

ADRIAN ROGERS

LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



2 SAMUEL

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2 Samuel

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The Death of a Brilliant Fool

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 14, 1982

Main Scripture Text: 2 Samuel 3:27–38

“And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?”

2 SAMUEL 3:33

Outline

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- C. Abner’s Friendly Deception
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Introduction

Turn to 2 Samuel the third chapter—2 Samuel the third chapter, and verse 33. Here we’re going to read of the lament of King David for a man named Abner—2 Samuel chapter 3 and verse 33: *“And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?”* (2 Samuel 3:33). And then, I want you to skip down to verse 38: *“And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?”* (2 Samuel 3:38). We’re speaking on the subject: “The Death of a Brilliant Fool.”

Here was a man who was a prince; here was a man who was a great man. And yet, he died so foolishly, so needlessly, so heedlessly. Because I was a friend of this young man—not because I enjoyed his type of raucous and irreverent humor—but sad to think that any young man, obviously talented, obviously loved by so many, should die at the age of 33. A life wasted, a death that was foolish. But I suppose that the death of this man Abner was even more foolish than the death of John Belushi. Here was a man who was a great man; here was a man who was a brave man; here was a man who was a discerning man. And yet, he died like a fool. He died in middle age. He died in a time of robust health. He died in a needless and foolish manner.

There are four things I want you to learn about Abner, and I pray God that He will lay them on your heart, if you’re not a Christian, because, indeed, Abner may reflect you, if you’re an unsaved person. Four things I want you to see:

A. **Abner's Fearful Danger**

First of all, I want you to see his fearful danger. Abner was in a place of fearful danger. Now what had placed Abner in such danger was this: There was a battle, and, at this particular time, Abner was fighting against David—David, the king of Israel. Abner was on the wrong side. He had not yet come over to David's side—but, later on, he would come over to David's side—but in this particular battle, Abner was fighting against David and fighting against David's troops. And Abner was losing, and the battle had gone against him. And Abner is running away from the battle. He has been defeated. But he hears footsteps behind him, and he looks back; and, he notices that a man named Asahel is chasing him. He's behind him—and you can read this story when you get home in the second chapter, beginning in about verse 17—and there is a young man behind him, who is chasing after him. And Abner turns around, and says to him, "Leave me alone; go back." Look, in verse 20: *"Then Abner looked behind him,"*—this is chapter 2, verse 20—*"and said, Art thou Asahel? And he answered, I am. And Abner said to him, Turn thee aside to thy right hand or to thy left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and take thee his armour. But Asahel would not turn aside from following of him. And Abner said again to Asahel, Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? how then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?"* (2 Samuel 2:20–22).

Now the Bible says this man Asahel was a track star of his day. I mean he was as sleek as a deer. The Bible says, "As a young roe could he run." (2 Samuel 2:18). Abner is, as I said, a middle-aged man; and, though he's a strong and a valiant warrior, he knows that he cannot outrun this man Asahel. But he doesn't want to do battle with Asahel, because Asahel is Joab's brother. So he says to the young man, "Leave me alone. Quit chasing me. Go chase one of these young men, please. I have no fight with you. I don't want to fight with you." But the younger man stays relentlessly on the trail. Abner knows that he must do something in self-defense. He's carrying his spear as he's running. He can feel the stout breath of Asahel behind him; and, finally, in an act of desperation, Abner takes his spear, and he brings it backward. And as he does, it pierces the body of the younger man who is chasing him, and he wounds him so that he dies. Look in verse 23—how is it he refused to turn aside? *"Wherefore Abner with the hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth rib, that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place"* (2 Samuel 2:23).

Now Joab was the brother of Asahel. Joab was David's commander-in-chief, and they had a law in Israel that there was such a thing as the avenger of blood. If someone was slain in that day—in the day of primitive judgment—the avenger of blood, the next of kin, could put the person to death and could avenge the blood of his relative. And he was called, in that day, *the avenger of blood*; and, it made Joab the avenger of Asahel's

blood. And so look in verse 24: *“Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner...”* (2 Samuel 2:24). Abner is in severe danger. There is a Joab of justice on his trail. He is a hunted man; he is a pursued man. The sentence of death now is hanging over his head. So the first thing I want you to see is his fearful danger, his fearful danger.

B. **Abner’s Foolish Death**

Now the next thing I want you to see is his foolish death, for David said, *“He died as a fool dies.”* Look again, if you will, in verse 33: David *“lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?”* (2 Samuel 3:33). Well, how did he die? Well, look, if you will, in chapter 3 and verse 27, and read here: *“And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother”* (2 Samuel 3:27).

Now Joab, who was David’s commander-in-chief, said to Abner, *“Abner, would you come over here for just a moment? Abner, I would have some words with you. There’s something I want to talk with you about.”* And as Abner comes over to Joab, Joab pulls out his dagger and smites him under the fifth rib, and he died right there. He’s killed by Joab. This is the thing that broke David’s heart: There was not one reason that Joab should have killed Abner, because Abner was right there, at a particular city named Hebron. Look again in verse 27: *“And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth rib”* (2 Samuel 3:27).

You say, *“Why shouldn’t he have died?”* Because, Hebron was a city of refuge. What is a city of refuge? Well, God knew that, in this day of primitive justice, there would be some people, like Joab, who would not ask, *“Was Asahel killed in self-defense?”* They would know that every man needed his time in court; and so, they set up cities across the face of the land of Israel. They were called *cities of refuge*. And if anybody had an avenger of blood on his trail, he could go inside one of these cities of refuge, and there he could be safe.

Keep your bookmark there, in 2 Samuel, the third chapter; turn to Joshua, the 20th chapter, and let’s just note it—Joshua chapter 20. Look with me in the first three verses of Joshua chapter 20: *“The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses: that the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood”* (Joshua 20:1–3). God said to Joshua, and Joshua said to the people, *“We’re going to set up some cities where people will be safe.”* Now skip down to verse 7: *“And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjatharba, which is Hebron, in the mountain of Judah”* (Joshua 20:7). Hebron was one of these

cities of refuge, and they were all over the land. Now go back, if you will please, to 2 Samuel, the third chapter; and, look, if you will, in verse 27: *“And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth rib”* (2 Samuel 3:27). That is, he died right at the doorway of the city of refuge, right in the place of safety. All he would have had to do was just step right inside the gate, and he would have been absolutely safe. This is the reason that David lamented; this is the reason that David wept, and he said, “Abner was a great man; but he died like a fool. He died right outside the gate of the city of refuge.”

And that’s an interesting thing to me, because I believe that I’ve met many of the brothers of Abner today—many men who are so wise, many men who are so capable, many men who are so great. David said, in verse 38, that he was a great man and a prince. I’ve seen these men—intellectual men. I’ve seen men who can cook up a business deal. I’ve seen men who can build apartment complexes. I’ve seen men who can perform surgery. I have seen men who can draw buildings. I have seen men who can make speeches. I’ve seen men who can lead people. I’ve seen men who can lead in Boy Scouts. And I’ve seen men who can lead in the Kiwanis—men who are wise men, men who are good men, men who are great men, but they die like a fool, because they die without the Lord Jesus Christ. They’re successful in every other realm, but they die like a fool, because they die without Christ.

In the 16th chapter of Luke, Jesus tells about a man who went out to survey his fields, and he said, “What shall I do? I don’t have room to store all my goods.” He said, “Oh, I know what I’ll do. I’ll pull down my barns; and then, I’ll build bigger barns, and then I’ll put all your goods in those bigger barns. And then,” he said—in effect—“I’ll get me a hammock, and a glass of pink lemonade; and, I’ll sit in the shade of the tree, and I’ll stretch, and say, ‘Soul, take thy ease, drink and be merry, for thou hast much goods lain up for many years.’” And *“God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?”* (Luke 12:17–20).

Now I suppose when that man died (that was described in Luke 16) they had a big funeral. And had the funeral been today, there would have been many Cadillacs, and Lincoln Continentals, and fine expensive automobiles out front. And when the man got up to give the eulogy, he would have said, as he bent over that coffin, “Here lies a successful man, a man of great enterprise, and a man of great influence; and, he departs, mourned by the whole community. He was good for the business of our community; he was a successful farmer.” But I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, his soul was in Hell before his friends knew he was dead. And had God written an epitaph for that man, it would have been a four-letter word: *f-double o-l—fool*. “Thou fool”—*thou fool*—“this night shall thy soul be required of thee” (Luke 12:20). And the

counterpart of this man was Abner, in the Old Testament. And David said, “He died like a fool dies.”

I wonder, have you considered the value of your soul? Or, are you going to die like a fool dies? Are you? Are you going to die right outside the city of refuge? Do you know who your city of refuge is? Jesus Christ. Do you know why God set up these cities of refuge in the Old Testament? They were types; they were pictures; and they were prophecies of the Lord Jesus. And the Bible says, “The Lord is as a strong tower: the righteous run into it, and they are safe” (Proverbs 18:10). *They are safe*. Jesus is our city of refuge; and yet, many men are going to die—many men who are great men, many men who are princes, many men who are leaders, many men who are discerning men—are going to die like a fool, because they are going to die just outside the gate of the city of refuge.

“*Shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*” (Mark 8:36–37). Your soul is worth more than all the stock, the bonds, the gold, the rubies, the emeralds, the schools, the real estate, the institutions of this world put together. What should a man give in exchange for his soul?

Abner died like a fool. The first thing I want you to see is his fearful danger. The second is his foolish death—he died right outside the gates of the city of refuge.

C. **Abner’s Friendly Deception**

The third thing I want you to see is what I call *his friendly deception*. How was it that such an otherwise brilliant man could die like a fool? He was deceived. How was he deceived? Look in verse 27, if you will, again: “*And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him privately*” (2 Samuel 3:27). Now can’t you see the picture? Joab says, “Hey,” with a smile on his face—“hey, Abner, come over here, fellow; there’s something I want to tell you.” I can see him as he puts his arm around him—probably his left arm, because he wants to use his right hand to smite him under the fifth rib. He puts his arm around him; he smiles at him as though he would whisper something to him, as though he would share some confidence with him. Obviously, he was deceived.

Look again, if you will, in verses 33 and 34: “*And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?*” Now look in verse 34: “[*His*] hands were not bound, nor [*his*] feet put in fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him” (2 Samuel 3:33–34). His hands were not bound; he wasn’t chained; and he wasn’t dragged. How did Joab slay Abner? He did it by deception. How is it that so many men—smart men, brilliant men, wise men—die and go to Hell? They’re deceived, and they are deceived by the devil.

The Bible speaks, in Revelation chapter 12: “*As that old serpent, the devil deceiveth*

the whole world” (Revelation 12:9). And the Bible says, in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 4: *“The god of this [age] hath blinded the minds of them [that] believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ...should shine [upon] them”* (2 Corinthians 4:4). And they should be saved. Oh, it’s so hard to break through the deception.

Do you know what the devil has really gotten people to believe, today? The devil has gotten people to believe, today, that he is their friend and that God is their enemy. It’s an amazing thing. Did you know that people think negatively about God? People think that, somehow, when you come to God, you have to stop living. They think that it’s hard to become a Christian. I don’t know where you got that, but you didn’t get it out of the Bible. Jesus said, *“Come unto me, all ye [who] labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me...for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”* (Matthew 11:28–30). Jesus said, *“I am come that [ye] might have life, and that [ye] might have it...abundantly”* (John 10:10).

It’s not hard to be a Christian; it’s hard not to be a Christian. The Bible says, *“The way of the transgressors is hard”* (Proverbs 13:15). The devil has so deceived people that they think, somehow, that God is the enemy and Satan is their friend. Joab, who was a murderer—Joab, who wanted to harm Abner and put Abner to death—did it with a smile on his face and his arm around this man, as if he would speak secretly to him. Oh, dear friend, the friendly deception! Our friendly enemy is the devil. He will smile at you; he will deceive you, as an angel of light, in order that he might destroy you.

D. **Abner’s Final Determination**

But there’s a fourth thing that I want you to notice. I want you to notice not only his fearful danger, not only his foolish death, not only his friendly deception; but I want you to notice his final determination. Look in verse 32: *“And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave”* (2 Samuel 3:32). But all of the tears of King David couldn’t bring him back again. He was dead, and he is gone. And well might David weep over Abner’s death, and well might the people of David weep over Abner’s death; but, there was nothing they could do to bring him back. All they could do was grieve and weep.

Ecclesiastes chapter 11, verse 3: “In the place a tree falls, there shall it lie” (Ecclesiastes 11:3). Picture a woodsman out here, cutting down timbers. Here’s a giant redwood, and he fails to make a proper calculation; and, with his ax, he starts to chop, little by little, a blow at a time. And then, it starts to fall, and it doesn’t fall in the place he thinks it’s going to fall; but it falls into a ravine. And there it is lodged, and there it rots, and there it stays, because there’s nothing the ax-man can do, the woodsman can do, to move that tree. *“In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be”* (Ecclesiastes 11:3).

Now what is God applying to us? What God is saying is this: that, my dear friend, when you die, your destiny is fixed. There's nothing you can do to change it. "It's appointed unto man once to die and after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Abner's final determination—it was decided at the moment of death. He was deceived, and he died; and, all of David's tears could not bring him back. He had but one life, and he threw it away. David wept after the fact. We have some loved ones who are going to die and go to Hell. Would to God that we could weep before the fact! I see Jesus as He wept over Jerusalem, and I wonder why I don't weep don't weep more; I wonder why we don't weep more.

Some of you have daughters who are going to die and go to Hell. Some of you have sons who are going to die and go to Hell. Some of you have brothers who are going to die and go to Hell. Some of you have sisters who are going to die and go to Hell. Some of you have mothers and fathers who are going to die and go to Hell. And where are those tears? Where are those tears? David wept after the fact; Jesus wept before the fact. Oh, may God give me a heart that's broken over the lost destiny of men! I believe that God sees our tears, when we weep for the unsaved.

I was preaching a revival down in Florida. A young lady named June came forward. She said to me, "Preacher, I am so concerned for a particular man—I don't know what to do. I believe my heart will break, if he's not saved." She wept. Her tears scalded my hand—her hot tears falling on my hands. Copiously she wept, and she cried. She said, "Pray with me for Mr. Dopper." And I said, "All right, we'll pray for Mr. Dopper." And we prayed for Mr. Dopper. And God heard those prayers, and the next night—or the night after that—Mr. Dopper came down the aisle of that church; and, under deep conviction, gave his heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, and he was gloriously saved—gloriously saved.

That's not the end of the story. A few days after he came forward in that revival meeting and he gave his heart to Christ, he was out in his backyard, and a high-tension power wire snapped. Just like that—for seemingly no reason—it fell to the ground, and encircled this man, and electrocuted him, right on the spot. I've never been able to get out of my heart, out of my mind, the burden that a little girl named June had for this man, and said, "If he's not saved, I believe my heart will break." And there he was in his own backyard, with absolutely no thought of imminent danger, and he died—just like that. I expect to meet him in Heaven, because there was a young lady who had a heart of compassion and a heart of tears.

I was preaching another revival in Jacksonville, Florida; and, there was a little room back there, where I would go to pray before the revival meeting. And I went into that room, and I looked there; and, I saw the chair where I would kneel to pray, and it was literally wet with tears. And there had been a young girl in that room. Her name was Pat. And I said, "Pat, are you the one who's been praying here? Are you the one who's been

weeping?” And the tears just trickled down her face, and her little chin quivered; and, she said, “Yes.” She said, “I have such a broken heart for my mommy and my daddy. They’re going to die and go to Hell, unless they get saved.” She said, “Pray for my mother and my daddy.” We prayed. The next night, her mother and her daddy were down that aisle to give their heart to Christ.

In a revival meeting, a lady came to a pastor and said to the pastor, “I don’t understand it. You say, ‘If you train up a child in the way he should go when he’s old, he will not depart from it’ (Proverbs 22:6). I’ve tried to live right before my children. I’ve prayed for my children. I’ve read the Bible to my children. I have witnessed to my children. And yet, my children are not saved. I have two boys that are unsaved. What have I done wrong? I’ve tried to live right. I’ve tried to pray. I’ve tried to teach them. I’ve tried to bring them up in church. Tell me, Pastor, where have I failed?”

The evangelist said, “I really don’t know how to answer you. Give me time to think about it.” He went and asked other people in that church, “Is it true? Is this woman a godly woman?” “Yes.” “Does she live an exemplary life?” “Yes, she does.” “Does she attend church faithfully?” “Yes, she does.” “Has she prayed for her boys?” “Yes, she has.” “Has she witnessed to her boys?” “Yes, she has.” The pastor, the evangelist, went back to that lady, and said, “Madam, I believe I know why your boys are still unsaved.” She said, “Why is that?” And he said, “Because your eyes are dry—because your eyes are dry.” She thought a moment; and then, she said, “Oh, my God. I have not prayed with a broken heart. I have not interceded. I have not wept.”

That night, she made up her mind that that she would pray all night for her boys to be saved before that revival had come to an end. The next morning, early, she called one of those boys at breakfast time, and said, “Jimmy, come over here. I want to talk with you for just a moment.” And Jimmy came over, and said, “Yes, Mama.” And she said “Jimmy, I want to tell you about Jesus. I want you to be saved.” He said, “Never mind, Mommy, I’m already saved.” “When were you saved?” “I was saved this morning.” “Well, how did you get saved?” “Well, mother, last night in the middle of the night, I got up, and I passed by the bedroom; and, you were in there, and you were praying. And I stopped, because you were crying, and I listened. And mother, you were praying for me, and it broke my heart. And mother, I couldn’t stand it. I got saved. I’m saved, Mother, I’ve been saved.”

She rejoiced. She went to call the other boy, who had gone out behind the barn, and she called him, and said, “Johnny, come here. I want to talk to you about Jesus.” He said, “Never mind, mother. I’ve already been saved.” He said, “When you talked to Jimmy, I knew what you were going to talk to him about, so I just went out behind the barn and got saved. I’ve given my heart to Jesus. I’ve been born again.”

Oh, listen, friend. We pray without fasting; we pray without weeping. Where is a

broken heart? The Bible says, “When Mount Zion travailed, she brought forth” (Isaiah 66:8). I tell you, may God forgive the coldness of our churches! May God forgive the sterility of our hearts! Here, David wept—but he wept after the fact; he waited too late. And he said, “Abner died as a fool dies.”

I was in a church in Fort Pierce, where I used to pastor, and a woman got me on the phone. She was screaming; she was hysterical. She said, “Brother Rogers! Brother Rogers! Brother Rogers, my daddy’s in Hell! My daddy’s in Hell! My daddy’s in Hell! My daddy’s in Hell!” I said, “Get hold of yourself. What do you mean, ‘Your daddy’s in Hell?’” She said, “My daddy is lost; and now, he’s died. They just called me. They told me my daddy has died, and my daddy wasn’t a Christian.” I said, “Did you ever witness to your daddy?” She said, “No, but my daddy’s in Hell.” I said, “Well, I want to tell you something. Just a few days before, I went by to see your daddy, and I shared the gospel with your daddy; and your daddy prayed with me and gave his heart to Jesus Christ. Your daddy’s in Heaven, but no thanks to you; no thanks to you.”

I tell you, dear friend, it’s not up to me to win your daddy; it’s up to you to win your daddy. It’s not up to me to win your children; it’s up to you to win your children. It’s not up to me to win your neighbor; it’s up to you to win your neighbor. Every now and then, someone will come to me, and say, “Brother Rogers, God laid someone on my heart. Will you go see them?” Why do you think God laid them on your heart? Because He wants you to go see them. And if God hasn’t laid anybody on your heart, that just tells me something about your heart.

I want to tell you something, ladies and gentlemen: There’s a world of Abners out there—brilliant people, great people—but they’re going to die like a fool dies; and, we need to weep over them; we need to have a broken heart for the people without the Lord Jesus Christ. See his fearful danger. See his foolish death. See his friendly deception—as his enemy pretended to be his friend—and see his final determination. There’s nothing that tears could do to bring him back. And one of these days, you’ll water the grave of your loved one; and, when the clods fall on that casket, each clod will say, “Lost, lost, lost, lost.” And you’ll not be able to get them back—you’ll not be able to get them back. “As the tree falleth, so shall it lie” (Ecclesiastes 11:3).

If you’re going to win souls, you’d better get at it. If you’re going to bring your children to Christ, you’d better get at it. If you’re going to bring your neighbor, you’ve got to get at it. I want to tell you something, ladies and gentlemen: Heaven is going to be wonderful. But there’s one thing we can do down here we can’t do in Heaven, and that’s wins souls. Did you know that? There’s not going to be any soul winning. When you die, your days of soul winning are over.

*Must I go—and empty-handed?
Must I meet my Savior so?*

*Without one soul with which to greet Him?
Must I empty-handed go?*
—CHARLES C. LUTHER

Abner died as a fool dies.

Conclusion

I just want to say one other thing, and then I'll be finished with this simple little gospel message tonight. I want you to notice again—look again, if you will—in verse 27: “*And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate*”—I mean, he was in the very gate—“*to speak with him*” (2 Samuel 3:27). He was so very close; and yet, he was so very far away. That gate speaks of Jesus Christ Himself, who said, in John 10, verse 9: “*I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved*” (John 10:9)—“*I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.*” He was yet so lost, though he was so close.

And I believe there are some of you here tonight who are very, very close to being saved and yet very, very lost. *To be half-saved is to be altogether lost.* No one is half-saved. Either you're in, or you're out.

*One door, and only one
And yet its sides are two.
I'm on the inside,
On which side are you?*
—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Here at the very gate—at the very door to his salvation, at the very door of the city of refuge—this man named Abner died. No wonder David lamented; no wonder David said, “Abner died like a fool.” A great man—a prince, a brilliant fool—he died like a fool died. He wasn't bound; he wasn't handcuffed—all he had to do was step inside. He let Joab deceive him. So close and yet so very far away.

Billy Sunday used to tell a story about Governor Pollock, who was then governor of Pennsylvania. There was a man in Pennsylvania who had committed a horrible crime and was sentenced to be hanged by the neck until dead. That man's mother wanted his sentence commuted to a life sentence in prison. She had tried again and again to get an appointment with the governor of Pennsylvania. But you know how governors are—so busy that this woman could not get in to see him. But she determined she would see the governor of Pennsylvania. And so she waited just outside the office. She was there, people were not paying too much attention to her; and, when the secretary had her face turned, that woman burst in through the secretary's office, pushed open the doors, and ran into the office. The guards came to take her out. But she fell at the feet of the governor, wrapped her arms around the feet of the governor. The tears were streaming

down her face, and she said, “Governor, listen to me. Don’t let them take me away. Listen to me. I’ve got a boy in that prison. He’s going to be hanged. He’s my son. He’s my flesh and blood. Governor, it’s within your prerogative to commute his sentence. You could give him a life sentence. You could keep him from being hanged. Governor, please, please, go speak to my boy.”

The governor said, “I’m a Christian. I know the Lord. I’m sworn to uphold the laws of this state. But I will go speak with your son. Perhaps I can lead him to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.” And the very governor himself went to the jail where this boy was incarcerated. The guard opened the door. The governor went inside, sat down with the young man. The young man had his hands in his face. He would not look up. Governor Pollock said to him, “Son, I’ve come to talk with you. Would you talk with me?” The young man never even mumbled. He said, “Son, God loves you. Your people love you. There are people praying for you. I just wanted to talk with you for a while and see if I could help you.” The young man never even said a word. Finally, the governor saw it was futile, and the governor said, “I must go now. I’m sorry you did not want to talk.”

And he said, “Guard, would you open the gate?” And the guard opened the gate and locked it again. And as the governor started down the hall, the guard said to him, “I’m sorry, governor, that he wouldn’t talk to you. I’m sorry.” And when he said that, the boy sat up, and he said to the guard, “Governor? Governor? Did you say governor? Was that man in my cell—was he the governor of this state? Was he the one who could have pardoned me? Was he the one who could have commuted my death sentence to life sentence? Do you mean he was right here in my cell, and I wouldn’t even talk with him? Oh, if I had only known it was the governor.” The hangman, who put the black cap on his face—the hangman, who fixed the noose around his neck—said, with his dying words, the young man was still saying, “If I had only known it was the governor, if I had only known it was the governor.” He was so very close, but he was so very far away.

When Great Men Die Like Fools

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 3, 1997

Main Scripture Text: 2 Samuel 3:27–38

“And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?”

