachers. It will teach them how to respect you as parents. But above all it will keep them in a good standing with Almighty God.

I. You Should Recognize Authority

Now here is a great principle and the principle is that you should recognize authority. David knew that he had no right to take Saul's life because Saul happened to be David's king, bad king that he was, yet he was God's chosen and anointed king. Now look if you will in chapter 26 and you find something of the same thing happening again. "So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench," —poor Saul this time he's down in a ditch asleep—"and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster." Now the word bolster means "his pillow." Here's Saul sound asleep, his spear stuck in the ground, his head on a pillow. "But Abner and the people lay round about him." They are trying to protect him. So Saul thinks he's perfectly at ease and perfectly safe. "Then said Abishai to David, 'God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once,'—Abishai says, "Listen I'm going to run the spear all the way through him and pin him to the ground." —"and I will not smite him the second time."—that is, when I'm finished with him you won't need to hit him again—"And David said to Abishai,"—now I want you to see what David has to say about spiritual authority—"Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?"

Now who was Saul? Saul was the king and Saul was God's appointed king. And David said, "Don't you touch him. He is your king. He is in a place of spiritual authority." Well, you say, "Pastor that's Old Testament." All right, let's turn in the New Testament to Romans chapter 13. I want to show you that the same principle is taught in the New Testament. Romans chapter 13 in verse 1: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." Now we're talking about the subjects of spiritual authority. The word higher power literally means "the higher authorities." How many souls are to be subject to the higher authorities? How many? Every. Look at it, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers." Does that include you? Nod your head. Sure, that includes you—the subjects of spiritual authority. Every soul is to be subject to spiritual authority.

A. The Source of the Authority

Now where does that spiritual authority come from? What is the source of that

authority? Look in chapter 13 verse 1: “For there is no power,”—that is, no authority—”but of God: the powers,”—that is, the authorities—”that be are ordained of God.” All authority is mediated. Jesus said, “All authority is given unto me in Heaven and on earth.” So therefore there is no king, there is no spiritual authority that is not ordained of God. That’s what He says, “For there is no power, no authority but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God.”

Now friend, that’s a big statement because that brings a lot of questions up about a lot of unworthy kings, like Saul. Saul was a very, very unworthy king. But God says, “There is no king, no power, no ruler that has not been ordained of God.” So therefore, you see the subjects, you see the source of this authority, and then you can see the sin against this authority. If you sin against this authority, who do you sin against? You sin against God. Look in verse 2, “Whosoever therefore resisteth the power,”—that is, the authority—”resisteth the ordinance of God.” Because you’re really resisting the one who has ordained that power. So to resist that authority is to resist God himself. You are withstanding God.

B. The Seriousness of the Sin

Now, not only the source of the authority, but I want you to notice the seriousness of that sin. And the Bible says, “And they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.” Now that means judgment, the severest of judgment. Now, why is this? Why does God have this thing about authority? Well, may I tell you? If you take all sin and boil it down and distill it, the quintessence of sin is rebellion against authority. It is that kind of rebellion that made the devil the devil. Turn, for example, to Isaiah chapter 14 here with me for a moment and let me show you what I’m talking about. Isaiah chapter 14 and you’re going to find out how the devil became the devil. Verse 12, “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer,”—now the word Lucifer means “bearer of light, light bearer,”—”How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!” What happened to Lucifer that he fell from heaven? “For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.” “I will, I will, I will, I will, I will,” five times he says it, I will.

When Jesus Christ was here on earth, Jesus Christ said, “Not my will but thine be done.” But Lucifer said, “Not thy will but mine be done.” And Lucifer rebelled against Almighty God and Lucifer, the son of the morning, became Satan, the father of the night and the father of darkness. This is where sin first had its origin. It arose in the rebellious heart of a glorious angel whose name was Lucifer. And God hates the sin of rebellion.

Now what was wrong with Saul? Well Saul was a rebellious person. And Saul was

really an unworthy king but he was still the king. Let me show you what happened to Saul. Go back if you will to 1 Samuel 15. Now Samuel is God's prophet. Saul is God's king. And Samuel, who was the prophet, told Saul, the king, "God wants you to destroy the Amalekites and all of their flocks and herds. I want them utterly destroyed." They were a bandit race. They would do all kinds of unspeakable, unmentionable atrocities. They were a cancer on the globe and God said, "I want them destroyed. Kill King Agag, the king of the Amalekites, and I want you to kill all of the sheep and the oxen. Well, Saul didn't do it. And notice Chapter 15 in verse 22 Samuel confronts Saul and I want you to listen to this: "And Samuel said, 'Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?'"

Now suppose you come here tonight and put a hundred thousand dollars in the offering plate and yet you're living in rebellion against God. Do you think that you can buy God? Do you think that you can bribe God? Do you think any amount of sacrifice is going to substitute for obedience? Notice what he says, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Saul said to Samuel, "Why I've saved these sheep, I didn't kill them. I saved them to sacrifice them to the Lord," that's what is meant by the "fat of rams." But Samuel said to Saul, and I want you to listen, the key verse is verse 23, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft,"—now if that's not underscored in your Bible it ought to be—"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft."

What is witchcraft? Witchcraft is trafficking with the devil. If you are rebellious against authority, then my dear friend you are in league with Satan and are practicing, as it were, witchcraft. Notice, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king." This was the thing that caused Saul to finally topple from his throne; it was his rebellion against Almighty God. Now, put it down, David was a man after God's own heart, Saul was a man after Satan's own heart. We're going to see that. If this gets deep, just stay with me.

All authority is mediated authority. All authority comes from God. All rebellion roots in Satan. And so when you have authority and rebellion, what you have is really Christ and Anti-Christ. That's what it boils down to. And God hates the sin of rebellion against spiritual authority. Now Saul was still the king. Even though he was a bad king, even though he was a wicked king, even though he was a king who had rebelled against the direct command of God, he was still the king.

Go back if you will to our text that we began with in chapter 24, 1 Samuel chapter 24. And I want you to notice the sensitivity of David's heart towards spiritual authority. Look at it. Look in verse 5. David has cut off the skirt of Saul. Saul has gone into the cave to relieve himself and David comes and cuts a part of his garment off. But notice how sensitive David is, you can see what makes David such a great man. "And it came

to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him,"—that is, that's he's convicted—"because he had cut off Saul's skirt." Now the people were saying to David, "David kill him. But David is convicted that he had even ridiculed him, that he had humiliated him.

I want you to learn something by verse 5: An attitude of rebellion is very closely akin to an act of rebellion. You need to teach your children to learn respect for authorities, to learn respect for policemen, to learn respect for sheriffs, for governors, for city councilmen, for the president, to learn respect for schoolteachers, to learn respect for pastors, to learn respect for elders. Teach them to learn respect and teach them that even an attitude of rebellion is wrong. You see we have a generation today of unruly people who shoot off the lip at everything.

Remember about two Sundays ago we were speaking in first and second Peter and we talked about how the apostates speak evil of dignitaries. And then we referred you to those scriptures over there in Jude verse 8 and 9. Let me read them again, "Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke thee.'" Now here is Lucifer and here is Michael the archangel. There is a dispute over the body of Moses, what that was about doesn't concern us right now, just put it down there's a big argument been going on between Michael and Satan. And Michael who is the all-glorious archangel and who is on the right side of the argument does not vilify even the devil. But he says, "Satan the Lord rebuke you." Michael the archangel knew that Lucifer still had remnants of the glory, the anointed cherub, and he so respected the authority that God had originally invested in Lucifer, who became the devil, did not bring against him a railing accusation.

Now that doesn't mean that he was soft on Satan. It doesn't mean that he feared Satan. It does not mean that in any way he agreed with Satan. It did not mean that he was any less the adversary of Satan, but he did not shoot off the lip at Satan. Satan was wrong and Saul was wrong in this instance. But David's heart smote him that he had even ridiculed and put Saul to shame because Saul was the king and Saul was the anointed. And David's heart smote him that he had even cut the skirt off of the man that set out to kill David, himself.

Now friend, David is a man that was such a great man. Yes he sinned and yes he failed, but there is something incredibly wonderful about this man David. The Bible says, "He was a man after God's own heart." And you can see it here. He was a man that lived by principle and not by appearance. Look in verse 4, "The men of David said unto him,"—I'm in chapter 24 verse 4, "The men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, 'Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee.'" Oh, they're even bringing God

into it. They are saying, “David this is right and God is in favor of it. This is what God promised you. Go ahead and kill him.” But David didn’t kill him, because David did not act according to appearance.

I mean, what an opportunity David had, it seemed to be too good of an opportunity to miss. Just one stroke of the sword and farewell to poverty, farewell to persecution, farewell to reproach, farewell to sneers, farewell to heartache—hello to triumph, hello to riches, hello to power, hello to praise. Now David would be king, all he has to do is kill Saul and it appeared like God had given him that opportunity. And I say ninety-nine out of one hundred people in that situation would have put Saul to death, but not David. David refused to act by impulse, he refused to be led by seeming appearance, but he lives according to principle.

Now my dear friend, what I’m trying to say in this first point is this—and I know we’ve been all around Robin Hood’s barn in talking about it, but listen—recognize authority.

II. You Should Respect Authority

All right now secondly, not only recognize authority, but respect authority. Begin now reading in verse 8 and look with me, “And David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, ‘My lord the king.’” Now David’s on the other side of the mountain this time. He cups his hand and shouts at Saul and notice how he speaks to him. This is the man who’s trying to kill him, “My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.”

Now he’s not mocking him. David is humbling himself before his enemy. He bows down before Saul. “And David said to Saul, ‘Wherefore hearest thou men’s words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?’ Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the Lord had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, ‘I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the Lord’s anointed.’” They were telling me Saul that I should kill you but I wouldn’t do it because you’re God anointed. “Moreover my father,” notice now as he speaks to him recognizing that he is an older man and David is a younger man, he calls him his father, “ see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it. The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. As saith the proverb of the ancients, ‘Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.’ After whom is the king of Israel come out? After whom dost thou pursue? After a dead dog, after a flea. The Lord therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.”

I said you should recognize authority, but I'm saying secondly, that you should respect authority. There's the absolute respect that David has. He calls Saul, his enemy, "my lord, my king, the Lord's anointed, my father." He bows himself before this malevolent, envious, wicked old king named Saul. David does this. That brings up a question. What about unworthy authorities? Now we say that children are to respect their parents, what about ungodly parents? Boy, there are some of them. We say that, "You should be subject to governmental authority." What about if you have a bad government? What about if the elected rulers are wicked or vile or incompetent or dishonest? What about spiritual leaders? What if your spiritual leader's not what he ought to be? And yet the Bible says, "We are to be subject to authority and we are to respect authority."