2 SAMUEL 3:33

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Saving Nature of the Cities of Refuge
- II. The Significant Names of the Cities of Refuge
 - A. Kedesh: Christ Is the Holy Place
 - B. Shechem: Christ Is a Helpful Place
 - C. Hebron: Christ Is a Harmonious Place
 - D. Bezer: Christ Is a Hiding Place
 - E. Ramoth: Christ Is the Highest Place
 - F. Golan: Christ Is a Happy Place
- III. The Strategic Nearness of the Cities of Refuge
- IV. The Sad Neglect of the Cities of Refuge

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and turn to 2 Samuel chapter 3—2 Samuel chapter 3? And, when you’ve found it, just look up here for a moment, and let me tell you that the Bible teaches that great men are not always wise. And, I’m sure that we have some people today that, if we were to put you on the scales of human responsibility and human achievement, you would be in the category of great. I’m speaking to some people—maybe you’ve founded a large business; maybe you’ve made some remarkable discovery; perhaps you are a renowned scholar; perhaps you have accumulated a vast fortune; maybe there are thousands who call you boss. You are great in the eyes of men, but I wonder if you will die like a fool. The title of the message is “When Great Men Die Like Fools.”

Now, they buried a man, and his name was Abner. And, look, if you will, in verse 32: *“And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept. And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?”*—or, “Did he die as a fool dies?” And, then he says in verse 34—*“Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before*

wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him” (2 Samuel 3:32–34). Then, skip down to verse 38: *“And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?”* (2 Samuel 3:38)—a prince, a great man; and yet he died like a fool.

Now, I’ve told you before that all of the Bible is about the Lord Jesus Christ, and I’ve told you before that the theme of the Bible is salvation—how to be right with God. The hero of the Bible is Jesus. The villain of the Bible is Satan. The story of the Bible is salvation. And so, God has packed salvation stories from Genesis all the way through to Revelation, and even to maps. We can find the story of how to be saved and how to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, why did David say that there was a man whose name was Abner, a great man, and yet he died like a fool? To find that out we have to go back in the Bible—this time to Joshua chapter 20. I want you to do that. Go back now to Joshua chapter 20, and open your Bibles to Joshua chapter 20. And, I want you to read with me the first three verses: *“The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge”—underscore that: “cities of refuge”—“whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses: That the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood”* (Joshua 20:1–3). Now, go to verse 7: *“And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjatharba, which is Hebron, in the mountain of Judah. And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh. These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel”* (Joshua 20:7–9). Now folks, I want to tell you about these cities. They were called “cities of refuge,” and they were a picture—a wonderful, glorious illustration—of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I. The Saving Nature of the Cities of Refuge

For example, think with me about the saving nature of these cities. They had, in Bible times, a law. They did not have the fine courts of jurisprudence that we have today, and the FBI, and all of those other things. If a person were to kill a blood relative of an individual, that individual was called the “avenger of blood,” and he could hunt down, seek out, find the slayer of his near kin, his relative, and put him to death. But God, knowing that many times a crime could’ve been done unwittingly; God, knowing that many times a person would need a court to hear him out; God, knowing that he would need a place of refuge, appointed six cities—six cities of refuge. And, the person who is fleeing from the avenger of blood—a person who needs a safe place, a hiding place—

would flee into one of these cities and there be saved. And, the Bible uses this illustration to picture the Lord Jesus Christ.

For example, the Bible speaks in Hebrews chapter 6 of those of us who have fled for refuge to Jesus—those who have fled for refuge to Jesus (Hebrews 6:18). And again, we know that wonderful, wonderful Psalm that says, *“The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe”* (Proverbs 18:10). And so, these cities of refuge are one more of the glorious illustrations that God has put in the mosaic of His Word, the tapestry of His truth, to point out and give us illustration upon illustration upon illustration of what it means to be saved and find refuge in the Lord Jesus. We sing about it:

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee*

—AUGUSTUS M. TOPLADY

*Where could I go, where could I go
Seeking a refuge for my soul*

...

Where could I go [but] to the Lord?

—J. B. COATS

And, we know that our Lord is a place of refuge, and these cities of refuge are a wonderful, wonderful illustration of the Lord Jesus.

II. The Significant Names of the Cities of Refuge

Now, not only do I want you to think about the saving nature of these cities, but think with me about the significant names of these cities. Look with me... Let’s begin in verse 7 and look at the names of these cities, because remember the Bible says, *“The name of the LORD is a strong tower”* (Proverbs 18:10).

A. Kedesh: Christ Is the Holy Place

First of all, in verse 7, there’s the word *Kedesh* (Joshua 20:7), and you know what that word means? It means “holiness”—“holiness,” and it speaks of Christ our dear, sinless, holy Savior. And so, when you think of Kedesh, think of a holy place. Say it: “holy place.” Say it again: “holy place.” Jesus is a holy place. You see, the Bible says of our dear Savior, He is holy and undefiled (Hebrews 7:26). He’s clean and pure, and that’s the reason He can save. You know, you can’t get dirty clothes clean if you wash them in dirty water. There’s no other sinner that can be our Savior. We need a holy person, and that’s the person the Bible says in Zechariah chapter 13 and verse 1: *“In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness”* (Zechariah 13:1). And again, the Bible says in Hebrews 12,

verse 14: *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”* (Hebrews 12:14).

Now folks, if you are not holy, you’re going to Hell. And, your only hope of holiness is for God to make you holy through the Lord Jesus Christ, so this very first place that we’re talking about speaks of Christ our Savior, a holy place—Christ our Savior.

B. Shechem: Christ Is a Helpful Place

Now, what’s the name of the next city? Shechem. Do you know what the name Shechem means? It means “shoulder” or “strength.” Now, not only is Christ a holy place; Christ is a helpful place, because the Bible says of our Savior, *“And the government shall be upon his shoulder”* (Isaiah 9:6). Remember there in the parable of the lost sheep when the good shepherd went out and found that sheep? What did he do? He laid it upon his shoulders and brought it back home safely. And friend, that’s the way I’m going to Heaven—upon the shoulders of the Lord Jesus Christ. There was a sheep with six legs (four of his own and two of the Savior), going on back to the sheepfold, because He is the One who carries our burdens. So, you’ve said, “Holy place.” Now, I want you to say, “Helpful place”—“helpful place.” Christ is a helpful place. Do you need strength? The glory of the Lord... *“The joy of the LORD is your strength”* (Nehemiah 8:10). And, when you come to Him for refuge, He will give you strength because not only is He Christ our Savior, the holy place; He is Christ our strength, the helpful place.

C. Hebron: Christ Is a Harmonious Place

The name of the next city is Hebron. Do you know what the name *Hebron* means? Fellowship—fellowship. Not only is He Christ our Savior, and not only is He Christ our strength; but friend, He’s Christ our satisfaction. The Bible says, *“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another”* (1 John 1:7). You see, Christ is a harmonious place. Say, “Harmonious place,” because there is harmony; there is peace. We are as one with Him. He has made peace through the blood of His Christ—through the blood of His cross—and through Him we do have that oneness that we want—that harmony. He has put that harmony in our souls, and we are at one with our Lord because He is a holy place, He is a helpful place, He is a harmonious place. He is Christ our Savior. He is Christ our strength. He is Christ our satisfaction.

D. Bezer: Christ Is a Hiding Place

And then, look at the next one. The name of the next city is Bezer. Do you know what the name *Bezer* means? It means “stronghold”; it means “fortification,” and that speaks of Christ our safety. You remember—“the righteous run in, and they’re safe” (Proverbs 18:10). Jesus is a hiding place. Say it: “hiding place.” Jesus is a hiding place. He is a

holy place. He is a helpful place. He is a harmonious place. He is a hiding place 'till the storm passes over.

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.*

—AUGUSTUS M. TOPLADY

Again, “*The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe*” (Proverbs 18:10). And, I want to tell you, friend, there is the hound of Hell, the justice that is baying at our heels, and we need to find a place to hide. And, I’m hiding in the Lord Jesus, and I trust that you are. And so, that speaks not only of Christ our satisfaction; that speaks of Christ our security. As long as an individual was in Bezer, he was absolutely secure from the judgment that was on his heels.

E. Ramoth: Christ Is the Highest Place

And, the name of the next city was Ramoth—Ramoth. And, the name *Ramoth* means “exalted,” and that speaks of Christ our sovereign. “*High and lifted up*” (Isaiah 6:1) is our Lord, and Jesus is the highest place. Say, “Highest place”—“highest place.” You see, the Bible teaches that when we get saved, when we come to Jesus, we’re seated with Him in heavenly places. And again, Peter, preaching on the day of Pentecost, said in Acts chapter 2, verse 33: “*Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted*” (Acts 2:33). Our Lord is exalted. Philippians 2, verse 9: “*Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name*” (Philippians 2:9). Jesus is the holy place. Jesus is a helpful place. Jesus is a harmonious place. Jesus is a hiding place. Jesus is the highest place. You’ll never find anything better than Jesus; you’ll never need anything more than the Lord Jesus. He is the highest of the high. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

F. Golan: Christ Is a Happy Place

And then, the next place is Golan, and the word *Golan* means “separated”—“separated.” And, when we come to the Lord Jesus, not only do we leave the things of this world, but we come into Him and are separated from the world and separated unto the Lord Jesus Christ. Second Corinthians chapter 6, verse 17 says, “*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate*” (2 Corinthians 6:17). But, the word here for separation is an interesting word; it means “separation that brings joy.” So, Jesus is a happy place. Say, “Happy place.”

Hey, don’t feel sorry for me because I’m a Christian, I have experienced this past week the joy of the Lord that is absolutely...it’s inexplicable. You say, “Well, I’ve been saved, Pastor, but I don’t have that joy. Why don’t I have that joy?” Well, maybe you’re not separated; maybe you haven’t been to Golan. You see, you show me a person who’s let go of this world with both hands and taken hold of Jesus with both hands, and

I'll show you a person who has *"joy unspeakable and full of glory"* (1 Peter 1:8). And so, the Lord Jesus Christ—He is Christ our Savior; He is Christ our strength; He is Christ our satisfaction; He is Christ our security; He is Christ our sovereign; He is Christ our sanctification. He is a holy place, a helpful place, a harmonious place, a hiding place, the highest place, and the happy place, and His name is Jesus. Jesus is our city of refuge.

III. The Strategic Nearness of the Cities of Refuge

Now, I want you to notice something else: not only the saving nature and not only the significant names, but notice the strategic nearness of these cities. As you look and see where the Lord put the cities, if you know anything of the map of Israel, you know that they were strategically placed: some were in the east; some were in the west; some were in the north; some were in the south, and some in the center. Why? Because if they're a city of refuge, they have got to be close.

If a person is in danger, he needs a hiding place. That hiding place—he must be very near. So, they have laws in ancient Israel concerning the cities of refuge. The road to the city of refuge had to be wide. If there were rivers, the rivers had to have bridges. Those bridges were carefully inspected and regularly inspected. If there were obstacles on those roads, those obstacles had to be removed. And, the priests and the Levites would go out and inspect the roads to the city of refuge. And, every time there was a crossroad where there might be any confusion, they would write a sign in big Hebrew letters, "MIKLOT," which means "refuge" and "a signpost." A wayfaring man, nor a fool, could not miss his way on to the city of refuge (Isaiah 35:8). It had to be wide open. It had to be near. It had to be clear and always open.

Now, what does that tell us about the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, I want you to take your Bibles, if you don't mind turning to it, and turn to Romans 10—Romans 10, beginning in verse 6. The Bible tells us, now, how to be saved, and listen to it: *"But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)"*—but now, listen to it—*"But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved"* (Romans 10:6–9).

Now, the key to this is the word is "nigh thee." What's the modern English for that? "Near thee"—"near thee." You see, these cities of refuge were so near. The Lord says, "Hey, do you want to be saved? You don't have to sojourn to Heaven and say, 'Savior, would you come down please and save us?' He's already come down, hasn't He? He

has already come down. He was buried, but you don't need to go down into the netherworld and bring Him up from the dead. Why? He is already come from the grave." We worship a Savior who stepped out of Heaven; suffered, bled, and died for us; went into the grave, was buried, and rose again. Friend, that was already done, okay?

Now, he says, "*The word is nigh thee*"—now, listen to this—"*even in thy mouth, and in thy heart*" (Romans 10:8). Did you know how close you are to being saved today? Do you know how close you are to the city of refuge today? Salvation is in your mouth and in your heart. You say, "Now, wait a minute. How did it get in my mouth? What does that mean? And, how did it get in my heart?" He said, "*The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart...the word of faith, which we preach*" (Romans 10:8). I just put it in your mouth; I just put it in your heart. It is the Word of faith that we preach.

Now, what do you do with the Word that is in your mouth? What do you do with the Word that is in your heart? "*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved*" (Romans 10:9). You see how close you are? It's already in your mouth. Confess it. It's already in your heart. Believe it. You be saved. That's how close you are to salvation. These cities were incredibly, incredibly close, strategically near.

I was on an airplane with a man who was of one of these denominations who believe you have to be baptized in order to be saved. We were having quite a discussion. I said, "Do you ever witness? Do you share your faith?" "Oh, yes, I do." I said, "Well, I'd be interested to know how you would share your faith as if the pilot of this airplane were to come on and say, 'Ladies and gentlemen, I hate to bring you bad news, but we've lost all power. We're in mountainous terrain. There's no way I can bring you down safely. We're in the glide pattern now. That will hold us for about five minutes. Then we're gonna hit. If you have anything you need to get settled, you'd better get it settled.' Now, suppose you're on this airplane, and suppose I'm sitting next to you on this airplane; and I am not a Christian. I have heard the gospel. I've heard about our Lord. I went to Sunday School as a boy, but I'm a businessman. I've been cheating on my wife. I've been cheating on my expense account. I've been taking God's name in vain. I've been going to the taverns in the evening, bending the elbow. I've just been living, you know, kind of like this, but now I'm gonna die. And mister, I don't want to die without knowing God. Can you tell me how to be saved?"

Now remember, this man believed you had to be baptized in order to be saved. "Well," he said, "you know, there are certain requirements to be saved." I said, "Yes, well, tell me. I need to be saved." He said, "Well, you know, God has a plan." I said, "Well, yes. I want to hear it." He says, "Well..." I said, "Look, we've only got two minutes left now. This thing's about to hit. What must I do to be saved?" He said, "I wouldn't have a message for you."

Well, friend, I want to tell you: I've got a message for everybody—if he's in a submarine, if he's in an airplane, if he's in a desert, if he's on a subway, if he is sitting on a church building, and he's driving down a highway. I can tell you the Bible says, *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Romans 10:13). And, when you put anything else as a requirement for salvation other than faith, you take the *whosoever* out of the Bible. You believe in baptism—you have to say, "Well, whosoever shall believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and shall be near water, and shall have a preacher to baptize him of my denomination will be saved." You see how ridiculous that is, folks? *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Romans 10:13).

The strategic nearness of these cities: *"The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved"* (Romans 10:8–9).

IV. The Sad Neglect of the Cities of Refuge

"Well," you say, "Pastor, why did you call the message today 'When Great Men Die Like Fools'?" Well, I want you to go back now to 2 Samuel 3, and let's look now at the sad neglect of these cities. They were there, but this is the story of a man named Abner. Abner had killed a man whose name was Asahel; and Asahel was the brother of Joab, and Joab was the commander in chief of David's armies. Joab was the avenger of blood. Joab was on Abner's trail. Now, Abner, and David, and Joab are outside the city of Hebron. The city of Hebron was one of the six cities of refuge, and as they are outside the city, David departs from them. There's left Joab and Abner. Now, remember that Joab is the avenger of blood. Remember that Abner is the one that Joab is tracking down. And, Joab says to Abner, "Abner, would you come over here? There's something I need to tell you." And, Abner went. Can you imagine it?

Notice, if you will, in 2 Samuel 3, verse 27: *"And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother"* (2 Samuel 3:27). They're there at the gate of Hebron. Joab says, "Hey, Abe, come over here. There's something I need to tell you. I need to speak quietly to you. Get real close." Then, Joab pulled out that dagger, and the Bible says that he *"smote him there under the fifth rib"* (2 Samuel 3:27)—right in the heart, right at the gate, right at the gate, right at the gate of the city of refuge. What a sad funeral that was! Notice 2 Samuel 3, verses 32 through 34: *"And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept. And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth? Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a*

man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him” (2 Samuel 3:32–34).

What a parable of today! What a picture of today! Here he was—a man who was valiant on the battlefield, a man who had the ear and the friendship of the King of Israel, a man who would be characterized by David—and David ought to know men—as a great man. And yet, the Lord said, “He died like a fool.”

This man had a brother (in the metaphorical sense) in the New Testament. Remember that story about that man who was a great farmer? He had such a crop he didn’t even know where he could put all his goods. He said, “What will I do?” He said, “Well, I know what I’ll do: I’ll tear down my barns, and I’ll build bigger barns. I’ll put all my goods in those barns, and then I’ll say, ‘I’ll eat; I’ll drink, and I’ll be merry.’” *“But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?”* (Luke 12:20). You know—*“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”* (Mark 8:36). I’m speaking to some of you. I mean, some of you are business people. You listen to me. You may have founded one of the biggest businesses in America. You may be just listening to this Baptist preacher so you can laugh at him. But, I’m gonna tell you, mister, you die without Jesus Christ, you’re a fool—I don’t care what you’ve done; I don’t care how many people call you boss. You are a fool. *“Died Abner as a fool [dies]?”* (2 Samuel 3:33).

What would you think of a woman whose house is on fire, her baby’s in the crib, and yet she’s in the kitchen gathering dishes, and pots, and pans, and trinkets? Wouldn’t you say, “She’s foolish”? You’re gathering all the trinkets of this world. You’ve stopped making money; you’re just keeping score now. And, you’re going to die and lose your own soul.

Conclusion

Now, where did Abner die? He died at the gate of the city of refuge, right at the door. Jesus said, *“I am the door”* (John 10:7). He’s your city of refuge, and He’s here today. And, I’ll promise you, whether you’re great in the eyes of this world or not, you can be great in the eyes of God if you give your heart to Jesus Christ. Trust Him to save you. The Bible says, *“Great men are not always wise”* (Job 32:9). You may be a scientist, you may be a banker, you may be a lawyer, you may be a physician—but friend, the epitaph that God will put on your tombstone is “fool” if you die just outside the gate of refuge. God has provided for you a refuge in... *“The name of the LORD is a strong tower”* (Proverbs 18:10).

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. And, if you don’t know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, today is the day;

this is the time. You are right now, this very moment—right now, this very moment—at the gate, at the door. Like Joab, the devil would deceive you. The devil would draw you aside right now because he wants to destroy you. Abner was deceived by Joab; don't you be deceived by Satan. Give your heart to Jesus. Pray this way: "Lord Jesus—Lord Jesus—thank You for dying for me. Thank You for becoming my city of refuge, my holy place, my helpful place, my happy place, the highest place. Thank You, Jesus, for that. I come in by faith right now. I receive You this moment as my Lord and my Savior. I trust You to save me, and I will make it public. I will not be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen."

Now, look up here. Did you pray that prayer this morning, or you need help still—further help? Here's what I'm gonna ask you to do: when we sing in a moment, I'm gonna ask you to be in a spirit of openness for whatever God wants for you. And, as we sing, if you need the Lord Jesus Christ, I want you to leave your seat, and come forward, and tell the minister, "I'm trusting Jesus." You say, "Pastor—Pastor—why do I need to come forward?" Remember the scripture there in Romans 10: *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved"* (Romans 10:9).

Enjoying the Presence of God

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 28, 1982

Main Scripture Text: 2 Samuel 6:1–23

“And David danced before the LORD with all his might...”

2 SAMUEL 6:14

Outline

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- I. The Holy Reverence That You Must Express
 - A. Without Reverence There Will Be Disobedience
 - B. Without Reverence There Will Be Displeasure
 - C. Without Reverence There Will Be Death
 - D. Without Reverence There Will Be Discouragement
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 1. Simple Obedience
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Conclusion

Introduction

So tonight, we're talking on this subject: "Enjoying the Presence of God"—2 Samuel chapter 6. And, we need—we need—a conscious awareness of God's presence. Now, let me tell you something that has happened: we've been preaching through the life of David—of course, not everything in the life of David. It would fall under its own weight if we tried to preach every detail and to show you everything. But, first of all, we've seen David as a shepherd. Then, after we saw him as a shepherd, we saw him as a singer, as he would quiet old Saul by singing those songs and playing on his harp. And then, we saw David as a soldier. And now, we're seeing David as a sovereign, as he just moves on through his life.

Now, David is the king. Saul no longer is the king; David is the king. And, David knows that, as the king, he needs God's power, he needs God's anointing, he needs God's presence. Now, in the Old Testament days, God's presence was wrapped up in a

little piece of furniture called the ark—the Ark of the Covenant. And, it was not a big piece of furniture. As a matter of fact, it was quite small—smaller than this pulpit. There... It was about four-feet-long, an oblong box—this is probably three-and-a-half feet, I suppose, maybe four—three-and-a-half, and then it was about two-feet-wide and two-feet-high, just a small box. And, it had two figures of cherubim or angels on the lid, and the lid was made of solid gold. And, that piece of furniture was where the Shekinah glory of God hovered—right over that piece of furniture. What we mean by the Shekinah glory of God is the fullness of God’s glory. It dwelt right there over that ark. Now, that ark, therefore, represented Jesus in the Old Testament. The Ark of the Covenant was symbolic of the presence of God, and it represented the Lord Jesus.

And, there were three things in that chest. It was like a cedar chest, a box. There were three things in it. First of all, there was Aaron’s rod that budded. That represented leadership and authority; and so, that tells us that Christ is our rule. He is our King. He is heaven’s rule. And then, in there was that manna. They took some manna up off the ground and put it in a golden pot, and that was in that ark. And, that tells us that not only is Jesus heaven’s rule; Jesus is heaven’s resource. And then, in that ark were the Ten Commandments engraved in stone. They were put in that ark, and that tells us not only is Jesus heaven’s rule and heaven’s resource; He’s heaven’s righteousness, because the fulfilled law is in Christ. Christ came to fulfill the law and then impute the righteousness of the law to us. And, on top of that was a solid slab of gold called the “mercy seat.” And, when the high priest would take the sacrificial blood, he would sprinkle it on the mercy seat, and that would make an atonement for the sin of the people. And, when atonement was made there, then the people had peace and righteousness with God and the presence of God. When Christ is enthroned and when sin is atoned, there is the Shekinah glory of God. Well, let me just reverse it: when sin is atoned and Christ is enthroned, there is the Shekinah glory of God. That’s what this ark represents, and now it represents to us today Christ dwelling in us. You see, in the Old Testament, the ark was in the temple, but in the New Testament, we’re the temple. In the Old Testament, the ark was the ark, but in the New Testament, the ark is Christ. He is in us. It just pictures Christ in us. It pictures—the Old Testament ark—pictures the conscious presence of God with His people.

Now, I want to give you a little “ark-eology.” I want you... I want to give you the history of the ark and what happened to the ark. You remember that God first commanded Moses to make the ark and told him how to do it. And, when they came out of Egypt, God spoke to Moses and gave him—in Exodus chapter 25—told them how to make the Ark of the Covenant. (Exodus 25:10) And, Moses made the ark and told them how to carry it around through the wilderness, and they carried that ark almost forty years, round and round in the wilderness, even as we preached this morning. And then,

Moses died, and after Moses died, Joshua took over, and he was God's commander-in-chief. And, it was Joshua's duty and privilege to lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land. And, in order to go into the Promised Land, they had to go through the River Jordan. You remember that. And, what did Joshua tell them? He said, "As we go into the river, first of all, the priests that are bearing the ark are going to go in first." And, the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant on their shoulders went into the Jordan, and the waters dried up; and they went in. And, Joshua said to them—and these were his instructions: "Keep your eyes on the ark. You follow the ark." (Joshua 6:7) And so, the ark led them right on into the land of Canaan, just as Jesus leads His people into victory and just as Jesus leads His people into rest.

But then, in the period of the judges, after they went into the land of Canaan, the judges recognized that the Ark of the Covenant had in it supernatural power. I don't think they understood all that it symbolized. Perhaps it was a time of spiritual declension, but they would take the Ark of the Covenant, if they were going into any battle or going into any war, they would take the ark of the covenant out in front of them. They were thinking it would help them to win the battle, but it didn't always—and I'll tell you why: because they had lost the holy reverence for the ark. They had stopped obeying God, and they thought that the ark was something to be used. And, God will refuse to be used by you, or by me, or by anybody else. And, incidentally, some of you young preachers would like to be filled with the Holy Spirit so you can use Him to make you a better preacher. He's not going to be used—not going to be used. He'll use you, but you can't use Him. But, they thought they could use the ark.