Well, my dear friend, it may surprise you to know that the Bible teaches you to be subject even to unworthy leaders. Turn with me for just a moment here to 1 Peter chapter 2. Let's bring it back to the New Testament again. And now let's see what Peter says about the same thing. 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 13, look at it. Peter's saying the same things, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well." Well you say, "Sure. Sure if you've got a good king, if you've got a good government." Well I want to ask you a question: Who was the king when Peter wrote this? Nero, one of the vilest men who ever lived and Peter wrote that. Well that causes some problems.

If you're a thinking person you're doing some industrial strength thinking right now. I mean you're saying, "Well wait a minute." Well let's go on. Look in verse 18, "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear." You say, "Sure, if I'm serving a good master. If I've got a good boss, sure I'll be subject to him." But look at what he says, "Not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." —that means the vile and the wicked. Let's go over to chapter 3 verse 1, "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands" Oh you say, "Sure, if you've got a good man be in subjection to him." But continue to read, "That, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation,"—or the behavior—"of the wives." He's talking here about godless government. He's talking here about bad bosses. He's talking here about mean mates. And he says, "be subject, be subject, be subject."

Now you say, "Well Pastor that brings up a real problem: What if my parents tell me to do something that's wrong? What if my husband commands me to drink something, do something, or go somewhere that's absolutely contrary—would violate my conscience? What if my king, my governor, or somebody else commands me to do something that is absolutely contrary to the Word of God, should I do it?" Oh no, oh no. The Bible says, "We should obey God rather than men." But now be very careful; make

certain that even when you do it, when you disobey your civil authority or whatever authority you must obey for conscience sake, make certain number one that you have a warrant from the Word of God to do it, and make certain that even when you do you still respect authority.

Now David did not come and lie down and let Saul kill him. He did not do it. He did not just roll over and play dead. He did not do it. But I want you to see how he respected the authority that he recognized. Look for example in verse 8, “And David arose and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, ‘My lord the king’. David stooped with his face to the earth.” There’s reverence. Look if you will in verse 10, “I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the Lord’s anointed.” There is respect. Look in verse 9, “David said to Saul, ‘Wherefore hearest thou men’s words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?’ There he’s giving Saul the benefit of the doubt. He’s says, “Now Saul maybe you’re mistaken. People have told you things that are not true.” And so he gives him reverence; he gives him respect; he gives him reason.

Look if you will in verse 11, “Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand.” He reasons with Saul. He gives Saul reverence; he gives him reason. Now how does he do this? Well because he is trusting the Lord. Notice in verse 12, “The Lord judge between me and thee and the Lord avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.” Look in verse 15, “The Lord therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.” David refuses to take the matter into his own hand and transgress the law of God. He just simply trusts God. He simply looks to God and asks God to take the whole thing into account and asks God to do something for him that he, himself, cannot do. And what David is doing now is pleading with his authority. He is respecting authority.

Now I want to give you some Proverbs right here. Proverbs 15 verse 1, “A soft answer turneth away wrath,”—you’re going to see this fulfilled. Remember now that Saul is trying to kill David and you’re going to find Saul weeping, weeping over what he was going to do—”but grievous words stir up anger.” Proverbs 16 verse 7, “When a man’s ways please the Lord,”—that’s David—”he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him,” that’s Saul.

Here’s another proverb. Proverbs 21 verse 1, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.” All of these proverbs, as yet not written, were still true even before they were written and the truth of those proverbs is worked out in the life of David now as he’s with King Saul. He has a soft answer, his ways please the Lord, and God begins to work in wicked King Saul’s heart. What do you do when you have an unworthy authority? What do you do when you have

parents, or bosses, or someone else that tells you to do something that's absolutely wrong? Don't do it, but on the other hand, don't have a rebellious spirit.

Let me give you an illustration. Suppose you're a high school student here tonight and the teacher tells you we're going to do a book review on thus and such a book. I want you to read this book and report back. Now let's suppose that the book is a book full of fornication, adultery, bad words, blasphemy, or whatever. You pick it up you've read a chapter of so and you see that it's a vile book, an unworthy book, for you to read. You don't want to fill your heart; you don't want to fill your mind with that. Now, if you're like some bright-eyed and bushytailed young Christians that I know, you would walk in there and tell your teacher, "Look that's a vile, filthy book. I am not going to read it. I'm not going to do a report. You can flunk me out if you want to, but I'm not going to read that book. I am a Christian and I'd rather fail out of school than dishonor my Lord." Doesn't that sound good? But it's not good. You know what that is? That's a spirit of rebellion. You are the student, that person is the teacher. You have no right to talk to your teacher that way.

You know what you should say? You should go in there and say, "Teacher may I have some words with you? Teacher thank you for what you've invested in my life. Thank you for wanting to impart knowledge to me. Teacher I have a real problem. I wonder if you could help me with it. Teacher as I read this book I saw certain things in here that grieve me, that I feel are contrary to what God would have me put in my mind. Now I know that you did not want to harm my heart and you've probably not thought of it this way. But Teacher I would certainly appreciate it if you not make me read this book. Tell you what I will do: I have gone to the library and I have found two books in the same category that are even more difficult than this book to read. And if you will allow me to do so Teacher, I'll read both of those books and I'll bring a report on both of those books that will be the best report I can do. If you just allow me, please Teacher, not to have to read that book." I'll tell you one thing that teacher would say, "That student is a cut above the average student." And I don't know that every teacher would agree, but I believe that nine out of ten teachers would say, "Why yes, that will be fine and thank you very much." And I believe that if there were anything that might bring conviction to that teacher's heart, it would be that kind of a spirit. That's the kind of a spirit that David has here. David is making a plea with Saul. So what you see is that David first of all—listen to me—David recognized authority, David respected authority.

III. You Should Rest in Authority

Now I want to bring you to the last thing: David rested in authority. Look if you will in verse 16, "And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, 'Is this thy voice, my son David?' And Saul lifted up his voice,

and wept. And he said to David, 'Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.' You see, what David has done is just simply heap coals of fire upon Saul's head. The Bible says in Romans chapter 12, verses 19 and following, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay,' saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." And so you see how Saul now is so under conviction, David has heaped coals of fire upon his head. And verse 18, "And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the Lord had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not. For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? Wherefore the Lord reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day. And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand."

Now my dear friend, why was David such a great king? And why did David have such great authority? There is a principle and I want you to learn it. I'm almost finished but turn to Matthew chapter 8 in verse 5. Here's something that took place in the life of Jesus Christ: "And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion,"—do you know who a centurion is? That's an army officer who has a lot of men under him—"beseeching him,"—that is, pleading with him—"and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented."—here was a man in agony and pain—"And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him." Verse 8, "The centurion answered and said, 'Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.'" This is, "You don't have to come heal him, you can heal him long distance. You just say the word right here where you are and he'll be healed."

Now look in verse 9, "For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, 'Go', and he goeth; and to another, 'Come', and he cometh; and to my servant, 'Do this', and he doeth it." That's what you can do when you're a centurion. You can say, "Hey soldier, go over there. Soldier, come over here. Servant do this." Why can he do that? Because he's a man with authority, he's a centurion, that's what he says. And now look in verse 10, "When Jesus heard it, He marveled,"—hey don't pass by that easily. I mean when you amaze Jesus you've done something. When you cause Jesus to marvel you have done something—"When Jesus heard it, He marveled and said to them that followed, 'Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.'" Here's the number one man in faith in all the land. Number one, a centurion, a Roman army officer, not even an Israelite, and Jesus says, "This man has incredible faith."

Now friend you better learn what all that is about. What is that about? "Jesus you

don't have to come to my house, don't even come under my roof, I'm not worthy. All you have to do is say the word for I, too, am a man under authority". Now what does that mean? He's saying, "Jesus I know how you operate. I know how it all works. Look I'm a centurion. And because I am a centurion, I am under authority. I'm a centurion but there's a general over me. And as long as I am under the general, I'm over the lieutenant, the sergeant, and the private. As long as I am under, I am over. Therefore, as long as I stay under authority, I too am a man set under authority"—that's literally what the Greek language says—"I too, I also, am a man set under authority. So therefore because I am under authority, I have authority. And Jesus I know how you operate. You are under authority. I too, that is, you are just like I am."

He saw that Jesus Christ in his humanity, he saw that Jesus Christ in his earthly ministry, said of the Heavenly Father, "I do always those things that please Him." — "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death." And because Jesus Christ recognized the authority of God Almighty in the humanity of Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ lived under the authority of the Father. And therefore, Jesus Christ who was under authority had authority over death, disease, demons, disaster, Satan—He had authority over all of it—and could speak a word because He was under authority. And that centurion said, "Jesus just say the word and it'll be done." And Jesus marveled and said, "He's got it, he understands it, he knows how it all works." Here it is in a sentence: Friend you will never be over until you learn to be under.

Conclusion

Do you want authority over Satan? Do you want authority in prayer? Do you want to preach or teach with authority? Do you want authority over your children? Do you want authority in your business? Do you want to live with kingdom authority? Then my dear friend, learn to submit to authority! Saul said, "Yes David you're going to be king—king over all Israel." How did David get to be such a king? Because he was a man after God's own heart. He recognized authority. He respected authority. He rested in authority and God took care of Saul. And God will take care of your enemies as you learn to rest in the Lord. That doesn't mean that David made a fool of himself. Look in verse 22 and I'm finished, 1 Samuel 24 verse 22, look at it: "And David swore unto Saul,"—that is, Saul I'm not going to harm you or your children—"And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold." —that is, David just goes up there and retreats wisely, innocent as a dove, wise as a serpent. David won a great victory over self, over Saul, and therefore over sin.

End of message, now, application: Is there anybody or anything that you have a rebellious spirit about? If you do, you're acting like the devil. Let me ask you this

question: Have you submitted to the King of Kings? That's where it all begins, by giving your heart to Jesus Christ. And when you get under the authority of Jesus Christ, under the authority of the Word of God, under authority of those that God has put over you, you're going to find yourself living, praying, speaking, and acting with incredible authority.

How to Behave in a Cave

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 6, 1996

Main Scripture Text: 1 Samuel 24:1-15, 19

“And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.”

1 SAMUEL 24:6

Outline

Introduction

I. We Must Recognize Kingdom Authority

II. We Must Respect Kingdom Authority

III. We Must Rest in Kingdom Authority

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God's Word and be finding 1 Samuel chapter 24? And, in a moment, we're going to read the first seven verses of that chapter, but more verses later on.