Well, in trying to use the ark, what they did—they found out they could lose the ark, and the Philistines captured it. They thought, "Oh, boy, we've really got something! Look what it's done for all these Jews; now look what it's going to do for us." But, what the Philistines had on their hands was a hot potato. When they got the ark, it...they had calamity after calamity. Everywhere the ark went there was calamity. They finally said, "Boy, we want to get rid of this thing." And so, they put the ark... They made a cart—a brand-new cart—and they put the Ark of the Covenant on that cart, and they took it as far as it could go towards a certain town, and just pointed the oxen in that direction, and said goodbye. And, the oxen went on down the road to a place called Bethshemesh, and there the people of Bethshemesh saw the ark. And, they ran out, and they said, "Well, look what we've got. Here comes the oxen, and here comes the new cart, and here's the ark." And, they took the ark of God, and they unloaded it. And then, they said, "I wonder what's in that box." And, they lifted the lid off, and they laid profane and unholy hands on God's ark and looked inside the ark, which was strictly forbidden. And, when they did, God struck them with a great slaughter, and many of them—just hundreds and thousands of them—died because of their carnal inquisitiveness, looking

in. And so, then, they take the ark to the house of a man named Abinadab, and there the ark stayed for about fifty years.

And now, David becomes king of Israel, and David knows that that ark represents the conscious presence of Jesus, or the conscious presence of God with His people. And, David knows that, as the king, that he has tremendous responsibilities and that he cannot be king without the conscious presence—conscious presence—of God any more than I can be pastor without the conscious presence of God, any more than you can be associate pastor without the conscious presence of God, any more than you can be a deacon without the conscious presence of God, any more than you can be a Sunday School teacher without the conscious presence of God, any more than you can be a Christian—the kind of Christian you ought to be—without the conscious presence of God. David had enough sense to know that he needed the conscious presence of God in his heart and in his life.

And so, he starts out to bring the ark into the city of Jerusalem. He has now conquered the Jebusites' stronghold, and he is now making it the city of David, which is now the city of Jerusalem. And so, now, let's begin reading. We've had enough background. And, I want us to begin reading in 2 Samuel chapter 6, verse 1: and the Bible says, *"Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims"*—you see, this is where God dwelt: between the cherubim. That's the two angels on top of the ark—*"And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and [they] brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart"*—that is, they were driving the new cart; they were leading the 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 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. And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it"*—that is, the oxen stumbled, and the ark started to waver. And, Uzzah says, "Uh oh, it's going to fall." And, he puts his hands upon the ark to steady the ark—*"And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. And David was displeased, because the LORD...made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of [that] place Perezuzzah [unto] this day. And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me? So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside [to] the house of Obedom the Gittite.*

And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obedom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obedom, and all [of] his household.” (2 Samuel 6:1–11)

I. The Holy Reverence That You Must Express

Now, the very first thing that I want you to see, if you will know the conscious presence of the Lord—if you would know it—there is the holy reverence that you must express—the holy reverence that you must express. The reason that some people do not know the conscious presence of God is they have lost a holy reverence for God. We see that right here in this passage. You see, David’s first attempt to bring the ark in was lost because he did not express a holy reverence for the things of God. He became careless in the things of God, and his carelessness led to a great calamity that day.

A. Without Reverence There Will Be Disobedience

Now, the first mark of his carelessness was disobedience. In verses 1 through 5, we see that David, in bringing the ark, put it on a new cart. And, now, the place where the ark had been was up on a hilltop, and David says, “Well, now, we’re going to get it down from that hilltop, and we’re going to bring it into the city of David.” So, he went out and got a nice brand-new cart, got some good healthy oxen, and he started to roll the ark down off the hill. I mean, after all, that sounds like a good way to do it. If you’re going to move an ark, how else would you do it except with a new cart? Wouldn’t want some old cart—wouldn’t want some old broken-down cart. And, you’d get you some nice oxen to pull it. That’s the strongest beast of burden they knew of in that day. I mean, David was doing it oh so right, but he was doing it oh so wrong. Why? Because that’s not the way the cart—the ark—was to be carried.

I want you to see... Just turn with me to Exodus chapter 25 here, for just a moment, and see what God had said about the ark—how the ark was to be transported. Look, if you will, in Exodus 25, beginning in verse 12. Now, God is telling them how to make the ark; and then, He tells them how to transport the ark, and God says, *“Thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four corners thereof; and two rings shall be in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it. And thou shalt make staves of shittim wood”—or, “acacia wood”—“and overlay them with gold. And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne”—that is, “that the ark may be carried”—“with them. The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: [and] they shall not be taken from it.”* (Exodus 25:12–15) Now, God says, “The way the ark is to be moved—the ark is to have a ring here, and a ring here, and a ring here, and a ring here, and there are to be long rods that go through those rings from either side. And, when you get ready to move the ark, the priests—people who have been ordained and designed for that specific job—are to take the ark on their shoulders, and that’s the way the ark is to be moved.” Now, God never said to move the ark with a cart. As a matter of

fact, He gave specific instructions against moving the ark with a cart.

Well, where on earth did David ever get the idea of moving the ark with a cart anyway? I want to tell you where he learned it. You're in 1 Samuel chapter...2 Samuel chapter 6; turn to 1 Samuel chapter 6 for just a moment. I want you to see something here—very interesting. Now remember, I told you that the Philistines had captured the ark, and let me show you how the Philistines went to move the ark when they moved it around. I'm reading here in 1 Samuel chapter 6, verses 6 and 7. Well, let's just go on to verse 7: "*Now therefore*"—here's what the Philistines are saying one to another—"*Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine*"—that is, "two milk cows"—"*on which there [has] come no yoke, and tie the kine*"—the cows—"to the cart, and bring their calves home from them: *And take the ark of the LORD, and lay it upon the cart.*" (1 Samuel 6:7–8) Now, that's the Philistine philosophy—that's what that is. The Philistines said, "How would we move this ark? How are we going to get rid of this thing? Well," they say, "let's build us a new cart; let's get us some cows to pull the cart, and that's the way we're going to get rid of the ark." Now, the interesting thing here is David is following the way of the heathen rather than following the Lord. Now, God had said clearly, and specifically, and plainly that the ark is to be transported, but rather than transporting it, as God said to transported it, he starts out to do a good thing the wrong way, and what he's doing is just simply disobeying the Lord.

Now, I want to tell you something, friend: we can have the presence of God in our church and we can have the presence of God in our lives, but if we do, it's going to be God's way, not ours. You know what's wrong with so many churches today? They've learned from the Philistines, and they're following the ways of the Philistines. You would be surprised that the world is conforming the Church more than the Church is transforming the world. We are being conformed rather than being transformed by the Spirit of God, and it's amazing how the spirit of this world has crept into so many churches.

For example, the feminists and the ungodly secular humanists are coming along with their ideas. Now, I believe in equality of the sexes and all that. If you think I don't, you don't even understand what I'm talking about, but I'm talking about feminism, now, which is something completely different. It comes from a different source. It follows a different course. It arrives at a different conclusion. But, you'd be amazed how many people today have let feminism invade the sanctuary. Now, everybody's saying, "Well, we ought to ordain women, and we ought to have women pastors," and so forth. There's just one thing wrong with that, friend: the Bible says if a man's to be a pastor, he's to be the husband of one wife, (1 Timothy 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6) and that's hard for a woman to do. I mean, you know, the Bible says, for example, "*If a man 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

means that a pastor is to be the head of his house. If you make a woman your pastor, she would also be the head of your house, wouldn't she? So, the husband would be submissive to her. You see, that's confusing—that's confusing. You know what that is? That's hauling the ark of God on a new cart. That's something we have learned from the Philistines; that's not something we have learned from God.

You'd be surprised how the spirit of the corporation enters, sometimes, into the sanctuary. Now, God's work is business, but it's a holy business. But, but, it's interesting—we had a deacons' retreat this last week, and Dr. Charles Stanley, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Atlanta, Georgia, was there to speak to us, and he talked about his church, when he first came, and some of the strange ideas that some of the deacons had. And the deacons had the idea that they were elected by the church to take care of the business of the church, and the pastor was to be over here. And, the pastor is to do the preaching, and he's to stay out of the business. They were to take care of the business of the church. And, they were about to do something, and the pastor said, "Now, wait a minute. Let's see what God thinks about it." And, one of the deacons said to him, "God doesn't have anything to do with this. This is business. Now, leave God out of this. This is business."

Now, you'd be surprised how many people really think that way; that is, they try to haul the ark of God on a new cart. They borrow from Madison Avenue. They borrow from General Motors. They borrow from Hollywood. They borrow from wherever. Oh, now, don't get me wrong—just because Hollywood can do something beautiful, that's no sign that we can't do anything beautiful. Just because General Motors does things decently and in order, if they do—I'm not talking about Chrysler now—that doesn't mean that we're not to do things decently and in order. I mean, if you're a bookkeeper, whether you're a church bookkeeper or whether you're a secular bookkeeper, you ought to keep books right. And, you know, two and two is still four no matter whether you're saved or lost. I'm not talking about that, but I am saying, dear friend, that we do not try to haul the ark of God on a new cart—that is, that we adapt and adopt somehow the philosophies of the Philistines.

B. Without Reverence There Will Be Displeasure

Now, his first step here, in verses 1 through 5, was really disobedience. He's trying to do a right thing, but he's doing it the wrong way. So, he starts out to bring this ark, and he brings it on a cart rather than doing it as God told him to do it. Now, what follows after disobedience? Well, it's displeasure. Look, if you will, in verses 6 and following. Here the Bible says... Well, let's go back to 2 Samuel chapter 6 and verse 6: "*And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah.*" (2 Samuel 6:6–7) After disobedience comes displeasure. Rather than God

being for you, God is angry with you. And, I believe that many of God's people have angered Him because of their disobedience and they displeased God. And, I want to tell you, dear friend, *if you displease God, it doesn't matter who you please*. And, they displeased God.

C. Without Reverence There Will Be Death

First of all, disobedience; secondly, displeasure; thirdly, death. Look, if you will, at the last part of verse 7: *"and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of [the Lord]."* (2 Samuel 6:7) Now, here David is starting out to minister life, and he ministers death. Here David, by disobeying the Lord, has incurred the displeasure of the Lord and brought about the death of a man who was seemingly sincere. Here he sees the ark about to topple off the cart. He reaches out and puts his hand on the ark, and immediately, just like that, he's stricken dead. Now, some people say, "Oh, God ought not to do that. My goodness, what kind of a God is that?" He is the kind of a God that had already said in His holy Word that "you are not to touch that ark, lest you die." (Numbers 4:15) God had already said that in Numbers chapter 4, verse 15.

But, you see, dear friend, listen, you lay careless and profane hands on holy things, and that's a good way to sign your death warrant—I mean, in many ways. I have known people who started criticizing a work of God, and God signed a death warrant. I can tell you of some in my own ministry—that when God was moving, they opposed what I was doing and what I was preaching, and not because of who I am or not because I think I'm anything big or whatever, but I can think of people who I have turned over to the devil and God has taken them just like that, because they wanted to lay profane hands on holy things. And, God won't stand for it—God won't stand for it. And, and, here's a man named Uzzah, and God just simply took him home. I expect to meet him in heaven. I believe he was a good man; I believe he was a saved man, but he died prematurely. *"There is a sin unto death."* (1 John 5:16) And, here is David, who starts out to minister life, and David, rather, is ministering death. He has a deadly ministry.

D. Without Reverence There Will Be Discouragement

Now, and then, what follows this? I want you to see first, disobedience, then displeasure, then deadliness, then discouragement. Look, if you will, in verses 8 and 9: *"And David was displeased, because the LORD...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 6:8–9) Now, it's not talking about a healthy fear of the Lord; he's talking about a craven, carnal fear of the Lord—no fellowship with the Lord. He's not right with God. He's not happy with the Lord. He's not enjoying the presence of God. Rather than enjoying the presence of God, he feels queasy when he thinks about God. And, he's hacked off at God; he's angry at God. And, it's really his own fault; it's just his

own rotten pride. Rather than doing God's work in God's way, he tried to do it his own way; and so, now, David is discouraged.

Look—look—at the last part of verse 9: *“How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?”* (2 Samuel 6:9) In other words: “It just can't be done—it just can't be done. How—how—is this going to be done? I just don't believe this thing of the presence of God. Is it there for me?” We come to the same place—I mean, so discouraged. You say, “Ah, there's Adrian Rogers up there preaching again. There he is up there telling me again, man, I'm supposed to have the presence of God. I'm supposed to have this power in my life. I'm supposed to have this. I'm supposed to know this. I'm supposed... How's this going to happen?” And, you feel kinda queasy when you think about God. You're a little hacked off at God; a little hacked off at God's preacher. That's the way David was. And he's just discouraged, thinking he never would really know the presence of God and the victory that it ought to be done, and there's...that ought to be done. And, some of you feel the same way. Perhaps you think that the Spirit-filled life is an impossibility.

E. Without Reverence There Will Be Defeat

And so, what follows? First of all, there's disobedience, and then God's displeasure, and then death, and then comes discouragement, and then comes defeat. Look, if you will please, in verse 10 of this same thing: *“[And] so David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside [to] the house of Obededom the Gittite. And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obededom the Gittite three months.”* (2 Samuel 6:10–11) And, it just stayed there three whole months. David is just in failure; he's in defeat.

And, you can write over these first eleven verses “mission unaccomplished,” “mission failed”—and why? Number one: If you would know the presence of God, you must express a holy reverence. David did not express a holy reverence by carrying the cart—the ark—on a new cart. Uzzah did not express a holy reverence by touching the ark when he had no business to touch it. Friend, I want to tell you something: we need a reverence for God, for holy things. I tell you, we ought to be on our face before the thrice holy God of Israel. We ought to tremble in the presence. We ought not to lay careless, profane hands on holy things: not only is it futile; it is dangerous.

II. The Happy Recovery That You May Enjoy

Number two, if you would know the conscious presence of God, not only must you have—not only must there be—a holy reverence that you express, but listen, I want you to see the happy recovery that you may enjoy. Let's see what David did now. One good thing about David is he had...he was a man after God's own heart, and he learned from his mistakes.

And so, I want you to notice what happens. Now, let's begin again in 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”—now here, evidently, Obededom was a good man. He believed in God, and God blessed him and there, the ark there, and God is just blessing in a wonderful way. Well, old David looks over there, and David hears all of this. Look in verse 12—“And it was told king David, saying, The LORD [has] blessed the house of Obededom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obededom into the city of David with gladness”—now, David sees again the blessings that he wants. He says, “Listen, why should Obededom have all those blessings? I want him to be blessed, but I want everybody to be blessed. I don’t want God’s blessings just in a corner for one man.” And so, look, if you will, in verse 13—“And [so] it was...that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod”—that is, he had a sort of a shirt jacket on, made of linen, very plain, and just came around him sort of like a coat—“[And] David and all [of] the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. 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”—now, she was the king’s daughter. Don’t forget that—“looked through a window”—now, she ought to have been out there with them helping to bring up the ark—“and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart. And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. 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 men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh”—that is, a beefsteak or something—“and a flagon of wine. So all of the people departed every one to his own house.” (2 Samuel 6:11–19)

Oh, the happy recovery of God’s presence! You see, after there’s a holy reverence, there can be the happy recovery. Now, I want you to just see how he did it. I want you to see how he got the ark back, because the same steps you’re going to have to take to have the conscious presence of God. Are you ready?

1. Simple Obedience

Number one: simple obedience. Number one: simple obedience. Verses 12 and 13 tell us how he brought the ark, and it doesn’t say anything about a new cart. As a matter of fact, it speaks of those “that bore the ark.” They are carrying the ark now exactly as God said that they were to carry it. As a matter of fact, if you want to, go look in the

corresponding passage when you get home. Put it in your margin: 1 Chronicles chapter 15. And, it tells how David got the priests, the holy ones, who were supposed to bear the ark. He told them, “Now look, we’ve had enough of this. We’re going to do it right.”

Well, let’s just look at that for a moment. Let’s turn to it; it’s worth looking to. Turn, if you will, to 1 Chronicles chapter 15. Here is the parallel passage, and I want you to see what happened here. One good thing about David is this: that David could learn. And so: *“And David made him houses in the city of David, and [David] prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent. Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites”—he learned his lesson, didn’t he?—“for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever.”* (1 Chronicles 15:1–2) And then, the rest of this chapter tells how the Levites went and carried the ark. Now, you see the difference? Before, he brought the ark on a new cart. Don’t think I was making too much of that cart business; I wasn’t. David learned his lesson, and David said, “Look, we’re going along to get that ark here, but this time we’re going to do it right.”

There is no substitute for obedience. Now, you know, I want to tell you something. Some of you are trying to be right with God. Some of you want God’s blessing. Some of you want God’s fullness, but you just won’t obey. Well, then, I’m just sorry for you—I’m just sorry for you, friend. There’s no other way—there is no other way. God cannot, God never has, God never will bless disobedience.

I heard of a father, one time, who said to his son—they were sitting in the living room together, father and son, who loved one another, and the father said to the son—“Son, would you get up, please, and put another piece of wood on the fire?” And, the son said, “Now Daddy, I’m doing something else. I’d rather not do it.” And, the father said, “Now Son, look, I’m asking you to put another piece of wood on the fire.” He said, “I’m sorry, Dad, I don’t want to.” Then the father said—it was a grown son—he said, “Son, look, I am telling you as your father, put another piece of wood on the fire.” The son said, “I am not going to do it.” There was a show of wills. And the father said to the son, “Now look, as long as you live under my house, eat from my table—you’re my son; you’re a grown boy—you’re going to obey me, or else you can’t stay here.” Well, the boy said, “If that’s so, I will leave and I’ll not come back.” And, in one of those quick fits of anger, he walked out of the house, slammed the door—out into the cold, a boy that loved his daddy, a daddy that loved his son. But, here was just a show of wills, and this boy with a with a stubborn spirit that turned quickly into a rebellious spirit that turned into a foolish spirit went out. And, you know how a young man is: he was too proud to come back—too proud just to come back and say, “Dad, I was wrong. Sorry.”

And, weeks turned to months, and months turned to years, and he was separated from the daddy that he loved for that long until his mother got sick and he heard about it

and learned about it. And, he thought, “I’ve been a fool. I’ve been a fool to leave my home, my parents, people who loved me, over something that stupid.” So, he went back, knocked on the door. His daddy opened the door and saw him. He said, “Daddy, I’ve come home. Daddy, I’m so sorry. Daddy, I’ve been a fool. I was so full of pride. I was so lazy and so rebellious. Daddy, will you forgive me so I can come home again?” The dad, with a tear streaming down his cheeks, said, “Son, you know, I forgive you. Come right in here. You’re welcome.” But, he said, “Son, before you come in, would you put another piece of wood on the fire?” And, that’s the way you’re going to come back to God: you’re not just going to come back to God any way.

I tell you, friend, God will receive you. God loves you. God loved David. And, God doesn’t hold grudges, but I tell you, if David had come again with another new cart, he would have had the same trouble. I want to tell you, friend, that some of you do not know the conscious presence of God. You just don’t learn—just don’t learn. How can God bless disobedience? We must obey Him altogether with a simple obedience—verses 12 and 13. (2 Samuel 6:12–13)

2. A Sacrificial Spirit

Step number two: a sacrificial spirit. Look, if you will, in verse 13 of this same chapter: “*And it was so, that when they that [bore] the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed—“oxen and fatlings.”* (2 Samuel 6:13) David now can’t do enough. He offered an oxen and fatlings. It doesn’t say how many, but knowing David, it was a whole lot. David is just saying, “Here, Lord, everything I have now belongs to you. Not only am I going to obey you, not only is there going to be that simple obedience; there is going to be that sacrificial spirit.”

3. Sweet Joy

Now, notice what happens when David gets simple obedience and a sacrificial spirit lined up together. Notice now the sweet joy. Look, if you will, beginning in verse 14—and I love this part: “*And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. [And] so David and all [of] the house of Israel brought...the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.*” (2 Samuel 6:14–15) When there, dear friend, is simple obedience, when there is a sacrificial spirit, there will always be sweet joy—sweet joy—leaping, and dancing, and praising God. Oh, God wants us to have “*joy unspeakable and full of glory.*” (1 Peter 1:8) God wants the presence—His presence—to be so real that our hearts are just overflowing we can’t even sit still—we want to dance around, and leap, and praise the Lord.

4. Spiritual Worship

And, this led to spiritual worship. As you continue to read in verse 17 and through 18,

you'll find out that David prepared a place for the ark. The ark came into the tabernacle, which pictures Christ coming into our hearts in all of His fullness. And, they were offering all of these sacrifices, and the worship was so wonderful, because God was there in the presence of His people. And, the city of Jerusalem was so blessed, and there was this spiritual worship.

5. Shared Blessings

And then, there were the shared blessings. David starts giving to everybody cakes, and steaks, and bottles of wine. Oh, they were just having a wonderful time. What a place it was! How glorious it is! I want to say it again: there's nothing sweeter, nothing more glorious than to be in a place where the Spirit of God is on it—nothing more wonderful in your own heart than to know the joy of the Lord. That is your legacy when Christ is enthroned. And, it's so simple: simple obedience, sacrificial spirit, sweet joy, spiritual worship, shared blessings—that's what these blessings tell us. I don't have time to speak on more of those, because I want to get to the third thing, the final point, because it's a very, very important thing.

III. The Hateful Resistance That You May Expect

The first thing I've tried to say is, if you would know the conscious fullness of God, there is the holy reverence that you must express; secondly, there is the happy recovery that you may enjoy; but thirdly, there is the hateful resistance that you may expect—the hateful resistance that you may expect.

Now, what happened when David came home that day? And, he's leading the Levites. The Levites have the ark on their shoulders. God is coming into the camp. David is so excited he can't keep both feet on the ground. He's praising God. The cymbals are ringing, and the trumpets are blowing. And, David is saying, "Glory, hallelujah! Praise God! Praise God! Praise God!" And, there is joy, and dancing, and so forth. And, his wife is looking at him, and she says to herself, "My husband is making a fool of himself. Would you look at him out there? Dancing, leaping, shouting—he's the king. Why, he's taken off all his royal robes. He's dressed in an old, plain linen hopsack garment, and there he is out there dancing around just like a common person." Now, she was a queen's daughter. She had been raised in King Saul's house. And now, not only is she a king's daughter, but now she's a queen; she's married to a king. And, she was a person who had a good case of "dig-nity." She was very dignified, and she is really taking umbrage at the fact that David is such a religious fanatic.

Now, I want us to begin reading here in verse 20, and I want us to see what happened here, because there's a lesson: *"Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day"*—now listen, friend, this is sarcasm of the richest kind. Don't

think that she meant that. She said, “Boy, weren’t you a sight!”—“*How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants*”—now, this doesn’t mean David did anything lewd; it doesn’t mean he was exposing himself. It means that he took off all his royal robes, now, and he’s just down there, just like a servant himself—“*as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself. And David said unto Michal, It was before the LORD, which chose me before my father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD*”—the word *play* here means, “Therefore will I be exuberant. Therefore will I dance. Therefore will I exalt in my God.” “Michal, you don’t understand. I was doing this before the Lord”—“*And*”—he says—“*I will yet be more vile than thus*”—now again, I want to tell you, you have to understand the King James language. What he means by that is this: “If you think this is bad, you ain’t seen nothing yet.” That’s what it means. “Listen, I’m going to be worse than this. Listen, God had made me so happy. I’m so filled with the presence of God. I am so happy in the Lord. If you think this is beneath your dignity, you just wait a while. I’m going to be more vile than this”—“*and will be more base in [thine] own sight: and of the [handmaiden] which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour*”—“These people that you’re so worried about what they’re going to think—they’re going to get a blessing out of it—“*[And] therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death.*” (2 Samuel 6:20–23)

Now, I want you to learn one other thing. Look, we must express a holy reverence. There is the possibility of a happy recovery. We can get the ark of God back. We can have the presence of God, but you must expect, if you do, a hateful resistance. Let me tell you something. Do you want to get some folks mad at you? Let me tell you how: get happy. That’s right, just get happy. You’ll get some folks mad at you. There’s some folks who can’t stand it if you just get happy. I mean, you get happy in the Lord, they are so miserable themselves that they’re going to do everything they can do to cool you down. I want to tell you what Michal’s problem was—she was his wife; Michal is the girl’s name here now—Michal was just full of rotten pride. She was stuffed full of pride; she was an egotist; she had no joy in the Lord, she did not want David to have any joy of the Lord, and, really, it was the spirit of the devil that was energizing her.

Now I want to tell you something: When you practice the conscious presence of God, that does not mean, dear friend, that it’s going to be all honey and no bees. I’ve said before and I’m going to say it again: *When God opens the windows of heaven to bless us, the devil will open the doors of hell to blast us*. And just as soon as David gets home—man, he’s going home, he’s going home to tell his wife wonderful things. The Bible says in verse 20: he’s coming home to bless her He opens the door and she has a bucket of cold water—Swoosh! She hits him right in the face with a verbal bucket of cold

water.

One pastor was talking to another pastor, asked, “Do you have committees in your church.” He said, “Yes, we have all kinds. We have a finance committee, a building committee, a budget committee, a bucket brigade committee.” “What’s a bucket brigade? We don’t have one of those; I don’t think we do.” “You mean you don’t have one in your church?” “No, what’s a bucket brigade?” “Well that’s when people get happy, or there’s something great we want to do for God. These people are a self-appointed committee; they come and pour cold water on them.” “Oh, pastor, yeah, we’ve got one of those, I didn’t know what to call it; I can even tell you who’s the chairman of the committee.”

Michal was the chairman of the bucket committee. And there she is with this cold water, just to pour it on David because David is so excited about the things of the Lord.

Now I want to tell you what Michal’s problem was. It was pride. She was like these people who want to worship God in dignity. I want to tell you something. There are some people, if they had their way, would turn Bellevue Baptist Church into a mausoleum. They really would. They wouldn’t want you to laugh; they wouldn’t want you to ever applaud. I don’t think we ought to applaud all the time, but let me tell you something about applause. If we applaud people up here like it’s show business, we ought not to do it. But if you just get so happy in Jesus you can’t stand it, go ahead. But lets not get in the business of thinking we have to applaud everything. Sometimes a good “amen” is all it takes—and if that comes from the Lord. Sometimes we just get moved, but some people, you know, arch their eyebrows if somebody applauds. They arch their eyebrows if the music is a little bit too jumpy for them. They arch their eyebrows if the pastor doesn’t wear a suit—I mean, if he wears a sport coat. Oh, they want the sort of a service, you know, where everything is cold, and clammy, and icy, and they like everything done just right. But, I want to tell you, dear friend, their problem is p-r-i-d-e—pride. They’ve got a good case of what Michal had. They’re trying to cram everybody into their little cold mold, and they don’t know anything of the joy of the Lord. I want to tell you something: the Bible says, “*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*” (2 Corinthians 3:17) And you get a cold, formal kind of a church service, and it may please the aesthetic pride of somebody, but it’s not the kind of a service where somebody will get saved. People do not get saved in a spirit of formalism.

I was interested to read the history of Dwight L. Moody. And Dwight L. Moody was a man who had the anointing of God. Now, he didn’t have an education. He had never been to the seminary. As a matter of fact, he murdered the King’s English. It’s said that Dwight L. Moody was the only man living who could pronounce the word *Jerusalem* in only two syllables, but that’s the kind of a guy he was. But, God’s hand was upon Moody, and somehow Moody got invited over to England to preach. And, I’ve told you

this story before, but Moody preached in the chapel, the service, of a cultured Britisher, a man named F. B. Meyer—Frederick Brotherton Meyer—a very erudite, learned, cultured, British, reserved type of cleric divine. And, Moody got up there, and Moody just murdered the King’s English. And, Moody was happy in the Lord, and Moody would sometimes weep. And, he told a story that today people would call a “tearjerker.” He told about a Sunday School teacher who learned he was going to die, and before he died, he went out and won all of the pupils in his class to Christ. And, it was a very moving story the way Moody told it, and Meyer was sitting there saying, “Oh, oh,” bumping his fingers and thinking, “When will this uncultured, uncouth, uneducated, super-hyperemotional American ever quit? Why did I invite him? How did I ever let this man named Moody, this shoe salesman—how did I ever let him in my church?” hoping it would be over. It had offended his dignity. He had a good case of what Michal had a case of. Later on, Frederick Brotherton Meyer was having tea with one of the ladies, and he asked her—and he said, “How goes it with you today?” She said, “Wonderful, Brother Meyer. Wonderful! Since Moody has been here, God has touched my heart, and I have won every girl in my class to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.” F. B. Meyer said, “That day I learned the language of the human soul, and my life has never been the same.”

I tell you something: we better learn it here, friends. I don’t want to pastor a stuffed-shirt church. Now, don’t get me wrong. We don’t have to be rolling in the aisles and foaming at the mouth. You know, somehow the devil gets across the idea either we’ve got to freeze in formalism or fry in fanaticism. Right? I mean, he’ll move you right across from one side of the thing to the other.

But the devil cannot stand a Spirit-filled service “where the Spirit of the Lord is, and where there is liberty.” (2 Corinthians 3:17) I am convinced that so many sermons that are preached by preachers who are ice-cold are preached not to win the hearts and the lives of people, but they’re preached from one theologian, and down here are the people.

Now listen. I’m not the dumbest guy in the world. I could preach a high-sounding, highfalutin, erudite, technical sermon if I wanted to. What good would it do? Oh, some of you guys out there who are the real scholars are gonna say, “Hey, Adrian, that’s great today.” Well, you go study it by yourself. You already know it anyway.

Same thing happens, Brother Jim, to ministers of music—they’ll get some German requiem up there, and they’ll sing in Latin. Somebody said, “It’s no wonder, when our choirs sing in Latin and our preachers preach in Greek, that our people want to speak in tongues.” Amen? They’re looking for reality. Get up there and sing some song that ought to be in some medieval cathedral somewhere, and one minister of music will say, “Oh boy, that’s great that ya’ll were able to do that. Let me tell you what we’re going to

do next week.” And, one minister of music in his rotten pride is trying to stroke another minister of music, and it’s pride—pride. I’m not saying that you ought not to do good music; I’m not saying we ought not to do some of the great music, but I’m saying, dear friend, that there is a sense of pride that creeps into our churches sometimes. And, people want things done a certain way, and they don’t give a hoot—they don’t care—whether souls are saved. They wouldn’t know a revival if they met one walking down the street.

I want to tell you something, friend: the spirit of Michal is the spirit of pride, and it holds back the power of God. And, when God gets in a service, sometimes He just may mess up the order of service, did you know that? He just may do it. One of these days, we may say, “We can’t have Sunday School—God’s given us revival. We’re just going to stay here; we’re going to stay here.” Now, we might have to cut out the choirs altogether and just have all preaching. Who knows? A preacher told me the other night he didn’t get to preach—said he got up, and some of his people started to share, and God started to move, and he didn’t get to preach. And, we need to be ready for that, amen?

Now, I’m not talking about trying to make things happen. Brother, if your cup overflows, let it overflow—just don’t tilt it, hear? Now, we’re not trying to make things happen; we’re not trying to run a circus. But, I am saying this: that “*where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*” (2 Corinthians 3:17) And, Michal could not stand it that David was happy, and leaping, and dancing, and praising God. It was beneath her dignity as a queen’s daughter.

I heard Dr. W. A. Criswell, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, say that he was on vacation, and he said he went into a church and it was as cold and dead as a mausoleum. And, they had a little quartet up there singing in a choir loft up there, in a ice chest somewhere—a paid quartet—and that’s all they had. It was the “First Church of the Holy Refrigerator,” where Jack Frost is the pastor. You have to ice skate down the aisle. And he said it was dead—as dead as a wedge. Then, he said he went later to a restaurant; it was in a resort area. And he said, in this resort area, that the tables were waited on by college students who were working their way through college. And, in this resort restaurant some of the college kids were singing; they had accordians and so forth, and they were playing music while people were eating, and the kids were so happy. And he said they had checkered table cloths on the tables, and flowers on the tables and the kids were happy, serving the food. Dr. Criswell said both of these things happened one after the other, first the church service, and then the restaurant. Now he said they didn’t give an invitation in either place, but if they had, he would have joined the restaurant.

I can agree with that. Oh, listen friend, If you’re one of these people trying to carry

around a load of dignity, if you're one of these people trying to impress the people down the street, forget them. David know that Michal might not like it, but David know this; he said, these handmaidens, they'll understand what I'm doing.

I'll tell you something. We better keep a church that has a touch for the common man. Let them go join some ice-cold dead thing, but I want to tell you something, friend, if you are one of these people filled with spiritual pride, religious pride, which is the worst kind of pride, don't look down your long nose at the drunkard, you're doing more than anybody else to hold back the power of God in revival. There is no doubt about it. Proud, cold, official, organized Christianity quenches the free Spirit of God. And the scribes and the Pharisees and the Bible scholars sometimes sit off to the side and they look with pride upon real heart-felt religion and anybody that doesn't dot every i like they want it dotted and every t like they want it crossed. And these people know how to dot all their i's right and they know how to cross all the t's, they just don't know how to spell the words. I mean, they do not know reality, and I want us to have, in our church, reality. Don't be like Michal. She was more interested in form than force. She was more interested in ritual than righteousness. She was a self-righteous bigot. And she mocked David's God when she mocked David.

I want you to see what happened to her, and I'm finished. Look in verse 23: "Therefore Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child until the day of her death. You know what that kind of a person is like? Do you want me to tell you what the Michal kind of a person is like? They're barren. And if you had to depend upon those people to bring souls to the altar, nobody would be saved. They're not soul winners; they don't have a heart for God. They don't love God. They're filled with rotten pride and they're filled with spiritual barrenness and her physical barrenness was but an illustration of the spiritual barrenness of these people.

Conclusion

Oh, that God would give us fruit. Oh, that God would give us a hot heart. I want to tell you something, friend. The joy of the Lord that you find in any church is the greatest advertisement. Most people in America are not all that worried about going to heaven or hell; they want to know how to hack it on Monday. They want to know is there someplace where there's joy and life. And I'm not talking about a carnival atmosphere. David tried that the first time he was leaping and dancing before the ark and God cut that off in a hurry. And don't you think that we can just come in here with cheerleader enthusiasm and have revival. That's a mistake that a lot of people make. "Ha, ha, it's not raining on the inside. Let's sing!" No. I'm just talking about when there's the Spirit of God and where God moves upon His people and the Holy One comes down and there is the presence of God. There will be an effulgence of joy; there will be a spontaneous,

supernatural joy that you cannot contain, and that's the most attractive thing that this church will ever have. God help us to have the conscious presence of God in our lives. Let's pray.

The High Cost of Low Living

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 9, 1997

Main Scripture Text: 2 Samuel 11, 12:9, 13

“Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight?”

2 SAMUEL 12:9

Outline

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- I. The Tragic Cause of David’s Sin
 - A. The Sin of Idleness
 - B. The Sin of Carelessness
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 - D. The Sin of Callousness
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- III. The Timely Challenge to David’s Sin
 - A. Conviction
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Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to find, please, 2 Samuel chapter 11. This is a sad chapter in the Word of God; it’s a tragic chapter. It’s the story of David’s sin with Bathsheba. The title of the message this morning: “The High Cost of Low Living”—“The High Cost of Low Living.” Can a child of God sin? Yes. Can a child of God sin and not suffer? No.

Now, I want you to pay attention to this scripture. I love David. David is a man that I

look forward to meeting in Heaven. The Bible called David “*a man after his own heart*” (1 Samuel 13:14). King David, poet, “sweet singer of Israel,” mighty warrior—one of the greatest men, in my estimation, who ever lived. As a matter of fact, I have a missionary son who is named after this man. Our son David is named after this David.

When I think of David, first of all, I think of his bravery—how brave he was. You remember the Bible records those stories of how he killed a lion, and a bear, and then how, as a little lad, he went out after Goliath and killed Goliath? We all know those stories. We love David’s bravery. Then, we think of his talent. What a king! What an administrator! What a warrior! What a poet! What a musician was David! One of the most talented men who ever lived was this man that we call David. And yet, he was so humble. After he had been appointed and anointed to be the King of Israel, he went back to tending sheep. What a humble man was this man David! And, how noble he was! Saul had tried to kill David. David had the opportunity to exterminate Saul, and then he said he ought to have done it. But David, so noble, said, “I’ll not lay my hand on God’s anointed” (1 Samuel 26:23). I’m telling you that David was a man among men and a man above most every other man—an incredible individual. And yet, David fell into deep, dark, hateful, heinous sin, and this chapter tells about it.

You know, when God paints a verbal portrait of a man, He paints the whole thing. He doesn’t hide the blemishes, the scars. I read somewhere where Alexander the Great, who conquered the world at 33, had a portrait made of him, and Alexander’s hand is up here as if he is in contemplation. But, what Alexander is doing is hiding a scar, a battle scar. But, the Bible doesn’t hide the scars, and here’s a scar on the life of this man David.

Listen to it—verse 1: “*And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But*”—now, watch this—“*But*”—and in my Bible, I have the word *but* underlined—“*But David tarried still at Jerusalem*”—now, David did not go to war. He was a warrior king. It was a time when kings went to war. David was a king, but—“*But David tarried still at Jerusalem. And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king’s house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house. And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child*” (2 Samuel 11:1–5). David committed the sin of adultery. The woman conceived. And now, David is in perplexity.

“Now,” you say, “Pastor, what does that have to do with me?” Well, I want to say that every one of us needs to take warning from this message, because none of us in this building is a better man than David was. None more noble, none more gifted, none more humble than David; and yet, David fell into sin. Now, there are four things I want you to see with me today as we look into this. And, you kids up in the balcony—I want you to pay much attention, because this is something you’re going to have to wrestle with, those of you who name the name of Jesus.

I. The Tragic Cause of David’s Sin

First of all, I want you to see what I’m going to call “the tragic cause of David’s sin.” How could a man like this fall into sin—I mean, a good man like this? Let me tell you what his sin was.

A. The Sin of Idleness

First of all, it was the sin of idleness—the sin of idleness. Look in verses 1 and 2 again. The Bible says here that it was the time when kings went to war, but David is there in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 11:1). Now, the Bible says the harvest was over; and now, the battle has begun. And, there are two fields that every one of us needs to stay in: one is the harvest field and the other is the battlefield. If you’re a man of God, a woman of God, a child of God, God never intends for you to ever get out of the harvest field or the battlefield. If we’re not in the harvest field, we’ll be in the battlefield. If we’re not in the battlefield, we’ll be in the harvest field. But, here’s the problem: David is not doing something wrong at this particular time, except that he’s failing to do something right. David’s sin here is the sin of omission; it is the sin of idleness. And, well have we heard that idleness, an idle heart, an idle mind is the devil’s workshop. The sin of omission. The Bible says, “*Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin*” (James 4:17).

I’m going to tell you something, folks: every sin ultimately is a sin of omission—every sin—because if you’re doing what you ought to do, you cannot be doing what you ought not to do. Is that not true? And so, David should have been with his compatriots in war. He should’ve been at the king’s battle fighting the king’s war, but he was not. What was he doing? He was in bed. When was he in bed? Now, listen to this: When was he in bed? In the afternoon. The Bible says that “*in an eveningtide*”—when the sun is setting—“*that David arose from off his bed*” (2 Samuel 11:2). He is in bed lolling around, and now he gets up to go walk out and look on the roof of his house.

Now, there is a time for legitimate rest, but you’re not supposed to stay in the sack all day long. The Bible says in Proverbs 24, verses 33 and 34: “*Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that*

travelleth; and thy want as an armed man” (Proverbs 24:33–34).

You guys, you gals in the balcony—you stay busy. Don’t you be sitting around the house all day long watching television. If you have nothing else to do, get out and rake the yard. Go in the kitchen and help your mother. You men who don’t have a job to do—you say, “Well, I don’t have work.” Well, let me tell you what to do: you go serve somebody even if you don’t get paid.

And, by the way, if you want a job, let me tell you how to get a job: you go to a place where you’d like to work, and you tell the man, “I’m out of work.” He says, “I’m not hiring any body.” You say, “Okay, fine. Would it be all right for me to come work for you for nothing? Just...I will work here for nothing.” Well, you’re not doing anything anyway, are you? So, rather than sitting around watching soap operas, just say to that man, “Listen, I will work for you for absolutely nothing.” He’ll look at you like you’re crazy. And, say, “No, I mean it.” And, I’ll tell you what: before long, you’ll have a job with that man—you will. Don’t just sit around doing nothing.

You men who are retired—you say, “Well, I worked hard. Now—now—I’m not going to work any more.” You, sir, are headed for trouble. If you’re retired, that means you’ve got more time to serve God. Isn’t that right? You’re not supposed to be sitting around like a dullard, doing nothing. You’re going to get in trouble. God wants you to be occupied. The Lord Jesus said we are to occupy ’till He comes (Luke 19:13). Where was his sin? Number one: It was a sin of idleness.

B. The Sin of Carelessness

Number two: It was a sin of carelessness. Now, David was a warrior king, but now he has taken off his armor. But, what does the Bible tell us to do? The Bible tells us in 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 3: *“endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2:3)*. Why had David taken off his armor? There was a battle going on, but now he’d had so many victories he now begins to take victory for granted. He just presumes that God is going to keep on blessing.

I’m talking to some of you. You’ve been mighty warriors for the Lord, but now you’re getting careless. You think that you are so strong, don’t you? You think that you cannot fall, don’t you? You think that you cannot fail. Isn’t that right? You’ve got a great record behind you, just like David had a great record behind him. Let me tell you where David fell: David did not fall because he was weak; David fell because he was strong. David fell not at the point of his weakness but at the point of his strength. Where was David’s strength? It was his integrity. He said in the Psalms, *“I have walked in mine integrity” (Psalm 26:1)*. If there were ever a man that had integrity, it was David; and yet, David fell at the point of his integrity. And, I’ll tell you why he fell at the point of his integrity: because he got careless. He was idle, and then he was careless.

Now, come up close. I wanna tell you something: “an unguarded strength is a double weakness”—“an unguarded strength is a double weakness” (Oswald Chambers). If you’ll study the great men of God, and find out if they fail and where they failed, they failed at their point of strength, not weakness. What was Simon Peter’s greatest strength? His courage. He said, “Lord, I’ll go with You to prison and to death” (Luke 22:33). He was the one who pulled out a sword and went after that man in the Garden of Gethsemane. Do you remember that? I’ll tell you, you wouldn’t wanna get in a fist fight with Peter. He was tough—the big fisherman. And yet, where did he fail? At the point of his courage. A little girl caused him to curse and deny the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen, I’m telling you, here is a man who failed because of his carelessness. That’s the reason the Bible says, “*Keep thy heart with all diligence*” (Proverbs 4:23). Don’t get idle. Don’t get careless.

C. **The Sin of Impulsiveness**

I’ll tell you what else it was: not only was it a sin of idleness, and not only was it a sin of carelessness; it was a sin of impulsiveness. He had not planned to sin that day. He had no idea he would’ve done such a thing when he woke up. I mean, it was not in his plans. He had not been scheming; he’d not been planning. The Bible just says that he looked out there. He’s walking on his rooftop. He looks over there, and there she is—there she is. And, the Bible says he saw her, and that fire of lust began to burn in him. This was his impulsivity, his impulsiveness, that caused him to sin. He had no idea he would have done such a thing.

Are you listening to me? Let me tell you what sin is. Are you listening? Teenagers, listen to me. *Sin is a combination of three things, so many times. It is an undetected weakness, an unexpected opportunity, and an unprotected life*—an undetected weakness, an unexpected opportunity compounded by an unprotected life. That’s the reason that you must keep your heart and protect your life. You do not know what is latent in your own flesh. You say, “Well, I’ve been saved a long time. My flesh has improved.” Your flesh has not improved one scintilla of an iota. That which is flesh is flesh, and that’s the reason that you must do as the Lord Jesus Christ taught us to do: when we pray every day, say, “[Dear God,] *lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*” (Matthew 6:13). And, you bring the mantle of God’s protection over your life, because there is an undetected weakness, an unexpected opportunity, an unprotected life, and you may go down. He was impulsive in this sin. He did not intend to do this thing.

I wanna tell you right now: there are three people sitting in that chair you are in right now. You say, “No wonder it’s so crowded!” Three people: there is the person you are right now this moment; there is the person you could be for God if you sold out 100%—

most of us are light years from what we could be and ought to be—and there is the person for evil that we may become if we take our eyes off the Lord. I'm telling you this: David never dreamed that he would have done such a thing—never, never. If you'd asked David, "David, would you ever do this?" he would say, "No way." But, he did. It was an impulsive sin. He had begun to coast. His heart had gotten cold. He didn't even realize how cold his heart was. We say, when somebody sometimes does a terrible thing like this, "Look how far they fell." The problem is, we don't know how low they were living. Outwardly, everything looked fine.

D. **The Sin of Callousness**

I'll tell you what else it was: it became a sin of callousness. Do you know what happened? If you begin in verse 6 of this same chapter, you're gonna find out that when David discovered that Bathsheba was pregnant, he tried to cover the thing up. He said, "I know what I'll do: I'll bring her husband home from the battlefield. They'll spend the night together, and then he'll think that's his child" (2 Samuel 11:6). Well, he brought Uriah home from the battlefield, but Uriah loved David so much, and he was so loyal to his soldiers on the battlefield, he said, "I can't be here having romance with my wife when my fellow soldiers are out there on the battlefield."

So, rather than going home, he just slept outside David's door—just to protect David, his king. David realized then that the plan wasn't going to work; and so, he said, "I've got to do something to get rid of Uriah, because Uriah's going to know this is not his child." So, David calls the commander-in-chief of his army, Joab, and he says, "Take Uriah, and put him out there in the battle, right in the forefront of the battle. And then, when he gets out there in the forefront of the battle, withdraw all of the troops, and that man will be out there, and he'll be killed, and we can tell everybody he was killed in battle" (2 Samuel 11:14–15). It was a diabolical plan hatched in Hell. How could David do something like that? Here Uriah is David's friend; and now, he's going to die by David's hand.

David's sin with Bathsheba—listen to me—David's sin with Bathsheba was a hot-blooded sin. He saw her, and the lust began to burn. But, David's sin with Uriah—listen to me—was a cold-blooded sin. He planned it; he connived it. It was one of the dirtiest deeds ever done. Uriah the Hittite, who would have died for David's honor, now dies from David's hand. Could David be doing this? I mean, is this David? Is this the one who wrote the psalms? Do you know the verse that comes to my mind right now? I'll tell you what it is: "*[beware] lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*"—"*lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*" (Hebrews 3:13). Here was a man whose heart now becomes hard. David never could've imagined that he would possibly have done this, much less committed the sin of adultery, but he did.

E. **The Sin of Stubbornness**

Idleness, carelessness, impulsiveness, callousness, and now stubbornness—stubbornness. God has spoken to David. David was under great conviction. But, David went one whole year without repenting and getting right with God. How stubborn was David! And, some of you are in the place right now. You are not only cold; you've rationalized this thing. You are stonewalling God. You're thinking somehow you're gonna make it work—somehow God's gonna forget about it. Somehow, you think, the statute of limitations is going to run out. Somehow, you think, you're just going to muddle through and gloss over the thing. And, you stubbornly go on day after day after day thinking, "Maybe God has forgotten." Do you know what happened? David continued to be the king. He continued to wear that smile and put on that front. That was the cause of David's sin.

II. **The Tremendous Cost of David's Sin**

Now, I want you to notice the second thing: I want you to notice not only the tragic cause of it, but I want you to notice the tremendous cost of it. You're in chapter 11. Look in verse 27, if you will—the last words in this chapter, the last part of the verse: *"But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD"* (2 Samuel 11:27). That's underscored in my Bible: *"But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD"* (2 Samuel 11:27). Now, David knew it displeased Him.

I want you to put a bookmark there and turn to Psalm 38, because in Psalm 38, David speaks of this displeasure. So, put a bookmark in 2 Samuel 11, and turn to Psalm 38. And, here in Psalm 38, you're going to see the tremendous cost of David's sin. I said in the beginning, "Can a child of God sin? Yes. Can a child of God sin and not suffer? Absolutely not." Now, remember that the Bible says that the thing displeased the Lord. Now, see how David speaks about this displeasure. Look in verses 1 and 2: *"O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore"* (Psalm 38:1–2). Now, what happens when a child of God sins?

A. **The Words of Rebuke**

Well, go back up to verse 1: *"O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath"* (Psalm 38:1). The very first things are words of rebuke. God the Holy Spirit will speak to you. God will rebuke you when you sin. God will put His finger on the sore spot and say, "That was wrong." Now listen, if you're living in sin, high, wide, and handsome—it may be the sin of adultery; it may be some other kind of sin—and God does not rebuke you—there is no conviction—I wouldn't give half a hallelujah for your hope of Heaven. Listen to me: if you're a child of God, God will rebuke you.