This is an episode in the life of David. King David was a mighty, mighty warrior, and I believe that he was the kind of a man who exercised Kingdom Authority. He was literally a king, and he had gone from victory to victory. We remember reading about David when he killed a bear, and David when he killed a lion, and David when he killed Goliath. He was a man that was known for victory, but the greatest victory that David ever had is going to be recorded in this chapter of the Bible. It was not a victory over someone else; it was a victory over himself. He got victory over self and learned the lesson that I want you to learn—and that is to have Kingdom Authority, you must remain under authority. I want to say it enough so you will never forget it: it is not God's plan for you to be defeated by the world, the flesh, nor the devil, for Jesus, when He died and rose again, has given to His children authority over these things. But, we will never be over those things that God has put under us until we are willing to get under and stay under those things that God has put over us. Now, I hope you understand that. That's what the theme of this entire series of messages is all about.

Now, let's read the story, and let me explain it to you for just a moment: *"And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi. Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, [and there] was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet"—that is, "to relieve himself"—"and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily. And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD. So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way"* (1 Samuel 24:1–7).

Now, you have to get the background. Saul is the King of Israel, and as the King of Israel, he is God's appointed and God's anointed, though he was a very unworthy king. Now, God was going to replace Saul with a young man whose name was David, *"a man after [God's] own heart"* (1 Samuel 13:14). Now, Saul is getting wind of this. He sees David, the rising star. He sees that his own sun is setting, and he now is eaten up with envy and jealousy against David. And so, he makes David Public Enemy No. 1. And, all of the energies of the kingdom now are focused on Saul's burning, malevolent ambition, and that is to kill David. And, Saul now is insane with jealousy, and in his mind, he repeats these words, "Kill David. Kill David. Kill David."

Now, he's had a skirmish with the Philistines, and when he gets finished with that, he learns that David is now hiding down by the Dead Sea, up in the mountains, in a place called Engedi, which means "the spring of the goats." I've been there many times. I've seen those caves. I've seen that spring—those waters cascading down. It's a beautiful place, and each time I go I think of this episode of David up there in those caves, hiding from Saul. Saul takes 3,000 handpicked men after one man: David. Now, David is in a cave, and Saul goes in there to relieve himself—into this cave. It's dark in the cave. David's eyes and those of his companions—their eyes are accustomed to the darkness. But, Saul can't see them; they're back in the recesses of that cave. And, Saul is there in the cave, and his men (David's men) see Saul. And, they say, "David, this is your opportunity. One act of courage, David—just one stroke of the sword—and goodbye to poverty! Goodbye to persecution! Goodbye to despair! Goodbye to hiding in the caves! Welcome riches! Welcome honor! Welcome power! Welcome authority! You will be the next king! Just one stroke of the sword!"

David goes over, and with his sword, in the darkness, he cuts off the hem of Saul's robe. That's how close he is to Saul. Saul doesn't know David is there, but David cuts off the hem of his robe. But, he won't kill Saul. Later on, after Saul is gone out of the cave, David says to Saul... He lifts his voice across the chasm. (Now, David's on one hillside, and Saul's on the other.) He says, "Saul, you see what I have? Do you see what I could have done to you?" Now, we're going to get to the whole episode a little bit more, but we just set the stage now. That's what all of this is about. Now, what David did in this episode was not to win a victory over Saul; what David did was to win a victory over himself.

Most Christians today—and I hate to say it—are into the cult of "self-realization," and the Bible teaches self-surrender. You see, in self-realization, all of the answers are in you, but in self-surrender, all of the answers are in Jesus. In self-realization, you are centered in you; there is a preoccupation with "No. 1." Self may be dedicated, but it is dedicated to self. It may be religious, but it is religious self. Ours is a generation of "selfaholics," and we are pickled in ourselves. The greatest victory that David won was not a victory over Saul; the great victory that David won was a victory over himself. The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 16, verse 32: "*He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city*" (Proverbs 16:32). How that was fulfilled in David! How David refused to take vengeance on Saul! He refused to do what he was able to do because he gained a great victory. As a matter of fact, he practiced what the New Testament says in Romans chapter 12, verse 21: "*Be not overcome [with] evil, but overcome evil with good*" (Romans 12:21).

If I had a title for the message, I guess it would be "How to Behave in a Cave." How you and I ought to learn to be under those things that God has put over us so we can be over those things that God has put under us! Because, very frankly, the problem in the world today is the spirit of rebellion. The Bible says Jesus was speaking about the last days, and He says, "*Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold*" (Matthew 24:12). And, the word for *iniquity* there is literally the word for *lawlessness*, for *rebellion*. Jesus said in the last days, rebellion would abound—rebellion would abound (Matthew 24:12).

And, we see it today. We see it in homes. Children today are rebelling against their parents like never before. Somebody said, "Everything in the modern home today is run by switches except the kids." We see in churches a spirit of rebellion. We see people in their arrogance, in the world of religion, who have actually gone through and revised and remodeled the Bible to make it politically correct. I mean, we have new translations that are coming out not because of scholarship, but because of philosophy and political correctness. That's sheer rebellion. We see rebellion in the streets, today—rebellion against government. All of this is the power of Satan, and what we need to do today is

to learn how to be under those things that God has put over us so we can be over those things that God has put under us. Three things, therefore, I want to write upon your hearts this morning:

I. We Must Recognize Kingdom Authority

First of all, like David, we need to recognize Kingdom Authority—we need to recognize Kingdom Authority. Look, if you will, in verses 5 and 6. After David had cut off Saul's robe, the Bible says in verses 5 and 6: *“And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD”* (1 Samuel 24:6). David understood the principle of Kingdom Authority. David understood that he needed to be under Saul, even though Saul sought for his life. Saul was still, though unworthy, he was still, at that time, the King of Israel. He was the appointed and the anointed king.

Later on, there came another opportunity for Saul to be killed—1 Samuel chapter 26, verse 9. You might just turn over there. There was a man named Abishai who found Saul asleep. His head was on the pillow, and Abishai said, “Listen, David, if you'll let me go over there,” he said, “I can put a spear through him right now.” He said, “And, I won't have to do it twice, because I'll do the job right the first time.” And, here's what David said to Abishai: *“Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless?”* (1 Samuel 26:9). “Don't kill him!”

Now, how does that apply to us today? Because Saul is not our king. Let me show you how it applies to us today. Just put in your margin “Romans 13, verses 1 and following”: *“Let every soul”—*now folks, that includes you—*“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers”—*that means “the governmental authorities”—*“For there is no power but of God: [and] the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power”—*that is, “the authority”—*“resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation”—*when you rebel against those authorities that God has put over you, you're not rebelling against those authorities; you are rebelling against Almighty God. He goes on to say—*“For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power?”—*“of the authority?”—*“do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he”—*now, he's talking about the governmental magistrate—*“For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath”—*that is, “to keep him from doing something to you”—*“but for conscience sake”* (Romans 13:1–5)—“to keep your heart right before God.”

Now folks, we may say, “Wait a minute. You don’t know the kind of government we have.” Maybe you don’t know the kind of government there was when Paul wrote this, when Nero was on the throne. We’re going to say more about that later on. Sometimes it may gall us. Sometimes we may be like David’s friend and say, “You got a chance to get him. Get him!” But, David said, “No, God’s the One who sets up kings. God’s the One who brings them down. I will be subject to those authorities that God has put over me.”

“Now,” you say, “what if I have an unworthy authority? What if my parents are unworthy? What if my husband is unworthy? What if my President is unworthy? What if my mayor is unworthy? What if my councilman is unworthy? What if my teacher is unworthy? What do I do?” That’s a wonderful question. We’re going to address that question next Sunday, but I’ll tell you one thing you don’t do: you do not have a spirit of rebellion.

And, by the way, while we’re talking about these who are our governmental authorities and magistrates, don’t you think it’s about time we said a good word for the policeman? Let me say something to you; here’s... Somebody wrote these words, and I was so moved by them I wanted to share them with you: “A policeman is many things: he is a son, a brother, a father, an uncle, and sometimes even a grandfather. He is a protector in time of need and a comforter in time of sorrow. His job calls for him to be a diplomat, a psychologist, a lawyer, a friend, and an inspiration. He suffers from an overdose of publicity about brutality and dishonesty. He suffers far more from the notoriety produced from unfounded charges. Too often acts of heroism go unnoticed, and the truth is buried under all the criticism. The fact is that less than one-half of 1% of policemen ever discredit their uniform. That’s a better average than you’ll find among clergymen. A policeman is an ordinary guy who is called upon for extraordinary bravery for us. His job may sometimes seem routine, but the interruptions can be moments of stark terror. He is the man who faces a half-crazed gunman, who rescues a lost child, who challenges a mob, who risks his neck more often than we realize. He deserves our respect and profound thanks. A policeman stands between the law abider and the lawbreaker. It’s the prime reason your home hasn’t been burned, your family abused, and your business looted. Try to imagine what might happen—try to imagine what might happen—if there were no policemen around. Then, try to think of ways to make their job more rewarding. Show them the respect you really have. Offer them a smile and a kind word. See that they don’t have to be magicians to raise their families on less-than-adequate salaries. We think policemen are great. We thank God for all the little boys who said they would be policemen and all who kept their promise. We hope you feel the same way, and we hope you will show it, so that there will always be enough good policemen to go around.” That’s good.

The Bible says, “These are ministers of God to us for good. They are a terror to evil works” (Romans 13:4). You see, we need to recognize the authority that God has put over us. Do you know what made the devil *the devil*? What made the devil *the devil* was to rebel against authority. He rebelled against Almighty God. In Isaiah chapter 14, verse 13: “*For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God*” (Isaiah 14:13). He wanted to kick God off the throne and put himself upon the throne. He said in verse 14: “*I will be like the most High*” (Isaiah 14:14).

Now, Saul, who was David’s foe, had the spirit of the devil in him. Do you know what Saul’s problem was? Saul rebelled against Almighty God. There was a time when Samuel told Saul to do something—Samuel was God’s prophet, and therefore he spoke for Almighty God—and Saul refused. And, Samuel rebuked him with these words (and I want you to put them down, because they are key words to all we have to say)—1 Samuel 15, verse 23. Here’s what Samuel had to say to this man Saul, who was there in that cave, whose life David could’ve taken: Samuel said to Saul, “*For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft*”—now, don’t pass that easily—“*rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king*” (1 Samuel 15:23). Now, God says, “If you have the spirit of rebellion”—listen—“if you have the spirit of rebellion, you are practicing a sin like witchcraft. Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.” What is witchcraft? Witchcraft is trafficking with the devil. Just think about it: What made the devil *the devil*? Rebellion. When you have rebellion in your heart, you’re over in the devil’s territory.