B. The Arrows of Conviction

There were words of rebuke, and then, secondly, there were arrows of conviction. Look, if you will, in verse 2: “*For thine arrows stick fast in me*” (Psalm 38:2). God pierced his heart. God said, “David, what you’ve done is wrong. It is horribly wrong.”

C. The Hand of Pressure

And then, notice, also, he says, “*And thy hand presseth me sore*” (Psalm 38:2)—words of rebuke, arrows of conviction, the hand of pressure. Sometimes people have the idea, “Oh, well, if we sin, God just tosses us away.” You’ve got it 180 degrees wrong. God doesn’t toss you away if you’re a child of His. When you sin, God puts His hand on you and squeezes. He says, “[*Your*] hand”—“[*your*] hand”—“*was heavy upon me*” (Psalm 32:4). In Psalm 51, he spoke of his bones being broken (Psalm 51:8). He’s a poet; he’s speaking poetically. He’s saying, “God, You’re crushing me. God, You’re squeezing life out of me.” Do you know that kind of pressure? If you’re living in sin and know that kind of pressure, you better thank God for it. If God has words of rebuke, if God has arrows of conviction, if God has a hand of pressure on you, say, “Thank God. He loves me too much to let me go on this way.” He’s under conviction.

Now, this is a mark that a person is saved. The Bible says, “If we be without chastisement, then we’re illegitimate; we’ve never been saved” (Hebrews 12:8). You see, listen, learn this—learn this: *the most miserable man in the world is not an unsaved man; the most miserable man in the world is a child of God out of fellowship with God*. Is that not right? He is far more miserable than an unsaved man. Other men in the kingdom could’ve done these kinds of things and never would’ve felt like David felt. When God saves you, God doesn’t fix you up where you can’t sin anymore, but mister, He fixes you up where you can’t sin and enjoy it anymore.

There are words of wrath. There are arrows of conviction. There is the hand of pressure. Have you ever been out soul winning, witnessing, and you talk to a man, and you can just tell he’s not about to let you talk to him, but you talk to him about being saved? “Oh,” he says, “I was saved. I’m saved. I was saved when I was a teenager down there at Bellevue Baptist Church.” And, he’s not living for God; he’s living in sin. He doesn’t care about the things of God. I wanna tell you, friend, he’s going to split Hell wide open. He hadn’t been saved. He says, “I guess I’m just an old backslider.” No, he’s not. If he was a backslider, he couldn’t laugh about it like that. I’m telling you what: he’s never been saved. He didn’t lose his salvation; he never had it. Friend, if you’re a child of God and you’re living in sin, God’s not going to let you go; you’re not going to get away with it.

Let me show you what David’s sin is. I’m talking about “The High Cost Of Low Living.” Let me show you what David’s sin did.

1. David's Sin Wearied Him

Look in verse 3. His sin wearied him. Notice he says, *"There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin"* (Psalm 38:3). Night and day, day and night, night and day, day and night, the thing David has done is in his heart and in his mind. He can't sleep. A clear conscience is better than any sleeping pill. Unresolved guilt will sap the strength out of your life—strength that ought to be given to productive purposes. His sin wearied him.

2. David's Sin Weighted Him

Notice in verse 4—his sin weighted him. He says, *"For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me"* (Psalm 38:4). I prayed with a young man down in Mexico City. I'd rented his car to get me around. And, we stopped, and I had the joy of leading the young Mexican to Christ. And, after we prayed in the front of that little Volkswagen, he said to me, "Mister"—I'll never forget it. He said—"Mister, let me tell you how I feel." He said, "I feel like I've been carrying a bag of stones all my life and I just set them down." Sin is a weight. His sin wearied him. His sin weighted him.

3. David's Sin Wounded Him

His sin wounded him. Look in verse 5: *"My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness"* (Psalm 38:5). I think he's talking about spiritual gangrene here. I think he's talking about the corruption on the inside. He's talking about what happened when that arrow went into him, and that arrow's sticking into him—the arrow of conviction. He's speaking poetically here, and he says, *"[Now,] my wounds stink"* (Psalm 38:5). Sorrow is a clean wound; it will heal. Guilt is a dirty wound; it only festers until it's cleansed.

4. David's Sin Worried Him

But, not only did his sin weary him, and weight him, and wound him; it worried him. Look in verse 6: *"I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long"* (Psalm 38:6). What a miserable man he is—worried about his sin! If they had telephones in that day, every time the telephone rang, David would jump. Every time he'd see people talking—wonder, "Are they talking? Do they know? Is the word out?" No peace. Trust me, "no torture...the poets [name], can match [that] fierce, unutterable pain [he feels]...[day] and [night], devoid of rest, carries his own accuser [within] his breast" (Juvenal).

5. David's Sin Wasted Him

His sin wasted him. Look, if you will, in verse 7: *"For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh"* (Psalm 38:7). I believe that David had venereal disease. That's what he's talking about now. He's talking, now, about a loathsome disease. He's not talking poetically now. He had a few moments of pleasure.

Sin promises much, but it pays little. His sin now wasted him.

Young people in the balcony, I wanna tell you what God's plan is—I hope you won't miss it: you keep yourself sexually pure for the one you're going to marry. Now, don't be worried so much about safe sex. Put your attention on sacred sex. That's always safe. God's plan for you—God... Yeah, that's right. Listen—God's plan is one man for one woman, premarital chastity, post-marital fidelity. His sin wasted him. What a wasted life this was!

6. David's Sin Weakened Him

And, his sin weakened him. Look, if you will, in verse 8: *"I am feeble"* (Psalm 38:8). He used to be a mighty warrior. Now, he's broken in body and broken in spirit. Sin promises much, but it pays so little. Let me show you how weak he is. In the next few verses, he speaks of himself as being blind, deaf, and dumb. Listen to it—listen to it. He says here in verse 10: *"the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me"* (Psalm 38:10). Look, if you will, in verse 13: *"I, as a deaf man"*—look in verse 13—*"I was as a dumb man"* (Psalm 38:13). Here is the mighty warrior of Israel—spiritually blind, spiritually deaf, spiritually dumb. He's blind to blessings, deaf to danger. No longer is he speaking, singing, praising, worshipping, glorifying God. His sin has weakened this mighty man of God.

This is the cost to David. I don't even have time to talk about the cost to David's friend. Look, if you will, in verse 11: *"My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off"* (Psalm 38:11). There's David. You know what the word *sore* means here in this verse? David is speaking poetically. The word is the word for *leprosy*. David had become a moral leper. He's unclean. His friends, his acquaintances, his kinfolk—they're backing away from him. Oh, the tragedy that David's sin brought to his family! I had rather die by torture than to dishonor my God and dishonor my family. Oh, the high cost—the high cost, the high cost—of low living! A few moments of pleasure—the tragic cost, the tremendous cost.

III. The Timely Challenge to David's Sin

Now, I want you to see with me, if you will, dear friend, the timely challenge to David's sin. Do you think God's just gonna let this go on and on? Oh, no. Go back, if you will, to 2 Samuel chapter 11. You're gonna find out that God sent somebody to speak to David about his sin. There is a confrontation. Look, if you will, in chapter 12 now, and verse 9: the Bible says Nathan is speaking to him and says, *"Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight?"* (2 Samuel 12:9). Now, let me tell you how God deals—and I'm gonna have to collapse a few things here, but I wanna give you the four steps—tell you how God deals with this kind of man when he's in this kind of a sin. The timely challenge.

A. Conviction

First of all, there is conviction. We've already talked about that. That's that conviction, those words of rebuke, that arrow of conviction, that hand of pressure. Now, what should you do if there's sin in your life? It may be just the sin of coldness. It may be a very small sin, not a big sin. But, you deal with it immediately. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, verses 31 and 32: *"For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged"*—God is not trying to get even with you; God just wants you to be corrected. He goes on to say in verse 32—*"But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world"* (1 Corinthians 11:31–32).

When parents punish children, they're not trying to get even with those children; they're trying to correct them. Now, there are some children—all you have to do is just look at them, and their little hearts will melt. "Oh," you don't say, "well, if the child is repentant and the child is changed, they're no longer doing that." You don't say, "Well, I'm gonna punish them anyway." No, what you want is a change of behavior—that's all you want. *"For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged"* (1 Corinthians 11:31). God is not trying to get even with His child; God wants to correct that child.

B. Chastisement

So, first of all, there's conviction. Well, suppose the conviction doesn't work. Second chance—second step: chastisement. God will carry you to the woodshed. Hebrews 12, verse 6: *"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth"* (Hebrews 12:6). And, don't think that God won't chastise you. And, the word *scourge* is a word for "severe whipping."

Let me tell you something: God is more concerned about your holiness than He is your health. God is more concerned about your righteousness than your driving a Cadillac, or living in a big house, or having business success. God is more concerned than your reputation. And, God will appropriately chastise you—not because He doesn't love you, but because He does love you. He loved David. Read Psalm 89: God said, "I'll never break my covenant with David" (Psalm 89:34).

C. Confrontation

All right. There's conviction. After conviction, there's chastisement. After chastisement, there is confrontation. God will bring you to a confrontation. I mean, God will not let you go on. God sent Nathan the prophet to confront David, and God said, "Now David, you'd better get right. You will not go on like this." Now, I don't know how the confrontation will come to you. Maybe the confrontation will come to you in a book that you read. Maybe the Holy Spirit of God will just speak to your heart. Maybe it'll be your wife. Maybe it'll be your husband. Maybe it'll be your pastor. Maybe it'll be a friend. Maybe it'll be some circumstance. But, you'll know that you're right on the threshold of being judged. It may

be this sermon. I don't know why God wanted me to preach this sermon today, but I felt it laid on my heart that I needed to preach this sermon today. And, it seemed as though God was saying to me, "There's somebody, Adrian, who needs to hear what you're saying." And, I believe that there may be a divine appointment here, and this is the confrontation, the challenge.

D. Consumption

Now, suppose the challenge is not taken. Suppose when God says, "All right, I have tried conviction. I have tried chastisement. Now comes a challenge; now comes a confrontation. I am drawing a line in the sand." Now, suppose you don't listen to this. Then, the last thing is consummation. Look, if you will, in chapter 12, verse 13. Here's what the prophet said to David: "*And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD*"—thank God he came to that place. David was a great sinner, but he finally became a great repenter—"*I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die*" (2 Samuel 12:13). Do you know what was happening? God was getting ready to kill David. Let me say it again: God was getting ready to kill David. You say, "God doesn't do that." You better reread your Bible. You better read 1 John chapter 5, where the Bible says, "*There is a sin unto death*" (1 John 5:16).

Do you know how Moses died? Do you think Moses died of poor health? Moses went up on Mount Nebo, and the Bible says of him, "*His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated*" (Deuteronomy 34:7). He walked to his own funeral because of his sin against God. "*There is a sin unto death*" (1 John 5:16). You remember that man named Balaam who was out of the will of God, riding that donkey that day, and the donkey went out in the field, and he beat the donkey, and then the donkey, going through a narrow place, crushed Baalam's leg against the wall? And then, Baalam got off the donkey and began to beat the donkey, and the angel of the Lord said, "Why are you beating that animal?" He says, "You're going against me." And, Baalam saw the angel of the Lord with a drawn sword. The donkey had already seen the angel. And, the angel said to Baalam, "Had you gone any further, I surely would have slain you" (Numbers 22:22–33). We're not talking about the unsaved now; we're talking about the child of God. Nathan says to David, "David, thank God that you confessed your sin. You're not gonna die" (2 Samuel 12:13).

I had a man in a former church. That man was a man I led to Christ. I loved him like a brother—a leader in the church. The man got a silly little sin in his heart. It dealt primarily with pride. I told him, "Jack, you're too good a man to let that be in your heart and in your life. Get that right." He said, "I'm not gonna do it." I said, "No, wait a minute. Just say you need help or something. Just don't say, 'I'm not gonna do it.'" He said, "No,

I'm not gonna do it." I said, "Jack, the Bible says, '*Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins*'" (Psalm 19:13). He said, "I don't care what the Bible says." I said, "Now, wait a minute." I said, "Jack, when you do that, you challenge God. That's arrogance. That's bold, blatant sin against God. God will judge you." You know what he said to me? He said, "He can do with me what He wants. I'm not gonna change."

I felt a cold chill come over me. I said, "Jack, take it back—take it back now. Don't say that." He said, "I've said it." I said, "Jack, take it back." He said, "I'll not do it." I couldn't believe my ears. I said, "Jack, I'm afraid for you." I went and told Jesse. I said, "Jesse"—(another friend) I said—"Jesse, I'm putting you on notice. I want you to bear witness. I want you to watch. I want you to see what's about to happen to Jack." I was out of town when I got the phone call: "Pastor, did you hear about Jack?" "No." "Jack fell dead." Just a matter of days, Jack died. He fell dead. No reason to expect him to fall dead. I said, "I'm not surprised. I'm saddened."

Folks, let me tell you something: the Bible says, "*There is a sin unto death*" (1 John 5:16). If you had a little child, you take that child to a birthday party, and that child is smearing the cake, pulling the hair of the little girls, ripping into the presents—you're his mama—first thing you do is correct him, speak to him. He doesn't listen. Then, you spank him. He just gets worse. What do you do? You say, "Come on. We're going home—we're going home." The child of God gets into sin. Does that mean he won't go to Heaven? It may mean he'll get there a lot quicker—there a lot quicker.

Moses is in Heaven. Moses went up on Mount Nebo. He died on Mount Nebo. "*His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated*" (Deuteronomy 34:7). Had Baalam gone any further, God would've killed him. Had David not repented, God would've killed him.

Conclusion

If you're living in sin and God is not dealing with you, know what you need to do? You need to get saved—you need to get saved. And, if you're living in sin and God is dealing with you, you know what you need to do? You need to get right with God—you need to get right with God. Listen, this is not a playground; this is not just Sunday morning church. God is serious about your life. He wants you to live a righteous and a holy life.

"Well," you say, "Adrian, boy, I hope they heard it—I hope they heard it!" No, God's speaking to you. You say, "Not me! I don't commit adultery. I don't murder people." That wasn't David's problem. David's problem was the coldness of his heart. That's where it began. And now, we're dealing with you. Would to God—would to God—that David were at the point that you're at right now when his heart began to get cold! The mighty warrior, the one who loved God with all of his heart, now he puts off the armor. Now, he is idle. Now, he is lazy. Now, he is no longer looking to God. And, God is calling some of you today to renew your vows to Jesus and say, "God, I haven't committed adultery. I

haven't killed any body. But, I don't love You like I used to. I've been lazy. I've been idle. I've had unguarded strength. It may be a double weakness."

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Father, I just pray that You will seal the message to our hearts today. And, help us, Lord, to learn the things we need to learn. And Lord, You know who needs this message—not primarily a lot of people who have committed horrible sin, but a church full of people whose hearts may be getting cold. Lord, help us not to commit the sin of idleness, of carelessness, laziness, and impulsiveness.

While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I wonder how many today would say, "Pastor Rogers, I'm not saved, but I need to be—I ought to be; I want to be. I need God in my life. I don't have the power, the strength, to live as I ought to live. And, I know if I die in my sins, I'll be eternally separated from God in Hell. But, I need to be saved, and I want to be saved." If you wanna be saved, God will save you today if you'll pray a prayer like this: "Dear God"—just pray it from your heart—"I'm a sinner. I'm lost. I need to be saved. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus. Save me today. Save me now. And, help me never to be ashamed of You. Help me to make it public. Amen."

The Way Home

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: Unknown

Main Scripture Text: 2 Samuel 11:1–15; 12:7, 9, 13

“And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.”

2 SAMUEL 12:13

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word tonight and turn with me, please, to 2 Samuel chapter 11? We’re going to read, in a moment, the story of David and Bathsheba. The title of our message tonight: “The Way Home.” The subject of the message tonight is the folly, the danger, the tragedy, the heartbreak of backsliding.

Now, this is a camp meeting; it is not an evangelist crusade. I hope that people will

be saved—and I want them to be saved—but primarily, I’m going to be speaking to God’s people in this camp meeting. We’re here to rejoice in the Lord, but we’re here to look at our own lives and see what God would say to us. And, though we’re here tonight to have a good time—and folks, we’ve had one; it’s been wonderful—but we’re here also to think seriously, and in keeping with the urgency and emergency of the time in which we live. And, I want to say that God has set before this church a great and awesome challenge. And, it is absolutely imperative that I be clean and pure. It is absolutely imperative that our staff be clean and pure. It is absolutely imperative that our deacons be clean and pure, that our teachers be right with God. And, God help us that our people—every one of us—shall be a clean people, a pure people, fit vessels for God to use. And so, I want you to think with me tonight about the danger of backsliding in this message I’m going to call “The Way Home.”

And, I’m reading beginning in verse 1: *“And it came to pass, after the year was expired, [and] the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem”*—notice the little word *but*. That is, there’s an inclination that he’s doing something he ought not to do—*“But David tarried still at Jerusalem. And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king’s house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house. And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child”* (2 Samuel 11:1–5).

I. The Danger of Backsliding

The first thing I want you to think about tonight is what I want to call “the danger of backsliding.” Of all of the characters in the Bible, I believe that I love David more than any man in the Bible, unless it is Paul. I love the Apostle Paul; I admire Paul, but I love David. I mean, I’m in awe of the Apostle Paul, but David is such a great man. You study the life of David, and you will find out why he was called, in the Bible, “a man after God’s own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22).

A. David was Brave

How brave he was! He was the one who slew the lion. He was the one who slew the bear. He was the one who killed Goliath. What a mighty warrior for God he was! How brave he was!

B. **David was Talented**

And, how talented he was! He was a king. He was an administrator. He was a poet. He was a musician. He was a theologian. He was a leader in every realm. What a talented, gifted man was David, Israel's greatest king.

C. **David was Humble**

But, not only was he brave and not only was he talented, how humble this man was. He was one of the most humble men that ever lived. When he was anointed to be king and could have been king—listen—already anointed to be king, yet he remained in Hebron. He did not go down to Jerusalem to be crowned king when he could have been and many people thought he ought to have been. But, he waited and bid his time. He waited as a shepherd after he had already been anointed to be king. He was a man that was a humble man.

D. **David was Noble**

And, what a gracious and noble man was David. Saul had hunted for David and wanted to kill David. Upon an occasion, David was in a cave, and Saul came into that cave. He didn't know that David was in the cave. David had an opportunity to kill Saul, but he didn't do it. He just simply cut off a piece of Saul's skirt, the robe of Saul's garment, to let Saul know that he could have killed him if he had wanted to. And, David's heart smote him because he even done that. He had to apologize and say, "I shouldn't have even done that." He said, "God forbid that I should even lay my hand upon God's anointed" (1 Samuel 24:6). Now, Saul—wicked, lascivious, mean, old king—and he was hunting for David's life. But, can you see something of the nobility of this man called David? He was brave. He was talented. He was humble. He was noble.

E. **But David Fell**

But now, you listen to me: he fell—he fell. What a message this is to my heart tonight! What a message this ought to be to every deacon, every staff member in this church! Do you think that you are better than David? Here is a warning from the Spirit of God of the danger of backsliding. Are we better than David? Are we stronger than David? Are we wiser than David? The Bible says, "*Let [a man] that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

II. **The Development of the Backslider**

But, I want you to think not only of the danger of backsliding, but I want you to think of the development of this backslider. He didn't just backslide over night. I mean, it wasn't like just one moment, he's walking with God, and the next moment, he's committing a terrible, horrible sin. Something happened. There was an evolution, there was a

process, there was a development in the life of this man.

A. The Sin of Idleness

First of all, he is committing what I want to call this call “the sin of idleness,” or “the sin of casualness.” Notice, if you will, in verse 1: *“And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab...his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem”* (2 Samuel 11:1). Now, rather than being in the battle, he was a warrior king, and he stayed at home, and he sent Joab. What does it mean “the times when kings went to war” (2 Samuel 11:1)? Well, the harvest time was over; they couldn’t go to war in the harvest time. They had to put first things first, and the harvest was necessary. But, after the harvest time, there was a battle to be fought for God, for righteousness, and for good. And, here is David staying at home.

Now, why did he do this? In former time, David would never have done this. But, as I read this here, I find now that David is now getting casual about his faith. He is beginning now to take God for granted. God has blessed him, and God has used him, but he is now coasting on past experiences. And, he simply presumes that God is going to keep on blessing. I wonder if some of you are like that. I wonder if I’m not looking at some people who were once deacon warriors. I wonder if I’m not looking at some people who were once prayer warriors. I wonder if I’m not looking at some people who were once soul winners, some people who were in the battle for God, some people who were leaders for God. And, God has blessed you, and God has tremendously used you; and now, you are coasting. You’re like David: you’ve taken off your armor. There never comes a time, my dear friend—I don’t care how old you get—when you can take off your spiritual armor.

Second Timothy chapter 2 and verse 3 says this to every one of us: *“[Now] therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”* (2 Timothy 2:3). But, David wasn’t enduring hardness. If you’ll look in verse 2, you’ll find out that he got off his bed at eventide (2 Samuel 11:2). It’s late in the afternoon, and you know what David has been doing? David has been lying around in bed all day long. It doesn’t sound like the David I know. But, the Bible says, *“In [the] eveningtide”* (2 Samuel 11:2), here’s David getting out of bed, finally rolling out. He figures now he’s been working all of his life; he’s going to take it easy for a life.

How many retired people we have here tonight? Let me see your hands. Lift your hands. All right, you retirees, I want to say something to you: don’t you get the idea for one moment that because you’re retired, you can be retired from serving God. If you’re retired and you don’t continue to serve God, you can get into serious trouble. Now, my friend, God only lets you retire so you’ll have more time to serve Him. A man never

retires from serving God. And, those of you who say, “Well, I used to work in Sunday School. I used to work in the church. I used to do this, and I used to do that”—I am telling you, my dear friend, you’d better get with it.

Here was David, who thought he’d done his thing and now it’s time for him to rest. You might rest from that labor, that physical labor, but you can’t rest from praying. You can’t rest from witnessing. You can’t rest from loving God and serving God. Proverbs 24, verse 33: *“Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: [And] so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man”* (Proverbs 24:33–34).

B. The Sin of Carelessness

But, here was not only the sin of idleness—God, keep us from that; God, keep us with the armor on—but it was also the sin of carelessness. Notice in verse 2 that the Bible says that David, now, as he gets from off his bed and he *“[walks] upon the roof of the king’s house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was...beautiful to look [at]”* (2 Samuel 11:2). Well, what happened at this moment is David got careless. David could not have helped the first look. Many of us see things that embarrass us and maybe tempt us. It’s not a sin to be tempted, but it is a sin to dwell on that temptation. That second look is the sin.

Now, David had forgotten what he himself had written. David said this in Psalm 101 and verse 2: *“I will behave myself wisely [with] a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes”*—but now, he’s not walking in his house with a perfect heart. Now, he allows a wicked thing to come before his eyes—*“I hate the work of them that turn aside”*—he says—*“it shall not cleave to me. A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person”* (Psalm 101:2–4). Would to God that David had lived by his own preaching!

There are some of us who watch things on television that we would be ashamed to watch if the Lord Jesus were in the room. Is that right? I mean, here’s a test: Could you put a chair down in your living room and say, “This is for You, Lord Jesus. You watch this program with me”? Oh, but we set certain wicked things before our eyes. We think that perhaps we’re good enough. We think perhaps we’re strong enough. We think that we can take this in, and it’ll not hurt us. But, the Bible says, *“Can a man take [a] fire in his bosom, and...be [not] burned?”* (Proverbs 6:27). You see, the Bible says, *“Keep [your] heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”* (Proverbs 4:23). And, some of you say, “Well, I’ve been walking with God so long. I’m so strong now—I can allow certain things in my life.” David couldn’t, and neither could you.

C. The Sin of Compulsiveness

His was a sin, my dear friend, of carelessness. His was a sin of idleness, and his was a sin of compulsiveness. David did not dream that he would do what he did. He looked at her, and compulsively he said, “Who is that?” Now, I suppose if you would have told him a day before he would have done this, he would have denied it. If you would have told him how horrible his sin would have been, and the terrible, horrible repercussions that were coming to him, he would have said, “That will never happen to me.” But, in a moment, he does something compulsively that he never dreamed he would have done.

I want to tell you, sitting in your chair tonight are three persons: the person you are now; the person you could be for good, and the person you could be for evil. Many of us don't realize the potentiality in those. Many of us do not realize the potentiality to serve God, to be used of God, to be mighty of God. And, I tell you, there's not a person here who does not, I suppose, who truly realized the ugly propensity of his flesh.

In the Bible, there was a man named Doeg. It was prophesied that he would do such a thing, a terrible thing. And, he said, “Am I dog, that I would do such a thing? Who do you think I am? Am I a dog, that I would do this thing?” (2 Kings 8:13). Actually, he was going to commit atrocities and rip up women with children and so forth. He said, “Who do you think I am? Am I a dog, that I would do that?” (2 Kings 8:13). But, he did it. He did not know the propensity in his own heart.

Jesus warned Simon Peter that Simon Peter would curse, and swear, and deny, and Simon Peter said, “Lord, oh no, not me. I'll go with You to prison, and I'll go with You to death” (Matthew 26:35).

Now, I want every mother's child in this building to listen to me: don't you sit there and think this sermon is for somebody else. You understand me tonight? Don't you sit there. I am telling you, there is, in your heart, an ability to do evil, and there, is in your heart, an ability to do good. You allow yourself to be put in that situation—you get idle, and then you get careless. And, you let your guard down, and then you are going to become compulsive. You are going to become presumptuous. Something is going to happen to you, and it'll happen to you quicker than you realize.

It was a sin of compulsiveness. That's the reason Jesus said to His disciples, who are Christians like we are, in Matthew chapter 26 and verse 41: “*Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation*” (Matthew 26:41). “Oh,” you say, “I don't need to watch and pray. It's beyond me.” “*Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*” (1 Corinthians 10:12).

D. The Sin of Callousness

But now, watch: first of all, carelessness—or, first of all, casualness—and then, carelessness; and then, compulsiveness; and then, my friend, callousness. I want you

to see something else he did: after he committed the sin of adultery, and he found out that Bathsheba had conceived, he knew that unless he did something, he couldn't cover up the sin. Bathsheba was married to a man named Uriah, who was one of David's friends, one of David's companions, and a fellow warrior. He was a man under David's command, and he was a man under David's protection. David, in order to cover up his sin, said this: "Uriah, I want you to come in from the battlefield. I need to see you. I want to talk to you. And, by the way, Uriah, I want you to go home and spend the night with your wife—you deserve it." But, Uriah was such a loyal man to David—he said, "Why, I can't do that with my brethren out there on the battlefield. I can't enjoy the comforts of a wife, and I can't have a relationship with my wife when my brethren are separated from their wives." And so, rather than doing that, Uriah just simply sleeps outside of David's door. David realizes that that thing did not work, and it would soon be found that Bathsheba was with child. And, the finger of suspicion might point to him, so he decided that he would just have Uriah killed so Uriah can't deny that he's the father of the child. And, what he says to Joab: he says, "Joab, during the battle, when the battle gets hot, I want you to see to it that Uriah the Hittite is out on the forefront of the battle, and then I want you let everybody else retreat. And, you leave that man out there by himself, fighting for me. Out there, leave him alone, and let him be killed."

You say, "I can't believe David would do such a thing!" I can't either, my friend. That is so unlike David. That's the dirtiest trick ever done. I want to tell you, what David did to Uriah, in my estimation, is far worse than what David did to Bathsheba—and what David did to Bathsheba was unspeakable. But, here was a man—you think about it. My dear friend, Uriah was under David's command. He was under David's protection. He was David's friend. He was loyal to David. What David did to Bathsheba was a warm-blooded sin, but what David did with Uriah was a cold-blooded sin. You think about it: he had figured it out; he had plotted it. He's not now caught up; he's not swept away with compassion. He is doing it; it is a reason thing. And Uriah, who was ready to die for David's honor, must now die by David's hand. What a disgrace! Could this be the David of the Bible? Could this be the David who wrote the 23rd psalm that I've been preaching? It's the same man. O God, help us.

Do you see the development of this man's sin? First of all, my dear friend, casualness; then, carelessness; and then, compulsiveness; and then, callousness—a hard-hearted, cold-blooded sinner. God, help us. Could it be David? It was David, and he did this. Now, I want to ask you a question: Could a man live this way and be saved? Could a man do such a thing and be saved? I want to be very careful right here, because I'll tell you this much: if you are living this way, you're probably not saved. This is not the norm; this is the exception. Technically, it is possible that you could be saved and get so far away from God that you could get into this kind of sin, or serious sin. But,

I'm going to tell you something else: if you are in that sin, you have no right to believe that you're saved. You may be, but, my dear friend, if you're living that way, I tell you what I would do: I would get so right with God so quick; I would not assume that I am saved. If you are saved—if you are saved—I want to tell you this, my dear friend: God will begin to deal mightily in your life, and you will repent or face the severest judgment of God.

We have so many people who are coasting and going to Hell on the doctrine of eternal security. I believe in the doctrine of eternal security, but I want to tell you something: this religion that we have is not a sinning religion. You don't have any right to believe that you are saved if you're living this way. You may be—you may be—but this is not the norm; this is not the regular way. It's possible—it's possible—that you can so get your eyes off of God, and you can go down—I've already told you that. But, my dear friend, don't you let David's sin or any body else's sin be an excuse for your sin, because I am telling you that David, because he was saved, faced something that was very severe, as we're going to see. And, so will you, if you're saved.

III. The Damage of Backsliding

Now, I want you to notice, therefore, the third thing. I've talked about the danger. I've talked about the development. I want you to see now what I'm going to call “the damage”—“the damage”—“of David's backsliding.” You see, he tried to cover up his sin, and the Bible says in Proverbs chapter 28 and verse 13: *“He that covereth his [sin] shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy”* (Proverbs 28:13). Now, if you find yourself sinning, the wisest thing you can do is to confess that sin as quickly as possible. Never try to cover it up. Jesus said, *“Agree with thine adversary quickly, [while you are] in the way with him”* (Matthew 5:25).

Do you know what happened to David? David went about one year in his life with this sin covered up in his life. It was the most miserable year of his life. I want you to turn to Psalm 32, and I want you to see how David felt during this time. Just take your Bible, and turn to Psalm 32. Thank God David had enough grace to record it for us, because not only was David a great sinner; he was also a great repenter. Notice what happened to David. In Psalm 32, David has had the burden lifted. David has come home, and David has said, *“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered”* (Psalm 32:1). By the way, the Bible says, *“He that covereth his [sin] shall not prosper”* (Proverbs 28:13). My dear friend, when you cover it, you are cursed. When you uncover it, you're blessed. And, what you uncover, God covers, but what you refuse to uncover, God uncovers.

“Blessed is he...whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man [to] whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile”—oh, David had so much

guile. He'd been living for a year a life of duplicity, a life of hypocrisy, a life of trying to pull the wool over everybody else's eyes. Notice when he describes that guile. Notice what happened in verse 3. He says—*"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long"* (Psalm 32:1–3).

A. Physical Aging

Now listen, friend, if you're a saved child of God—if you're a child of God—and you allow sin in your life, you know what's going to happen to you? You're going to age about ten years every year you live. David said, *"When I kept [quiet], my bones waxed old"* (Psalm 32:3). You'll get old so fast, my dear friend, the juices stop flowing in your life.

B. Inward Groaning

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine" (Proverbs 17:22). But, your joy will be gone. Notice, in verse 3, the lack of joy here: he says, *"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long"* (Psalm 32:3). What does he mean by "roaring"? He means by "inward groaning." There's that pain that was in his heart.

C. Spiritual Dryness

And, there's going to be that great conviction. Notice in verse 4: *"For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me"*—underscore that. God's hand was upon David so strong. God's hand was there when he tried to pray. The heavens were like brass. He says—*"my moisture [has] turned [to] the drought of summer"* (Psalm 32:4).

There was spiritual dryness. There was inward groaning. There was physical aging. All of these things happened to him.

Have you ever gone out soul winning? Have you ever knocked on a door, and been visiting for the church, and some man will meet you at the door? Maybe he'll have a six-pack in his hand. Maybe he'll be there in an old T-shirt. I just have a typical guy in my mind. He's kind of a pot-bellied old guy, and he comes out there with a can of beer. And, you tell him who you are and what you're doing, and he just laughs. You might as well be talking to a stone wall as to try to get this man to come to God and live for God. And, after a while, after he puffs his cigarette, he says, "Well, ha, ha, ha, ha, I guess I'm just an old backslider. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"—"an old backslider. I was saved when I was a kid, but I just don't go any more. Guess I'm just an old backslider." He's not an old backslider; he's headed straight for Hell—straight to Hell. My dear friend, when a man who has once known God, a man who has once walked with God, a man who has had the Spirit of God in his heart and the hand of God upon his life, he's not going to say, "Ha, ha, ha, I'm just an old backslider." He can't do it—not when the Spirit of God is working on his heart. David sinned, but he never laughed about it. God's hand was

heavy upon him. “God,” he said, “my bones are drying up within me” (Psalm 32:3).

Some of you who have sin in your heart, sin in your life—you’re counting on “once saved, always saved,” but you’re going to split Hell wide open because you’ve never been saved. My dear friend, I am telling you, it is possible for a child of God to sin. It is possible for a child of God to go down. But, when he does, God will lower the hammer. I’m telling you, the Spirit of God will tear you up.

IV. The Deception of Backsliding

I want to talk about something else tonight, too: I want to talk not only about the damage of this sin, but I want to talk to you about the deception of this sin. Here, David tried to cover up his sin, and every backslider tries to cover it up. People rationalize. We’ve been taught so much behavioristic psychology. We’ve been told, “Well, we’re really not evil; we’re just ill. We’re not wicked; we’re just weak. We’re really not sinful; we’re just sick.” We try to find some excuse for it. David continued to reign as king. You keep your job in the church; you keep on serving on your committee, but you know this sin in your heart and in your life. Oh, oh, how easy it is to want to hide it! *“He that covereth his [sin] shall not prosper”* (Proverbs 28:13). David tried for a year in futility and vanity to try to cover this sin.

V. The Dealing with Backsliding

I want to leave that point, and I want to go on, next, to what I’m going to call “the dealing with backsliding in the life of the backslider.” How does God deal with a backslider? This is the very serious part of this message. I want you to listen to it, because I dare say there are 20 or 30% of this congregation—maybe more, maybe 50%—who are in this category. I’m going to show you what’s going to happen. I don’t mean that you’ve committed adultery or murder—that’s not the point. Don’t try to categorize sin. What’s the first thing that happens?

A. Conviction

First of all, there will be conviction. If you’re a backslider, the Holy Spirit that is in you will be grieved. David said what in Psalm 32 and verse 4? *“For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me”* (Psalm 32:4). Some people have the idea that if you sin, God will throw you away. He doesn’t throw you away; He holds you tighter—He holds you tighter. He said in another place, “God, You...You’re breaking my bones” (Psalm 32:3). He was speaking poetically, but God had His hand and God was tightening down upon him. There will be conviction. Psalm 51 verse 8 says, *“Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice”* (Psalm 51:8). God will bring conviction. At that moment, He has not yet brought judgment. And, do you know what will happen? If, at that moment, you would judge yourself, He won’t judge you.

That's what God has promised.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 11 (1 Corinthians 11), some of the Corinthians were sinning so much that they had committed *"the sin unto death"* (1 John 5:16). A Christian may commit a sin unto death—I'm going to show you that in a moment. David almost died prematurely. You can come so close to God's deadline, or you can come so close to exhausting God's patience, that finally, you step over the deadline, and God kills you. You've died prematurely. They did in Corinth. They were living in immorality. They were living in dissent. They were living with improper reverence. They were even getting drunk at the Lord's Supper. And, Paul says, *"For this cause"*—"for this reason"—*"[some] are [sick]"*—*"[some] are weak and sickly among you, and [some are dead]"* (1 Corinthians 11:30)—"Some of you have died prematurely." They didn't die of natural causes; they died of supernatural causes. God killed them. Will God kill someone? We'll get into that in a moment.

But now, the Apostle Paul said that when we are chastened, God does this so that we will judge ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:32). And he says, *"If we would judge ourselves, [we'd] not be judged"* (1 Corinthians 11:31). That is, you can say to God, "Now God, I know what I deserve." Suppose David had come to the Lord, and he said, "God, I have done a terrible, horrible, awful thing. But God, You don't have to judge me, Lord, because I have already judged myself. I repent of it. I turn from it. I will do everything I can do to make restitution. I beg Your mercy." And, if David had judged himself, he would not have been judged.

Step number one is conviction. And, I want to say again, if you can sin without this conviction, you have never been saved—never been saved.

B. Chastisement

Step number two is chastisement. If conviction does not work, then God begins to chastise. God lays the rod on you. He did it for a year with David. He laid the rod on. For the Bible says, *"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and [scourges] every son whom he [receives]"* (Hebrews 12:6). Now, I want you to listen to me tonight: God is more concerned with your obedience than He is your driving a Cadillac. He's more concerned about your obedience than He is about your health. God is more concerned about your obedience than He is about your reputation. God is more concerned about your obedience than He is your influence. So, God will begin to chastise you, and it doesn't matter what it costs—God wants your obedience. Well, God chastised David, but David was a strong-willed man.

C. Challenge

First of all is conviction, and he could have judged himself. Then comes chastisement. He stonewalled God. And then comes a challenge. God sent a challenge to David, and

it just so happened that He sent a man named Nathan. And, Nathan came to challenge David about his sin. Notice in 2 Samuel 11: *“And when Uriah the Hittite was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war [went]”* (2 Samuel 11:7). And now, I’m back in chapter 12, verse 7: *“And Nathan”—*this is Nathan the prophet—*“said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul”* (2 Samuel 12:7). Skip down to verse 9: *“Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou has killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon”* (2 Samuel 12:9). Here he is challenged by God’s man. God sent a challenge to him, a face-to-face confrontation. God is getting ready to kill David, but God’s going to give him one more chance. At this moment, David doesn’t even know that Nathan knows it, but God knew it, and God told Nathan. And, Nathan points his finger in the face of the king, and he tells him what he has done, and he tells him the judgment of God is coming.

Now, this will happen. God will challenge you. There are some of you who are backslidden, and you’re truly saved. I don’t know how God will challenge you. Maybe God will use your wife to challenge you. Maybe God will use your husband to challenge you. Maybe God will use your pastor to challenge you. Maybe God will use a circumstance, an automobile wreck, to challenge you. Maybe God will use a sermon like this sermon to challenge you. I believe that some of you have been brought here tonight to be challenged by Almighty God. And so, Nathan challenges David. He says, “You are guilty,” and God gave him one more warning.

D. Consummation

Now, let me tell you what the next step is: first of all, conviction; then, chastisement; and then, the challenge; and then, my dear friend, there’s the consummation. God kills him. Do you think God would have killed David? I believe with all of my heart that God would have killed David, for notice what happened in verse 13: *“And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD [hath] also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die”* (2 Samuel 12:13). Had David stonewalled the Lord, had David just simply said, “Oh no, Nathan, I haven’t done it,” God would have killed him—God would have killed him.

Listen to this verse in 1 John chapter 5, verse 16: *“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give [them] life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death”* (1 John 5:16). Now, it is a sin that a brother may commit. He’s not talking about an unsaved person. He says, *“If any man [sees] his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give [them] life for*

them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death" (1 John 5:16). There is a point beyond which you can't go. I don't care who you are—God will kill you. Somebody says, "I don't believe in that kind of a God." Then, you don't believe in the God of the Bible—you don't believe in the God of the Bible.

Let me tell you, there was not a greater man than Moses. Moses was the meekest man who ever lived. He was God's commander and chief; and yet, Moses sinned against God. What did he do? God said, "Moses, speak to the rock." Moses had a rock, and he hit the rock. "Well," you say, "what was wrong with that?" Moses knew better. That rock was a symbol of Christ, already smitten, and out of that smitten rock, water would flow. But now, David, in a pit of anger, sinned against Christ. It was a spiritual sin. It was a sin of audacity. And, he smote that rock: "Here, must I fetch you water of this rock?" (Numbers 20:10). God said, "Now Moses, because you've done that, son, you're not going to the Promised Land" (Numbers 20:12). And, you read the Bible, and the Bible says that God took Moses up on Mount Nebo, and there he died. And, the Bible says, "*His eye was not dim, nor his [strength] abated*" (Deuteronomy 34:7). I mean, he was in perfect health as he walked up that mountain, and died up there on the mountain. And, God buried him, and no man knows where he's buried to this day. And, you're not better than Moses.

There was a man named Balaam. Balaam was a prophet of God. Some of the most unusual prophecies in the Bible came from the mouth of Balaam. But, there was a king named Balak, and Balak wanted to destroy the children of Israel. And so, he said, "Balaam, you're a prophet. I'll pay you if you'll pronounce a curse upon the children of Israel." And, Balaam said, "Well, I can't curse them. The Bible says God will curse those who curse Israel. But," he said, "I'll tell you what to do." He said, "I'll tell you how to teach them to curse themselves. And, you can get them to sin, and they'll just curse themselves." And, he gave some shrewd and wicked advice (Numbers 22:6–20). And, old Balak was saying to Balaam, "Hey, if you'll just do what I'll tell you to do, I'll pay you." And, rather than being a prophet, he became a P-R-O-F-I-T—a profit. And, he was on his way. He asked God, "Can I go and do this?" God said, "No." He asked God again, and God said, "No." He asked God the third time. So, God said, "Okay, go ahead." But, God didn't give him permission; God was getting ready to judge him for being impudent and continuing to ask when God had said no.

And, Balaam is riding along on his donkey, and the donkey sees an angel of the Lord out there. And, the angel of the Lord has a drawn sword. And, you remember what happened—the donkey was so frightened when he sees the angel of the Lord, the donkey goes up against the wall and crushes Balaam's leg. Balaam curses the donkey and is angry with the donkey, and then he gets the donkey going again. And, the donkey sees the angel again, and the donkey goes out in the field and falls down

underneath Balaam. And, Balaam begins to smite the donkey and to whip this donkey. And, the angel now appears to Balaam—the angel with a drawn sword. And, the donkey said, “Why are you whipping me? Haven’t I been your faithful beast? Haven’t I done this or that?” And then, Balaam—listen. Here’s the whole point—then Balaam, the prophet of God, saw that angel with the drawn sword, and that angel said to him, “If you had come any further, I surely would have slain you” (Numbers 22:23–33). There was a line that, if he would have crossed it, he would’ve died, if he’d come any further.

I’ve seen it happen in my ministry. I’ve seen people; I have put it on record. I told you about this in another message one time. I knew a man, one of my dearest friends—when I was a seminary student, he bought me a set of new tires for my automobile. I lived in his house. I ate at his table. I went out witnessing with him. I led him to Christ. I baptized him. I disciplined him. I helped him to be a man of God. He was a leader in a particular church. When I got ready to leave that church, this man said to me, “Pastor, would you announce there’s going to be a meeting at my house to talk about getting a new pastor?” I said to this man, “Friend, I can’t make that as a public church announcement because you’re not officially the person who is serving on the pulpit committee. If you want to have some friends over to pray, you may, but I can’t make that announcement from the pulpit; it wouldn’t be right.” I said, “You just invite them.” We’re close friends, as close as you and I are, Bob. Well, not that close, but we’re close. Bob and I are pretty thick. But, he’s a good friend—I mean, a man that I knew and loved. And, I said, “No, I can’t do that.” And, he began to swell up. He got angry. He said, “Well, then, I’m not coming back anymore.” I said, “Jack, don’t talk that way, buddy. That’s foolish.” “Well,” he said, “I’m not.” I said, “Jack, that’s wrong.” I said, “Friend, you’re wrong.” “Well,” he said, “I may be wrong, but,” he said, “that’s the way I feel.” I said, “Jack, listen, stop right now. You know better than that.” I said, “Right now, let’s just change that line of thinking. I want you to just change your mind, and don’t put down any ultimatums.” And then, he said something: he said, “I may be wrong.” He said, “As a matter of fact, I am wrong, but I’m not going to change.” I said, “Jack?” He said, “That’s right.” He said, “I am not going to change!” I said, “Jack, take it back.” He said, “No.” I said, “Please take it back.” He said, “No.” I said, “Jack, I know you know God,” and I said, “Jack, as your friend, I’m going to tell you, you are headed for serious problems, because,” I said, “you are sinning with your eyes wide open. Do you know what the Bible says? The Bible puts this awesome prayer: *‘[God,] keep back thy servant from presumptuous [sin]’* (Psalm 19:13). Do you know what presumptuous sin is? That’s where you say, ‘I am wrong, and I know it, but I’m going to have my way.’” I said, “Jack, I love you, but as a man of God, I’m going to tell you, you’re in serious trouble.”

I wanted to put myself on record. I went to another leader in that church, and I said, “I just want to tell you something. I just want to lay down the record. I want to make it

clear. I want you to know what's going to happen. Thus and thus has happened. And," I said, "that man is in serious trouble, and he's in trouble with God, because he's trying to stonewall God, and he can't do it." And, I said, "I want you to know that he's in great danger." I left that church, had been gone a few days when I got the phone call: "Preacher, did you hear about Jack?" I said, "What about Jack?" "Preacher, Jack dropped dead. Jack died." So far as I know, he had no physical problems. He died, dear friend, just like that. Don't you think that you can mock God—you can't do it.

My dear friend, God will let an unsaved man get away with things he won't let David get away with. David said, "I've sinned." And, Nathan said, "Okay, you're not going to die—you're not going to die" (2 Samuel 12:13). Had he not done it, had he stonewalled Nathan the prophet, he would have died.

When I pastored my first little church in Fellsmere, Florida, I preached—the first Sunday I preached in that church—I gave the invitation. I was a shirt-tailed, teenage boy, 19 years of age. I didn't know how to preach anything. But, I got up there and preached as best I knew how, and I gave an invitation. Some girls came forward to accept Christ; they were weeping. I was so thrilled God had used me. As I was presenting them to that little church—I was a guest preacher—a man stood up in that auditorium, and he challenged what was happening down there. He said, "Those girls are not saved. You have no right to say they're saved." If I know anything about one, in all of my years of experience, I believe those girls were saved. Under conviction, weeping, I prayed; I led them to Christ. I was just a kid. He must have been in his fifties, maybe sixties—I don't know. I didn't mean to be disrespectful. I was there as a guest. But, I just decided that I was still God's man. I knew I was God's man even as a 19-year-old boy. And, I said, "Mister, you're wrong." I said, "Mister, you're out of order in this service. I want you to be quiet. I want you to sit down." I thought to myself, "Do I have a right to do this?" They had me back there the next week, and I preached and more people were saved. And, he challenged it again. I said, "Sir, you're wrong. You ought not to be acting this way." I got out in my little car. I drove way out in the country where that man lived. I pointed my finger in his face. I said, "Sir, you're an educated man. You've got more experience than I have. I'm just a boy. But," I said, "you're wrong." I said, "You're dealing with the things of God." And, he got angry, and he got hostile, and he got sarcastic. Friend, he died. He just died—he just up and died. Listen, "*there is a sin unto death*" (1 John 5:16). There are some people who try to stonewall God so much that they pass over God's deadline.

Now, my dear friend, let me just say that after the challenge, there comes the consummation, or there comes the cleansing. God cleansed David. Let me just give you this scripture, and I'll be finished. Turn to Psalm 51. Thank God David took the challenge and found the cleansing. Find it here with me in Psalm 51, and notice what

happened to David: David prayed, *“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according [to] the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine [iniquities], and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my [transgression]: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, [and] thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest”* (Psalm 51:1–4). Notice, first of all, this great confidence: “God, there is a multitude of sin, but You have a multitude of mercies.” Notice this confession: *“Against thee, [and] thee only, have I sinned”* (Psalm 51:4). No more alibiing, no more covering—just confesses it to God. Notice the cleansing: he says, *“Purge me...and I shall be clean”*—*“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean”*—hyssop is a little shrub that they applied the blood with in the New Testament. He would say, “Purge me with the blood of Christ, and I shall be clean”—*“wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow”* (Psalm 51:7).

Conclusion

I want to tell you this story, and I'll be finished. I doubt very, very seriously that there is any one here tonight who has committed sin like David did, but I believe there are many people here tonight who need to get right with God. You see, what happened to David was that time of carelessness that I'm talking about, that time of coldness, that time of presumptuousness. That's when David needed to get right with God; that's when David needed to spare himself of so much heartache.

There was a Punjab Prince who had given to the Queen of England a huge diamond. This diamond, called the “Coroner Diamond,” was one of the most beautiful diamonds in the world. And, this boy prince, as little boy, who was in possession of this great beautiful diamond, gave it to the Queen of England. It was put in the Tower of London, where the Crown Jewels are. I suppose it's still there—one of the most beautiful diamonds in existence. That Punjab Prince grew up to be a man. He went to the Tower of London, and he asked the Queen to go with him. He said, “May I see the diamond?” They wondered, “Did he want it back?” They placed it in his hands. He looked at it. He held it in the light in all of its brilliance. He said to the queen, “When I was a child, I gave you this diamond. But,” he said, “I was only a child. I meant what I was doing. But,” he said, “I did not understand its value or its worth. Now, as a man, I want to give it to you one more time, this time understanding more what I'm doing.” And, I wonder if there are not many of you here tonight who, as a child, gave your heart to Jesus, but now that you see things as you really see them, now as you know the grace of God, now as you know the beauty of God, now as you know the love of God, you'd like to say, “Lord, one more time, with the heart of a man, a woman, I want to give it all to You one more time.”