You see, Saul was a man after the devil’s own heart; David was “*a man after [God’s] own heart*” (1 Samuel 13:14). Saul had the spirit of rebellion; David had the spirit of submission. You will never be more like the devil than when you’re a rebel; you will never be more like the Lord Jesus than when you submit. I hope you believe that; I hope you understand that, because some of us today think, “Man, you’ve got to rebel. You’ve got to stand up for yourself. If you don’t do that, why, you’re a weakling!” No, you’re not. You’re strong. David’s greatest victory was the victory he won over self when he submitted to those authorities, and for that reason God made him Israel’s greatest king. And, you will never be over those things that God has put under you until you learn to be under those things that God has put over you.

Now folks, that’s a lesson. And, today we are teaching our young people to have the spirit of rebellion, and we need to be very, very careful. That doesn’t mean that we approve what some people may do any more than David approved what Saul did. What Saul did was very, very wrong, but David understood a principle; and, therefore, David learned to rule with great power and great authority. Now folks, listen to this fact that your preacher’s telling you: we must recognize Kingdom Authority.

II. We Must Respect Kingdom Authority

Here's the second thing we must do: not only must we recognize Kingdom Authority, but we must respect Kingdom Authority. Now, begin in verse 8: *“David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself. And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but [my] eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth [my] hand against my lord; for he is the LORD's anointed. Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in [my heart], for I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it. The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea. The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand”* (1 Samuel 24:8–15).

Dear God, help us to understand this. I hope you'll understand this. I hope, sir, madam, that you will live this, practice this, and teach this to your children, because if not, you will never understand spiritual authority. Here is a man respecting spiritual authority. This man was an unworthy authority, but David recognized that authority and he respected that authority.

I want you to see how he talked to Saul with reverence. He bows his head down. With respect, he calls him, *“My lord the king”* (1 Samuel 24:8). He even gave him the benefit of the doubt. He said, *“Perhaps you've been misinformed.”* And then, during all of that time, that did not mean that he gave into Saul's wicked ways, but he said, *“I am trusting God to get me out of this thing. I'm not trusting you, Saul. I am trusting God.”* Look, if you will, again in verse 12: *“The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee”* (1 Samuel 24:12). Look, if you will, in verse 15: *“The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand”* (1 Samuel 24:15).

Now, the point is this: that not only did David recognize the authority that was in Saul, but he respected the authority. And folks, this is the hard part—this is the hard part: it's one thing for us to grudgingly give in to that authority, but it's another thing for us to respect that authority and to respect those leaders that God has put over us. Sometimes children have parents, and those parents don't deserve respect. And, if you have parents that don't deserve respect, respect them anyway. If you have teachers

that don't deserve respect, respect them anyway. If you're in a church and your pastor doesn't deserve respect, respect him anyway. If you have a government and the government does not deserve respect, respect that government anyway. You're not respecting the individual; you are getting yourself in a place under authority. And, when you do—when you get to that place—then God is going to begin to work in your life in an incredible way. And, God is going to see that you don't have the spirit of rebellion, and God is going to infuse you with great, great power and make you have Kingdom Authority, just as David one day set upon Israel's throne and became Israel's greatest king. But, that is very hard.

Do you know the problem with many of us is that we have a spirit of rebellion? And folks, I want to tell you, by nature, I have a spirit of rebellion. And, I guess it's no secret I am very dissatisfied with the present administration—I mean, I am. But, I have to watch myself that I don't shoot off the lip. You know, I have a gift for smart remarks, and I find myself many times not in sheer rebellion, but I find myself with a spirit of rebellion. I'm like that little boy whose mother said to him, "Son, sit down," and he wouldn't sit down. She said, "Son, sit down." He was about a four-year-old—wouldn't sit down again. She took both hands and set him in a chair. He sat down for a little while, and looked at her, and said, "I'm standing up on the inside." Now, I think many of us are that way. I think that while we may grudgingly get under those authorities that God has put over us, we are standing up on the inside. And, many times we speak in ways we wish we hadn't.

In Jude, verses 8 and 9—just put this in your margin—Jude is talking about apostates, and he says, "*Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh*"—listen to this—"*despise dominion*"—that is, they don't want any body over them—"*and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him*"—that is, "Michael did not bring against the devil"—"*a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee*" (Jude 1:8–9). Now, Michael did not give in to the devil. As a matter of fact, he disputed with the devil. He stood against the devil. He was opposed to the devil. He was going to bring Satan's kingdom down. Michael was the mighty archangel. And yet, because of the residual dignity that was in Satan, who was once the anointed cherub, the Bible says that even Michael the archangel would not speak disrespectfully. He would not bring a railing accusation against the devil himself.

I'm going to tell you something: around the dinner table, when you begin to carp and criticize those people—school principals, teachers, policemen, pastors, parents, presidents, whatever you do—do you know what you're building in your children? A spirit of rebellion—a spirit of rebellion. I'm going to tell you, it's going to come back on you—going to come back on you. And, you're going to have a little rebel on your hands, and you're going to say, "What happened? Why will not this person submit to authority?"

That does not mean we give in to wickedness; that does not mean we approve error any more than David approved what Saul did. As a matter of fact, it was David's submission that brought Saul's kingdom crashing down and made King David the king that he was.

Now folks, I don't know whether you understand what I'm saying or not, and maybe you think it doesn't apply, but I think there's hardly a message that applies more than what I have to say right now. I am saying to you that God wants His people to live with Kingdom Authority, but we will never be over those things that God has put under us until we are willing to get under those things that God has put over us. And, the Bible says, "Whoever it is, whether we like them or not..." Put this verse in your margin—1 Peter chapter 2, verses 18 through 20: "*Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward*"—that means "to the evil." You work for a boss—you work for a man—that's not a good man? Be in submission to him, if he's the boss—"For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully"—you say, "Well, he doesn't treat me right?" God says, "You do it for conscience's sake. Just suffer wrongfully." And then, he goes on to say—"For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye...take it patiently? but if, [and] when [you] do well, and suffer for it, [you] take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (1 Peter 2:18–20). We need to learn to respect authority.

One of my heroes, you may well know, is Joseph Tson—Joseph Tson—that apostle to Romania. He's spoken from this pulpit a number of times. He told me a story one time—we were in a restaurant—brought tears to my eyes. He said, "I was in a village there north of Bucharest. I was a pastor; it was back in 1974." He said, "I was in my study, when seven communist soldiers came just bursting into my study. They said, 'Are you Joseph Tson?'" He said, "Yes." "We have reason to believe that you're an insurrectionist against the government. We're going to go through your library, and if we can find one book in your library that has anticommunist words in it, you're going to be arrested; you're going to be in serious trouble." And, they started taking the books off of his library shelf. Now, you know, to a pastor, his books are very, very important. But, they began to confiscate his books, and they began to make him sign his name in the flyleaf of every book so that they could use it against him. "Put your name here, and put the date here that we got this book out of your library." One by one, they were taking down his books.

He said, "It was a terrible day! Seven communist soldiers in my house, but," he said, "they'd only taken down a few books when they handed me one that said, *Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory*—that was the title. The subtitle: *Are You Experiencing It Now?*" And, he realized that God says, "*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice*" (Philippians 4:4). And, he said, "I choose to rejoice," and he said, "Elizabeth,

we have guests in our home. Make them some coffee.” And, he said, “From that time on, I was in charge—the Lord and I—because I learned somehow not to have the spirit of rebellion.”

Joseph and others were those who brought that communist dictator Ceaușescu crashing down, but how did they do it? With a spirit of submission. They took those books; they could not find anything in those books, but they took all of Joseph’s tapes. They brought them back to the major, and they said, “We don’t know what’s in the tapes.” And, he said, “I’ll listen to the tapes.” So, he began to listen to those tapes, and as he was listening to the man of God preach, he had a heart attack and died—*just like that*. Word got out all around. One person heard these communists talking, and it got back to Joseph. They said, “Be careful what you do with the man of God. Be very, very careful. Don’t touch the man of God.” Now folks, what we need to learn to do is to exercise submission to authority, but yet not acquiescence. It doesn’t mean that we agree, but we must have a victory like David had.

III. We Must Rest in Kingdom Authority

Now, here’s the third thing: not only must we recognize Kingdom Authority, and not only must we respect Kingdom Authority, but we need to rest in Kingdom Authority—not rest in the government, not rest in the Sauls, not rest in the Ceaușescus, but rest in the Lord. Notice what David said again, in verse 15: *“The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand”* (1 Samuel 24:15). David was ahead of his time: he understood the spirit in the New Testament which says, *“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good”* (Romans 12:19–21).

This is contrary, folks, to human nature. You’re in chapter 24; look in verse 19: *“For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day”* (1 Samuel 24:19). Saul said, “What you did to me, David, was not human nature. You did something that was beyond human nature.”

And, I’m going to tell you, you’re looking at a man whose nature is the nature of a rebel. That’s me! I’m telling you, before I got saved, I was a street fighter—I really was. And, I’m a lover now. So, any body want to fight—don’t come to me. Go to Bob or somebody. I don’t fight. Sorry, Bob. Folks, I mean, by nature, it’s hard for me to submit, and that is against human nature. It’s against human nature for all of us, now isn’t it? Be honest! The Bible says, *“He that ruleth his own spirit [is better] than he that taketh a city”*

(Proverbs 16:32). And, I'll say again that David killed a bear, David killed a lion, David killed Goliath, but the greatest victory that David ever had was that day in that cave where he said, "I am going to get under those people that God has put under me so that I can be over those things that God has put under me."

Now, that does not mean that we blindly obey ungodly government. If you think I believe in that, you are wrong, and I'll say more about that later on. The prophets in God's Word preached against the wickedness in the kingdom. Nathan warned David when he did wrong. Elijah warned Ahab. Eliezer spoke to Jehoshaphat, Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, Moses to Pharaoh. And, God forbid that we should have pulpits today that are silent when little babies are being murdered and when wickedness prevails in so many ways. We do not acquiesce, but I am telling you, there must be in us a spirit of humility and surrender over our selves. And, when we get under those things that God has put over us, then God can trust us to bring these wicked kingdoms crashing down. The Church, beloved, is not the master of the State, not the servant of the State; we're the conscience of the State to preach God's truth.