We're not going to have a public, come forward invitation tonight. But, if you would like to do that—you've already given your heart to Jesus—but you would like to say, "One more time, knowing what I know now, in a richer, fuller way, I give You my heart," I want you to do it.

Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed.

The Way Home

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 12, 1995

Main Scripture Text: 2 Samuel 11:1–27; 12:1–13

“And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.”

2 SAMUEL 12:13

Outline

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Introduction

I would like you to take God’s Word and find 2 Samuel, the 11th chapter, if you will. And, if you are familiar with the Old Testament, right away you will recognize this is one of the dark chapters in the Bible, because it tells the sin of a great man, and that great man was King David. And, if you wanted a study of character, nobility, wisdom, courage, or devotion, you could not find a better man than David. The Bible calls him “*a man after [God’s] own heart*” (1 Samuel 13:14); yet there’s a dark chapter in David’s life, and the Bible doesn’t leave it out. I’m told that when Alexander the Great, who conquered the known world, was having his portrait made, that the painter of the portrait arranged for Alexander to hold his hand at his face in a certain way so it would cover a scar on Alexander’s face. And so, the portrait, there, is done so that the scar does not show, though the scar is there. But, when the Bible paints a portrait, it doesn’t cover the scars. And, there’s a scar on David’s life, and there’s much we could learn from this.

As you know, obviously—I think all of us know—that David was the King of Israel.

And, there came a time when he entered into an adulterous affair and committed adultery with a woman whose name was Bathsheba. And then, in order to try to cover his sin, he had a man killed. It was manslaughter at the best, but more aptly it should be called “cold-blooded murder.” Now, that’s a strange thing, because David was a wonderful man. I think of David, and I think of his bravery. David was a man who, with his bare hands, destroyed a lion and a bear and, as a lad, killed mighty Goliath, this giant who was over nine-feet-tall. David was a talented man who wrote so many of the psalms and has earned the title “the Sweet Singer of Israel.” And, I think of Charles Wesley, who wrote some six thousand hymns—he, like David, gifted and talented.

I think of David as a humble man. He was not a man to push himself to the front. As a matter of fact, when he had been appointed and anointed king over Israel, he still waited for God’s time to be inaugurated, to be ushered in. He knew how to take care of the sheep on the backside of the desert, though he was actually a gifted and a wonderful man, and even after his anointing, went back to taking care of sheep. I think of him as a noble man, a man of great character. When he had his archenemy, Saul, in a very vulnerable position, where he could have killed Saul—and everybody has said, rightly, he should have killed Saul, because Saul was seeking to kill David and it could be called an act of self-defense—but David said, “I’ll not stretch forth my hand against God’s anointed” (1 Samuel 24:6). And, though Saul was a wicked and a vile man, yet he was the King of Israel, the anointed King of Israel, and David, with godly restraint, would not put forth his hand to kill Saul. And yet—and yet—beloved brothers and sisters, David committed horrible, hateful, heinous, egregious sin against Almighty God.

And so, therefore, we need to see how it happened, why it happened, and we need to be forewarned, because—listen to your pastor, tonight—David was a great man. He loved God; and yet, he fell into sin. You don’t love God better than David did, in my estimation. You’re not more gifted than David was. You don’t have greater knowledge than David had. It is true that you live on this side of Calvary, but David had an intimate walk with Almighty God. And, the point, therefore, that I’m making, before we ever get into this study is *“let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”* (1 Corinthians 10:12). And, you say, “Well, I’m strong in the Lord.” So was David. Oswald Chambers said, “An unguarded strength is a double weakness.” So, we can learn here; there’s a lesson for all of us. David became a backslider. A backslider is not someone who has never been saved; a backslider is a saved person who has gotten out of fellowship with God and, as a result, gets into sin.

I. The Cause of David’s Backsliding

Now, I want you to see what I’m going to call “the cause of David’s backsliding.” And, look, if you will, in chapter 11 and verse 1: *“And it came to pass, after the year was*

expired, at the time when kings went forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him”—now, Joab was David’s commander-in-chief—“sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem. And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king’s house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon” (2 Samuel 11:1–2). Now, let me just say at the outset, what was David’s sin?

A. A Sin of Casualness

In the beginning, it was a sin that I’m going to call “the sin of casualness”—“the sin of casualness.” It was a time when kings went forth to war. That meant that the harvest time was over, and it was battle time. There were battles to be fought. Now, David is not doing anything necessarily wrong in itself. He’s just failing to do right. And, the Holy Spirit puts this in the Scripture—that it was a time when kings went to war (2 Samuel 11:1). David was a king. He should have been on the battlefield for the Lord. His sin was a sin of omission—not outwardly, blatantly, arrogantly doing that which is wrong, but failing to do that which is right.

Now, sins of omission are greater than sins of commission, because every sin of omission is really a sin of commission, rightly understood. If you are failing to do what is right, it is very easy for you to do what is wrong. As a matter of fact, to fail to do right in and of itself is wrong, but if you’re doing what is right, you cannot do what is wrong, because no man can do two things at one time. So, here it was a sin of casualness. He ought to have been at war.

Now, why was this? Why was this? Well, you know what I think? I think David is now a mature man; I think David is now a battle-scared veteran, and he says, “I’ve done my time on the battlefield. I have fought my battles. I need a little R&R, a little rest and relaxation.” I’m going to talk to some of you older deacons, and some of you veteran Sunday School teachers, and some of you long-time Bellevue workers. Don’t ever, for one moment, think you have done your service to Jesus and now you can quit. If you’re retired from your job, that just simply means you’ve got more time to serve Jesus. And, you need to press the battle to the gates, and you need to keep the fire burning in your heart and in your soul as long as you live. Say, “Amen.”

And, don’t you ever get the idea that you can get casual about this thing of serving the Lord and that you can just coast on into the precincts of Heaven in a Pullman sleeper. The Bible says to every one of us in 2 Timothy, chapter 2, verse 3: *“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2:3)*. Look at verse 2; look at it carefully: *“And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose off*

his bed” (2 Samuel 11:2). Can you imagine that—waiting until evening to get out of bed? You know what he’s been doing? He has been lolling in bed all the day long when others are out on the battlefield. Proverbs 24, verses 33 and 34: *“Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come like one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man”* (Proverbs 24:33–34). David is about to enter into spiritual poverty through the sin of casualness.

B. **A Sin of Carelessness**

It was also a sin of carelessness, because carelessness comes with casualness. Now, David has failed to be warned. He’s failed to keep up his guard. He has failed to pray as Jesus would teach: *“Deliver us from evil”* (Matthew 6:13). He’s failed to learn the lesson that his son later taught—Proverbs 4, verse 23: *“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”* (Proverbs 4:23). And now, this man, who has been casual, is careless. As a matter of fact, he’s forgotten the advice that he, himself, had written—Psalm 101, verses 2–4: he says, *“I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person”* (Psalm 101:2–4). What a resolve! What a wonderful resolve! *“I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes”* (Psalm 101:3).

Those of you who have spare time had better be careful what you’re watching these days, I guarantee you, because when you come to this place of casualness, if you’re not careful, you’re going to come to a place of carelessness. And, that’s exactly what happened to David. How different David was from Joseph—Joseph, who, when he was tempted by Potiphar’s wife, immediately fled and obeyed what later would be an injunction by the Apostle Paul: *“Flee fornication”* (1 Corinthians 6:18). But, you see, because David was casual, he was careless.

Jesus warned the apostles in Matthew 26, verse 41: *“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation”* (Matthew 26:41). You will have times in your life when everything is going just fine. You don’t feel any unusual temptation. You feel that you are a senior citizen in the Kingdom of Heaven. You’ve earned your stripes. You have your scars. You’re going to now take it easy, and you cease to do what Jesus said, when He said, *“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation”* (Matthew 26:41). And so, it was a sin of carelessness.

C. **A Sin of Compulsiveness**

I’ll tell you what else it was: it was a sin of compulsiveness. He didn’t intend to do this. I mean, he didn’t wake up in the morning and say, “Well, I think I’ll see if I can find a woman today, other than my wife.” It just happened. There he is: he’s casual; he’s

careless. He walks over and looks over the parapet wall there, and there she is. *Sin is an undetected weakness, an unexpected opportunity, and an unprotected life*—an undetected weakness, an unexpected opportunity, and an unprotected life. There it is: *bang!* Something begins to rise in this man’s heart, and he compulsively calls his servants and says, “Get her for me.”

There are three people seated in your seat tonight. You say, “Well, no wonder it’s so crowded!” There is a person, right now, that you are, this very moment, and there is the person you could be for God, if you were totally sold out. Oh, what God could do through any man’s life here, including the man speaking, if we would just let Him have more and more of us! And, there is the man that we could be for evil. You say, “Well, it couldn’t happen to me.” David would have said, “It couldn’t happen to me.” David would have said the same thing. But, here he compulsively falls into sin. Remember what Chambers said, “An unguarded strength is a double weakness.” And so, here is the sin that David has committed.

D. **A Sin of Callousness**

First of all, he’s casual; and then, he’s careless; and then, he’s compulsive—but it doesn’t end there. Now, he becomes calloused. He commits this sin, this horrible sin. You say, “He was only weak.” No, he was desperately wicked. It was a vile, horrible sin. We could make no excuse for it. And, David paid the bitter price for this sin, but he tries to cover it.

Look in verse 5—Bathsheba conceives *“and sent and told David, and said, I am with child. And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David”*—now, Uriah happened to be Bathsheba’s husband—*“And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered”*—David is saying, “Uriah, tell me about what happened on the battlefield”—*“And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king’s house, and there followed him a mess of meat from the king”*—the king says to give Uriah some savory food, a mess of meat. It must have smelled so good. He says, “Come on home from the battlefield, Uriah, my friend, my brother, and go down to your house, and wash your feet, and have a good meal, and have a good time with your wife”—*“But Uriah slept at the door of the king’s house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house. And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from thy journey? why then didst thou not go down unto thine house? And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth,*

I will not do this thing” (2 Samuel 11:5–11).

I wonder how David felt right then, because that’s exactly what David had been doing. David was absent from the place of responsibility. *“And David said to Uriah, Tarry here to day also, and to morrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow. And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house”*—David thinks, “If I can just get this man to drink a little King Alcohol, then maybe his inhibitions will be loosened, and he will have this courage and this loyalty to his king and to his God. Maybe I can spoil that”—*“And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah”*—Uriah doesn’t know it, but he’s carrying a death message—*“And he wrote the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die”* (2 Samuel 11:12–15). “Put Uriah out there on the front lines, and then pull everybody else back from him. Leave him out there, that the enemy will kill him.” Why? Because, then no one will know that Uriah had not had relations with his wife, and no one will know that the baby that has been conceived is not Uriah’s child. And, that’s how the deed was done.

Now, can you imagine this? I mean, can you imagine this is David? This is not David, but it is David. Can you imagine him doing such a thing? Now folks, when David committed adultery with Bathsheba, that was terrible, that was vile, that was wicked, but it was hot-blooded sin—hot-blooded sin, hot-blooded crime. But, this is cold-blooded murder. David has to think this through. David has to connive. David has to say, “How can I do it? How can I cover my own vile sin, even at a cost of a good man’s life?”

David, how can you do such a thing? Now, David has been hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. The Bible warns about this. The Bible warns how sin can harden a person’s heart. Uriah was David’s friend. Uriah was under David’s command. He was under David’s protection, but David’s pride meant more to him than the life of a devoted servant. And, Uriah, who was willing to die for David’s honor, died at David’s hand. This is a sad story, folks, and God was grieved.

“Now,” you say, “Pastor Rogers, can a person be saved who would do such a thing?” As I study the Bible, I have to say, “Yes, as I understand the Bible.” He did this thing, and it’s there; and we can’t explain it away, and we can’t deny it. And yet, as we read the rest of David’s life, we find how he suffered for this thing and how God dealt in his life. So, if you’re living in adultery tonight, or if you’re living in some other kind of sin, don’t take refuge in this story, because when you see the rest of the story and you see what happened, you will get rid quickly of the theory that it makes no difference how you live—that if you can be a child of God and sin, it makes no difference. If you are living this way, and God is not dealing mightily in your life, I wouldn’t give half a hallelujah for

your hope of Heaven. I want you to see the rest of it, now. What we are seeing, here, is the committal of David's sin. We're seeing the cause of David's backsliding.

II. The Cost of David's Backsliding

Now, I want you to see—secondly, I want you to see—the cost of David's backsliding. I want you see what happened in his particular life. You know, the Bible says in Proverbs chapter 28 and verse 13: *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy"* (Proverbs 28:13). Now, what David needed was mercy, but he tries to cover his sin. He tries to cover his sin through the death of Uriah the Hittite. If he had only confessed his sin quickly! Jesus said, *"Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him"* (Matthew 5:25). That is, "if you've done something wrong, confess it—the sooner, the better. The longer you wait, the worse it gets."

And, about a year went by with David's un-confessed sin eating at his heart. Just stay there in 2 Samuel with your fingertips, and turn to Psalm 32. And, here's a Psalm written, I believe, when David was spending that horrible year. His sin is finally forgiven, and he's saying, "Thank God for that": *"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered"*—when David finally uncovered it, God covered it; but as long as David covered it, God uncovered it—*"Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile"*—he had known this God. He'd know this hypocrisy, and I want you to see what happened: there was that premature aging; he grew ten years in one—*"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long"*—there's premature aging; there's inward groaning: "my roaring." What he's talking about is "my groaning." He'd wake up at night in perspiration and say, "Ohhhhhhhhh!" He would feel the sin in his heart that was gnawing away. God's hand was so heavy upon him. Look in verse 4—*"For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer"* (Psalm 32:1–4). God had His hand on David. Don't get the idea that if you sin, God tosses you away—not if you're a child of God. He gets grip, and He squeezes all the time. David said, "Your hand is there upon me" (Psalm 32:4). The joy had gone out of his life, and the sweetness. He said, *"My moisture is turned into the drought of summer"* (Psalm 32:4). What does he mean? "I'm spiritually dry."

If you've ever been with God, and gotten sin in your life, and tried to blow past it and not deal with it—you know what David is dealing with. Have you ever known... If you've known God in an intimate way, you know the joy, you know the victory, and you know the happiness. I mean, you just get in your car, and roll up the windows, and sing. Have you ever done that? Just, "O Jesus, I love You. Hallelujah! Praise God!" Sometimes you get so happy when you're by yourself, you hope nobody sees me act this way—just

loving the Lord, giving Him praise, and giving Him joy. And, David had those times, but now, sin in your life—a struggle to pray, no joy, no victory, no peace.

Believe me, *the most miserable man in the world is not an unsaved man; it's a saved man out of fellowship with God*—more miserable than any lost man could ever be. There are some, perhaps, like that, in this congregation tonight. How do you deal with your sin when you try to cover it? Well, you rationalize. Behavioristic psychology tells you it really wasn't your fault: "It was my wife's fault," or, "The devil made me do it," or, "I have a glandular malfunction." You get busy and active in church work; you may even redouble your church work. Remember that David continued to reign over the kingdom. It may be that you just go around saying, "Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!" all the time, when your heart is dirty and rotten. Moses got out of fellowship with God, but he wore a veil over his face so people wouldn't know that the glow—the holy glow that was once there—was gone. Some of us are going around with a veil of hypocrisy, and on the inside there's that horrible backslidden condition.

III. The Crisis of David's Backsliding

Now, there's the cause of his backsliding. There's the cost of it. I want you to notice the crisis of it, because God brought David to a crisis. And, God brings every man and woman who is truly a child of God to a crisis. God loves you too much to let you go on in your sin. And so, how does God confront a child of God when a child of God does such a terrible thing? Well, basically, in four steps:

A. Conviction

First of all, God convicts by the Holy Spirit. If you can live in sin, dabble in sin, run with the world, and you don't get convicted over it, make no doubts about it: you've never been saved.

You know, a pig has never felt dirty. No pig's ever said, "Woe is me. I'm dirty." Oh, no. And, you might be living in sin, and that's fine because, friend, you're not a sheep. You've never been saved. You don't have this conviction.

First of all, God will convict you. Remember Psalm 32, verse 4: David said, "*For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me*" (Psalm 32:4). Some of you may feel that, tonight. He said the same thing in Psalm 51 and verse 8: "*Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice*" (Psalm 51:8). Now, at that moment, David should have repented. The Bible says, "*If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged*" (1 Corinthians 11:31). And, God gives us that privilege of confessing, and repenting, and turning.

B. Chastisement

Now, after conviction (if there's no change) comes the second step: chastisement.

Hebrews chapter 12, verse 6: *“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth”* (Hebrews 12:6). David had been chastised. You can read the psalms of David. Read Psalm 32. Read Psalm 51. Read the other psalms, and find out how God chastised David. God loved him too much to let him go on in this sin. And, if you’re a child of God living in sin, you may know that chastisement. It can come in different ways, you know—maybe sickness, maybe heartache; it may be financial reverse, you know. See, God is not primarily interested that you drive a Cadillac. He’s not primarily interested that you maintain your health. He’s not primarily interested that you have a reputation, so everybody will say, “What a good person!” God is interested in your holiness—in your holiness. So, conviction; and then, chastisement.

C. Challenge

Now, if the chastisement doesn’t work, if you begin, still, to stonewall the thing, then comes a challenge—a challenge. God will bring you to a crisis; God will put a challenge in your life. In this case, God sent Nathan the prophet to challenge David. And, you know the story—how Nathan told the story—of how a rich man killed a poor man’s lamb, and ate it, and served it to a stranger. I’m not going to tell you the whole story for the lack of time. It’s a very interesting, poignant story. And then, David said, “The man who’s done this thing will pay fourfold” (2 Samuel 12:6). And, Nathan put his long, bony finger right in the face of the king and said, “And, you’re the man!” (2 Samuel 12:7). There was a challenge from Almighty God.

Look, if you will, please in chapter 12, verse 7—let me just give you a taste of it: *“And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; And I gave thee”—ta da ta da ta da; verse 9—“Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon”* (2 Samuel 12:7–9). It’s a challenge, a direct confrontation of crisis. Conviction, chastisement, and challenge.

And, God will bring a challenge to a person who’s living in sin like this. The challenge can come in different ways: it may come from your wife; it may come from one of your children; it may come from a husband; it may come from a pastor; it may come from a friend, or it may come from a sermon. It may be that in this very building tonight, God is saying to someone, “And, you’re the man! You’re the woman. I brought you to this place tonight to hear this challenge from Almighty God.”

D. Consummation

Now, at that moment, David is running out of time. David is about ready to be killed if he doesn’t get right with God, because after the conviction, and after the chastisement, and

after the challenge, there comes the consummation. Thank God! Hallelujah! David, at this point, repented of his sin, confessed his sin to God, and was cleansed and forgiven. And, because of that, the consummation did not take place. But, look, if you will, in chapter 12, verse 13: *“And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD”* (2 Samuel 12:13). Thank you, David. It’s about time, David. David, why didn’t you do that a year ago? Why didn’t you do it before Uriah died? *“I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die”* (2 Samuel 12:13).

Now folks, I take that to mean had not God put away his sin, he would have died. God would have killed him. The Bible says, *“There is a sin unto death”* (1 John 5:16). First John chapter 5, verse 16: *“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it”* (1 John 5:16). Folks, when God brings the challenge and there is cold-blooded rebellion, like there is cold-blooded sin, you’re living dangerously.

There was a prophet named Balaam. And, Balaam had been warned by the Lord, but he overrode his conscience and transgressed the Word of God. And, Balaam was going in a certain direction that he ought not to go in. And, God put an angel of the Lord there to stop him, but Balaam could not even see the angel of the Lord. He was so spiritually blinded that the jackass that he rode on—the donkey that he rode on—could see better than the prophet. You remember the story—how the donkey caught Balaam’s foot against a wall, and how the donkey went out in the field, and how Balaam got off the donkey and began to beat the dumb animal. The animal, miraculously, was able to talk and said, “Why are you beating me? Haven’t I been your faithful beast?” God opened Balaam’s eyes, and there was an angel standing there with a drawn sword. And, the angel said, “If you had come any further, I would have killed you” (Numbers 22).

I’m telling you, folks, you’ll only get so far—I mean, if you’re a man of God. Now, if you’re not a man of God, if you’re not saved, if you’ve never been born again, you can live high, wide, and handsome, and go straight on to Hell with nothing happening—not if you’re a child of God. You can die prematurely. Moses did. Moses died in Mt. Nebo. And, he didn’t die of old age, and he didn’t die of AIDS; and he didn’t die of pneumonia. The Bible says, *“His eye was not dim, nor his [strength] abated”* (Deuteronomy 34:7), yet he died prematurely because of sin in his life, and he failed to go—Moses, the great man, Moses.

In a former church, there was a man that I prayed for, and wept over, and witnessed to, I believe, for several years, before I led him to Jesus Christ. He became one of my best friends. He became the director of the Sunday School and the chairman of the

building program at that church. He loved me, and I loved him. When I got ready to leave that church, he said to me, “Pastor, will you make an announcement about a group of people going to meet at my house? We’re going to discuss getting a new pastor.” I said to him, “Well, it’s not an official church meeting, so it would not be appropriate for me to make an announcement from the pulpit. But, of course, you can have friends over to your house and discuss what you want.” He said, “No.” He said, “I want you to announce it from the pulpit.” I said, “Well, I can’t do that. That would be improper.” He said, “You mean, you’re not going to do that?” I said, “Well, no.” I said, “I’ll be glad to tell people casually, but I can’t make that announcement.” “Well,” he said, “all right, then.”

I said, “Hold it.” I said, “Are you angry?” He said, “Yes, I’m angry.” I said, “Well, brother.” I said, “Hey, we’re brothers. I love you; you love me. Let there be no strife between you and me. We’re brothers.” He said, “Well, I’m mad.” I said, “Well, now, that’s wrong. Let’s pray about it.” He said, “I don’t want to pray.” I said, “That’s worse.” I said, “Listen,” I said, “if you won’t pray about it, we can’t get it right. I love you. I led you to Christ.” He said, “Well, I’m not going to pray about it.” I said, “Well, that’s Achan’s sin.” I said, “That’s willful sin, presumptuous sin.” I said, “God will judge that.” He said, “Well, God can do anything to me He wants to do. I am not going to change.” I couldn’t believe it. I said, “Jack, don’t say that.” I said, “Man, don’t say that. Take that back now, please. Just take it back, and say you didn’t mean it.” He said, “I said it, and I mean it.” I thought of the scripture that says, *“Keep back thy servant...from presumptuous sin”* (Psalm 19:13). But, here he was, in the face of God—not that I’m God, but he wasn’t addressing me. He said he can do anything he wants—“I am not going to change.” I said, “Jack, my brother, I’m afraid for you—desperately afraid. What you have done is so dangerous.”

I left. I went over to see another brother in the church, a leader. I said, “I’m leaving this town, but I want to tell you something before I go.” I said, “I want to tell you what happened, and I want to tell you what I told this man.” I said, “I just want to go on record so you will know and somebody will attest to it when it happens.” And, I left. In a matter of days, I got the phone call. They said, “Pastor, did you hear about Jack?” I said, “What about Jack?” They said, “Pastor, he dropped dead. He’s dead.” I was not one bit surprised. For a man to arrogantly, in the face of God, say, “I know I’m wrong, but I will not change”... *“There is a sin unto death”* (1 John 5:16). Nathan said to David, “You’ll not die—you’ll not die” (2 Samuel 12:13).

Now, the consequences of David’s sin followed him, but David got forgiveness and he got cleansed. When God forgives, that doesn’t mean that the consequences are gone. If you get drunk, and get in a wreck, and cut off both legs, God will forgive you if you ask Him, but your days as a high hurdler are over. You’re not going to run in any

more track meets. The consequences remain, but, thank God, God will forgive. And, God forgave David.