Conclusion

That's how to behave in a cave, and you're going to have a chance to practice it, perhaps, this afternoon. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. Now folks, you will never win a victory over self, over anything else, until you yield to Jesus Christ. You've got to submit, first of all, to the King of kings, the Lord of lords: Jesus Himself. And, when you give your heart to Jesus, He will cleanse you and forgive you of every sin. He will send His Holy Spirit into your heart to empower you, to give you peace, and comfort, and direction. And, when you die, He'll take you to Heaven. If you want to be saved, you can be saved right now by receiving Christ. He has died for you. He's paid for all of your sin. He is knocking at your heart's door. He wants to come in today, and make you a new person, and to help you to be all that you were created to be.

Would you like to be saved? Would you pray a prayer like this: "God, I acknowledge that I'm a sinner, and I acknowledge that my sin deserves judgment. But, I need mercy. I want to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me, and You've promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus, right now, like a child. I receive You into my heart. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus"? Pray that prayer: "Save me, Lord Jesus."

Did you pray it? Then, pray this: "Lord, because You died for me, give me the courage to make this public. Help me not to be ashamed of You, Lord—to declare my faith. Help me to do it and to do it now. In Your name I pray. Amen."

Now, look up here. We're saved when we trust Christ. But, the open public

confession of our faith is that which seems to settle it and seal it. The Bible says, *“With the heart man [believes] unto righteousness...with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”* (Romans 10:10). So, here’s what we’re going to do: I’m going to ask that a minister stand at the head of each of these aisles, and up there in the aisle-way in the balcony, there will be ministers along. Then, when we sing this invitational hymn—listen very carefully—if you prayed that prayer and asked Jesus Christ to come into your heart, I want you to do something very wonderful that will give Him glory, that will shame the devil, and that will help settle it and seal it in your heart: I want you to come forward, and I want you to tell the minister that you’re trusting Christ. We want to rejoice with you, give you some scripture to stand on, answer any questions, and seal this decision in prayer with you.

Now, others of you today are already saved, but you need a church home. I want to invite you to come and say, “I want to place my membership in this church,” if you know Christ, if you believe as we believe, if you want to be a growing, fellowshiping member. Now, we don’t require that you be perfect. (None of us are perfect.) But, we do require that you be sincere. None is perfect, but you be sincere, all right?

Now, don’t look around to see what someone else is going to do. Don’t leave early. Be in a spirit of prayer. If you’re with a friend who needs to make a decision, you might say to that friend, “If you want to go, I’ll go with you.” How beautiful to see one friend bring another friend to Jesus!

Games That Fools Play

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 8, 1987

Main Scripture Text: 1 Samuel 26:21

“Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.”

1 SAMUEL 26:21

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Introduction

Take God’s Word tonight, and turn in the Old Testament to 1 Samuel chapter 26, and we’re going to look at verse 21, in just a moment. This morning, we spoke of obedience—we said that obedience was the way to victory; it was the way to joy; and, it was the way to power. Now I said that I wanted to give you an illustration to the reverse side, tonight, and speak to you about the problem and the sin of disobedience. The title of our message tonight is “Games that Fools Play.”

First Samuel chapter 26 and verse 21: *“Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes*

this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly” (1 Samuel 26:21). Here’s a man at the end of his days, who confessed, “I’ve been an exceeding sinner, and I have been a fool.” No man ever had a better start than the man named Saul, and nobody ever had a sadder finish than the man named Saul. When you first meet Saul in the Bible—as you know, he was Israel’s first king—when you first meet him, he’s handsome; he’s winsome; he’s courteous; he’s thoughtful; he is humble; he is young; and he is vital, virile, and vivacious. You look at him, and he seems to have it all; and yet, when you look at this same man when he becomes a old man, you see him as a bitter old man—as a bitter old man, as a murderous old man, as an envious old man, as a wicked old man, as a desperate old man, and you say, “How could it be?” How could someone who started out so well end so poorly?

The life of Saul is a life of great contradictions. The great Sidlow Baxter put it this way: “In some ways, he is very big and, in other ways, very little. In some ways, he is commandingly handsome and, in some ways, decidedly ugly. All in one, he is a giant and a dwarf; a hero and a renegade; a king and a slave; a prophet and a reprobate; and, a man God anointed and a man Satan possessed.”

When I look at the life of Saul—and I want to tell you, from my heart—it frightens me, and it challenges me. As I say to myself, “Adrian, do not let the thing that happened to Saul happen to you”—and it could happen to any one of us in this auditorium, in my television or radio audience, or to any who will listen later by tape; and so, I want your strictest attention. I want to show you the folly of disobedience. I want to show you that fools are not born—they are made; and generally, they are self-made.

I. Saul’s Golden Opportunity

I want you to think with me about Saul’s golden opportunity. I say that no man ever had a better start than this man named Saul. Would you go backward in 1 Samuel to chapter 9—1 Samuel chapter 9—and let’s keep our Bibles open, because we’re going to read an exceeding amount of Scripture tonight, and you’ll learn so much more if you’ll have an open Bible in your hand. I want to show you that this man had so much going for him. I mean, some people have it all, and nobody more than this man named Saul.

A. Saul’s Manhood

First of all, I want you to look at what I’m going to call his manhood. First Samuel chapter 9, verse 1: “*Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish.*” And then, skip to verse 2: “*And he had a son, whose name was Saul,*”—now, I want you to see how God describes Saul right here—“*a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.*” (1 Samuel 9:1–2).

Now folks, when the Bible, which is consummate, infinite proof, says that there wasn't a goodlier person nor a better person in all of Israel than this man, that's a superlative that you have to pay attention to. When you think of his manhood, he was a man among men. He was head and shoulders above the rest. Had he lived today, Hollywood would surely have tried to give him a contract. He had it all. He could have been a movie star. He had health; he had height; and he had handsomeness—he had it all.

B. **Saul's Modesty**

Think not only of his manhood, but to go with his manhood, I want you to think of his modesty. Here was a man who, in spite of all that he had, felt so modest and so unworthy. Look in chapter 9, and begin in verse 15: *“Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me. And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold, the man whom I spake to thee of! the same shall reign over my people”* (1 Samuel 9:15–17).

God selected Saul, and God said that Saul was to be king; but, when Samuel came to Saul, I want you to notice what Saul said—look in verse 21: *“And Saul answered and said, Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all of the families of the tribe of Benjamin?”* (1 Samuel 9:21). Do you know what he's saying? “Oh, I'm not worthy to be kin. Why, surely you have the wrong person. I don't have the background. I don't have the ability to be king.” Why, he was so modest—he didn't seek publicity; he shunned publicity. Look, if you will, in chapter 10 and verse 22: *“Therefore they enquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And the LORD answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff”* (1 Samuel 10:22). They were looking for Saul. Where is Saul? He's to be king, and there's Saul—back there, hiding himself. He doesn't have a campaign—a publicity campaign—saying, “Vote for Saul; Saul for king.” He's such a humble man—no campaign office, no flairs, no publicity.”

C. **Saul's Magnanimous Spirit**

Oh, think not only of his manhood—head and shoulders above others; think not only of his modesty; but, think of his magnanimous spirit. Here was a man with such a wonderful spirit. Look with me in chapter 10, verses 26 and 27, here, for a moment. Now even though God had chosen Saul to be king, there were some who were wiseacres and smart alecks. And notice, in verses 26 and 27: *“And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had*

touched. But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought no presents. But he held his peace” (1 Samuel 10:26–27).

Now here are people who are taunting him and sassing him. He is now already the king, but he doesn't say a word to them. Now look over here, if you will, in chapter 11, verses 12 and 13: *“And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death. And Saul said, Thou shall not a man be put to death this day: for to day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel”* (1 Samuel 11:12–13). Isn't that a great spirit? Here was a man who held the lives of these men in his hands. They had mocked him; they had ridiculed him; and they had despised him. Saul doesn't seek any vengeance. He doesn't have a vindictive spirit; he doesn't have a murderous spirit. Saul just simply says, “Oh, oh, don't do them any harm.” And his great strength is shown in his restraint and in his kindness to his enemies.

D. **Saul's Mighty Spirit**

Aren't you beginning to like this man? Not a goodlier man in all Israel. Here's a man who is so humble. Here is a man who is so kind and magnanimous; and then, think also of the mighty spirit of God that was upon him. Look in 1 Samuel chapter 10 and verse 1: *“Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head,”*—that is, on Saul's head—*“and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?”* (1 Samuel 10:1). That is, “Saul, I'm putting this oil on your head, but it's only an emblem—it's only a symbol—that Almighty God has touched your life. You have been anointed of God.” And look in verses 6 and 7: *“And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee,”*—this is chapter 10, verses 6 and 7—*“and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man. And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou shalt do as occasion serve thee;”*—now watch this—*“for God is with thee”* (1 Samuel 10:6–7).

Isn't that great? God is with you. Here's a man that has not only a magnanimous spirit, but he has mighty spirit; he had not only natural ability—and he was loaded with natural ability—but now he had supernatural ability. Not only does he have this handsomeness, charm, and leadership, but now, God the Holy Spirit has anointed this man, and he has both natural and supernatural ability in one man. He's a man of God; and, the prophet said, “Saul, God is with you.”

E. **Saul's Men**

Now let me talk not only about his mighty spirit, but his men. He had some men who were helpers. Look in chapter 10 and verse 26: *“And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched”* (1 Samuel 10:26). Oh boy, the word *band* literally means, “hosts of men,” and the word *host*, in

Hebrew, means that they were mighty men of valor. These were warriors—loyal and faithful—and they said, “Saul, you’re God’s man, and we are with you.” God gave Saul those men’s hearts: they lived for Saul, and they would have died for Saul.

Now it’s one thing for a man to be a leader, but it’s another thing for a man to be a leader with a band of men behind him. And by the way, I’ve just come from a deacon’s meeting. It’s been a praise, prayer, and worship service, and I think, oh, how blessed of God I am to have the band of men with me that I have. Thank God for our mighty men of spirit—these dear deacon brothers that we have in this church.

F. **Saul’s Mentor**

But think not only of his mighty spirit and his men, but let’s go a step further. I want you to think of his mentor—his teacher. Look in 1 Samuel chapter 10 and verse 25: *“Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house”* (1 Samuel 10:25). Samuel was there, who was God’s man—a man who knew the ways of God, a man who could hear the voice of God—and Samuel was there as the mentor to Saul. He was there, as the royal prophet, to lay his hand upon the shoulder and say, “Saul, this is what God wants you to do, and this is what God doesn’t want you to do.” How would you like to be able to have your own personal prophet—a man of God to lead you and to speak to you?

G. **Saul’s Monarchy**

I’m telling you, folks, there’s nobody that I ever knew of that had a better start than this man. When you think of it—when you just think of his manhood, his modesty, his magnanimous spirit, his mighty power, his men who were with him, his mentor who taught him—then, on top of that, you think about his monarchy. You think of the kingdom over which he ruled. Look in chapter 10 and verse 1 again: *“Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?”* (1 Samuel 10:1). Here was a man who was to rule and to shepherd the most wonderful nation on the face of the earth. What an opportunity to bless men!

Now let me tell you, folks: some men have opportunity, but they don’t have any ability; some men have ability, but they don’t have any opportunity; but here was a man who had phenomenal ability and unbelievable opportunity. He was to be king over God’s chosen people. He had the one opportunity in a million and he came to be the one man in a million. What could go wrong? I mean, that’s it folks—he’s got it all.

II. **Saul’s Tragic Destruction**

And yet, I want to tell you that he blew it. No one ever failed more miserably than this

man. I hope that will astound you and hope that it will startle you. And I hope that it will warn you, and I hope that you will pay attention. Here was a man who went from hero to zero, and said at the end of his days, “I had to sin exceedingly, and I have played the fool” (1 Samuel 26:21). Are you ready to learn some now? I want you to notice his tragic destruction. Saul began to play a dangerous game. The stakes were very high. It was a game that he could not possibly win, and yet, could not afford to lose.

Saul started down a road that led to self-destruction, and there were five tragic steps on that road to destruction. I want you to listen, because if mighty Saul went down, how much more should we be warned?

A. Saul’s Self-Determination

Step number one: self-determination. Turn to 1 Samuel chapter 13, and I begin to read in verse 5—now, it’s an extended passage, but I’m going to read from verses 5 through 14, so follow along: “And the Philistines *gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Bethaven. When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits. And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.*” Now folks, you just cannot imagine what a terrible situation you’re in, when you’ve got 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen coming against you, and the people—Saul’s people—are in a strait.

Now notice verse 8: “*And he tarried seven days...*”—that is, Saul waited seven days according to the set time that Samuel had appointed—“*but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he*”—Saul—“*offered the burnt offering.*” Now friend, that was something only a priest should do. Saul was the king, but Saul was not the priest. “*And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him. And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.*”

Now I want you to notice this self-determination: “*I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering. And Samuel said to Saul,*”—watch it now—“*Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he*

commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.” Now dear friend, pay close attention to what happened—Samuel says: *“But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee”* (1 Samuel 13:5–14).

“Already,” Samuel says, “there’s a flaw in this man’s character, and it is the flaw of self-determination.” Saul was told to wait seven days in Gilgal for Samuel. It was a test—nothing was out of control; but Saul failed that test. He violated the priest’s prerogative in his panic by doing something that he should not have done, which showed his lack of trust and faith in God. And what was the mistake that he made right here? It was the beginning of the end. He was running ahead of God. Keep that in our minds—just running ahead of God. He couldn’t wait on God. He said, “Things are desperate. I’m going to take matters into my own hands.” And Samuel said, “Saul, you’ve been so foolish.”

B. Saul’s Stubborn Disobedience

Step number one: self-determination—taking matters into your own hands. Step number two: stubborn disobedience. I want you to notice that sin is never static; it continues to grow. Saul did not repent. Saul did not get right with God, and so he enters into phase two of his self-destruction.

Look, if you will, in 1 Samuel chapter 15 now, and I begin in verse 1: *“Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass”* (1 Samuel 15:1–3).

God said to Saul, “Saul, you are to utterly destroy the Amalekites.” Now when God commanded Saul to wipe people from the face of the earth, God was doing humanity a kindness and a favor. Let me tell you who the Amalekites were. They were a cruel, abandoned race that had ridden roughshod over the other nations for over 500 years. They were slaughtering, raping, and torturing, just for the joy of destruction. They left a trail of blood everywhere they went. When they would go into a land, they would destroy the monuments; they would destroy the sacred scrolls; and anything they could not carry away, they destroyed and marred. They delighted—the Amalekites—in oppressing weaker people. Their wars were wars of ambush against the weak, against the aged, and against the helpless. They were demon-infested people. When they would come in, they would destroy the crops and leave people to starve; they would kill the herds, and

what meat they could not eat, they destroyed—they were so cruel. They would hack the limbs off their victims. They would gouge out the eyes of their victims, and they would knock out the teeth of their victims. They would take the women and rape them. They would make slaves of the children. The Amalekites, sometimes, would mutilate the bodies of their victims; they would cut up pieces of flesh and fling the flesh into the sky into the face of God as they cursed God. They jeered at Israel's God.

God had patience with them for 500 years, but then, God's patience ran out, and God decided that He would remove this cancer from the human race. Even in that, God was merciful, for by taking them early, they would meet God with less sin than they would have, had they continued to live. And God saved millions from their idolatrous influences, and even the little children would be taken to Heaven and not have to be raised in that kind of an atmosphere. And so Almighty God brought judgment, and God said that they were to be utterly destroyed.

But what did Saul do? Well, I want you to look here in 1 Samuel chapter 15, and begin to read in verse 13, and see what Saul did: *“And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD, I have performed the commandment of the Lord. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.”* God said to destroy it all, but Saul said, “We kept the best of what God hated.” *“Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel? And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord? And Saul said to Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and hath done the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal. And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king”* (1 Samuel 15:13–23).

These are solemn words. God said destroy the flock—destroy the sheep, the goats,

the lamb—and Saul saved them. He said, “I save them to sacrifice to God.” It sounded so reasonable; it sounded so sensible; it sounded so logical; it sounded so economical; but, friend, there’s one thing that God will never accept for disobedience, and that is an excuse of any kind. We need to understand that. Saul felt that, somehow, the end would justify the means. Please listen. If you don’t learn anything else, it’s never right to do wrong—even to get a chance to do right. He said, “I’m going to take this and sacrifice it to God.” There is no substitute for disobedience.

C. Saul’s Swift Degeneration

And so what do you find? First of all, you find self-determination—he just simply runs ahead of God. And now you find stubborn disobedience. And God says this obedience is as witchcraft. And that’s very important—you keep that in your mind, because I want you to see now, thirdly, he goes from self determination to stubborn disobedience, to number three: swift degeneration.

Look in chapter 16 now, in verse 14. I want you to see what happens now, when he willfully disobeys the Bible. The Bible says: *“But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul”* (1 Samuel 16:14). Now remember this morning when I preached, and I said that, when those people obeyed the Lord, they said, *“We are...witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy [Spirit], whom God hath given to them that obey him”* (Acts 5:32). What happens to those who disobey him? *“But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and”*—watch it—*“an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him”* (1 Samuel 15:14).

Remember when I said that, my dear friend, it’s easier to obey than it is to disobey? The way of the transgressor is hard—an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. What does that mean—*“an evil spirit from the LORD”*? As far as I can understand, it means that even the forces of Hell are under God’s control, and that the devil can do nothing, except that God allows it. But there was an evil spirit, now, that came into Saul, and Saul had given the devil a place. Sin is now sweeping Saul along. He goes from bad to worse. He is in the grasp of the devil, because here’s a man characterized by willful, stubborn disobedience. He has given a place to the devil in his life.

Now watch—he has gone from ignoring God to disobeying God to fighting God. Now he’s fighting God, dear friend, because he has been fighting David, and David was God’s anointed. And now here’s a man with an evil spirit in him, fighting David, God’s anointed King. At first, he was just running ahead of God, and then he was disobeying God; and now, here’s a man who is absolutely opposing God, and trying to kill God’s anointed one, young David.

D. Saul’s Spiritual Depravity

Step number one, remember, was simply self-determination. Step number two: stubborn disobedience—rebellion and witchcraft. Step number three: swift

degeneration—the Spirit of the Lord departs, and an evil spirit comes. Step number four: spiritual depravity.

Turn, if you will, to 1 Samuel 28. I want you to see what happens. You can hardly believe as you read this passage of Scripture. First Samuel 28, and verse 7: *“Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit.”* Can you imagine a woman with a familiar spirit? Do you know what a familiar spirit is? That’s a demon spirit—a spirit of divination, a fortune-teller. Here was Israel’s king—a man anointed of the Holy Ghost, a man who had a prophet of God as his mentor; and now, he says to his servants: *“Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor”* (1 Samuel 28:7).

And now we find that this man Saul goes to a witch to ask for information. He’s depraved. He has now become a bitter, desolate old man, and one who once enjoyed the counsel from Heaven, yet is now trafficking with the underworld. It’s unbelievable. No one ever had a better start than Saul. Now he’s in a witch’s home. You see, he had rebelled against God, and disobedience is as witchcraft. He put himself over in the devil’s sphere, and now, he has gone from ignoring God to disobeying God to fighting God; and now, he goes one step further, cooperating with the devil. How could it be? How could it be?

E. Saul’s Self-Destruction

Step number five I want to call self-destruction. Look, if you will now, in 1 Samuel 31 and verse 4. Saul is on the battlefield; the Philistines have invaded the land on Mt. Gilboa. Notice chapter 31, verse 3: *“And the battle went sore against Saul,”*—and God would have given Saul victory. No one could have stood against Saul if Saul had stayed with the Lord; but, *“the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers. Then said Saul to his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me.”* He said to his armor bearer there, “Put me out of my misery. Kill me. Don’t let the Philistines find me, taunt me, and torture me before they kill me. *“But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it”* (1 Samuel 31:3–4).

Well might we weep. Well might we say how are the mighty fallen. Let your eyes sweep across the blood-soaked battlefield; let your eyes focus upon that pathetic figure named Saul. Those faithful men have fallen by his side. His God-given army is in retreat. His beloved son, Jonathan, has been slaughtered. The Spirit of God has departed from him. A demon spirit rules his life. And now he dies by his own hand. Saul is no more. Oh, what he might have been! And oh, what he became! He played with sin,

and he lost the game. No wonder he said, *“I have played the fool”* (1 Samuel 26:21).

Conclusion

My time is gone, but, in conclusion, I want to lay two truths on your heart. May the Spirit of God burn these into the hearts of the people here tonight.

Number one: Circumstances cannot make you, and circumstances cannot break you. Are you listening to me? If circumstances could have made a person, then they would have made Saul, because he had it all. I mean, he had all the circumstances. He had everything going for him, and he lost it all. But young David had nothing going for him, and he gained it all. He became Israel’s mighty king, and these materials give us a contrast between the life of David and the life of Saul. Nobody would have chosen David, but everybody would have chosen Saul. Everybody would have said, “Well, look, he’s got such a wonderful start, no wonder he’s going to succeed”—speaking of Saul; but he didn’t succeed. Nobody even looked to David—he’s the little old shepherd boy; but he did succeed.

Are you complaining about your circumstances? Are you saying, “If I only had ability, if I only had size, if I only had background, if I only had charm, if I only had this, or if I only had that—then, I could succeed.” My friend, with God, you can succeed, and without Him, you can’t. It’s just that simple. If you will obey the Lord, then you will succeed. Circumstances cannot make you, and, thank God, circumstances cannot break you. David had so few advantages, and yet, he became Israel’s greatest king.

Second application I want to make to you: There can be no success in your life without obedience. Disobedience is as rebellion and witchcraft. You need to learn to treat sin as sin will treat you. Sin will have no mercy upon you, so have no mercy on your sin. You cannot obey if you are self-willed rather than Spirit-filled. You say, “Well, it can’t happen to me, Preacher.” Well, I want to tell you something. It could happen to me. It could happen to me. Maybe you’re better than I am. It could happen to Paul. Paul said, “I don’t want to become a cast-away.” It did happen to Saul. *“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”* (1 Corinthians 10:12). My friend:

*Trust and obey, for there’s no other way
to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.*

—JOHN H. SAMMIS

Let’s pray.

A Formula for a Fool

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 14, 1990

Main Scripture Text: 1 Samuel 26:21

“Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.”

1 SAMUEL 26:21

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Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to 1 Samuel chapter 26. Do you know God gives some people incredible opportunities and they foolishly squander those opportunities? And, actually, they start out wonderfully blessed and end up pathetically cursed. They play the fool. I want to talk to you tonight on this subject—a rather somber title for the

message: “A Formula for a Fool.” And, I want to show you a man who was not a self-made hero but a self-made fool and then encourage you not to do what he did. Psalm... 1 Samuel 26 and verse 21—these are the words of Saul, who was the first king of Israel: *“Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in [thy sight] this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.”* (1 Samuel 26:21)

Now, this is going to be a Bible study in the life of a man named Saul. May I say to you, ladies and gentlemen, that no man ever had a better start than did Saul and no man ever had a sadder finish than did Saul? When you first meet Saul in the Bible, he is a man that would be the epitome of a man. He was handsome. He was winsome. He was courteous. He was a thoughtful young man. He had so much that you would admire. You would have voted him “Most Likely to Succeed.” And yet, as he comes to the end of his life, he’s bitter, murderous, envious, wicked, malevolent, hateful, spiteful, foolish, and he dies by his own hand of suicide. Something tragic—something horrible—along the way happened to a man, a man who started so well and he ended so poorly. Sidlow Baxter, whom we’ve had in our pulpit on a number of occasions—and I hope to have back one more time before he gets transported to Glory—Sidlow Baxter said this about Saul: he said, “In some ways, he’s very big, and in others, very little. In some ways, he is commandingly handsome, and in other, decidedly ugly. All in all, he is a giant and a dwarf, a hero and a renegade, a king and a slave, a prophet and a reprobate, a man of God, anointed, and a man Satan possessed.” Something happened to this man. And, perhaps the same things that happened to Saul might happen to someone here today.

I. Saul’s Tremendous Start

Now, I said that Saul had such a tremendous start. He had such an incredible amount going for him. I want to point that out to you. I want you to go back to 1 Samuel chapter 9 for a moment, and let’s just see if we can get a little biographical snapshot of this man Saul. And, I want you to see all of the wonderful attributes that are in his life. I say, very few men ever had what Saul had.

A. Saul’s Manhood

The very first thing I want you to notice is what I’m going to call “his manhood.” He was a virile man. I mean, he was the All-American type. He was a man among men. Look in chapter 9, verses 1 and 2: *“Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite”—“a Benjamite”—“a mighty man of power. And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly”—*now, notice what else he says about

him—*“there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.”* (1 Samuel 9:1–2) You know what that means? That means if Saul were to walk into this congregation tonight, he would tower head and shoulders above everybody else. But, not only would he be tall; he would be dark and handsome. Now, the Bible says he was “goodly.” (1 Samuel 9:2) That means he was just striking in appearance. I can see him with broad shoulders, clear eyes, a square jaw, tall of countenance, suntanned and sun-crowned. And, as he walked by, everybody would say, “Would you look at that man!” He was a virile man’s man. Had he lived today, he would have been a candidate for a movie star. He had health. He had height. He had handsomeness.

B. **Saul’s Modesty**

But, let’s move on. With all of that manliness, he had such modesty. Go to verse 21—chapter 9, verse 21: now, they’re trying to find a leader, and notice what *“Saul answered and said, Am...I!”—“Am not I!”—“a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou [as] to me?”* (1 Samuel 9:21) Saul said, “Why have you chosen me to be a leader? Why, I just...I’m from Benjamin, an insignificant tribe, and my family is one of the least in that tribe. I’m not really worthy. You don’t—you don’t—want a person like me.”

And, go back up in chapter 9, verses 15–17: *“Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come to me. And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! [the] same shall reign over my people.”* (1 Samuel 9:15–17) God had chosen him and God had selected him, but he felt so unworthy. He was so full of modesty, and he shunned publicity.

Now, he didn’t swagger. Look, if you will, in chapter 10 and verse 22 of this same thing. Everybody is looking around for a leader—and chapter 10, verse 22: *“Therefore they enquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And the LORD answered”—“You’re looking for him?”—“Behold, he...hid himself among the stuff.”* (1 Samuel 10:22) There’s everybody looking for a leader, and here’s this tall, sun-crowned, handsome, broad-shouldered man, chosen of God. And, they’re saying, “We want you to lead us.” And, there he is back there in the shadows, hiding himself. He didn’t have a campaign office. He didn’t put out posters saying, “I want to be your king.” So, you see his manliness; and yet, you see his modesty. Isn’t that a good combination?

C. **Saul’s Magnanimous Attitude**

And then, also, you see his magnanimous attitude. Look, if you will, in chapter 10 and

verse 26: the Bible says here that—here was a man who had some men who rose up against him—the Bible says here, *“And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and [they] went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched. But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought [him] no presents. But he held his peace.”* (1 Samuel 10:26–27) Now, “sons of Belial” means these were wicked, churlish men—vile men. Now remember, at this time, Saul is chosen to be king. One word from Saul and these men would have been put to death. But, he had such great strength that he showed restraint and he showed kindness to his enemies. So, he’s a manly man, but he’s a modest man, he’s a magnanimous man. And, he treats his enemies with respect. I admire that in a man. He has strength under control.

D. **Saul’s Mighty Spirit**

And then, I want you to notice not only his magnanimous attitude but his mighty spirit. Look in chapter 10 and verse 1: *“[And] Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it [on] his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?”* (1 Samuel 10:1) Here’s Samuel pouring oil on the head of Saul and saying, “You are God’s anointed.” And then, skip on down to chapter 10, verses 6 and 7: *“And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shall be turned into another man. And let it be, [that] when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee”—*and then, notice this phrase—*“for God is with thee.”* (1 Samuel 10:6–7) Here’s a guy who has it all. I’m telling you, he’s big and handsome; and yet, he’s humble, and he is kind to his enemies. He is anointed of God. The Spirit of God is come upon him. And, Samuel says, “God has blessed you, and God has anointed you.” (1 Samuel 10:1) He was a man of God, a saved man that I expect to meet in heaven. Let that be a warning to every one of us when you see the trouble he got into.

E. **Saul’s Marvelous Men**

But, not only do you see his mighty spirit, but you see his marvelous men. He had some men to help him. It wasn’t just that he was by himself. I want you to see the men that he had with him. I’ve already read this verse, but go back to chapter 10, verse 26: *“And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched.”* (1 Samuel 10:26) Now friend, it’s one thing to be a man chosen of God, but it’s another thing to be a man chosen of God—to have a band of men with you. And, not just any men—a band of men whose hearts God had touched, surrounded by a band of men. The word here—“band of men”—literally is “host”—H-O-S-T, and it means “men of valor,” “courageous men,” “warriors,” and yet, warriors touched of God. Oh, how wonderful! God had given him their hearts. They would have died for Saul. Isn’t he a blessed man?

F. **Saul's Mentor**

But, not only did he have marvelous men; he had a mentor. He had someone to teach him the things of God. Look in chapter 10 and verse 25: “[And] Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the LORD”—now, what had happened is this: that here is Samuel teaching the people. Samuel was a man of God—“And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his [own] house.” (1 Samuel 10:25) And, here is—here is—Samuel, who is teaching Saul. Well, let me back up to verse 24: “And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And...the people shouted, and said, God save the king.” (1 Samuel 10:24) And, by the way, that’s where that phrase that our Britishers use came from: “God save the King.” You see, Samuel was Saul’s pastor. Samuel was a prophet of God—very few people like old Samuel in the Bible. And, here’s Samuel, a man of God, to guide old Saul. Samuel was a trusted counselor and a God-inspired prophet. What more could a man want? Here he’s got a mentor.

G. **Saul's Monarchy**

And then, on top of that, he has a monarchy. If you’ll look in chapter 10 and verse 1, the Bible says that God “anointed [Saul] to be captain over his inheritance.” (1 Samuel 10:1) The word *captain* means that he was to rule and shepherd the most wonderful nation on earth. You see, he had an opportunity to bless men. Now, there are a lot of people who have opportunity, but they don’t have ability. Then, there are a lot of people who have ability, but they don’t have opportunity. But, Saul was one man in a million, and he had the one opportunity in a million—an incredible young man, an incredible opportunity.

Now, you’re going to have to agree with me that this was some kind of an individual, wasn’t he—this man named Saul? I mean, in every respect—in every respect—a great, great man; and yet, he went from hero to zero. He ended up as pathetically as any man could possibly end up.

II. **Saul's Tragic End**

Now, I want you to see what happened to him. I want you to see how he started down a road that ended up in self-destruction. He played a very dangerous game. He himself called it “playing the fool.” He played a game whose stakes were very high, and he played a game he could not possibly win. Five steps he took—and I want you to see what they were.

A. **Running Ahead of God**

The very first step that he took is what I want to call “running ahead of God.” Look, if you will now, in 1 Samuel chapter 13, and I begin reading in verse 5. Now, there’s a battle,

and Israel and the Philistines are engaged in battle. And, begin here in 1 Samuel 13, verse 5: *“And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Bethaven. [And] when the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits”—I mean, dear friend, they were in difficulty—“And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling”—now, he’s their leader, and they’re following this man, head and shoulders above everyone else—“And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed”—now remember, God gave him a mentor that was a prophet, and Samuel had said, “Saul, wait seven days”—“but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering. And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him. And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down”—“will come down”—“now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication [to] the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering”—now remember, he was king, but he wasn’t a priest, and it did not appertain to Saul to offer a burnt offering. And so, verse 13 says—“And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly”—now, he’s beginning to play the fool right here—“Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.” (1 Samuel 13:5–14)*

Now, he’s in difficulty. The Philistines are surrounding them. And, Saul is commanded by Samuel expressly to wait seven days in Gilgal for Samuel, but Saul panics. He sees the Philistines out there, and he says he’s got to do something. And so, what he does—he violates the priest’s prerogative. He makes a sacrifice to the Lord. Now, what had happened is God was giving Saul a test, and Saul failed the test. And, the reason that he failed the test was because of his lack of trust and faith in God. And so, he begins to run ahead of God. He begins to take things into his own hands. And, he begins to do what he thinks is a right thing, but he does a right thing a wrong way. He

simply runs ahead of God and does something that God has not commanded him to do in the name of the Lord. That's step number one: running ahead of God.

B. Willfully Disobeying God

And then, that leads him quickly to step number two, and that is willfully disobeying God. Now look, if you will, in chapter 15, and I begin to read the first three verses of chapter 15: *“Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.”* (1 Samuel 15:1–3) Now, what God is this: “Saul, there’s some people that I want exterminated. I want you to utterly destroy the Amalekites.” Now, why did—why did—God command this? Well, God wanted these people wiped from the face of the earth, and when He wanted them annihilated, He was actually doing humanity a favor.

Now, who were these Amalekites? Who were they? Well, they were a bandit race—a bandit race. And, they had ridden roughshod over other nations. They were a people who enjoyed slaughtering, and raping, and torturing. They did it just for the mad joy of destruction. And, they had left a trail of blood and sacrilege for five hundred years. When they would conquer other nations, they weren’t just content to conquer those nations—they would destroy the monuments; they would burn the sacred scrolls. And, whatever they could not carry away, they would mar and desecrate. They delighted in ambushing weaker people, and most of the wars were wars of ambush against the weak, the aged, and the helpless. After the war and after they would retreat, they would destroy the crops, drive away the herds. They were so cruel. When they would capture people, before they would put them to death, they would hack off their limbs, they would gouge out their eyes, they would take heavy pieces of wood and knock out their teeth. They took women and children as slaves. They mutilated the bodies of their victims by cutting off parts of them while they were still alive, and hurling pieces of flesh in the air. They jeered at Israel’s God. They were incredibly, unspeakably immoral people—demon worshippers. They were like a cancer on the globe. And so, God said, “I want them destroyed. My patience has run out.” I suppose, in a way, it was merciful that they be destroyed when they were destroyed because they would meet God with less sin than if they had continued to live. And, God saved millions from their idolatrous influence. And so, God said, “I want them destroyed,” and God said, “Saul, I want you to do this.”

But, what did Saul do? Well, begin reading in 2 Samuel—1 Samuel—chapter 15 and

verse 22. Now, well, let's...let's read—start in verse 13: *“And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed. Then Samuel said [to] Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel? And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD? And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal”*—now, he's making an excuse now, and he's trying to blame other people—*“And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD?”*—and here's one of the key verses in all of the Bible—*“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.”* (1 Samuel 15:13–23)

Now, he is rebelling now. Not is he just simply running ahead of God; now he is actually rebelling against God. That's the second step. He is—he is—actually willfully disobeying God. And, Saul said, “Don't you know that's like witchcraft?”—or, Samuel says, “Don't you know that's like witchcraft?” (1 Samuel 15:23) And, before long, we're going to find out that Saul is actually practicing witchcraft.

You see, let me tell you this about sin: sin is never static. Here was a man who started merely running ahead of God, and now he is stubbornly disobeying God. Now, he has an excuse. What he did sounded so good. It sounded so reasonable. It sounded so sensible. It sounded so logical. It sounded so economical. It sounded so spiritual. He's going to save these animals to sacrifice to God. He was going to give God the best of what God hated. Now, let me tell you this about God: God will never accept an excuse for disobedience. Somehow Saul felt that the end would justify the means. Somehow Saul felt that he could do wrong in order to do right. Now folks, I want to tell you this: no matter how logical it may seem to you, there's never an excuse for disobedience. And so, he begins to disobey. There's no—there's no—substitute for

obedience.

You get an automobile, and you open the manual, and it tells you that automobile burns a certain kind of gasoline. Well, don't think that you're smarter than the manufacturer. You'll say, "Well, I'll put molasses in there. That will help it hold together. Or, maybe I'll put ammonia there, and that will wake it up. Or, I'll put some honey in there, and it will run sweetly." No, you put gasoline in it because that's what the manufacturer calls for. We have churches today that are filled with everything but the Holy Spirit, and they're not filled with the Holy Spirit because we do not obey God.

C. Fighting Against God

All right. Now, here's the third step. First of all, he runs ahead of God. And then, when he begins to play the fool, you see him stubbornly disobeying God; and yet, he's disobeying God with some sort of an alibi. And next, you find him fighting against God. Look, if you will, in chapter 16 now, and I want you to see how he's swiftly disintegrating. Look, if you will, in chapter 16, verse 14: the Bible says, "*But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.*" (1 Samuel 16:14) Now, the Bible says it was "*an evil spirit from the LORD.*" (1 Samuel 16:14) That is, God allowed an evil spirit to come. It was a part of His judgment. And, sometimes you're going to find out that Satan is God's messenger. And, the Apostle Paul spoke of "*[delivering] such [a] one [to] Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*" (1 Corinthians 5:5) And, when this evil spirit came upon Saul, then, you know what Saul was doing? Saul was fighting young David.

Now, who was David? David was the king now that God had chosen. David was God's anointed, and Saul begins now to fight David. His sin is sweeping him along, and he's going from bad to worse. When he used to be anointed of God, now he's in the grasp of the devil. He has given place to the devil. He's gone from ignoring God to disobeying God to fighting God. When he was fighting David, he was fighting God's anointed and he was fighting God. Have you got it? Running ahead of God. Next step: willfully disobeying God. Next step: fighting against God.

D. Cooperating with the Devil

But, he's not finished yet. The next step we find him actually cooperating with the devil. Go to 1 Samuel chapter 28 now, and look with me in verse 7: "*Then said Saul [to] his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit*"—do you know who that is? That's a fortuneteller, a soothsayer. Do you know what a "familiar spirit" is? That's a demon spirit—"that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said [unto] him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor." (1 Samuel 28:7) And now, you find this man of God—can you believe it?—this man who was so tall, this man

who was so handsome, this man who was so gifted, this man who was so humble, this man who was so anointed, this man who had such a mentor, and had such friends, and had such opportunity—this man is now consorting with a witch. He’s now asking leadership of the devil. He is now practicing witchcraft. He is now trafficking with the underworld. He’s gone from ignoring God to disobeying God to fighting God to cooperating with the devil. How can it be that a man who started so well ended so poorly?

Now, I want you to go to 1 Samuel chapter 31, and I want you to see how he ended up. Look with me in verse 1: *“Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Melchishua, Saul’s sons. And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers. Then said Saul to his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.”* (1 Samuel 31:1–4) Here is Saul now, dying by his own hand, dying of suicide. The scene is a battlefield, and as your eyes sweep this blood-soaked field, you focus on the pathetic figure of Saul. His faithful men have fallen by his side. His army is in retreat. His beloved son, Jonathan, is dead, and he now dies by his own hand. Oh, what he might have been, but he played the fool. He played with sin, and he lost. No wonder he said, “I have erred exceedingly. I have played the fool.” (1 Samuel 26:21)

Conclusion

Now that’s the story. I want to give you four thoughts, and I’ll be finished. And, may God burn these four thoughts into your mind.

A. Circumstances Cannot Make You or Break You

First of all, circumstances cannot make you or break you. Are you listening?

Circumstances cannot make you or break you. You can have every advantage and still play the fool, or you can have few advantages and succeed. Saul had every advantage, and he ended in ignominious shame and failure. Little David had few advantages. He was out there tending the sheep when God called him, and he became Israel’s greatest king—a little shepherd boy.

All right. Now, if you’re sitting out here thinking, “I’ve got it made because I’ve got all this stuff. I’m so smart. I’m so handsome. I’m so rich. I’m so wise. I’ve got so many friends,” friend, you may end up pathetically. But, if you’re out here—you’re saying, “Why is it I don’t have all these opportunities that everybody else has?” why don’t you

just keep those few sheep that God has given you to keep and why don't you just have a heart for God and see what God just might do with you? Friend, circumstances cannot make you or break you.

B. There Can Be No Success Without Obedience

There's a second thing I want you to learn: there can be no success without obedience. What happened to Saul was this: he failed to obey the Word of God. No matter how much you know, no matter how much you have, no matter how much influence and authority, if you do not obey, you are going down because you are practicing witchcraft. "[Disobedience] is as the sin of witchcraft." (1 Samuel 15:23) Never parade the Word of God past the judgment bar of your mind to see whether or not it sounds reasonable or logical.

*Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.*

—JOHN H. SAMMIS

C. Success Now Does Not Mean Success Always

Third thing I want you to learn: success now does not mean success always. There was a time when God was with Saul. Maybe you're a pastor, maybe you're a deacon, maybe you're a Sunday School teacher, and God is blessing you—don't take those blessings for granted, and don't think because God is blessing you now, God will always bless you.

Do you know what my prayer is for me? I want to end well—I want to end well. I would not be honest with you if I did not tell you that I believe that God has had His hand on my life, and I bless Him for it. I bless Him for these years. Since I was a nineteen-year-old boy, God has let me preach His Word. And friend, I want to end well. Saul started out fine, but he didn't end well. Do you know what the great Apostle Paul said, Bob? "I buffet my body and keep in under, lest after I've preached to others, I myself should become a castaway." (1 Corinthians 9:27) My dear friend, I want to tell you that success now does not mean success always. The life of Saul tells us that.

D. No One Is Immune to the Deceiving and Deadening Power of Sin If He Becomes Self-Willed Rather Than Spirit-Filled

And, the fourth and final thing that I would have us to learn—I want you deacons to listen. I want all you staff members to listen to this. I don't care who you are. I don't care what your gifts, and I care not what your previous blessings have been—no one is immune to the deceiving and deadening power of sin if he becomes self-willed rather than Spirit-filled. I don't care who you are or what you've achieved.

I pray God that every one of us will have enough sense not to play the fool. Never a

man had a better start and never did a man end more tragically.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father God, I pray that you'll just seal the message to every heart—first of all, to my own. And, Lord God, help us not to run ahead of you. Help us not to disobey you. Help us not to fight against you. Help us not to cooperate with the devil but, O God, to keep our eyes upon the Lord Jesus and to be faithful and true. In His wonderful name I pray. Amen.