“Now,” you say, “Pastor Rogers, that’s an interesting story, and maybe I can pass it on to somebody else who needs it.” See, you missed the point. David got in trouble with the sin of casualness. He didn’t go roaring into sin, okay? The sin of casualness, the sin of carelessness. Wouldn’t it have been so much better if, at that point, he kept his heart warm and true to Jesus, and had gotten up early that morning, and put on the whole armor of God, and continued to press the battle to the gates until God called him home? Don’t any of you ever think that it couldn’t happen to you or that you can just coast on into Heaven. Is your heart cold? Get it warm. You’ve been lazy? Go to work. You’ve been careless? Check up, and keep the fire burning for Jesus. Amen.

Conclusion

Bow in prayer. Father God. I pray that You’ll speak to every one of us tonight, including this pastor, and Lord, that we’ll stay on the battlefield of our Lord; we’ll never put off the armor; and never, Lord, cease to march under the bloodstained banner of Prince Emmanuel. Lord, I pray tonight, should there be any body here who’s not saved, that tonight they would be saved. Lord, I pray tonight, should there be any body here who would say, “I’m the one who’s been challenged tonight, and I need to repent of my sin,” O God, that they would do it tonight, publicly, if they need to. You know, Lord, whatever it is—deal. We pray, in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen and amen.

Now, look at me. If you’re not saved, you can be saved tonight by receiving Christ. The Bible says it clearly and plainly: *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”* (Acts 16:31). That means believe He is the Son of God, believe He paid your sin debt with His blood on the cross, believe that God raised Him from the dead, believe that salvation is the gift of God, receive it in repentance and faith, and I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, He will save you and He’ll keep you saved. He’ll save you instantaneously and eternally if you’ll trust Him, okay? And, if you want that tonight...

Now, I realize that most of us here tonight are already saved, but I’m certain in a congregation of several thousand there are some here tonight who may not be saved. So, when we stand and sing, I want you to leave your seat, and come forward, and tell the minister, “Tonight, I’m giving my heart to Jesus.” We’ll take an open Bible, and guide you in this decision, and seal it in prayer. And, God will save you tonight.

There are others of you tonight who need a church home. And, if you don’t have a church home, or you need a church home for whatever reason—and you’re saved, and you believe as we believe, and want to be a faithful, fellowshiping, growing, participating member of Bellevue Baptist Church—I invite you to come forward and tell

the minister you want to place your membership here.

Some are coming, saying, "I want Christ to save me." Some are coming, saying, "I have been saved. I'm coming to make it public and to make an appointment for my baptism." Others are coming, saying, "I want to place my membership here in this church." Maybe you just need somebody to pray for you. You don't even know what you need. You just say, "I need God. I need somebody to pray for me." Just come forward. There'll be a minister standing at the head of each of these aisles, and we're praying for you already. And, you step out and come.

Let's stand up and sing together.

Cleansing with Chastisement

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 23, 1982

Main Scripture Text: 2 Samuel 12:1–14

“And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.”

2 SAMUEL 12:13–14

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Law of the Harvest Explained
 - A. The Principle of Implantation
 - B. The Principle of Identification
 - C. The Principle of Incubation
 - D. The Principle of Intensification
 - E. The Principle of Implementation
- II. The Law of the Harvest Experienced

Conclusion

Introduction

Second Samuel chapter 12—the title of our message tonight is “Cleansing with Chastisement,” or, I suppose we might call it “Pardon with Punishment.” I don’t like the word *punishment* quite as well, because the word *punishment* perhaps implies that God is dealing judiciously, and that is not exactly what I wish to say. But 2 Samuel chapter 12—let’s begin in verse 1:

“And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor man had nothing, save”—or, “except”—“one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but [he] took the poor man’s lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David’s angel was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall

surely die: and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been to little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and has slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou has despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die" (2 Samuel 12:1–14).

Now the story that we have tonight is not a pretty story. We already preached about David and his sin—how David committed adultery, and then, how David committed manslaughter in order to try to cover and to hide that sin. But the Bible says, *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper"* (Proverbs 28:13). And God's hand was heavy upon David, and, finally, God sent the prophet Nathan to David to challenge him. I can see Nathan as he goes to the king's secretary and says, "I want to see the king," and she says, "Well, the king is busy. He's not taking appointments today." He says, "You tell him he needs to see me." And so she buzzes him, and he says, "All right, let the preacher come in."

And so Nathan comes on in to the king's office there, right into the very oval office, and looks him right in the face, and says, "King, there's a matter that you need to adjudicate. I want to tell you a terrible thing that has happened in the land." And then he tells King David the story of a man, who was a very rich man, who lived by a very poor man. The rich man had everything his heart could wish—thousands of flocks, herds, lambs, goats,—and the poor man who lived next door had just one little lamb, a little ewe lamb, a little female lamb that was like his own daughter. It ate from his table, drank from his cup, laid in his bosom. And then Nathan the prophet said to the king, "King, there was a wayfaring man, a stranger, that happened to stop in to the rich man's house. The rich man spared his own flock—he wouldn't take one of his own goats, one of his own lambs, one of his own sheep. He went next door and he stole that poor

man's one little lamb. He took that little lamb, killed it, barbequed it, and fed it to the stranger—the wayfaring man. What should be done to him, David? What do you say?"

David was livid with rage. David leaped from the throne and David said, "The man that has done such a thing will pay fourfold." And David had just sentenced himself in his own court. "*With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again,*" because David was the man.

Nathan, the prophet, pointed at David and said, "Thou art the man!" The whole thing had been a parable. The whole thing had been an analogy. While this rich man had stolen a lamb, David had stolen a woman, and while this rich man had killed an animal, David had killed a man. And David now has sentenced himself in his own court.

Now we see the result of David's sin and we perhaps will deal with some of these things later on as we read. The child that was born out of this adulterous relationship, before he reached eight days of age, was very sick. They called in the physicians and they prayed and they wept and David fasted and prayed and said, "O God, spare the child! Spare the child!" But finally he could tell by the whispering in the palace that something was wrong. He went and asked a question: "Is the child dead?" They said to the king—the heart broken king—"Yes, the child is dead." Poor David, his first crop was in the barn, but God is not finished yet. David said, "The man who has done such a thing shall pay fourfold."

David had some other children. He had a daughter who was lovely and vivacious and beautiful. Her name was Tamar. One of David's sons, Amnon, was sick—he was depraved. He was not physically sick—he was mentally and emotionally sick. He lusted after his own sister, Tamar. He feigned that he was sick. He asked Tamar to come in to wait on him and bring him some food. While she was in the bedroom with her own brother, he assaulted her and ravaged her and ruined her. When they brought the news to David, I'm certain that David thought, "Oh my God, it's a sin like the sin that I committed, only more wicked, more foul and more vile." Poor David, his second crop was in the barn. But David had said, "The man who hath done such a thing, will pay fourfold."

David had another son—this son was tall and handsome. This man was witty and charming. His name was Absalom. But Absalom rose up in rebellion against his own father. He hated his father and he hated his brother, Amnon, for what Amnon had done to Tamar. So Absalom plotted the murder of Amnon. He hired his servants and said "Make Amnon drunk, and when Amnon is drunk, take this dagger and plunge it into his heart" and they did. Red were the drapes and red the carpet in the banqueting hall that night with the blood of Amnon, who was slain by Absalom.

When they brought the news to David, it took brave men to tell David that one of his sons has died and another of his sons is a murderer. And David again can see a man

on a battlefield. He can see Uriah the Hittite and Uriah's blood. Poor David. "The man that hath done this thing shall pay fourfold," and David's third crop is in the barn. But God is not finished yet, and David has not yet reaped the consequences of his sin.

Absalom goes on in his rebellion and his wickedness against his father. He sits in the city gates. He wins the hearts of the people away from his father. His father is now an old man, but David has to leave the throne again. One more time, he has to flee for his life, while Absalom the usurper takes over the throne. And there's a battle—there's a battle—between the forces of David and the forces of Absalom. And David is having to wage war against his own son. He tells Joab, his commander-in-chief, "When you go to battle, there's just one thing I want you to remember: that I want you to deal gently with Absalom. I know Absalom has done wrong. I know that Absalom has sinned against me. I know he's rebelled against his king, and against his father, and against his God. But listen, Joab—listen to me: Deal gently—deal gently—with him, for my sake."

But you know the story. In the midst of the battle, Absalom, who had long flowing hair, was riding beneath an oak tree and his hair—the locks of his hair—were caught in that oak tree. And the animal that he was riding upon, the mule, went out from beneath him and left him dangling there. And Joab and the soldiers came and threw spears through him; and he died there, suspended between Heaven and Earth.

They came to the tottering old king to bring the king news of the battle, but he did not want to know whether his kingdom was safe or not. He did not want to know how the battle had gone. He didn't want to know whether he had regained his throne. He said, "I want to ask you this question. Tell me this before you tell me anything else: Is the young man Absalom safe?" And they had to tell the tottering old king that Absalom was dead. And he wept, and cried, and said, "O Absalom! O Absalom, my son, Absalom! Absalom, my son—would to God I had died for thee! Absalom, my son, Absalom!" And David's fourth crop was in the barn. David had learned what Galatians chapter 6, verse 7, tells us in the New Testament: "*Be not deceived; [for] God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*" (Galatians 6:7). David had planted a crop; and now, David had reaped a harvest.

Now that just brings me to speak to you tonight on this subject: the law of the harvest. I want you to notice that there are five unbreakable laws in the law of the harvest, or five unbreakable principles. You see, God is a God of order, and God is a God of law. Nothing in this universe happens by chance. And God's laws are fixed in the spiritual realm, as God's laws are fixed in the material realm. There is a law of gravity. I let go of these glasses—they fall. If I swing something around, there's a law called the law of centrifugal force. It's just a law built into the universe.

Now dear friend, just as God's physical laws operate, God's spiritual laws operate. You step out of a 20-storey building—you don't break the law of gravity; you

demonstrate it. Now you might think for a while you're breaking it. You might be like that guy that jumped out of a skyscraper, and, as he passed each window, he said, "It's okay so far. It's okay so far. It's okay so far." But you know, that *so far* only goes so far. And then, of course, it wasn't the fall that killed him; it was the sudden stop when he hit the ground. You don't—you don't—break the law of gravity when you jump out of the building; you just merely demonstrate it.

And you don't break God's spiritual laws; you are broken on them. And one of God's laws in the spiritual realm, as well as in the physical realm, is the law of the harvest.

I. The Law of the Harvest Explained

Now I want you to notice five things about the law of the harvest; and then, I'm going to come back again and tell you why David suffered as he did, even though God had forgiven David.

A. The Principle of Implantation

Now here are the five laws—five principles—of the law of the harvest. The first principle is the principle of implantation—implantation. That is, whatever you plant, you reap. Again, Galatians chapter 6, verse 7: *"Be not deceived; [for] God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"* (Galatians 6:7). You see, what God is saying is that, if you are going to reap, you must plant. Whatever we sow, we reap. There can be no reaping without planting. There is no such thing as spontaneous generation.

For example, we're reaping blessing here in America because others have planted. And do you know the freedom, and the liberty, and the wealth, and the luxury that we have here in America is here because of our forefathers? I copied this down because I thought the writer said it well. He said, "Did we bring the Bible to these shores, or did it not rather bring us? The breath of the ancient prophets was in the sails that drove the tiny Mayflower. The hope and faith of ancient poets, kings, and lawgivers were in the hearts of those who first sang the Lord's song in this strange land. From those beginnings unto now, the Bible has been a teacher to our best men, a rebuke to our worst men, and a noble companion to us all." And the reason that America is such a great nation is not because Americans are smarter, not because the sun shines on us more, not because it rains more, not because our soil is richer, but because our forefathers planted certain things in American soil—and I'm not talking about seeds; I'm talking about faith, and truth, and hope, and charity, and justice. And because of that, we are reaping a harvest.

You see, there is a principle that, whatever a man sows, he reaps that. But you have to plant in order to reap. We're reaping a harvest here at Bellevue Baptist Church

because other people have planted, who have gone before us. And I know full well, dear friend, that the blessings that are mine as pastor of this church are not merely because of what God allows me to do, but because of what Dr. Ramsey Pollard has done; and because of what Dr. Robert G. Lee has done; and because of others, and other deacons, and other teachers, who have gone before.

I want to show you something here in John, the fourth chapter—just turn to it a moment. What a blessing this was to me, as I meditated on this and thought about it. In John chapter 4, look, if you will, in verse 35: *“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages...”*—you get in God’s harvest field, my dear friend, you become a soul winner, and you lay the golden grain at the feet of Jesus, He’s going to pay you, and He’s going to pay you well—*“he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.”* Now notice verse 37: *“And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours”* (John 4:35–38).

Now many times we reap where we’ve not sowed. But if we reap where we’ve not sowed, it’s because somebody else has sowed before us—somebody else has planted before us—and we just simply enter into their harvest.

This auditorium—I didn’t build this auditorium. Some other people built it. Most of us didn’t build it; most of us didn’t pay one nickel for it. Some other people paid, and they built this; they dreamed it. This is a beautiful place—a magnificent place. We just come in and plop down, and I guess we just think maybe it just floated down out of Heaven; but it didn’t. Friend, I want to tell you, there were some people that went before us who paid with blood, sweat, and tears, and sacrificed, that we might come to this beautiful place here tonight and preach.

When I came to this church 10 years ago, I’ll tell you what I found. God, through Dr. Ramsey Pollard, gave to me three things: he gave to me a people that loved one another; he gave to me, secondly, a people who believe the Bible is God’s Word; he gave to me, thirdly, a people who believe that the pastor is God’s chosen man to lead His flock. What more—what more—could a man want when he comes to a church? And I thank God for this man. And Dr. Pollard knows that the church has grown in a phenomenal way, and nobody could be happier than Dr. Pollard. Dr. Pollard doesn’t say, “Oh, I regret the growth.” No, he laid the foundation. He did the planting; we are doing the reaping. But the Bible says, “He that plants and he that reaps are one.”

I want to tell you, dear friend, if you plant and you don’t reap, somebody else is going to reap what you plant. But the Bible says, “Whatever we sow, we’re going to

reap.” And I remember what Adoniram Judson said—and remember it well, dear friend: “If you suffer without reaping, somebody else, dear friend, will...” No, let me give it to you the way he gave it: “If we succeed without suffering, it is because somebody else suffered before us; but there can be no success without suffering”—“If we succeed without suffering, it is because somebody else suffered before us; but there can be no success without suffering.” I thank God for what we have here in America. I thank God for what we have here in Bellevue Church. I thank God for the law of the harvest that teaches that there must be seeds put in the ground before there can be a crop. There is the principle of implantation.

B. **The Principle of Identification**

There’s another principle—there is the principle of identification. Now what is the principle of identification? The principle of implantation means if you want a crop, you have to plant. The principle of identification is this: that you’re going to reap what you sow; we reap the same as we sow.

The Bible says, in Genesis 1, that the plant and the animals bring forth “after their kind” (Genesis 1). There is a locked-in likeness, and you cannot sow one thing and reap another thing. For example, you don’t reap figs from an olive tree. You don’t plant corn and reap wheat. And you cannot plant discord and reap unity. You cannot plant hypocrisy and reap holiness. You cannot sow to the flesh and reap to the spirit. “Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. He that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. He that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Galatians 6:7–8). Job chapter 4, verse 8 says, “*They that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same*” (Job 4:8). That is, you are going to reap what you sow.

Now there’s no way to get around this, in the good side and in the bad side. And whatever you need you ought to plant. Now remember the verse that I gave you this morning? In the Gospel of Luke, chapter 6, verse 38: “*Give, and it shall be given unto you*” (Luke 6:38).

Now what are men going to give to you? They’re going to give to you what you give to them. Do you have a need? Is there a need in your life? Well then, dear friend, that’s the area where you need to start planting; that’s the area where you need to start investing. You want love; you say, “Nobody loves me.” All right, let me tell you how to get love: start loving. If you want love, then so love. You say, “Well, I need people to be concerned.” Then why don’t you be concerned? You say, “Well, I need friends.” “He that would have friends must show himself friendly” (Proverbs 18:24), the Bible says. You see, there’s a locked in-likeness. You say, “Well, I don’t have enough time.” Then start giving your time, and you’re going to find out that you’ll have more people to come help you do what you need to do. “*Give, and it shall be given unto you*” (Luke 6:38). And

dear friend, if you are not reaping as you desire, you'd better check up and see what you've been planting. There is the principle of implantation. There is the principle of identification—you reap as you sow.

C. **The Principle of Incubation**

Now there's a third principle. We're going to get back to David in just a moment. There's a principle of incubation. You don't reap immediately. Whatever you plant has to incubate; it has to wait. You see, not only do you reap what you sow—the same as you sow—but you reap later than you sow.

You see, God has a season for every crop. Now some seeds sprout very quickly. David's crop started coming up in a matter of days after God pronounced judgment on him. But some seeds sprout after a long time. And the reason that many people don't understand the law of the harvest is they don't have enough patience.

Now again, Galatians chapter 6, verse 7, says, "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*" (Galatians 6:7). "If we sow to the flesh, of the flesh we will reap corruption. If we sow to the Spirit, of the Spirit will reap life everlasting." But he says, "And be not weary in well doing. We will reap in due season" (Galatians 6:8–9).

Now too many of you are just going around pulling up your radishes by the roots, trying to see how they grow, and then jamming them back in the ground again. And you don't give God enough time to bring the crop in. And it's going to come in—it's going to come in. Solomon wrote this in the Book of Ecclesiastes, chapter 11, and verse 1: "*Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days*" (Ecclesiastes 11:1).

Now I've tried to figure out what Solomon meant by that. And I found, in 1 Kings chapter 10, verses 20 through 23, that Solomon had a navy, and he had great ships, and he would send these ships as far away, I believe, as England (1 Kings 10:20–23). It was Tharshish, is what the scripture says there. And they would come back, and the Bible said they came back with ivory, and apes, and cedar, and all kinds of spices and everything. And Solomon was a wise man. He paid for these sailors. He built these ships, and he sent them out. It's as though he said goodbye to them. It's as though he were just casting his bread out upon the water. But he said, you'll find them again after many days. He was a very wise man. He knew how to invest in the maritime trade. And he cast his bread upon the waters; and then, he waited. And after a while, his ship came sailing back.

You see, dear friend, there is a principle of incubation. That's the reason that some people sin as they sin—because they don't see immediate judgment. They think that somehow they've gotten away with their sin. Solomon also wrote, in Ecclesiastes chapter 8 and verse 11—and I would that every judge in America had this verse put on

his desk—it says this: *“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil”* (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Now let me read that again: *“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”*

If we had quick, and sure, and just punishment for crime, the crime would go immediately down. But there is this postponement. There is this bonding. There is this thing and that thing. And I believe in the judicial system, but I believe that some today have made a mockery of the judicial system. And they do not understand the principle; and so, people have the idea because they do not immediately see the harvest that somehow they have gotten away with their sin.

I just want to give you an example of what I’m talking about here. God had a law in the land of Israel that they were to let the land lie fallow every seven years. That is, they were to farm the land for six years; and just as there was a Sabbath Day, there was to be a Sabbath Year. They were to let the land just lie fallow. That is, the nutrients and so forth—there would be a cover crop, and they’d just let it lie fallow; and that way, the land had a way to recoup and to regain its strength. But they failed to do this. As a matter of fact, for 490 years they failed to let the land lie fallow for every seventh year. And it seemed like God just turned His head the other way. It seemed like God didn’t pay any attention. It seemed like they were getting away with their sin.

But 1,000 years later, Israel was carried into the Babylonian captivity. And I want you to notice, in 2 Chronicles chapter 36, why God says it happened as it did. Second Chronicles chapter 36—a very interesting verse—and look with me in verse 20: *“And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia:”*—now, notice why they were carried away—*“to fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years”* (2 Chronicles 36:20–21).

They were there for 70 years in captivity. And if you’ll add it up, you’ll find out that there were 70 years of Sabbaths that they had failed to keep. And they thought, “Well, we’re getting away with this. We’re not letting the land lie fallow.” But God had the record, and God said, “All right, you’re going to be carried away into captivity, and you are going to stay there 70 years until the land fulfills her Sabbaths.”

And some of you, dear friend, think you’re getting away without tithing. Did you hear about the man who went to the hospital to have his tithe removed? “Oh,” you say, “well, I’m just getting away with it.” God, my friend, is keeping the record. You’re not going to outsmart God. And men reap. They must sow in order to reap. They reap the same as they sow. They reap later than they sow. There is the principle of implantation. There is the principle of identification. There is the principle of incubation. Sooner or later, your

harvest will come.

D. **The Principle of Intensification**

Now there's another principle—of intensification. That is, not only do you reap what you sow, not only do you reap later than you sow, but you always reap more than you sow. That's what David did, and it's what everyone does. You reap more than you sow. The Bible says, in Hosea chapter 8, verse 7: *"They have sown the wind, and they [will] reap the whirlwind"* (Hosea 8:7). That is, they've sinned like a breeze, but they have retribution like a cyclone. You reap more than you sow.

Now that's true in the spiritual realm. If you do a little good, God rewards your whole life. If you do a little evil, then that little evil is intensified. And you reap far more than you sow.

Now let's go back to this matter of giving again. Suppose a farmer is married to a woman, and he goes out to put his seed in the ground, and she says to him, "What are you going to do?" And he says, "Well, I'm going to take this corn, and I'm going to take this wheat, and I'm going to bury it." She says, "You're what?" "Yeah, I'm going to take this corn, this wheat—I'm going to take it out here, and I'm going to bury it." "No, you can't do that. We've got to feed the chickens, and we've got to feed the cows, and we've got to feed the children." "Well, with part of that, we're going to feed the chickens; and, with part of that, we're going to feed the cows; and, part of it I'm going to grind up and make into bread—going to feed the children." "We can't afford just to go out and put that in the ground. I'm not going to let you bury that." "But," he says, "now, wait a minute—wait a minute. I don't intend to lose it when I put it in the ground. I intend to get back more than I ever put in the ground."

I want you to look in 2 Corinthians chapter 9 for just a moment. Let me show you something here, those of you who are afraid to give, those of you who are afraid to trust God with your finances. Second Corinthians chapter 9—we eluded to this chapter this morning. I want you to look in verses 6 and following—2 Corinthians chapter 9 and verse 6: *"But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."* Now listen: *"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart,"*—that is, according to the kind of crop he wants—*"so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."* Now notice verse 8: *"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work"* (2 Corinthians 9:6–8).

And so that farmer says to his wife, "Look, I'm not throwing this seed away. I am not scattering it; I am investing it."

And dear friend, when you bring your money and give your money to the work of God, I want to remind you that you're just planning a crop. And really, Galatians chapter

6, verse 7, which says, *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”* (Galatians 6:7), is talking about the matter of your giving. And God is just simply saying that “You can’t out-give Me. You shovel it out, and I shovel it in; and I’ve got a bigger shovel than you have.”

There is a law of intensification. You sow to the wind—you reap the whirlwind. You plant a handful of grain—you reap a crop. You always get back more than you sow. It is the law of the harvest. And it’s going to intensify, whether it intensifies for good or whether it intensifies for evil; it just depends upon what you plant.

E. **The Principle of Implementation**

But now, I want you to notice the fifth of these principles; and then, we’re going to be back to David in just a moment. Not only is there the principle of implantation, and not only the principle of identification, and incubation, and intensification, but there is the principle of implementation. That is, you’re going to have to put the plan into action. God’s not going to put it into action for you. If you want to reap a harvest, then you’re going to have to implement it. I mean, you’re going to have to get busy. You see, God gives the opportunity, but you must implement the plan.

Now let’s go back to that farmer. We say, “Farmer, are you going to plant a crop?” “No.” “Well, why not?” “Well, you see, I want to harvest first; and as soon as I have a harvest, then I’m going to plant.” “No,” God says, “if you want a harvest, you must plant.”

Now the devil will try to keep some of you from making a mutual investment. The devil will try to keep some of you from planting, from implementing God’s plan. He wants you sitting around. Do you know the reason that some folks don’t give money? Some of you have got money laid up in your bank. You say, “Much good for many years.” And God’s going to say, “Thou fool, tonight thy soul should be required of thee” (Luke 12:20). But you say, “Well now, look. I don’t know what might happen. I might, you know, I might need this for my old age.” You might be like the man—a guy put a pistol in his ribs and said, “Your money or your life.” He said, “Take my life. I want my money for my old age.” Well, you might be—you might be—like that guy, just wondering what’s going to happen to you in your old age. And sure, indeed, you need to lay up some things for the future, but don’t be afraid to invest—don’t be afraid to invest.

Do you know what the Bible says? The Bible says, in Ecclesiastes chapter 11 and verse 4: *“He that [considereth] the wind [will] not sow”* (Ecclesiastes 11:4). Do you know what that means? Here’s a farmer out here, and he’s getting ready to plant a crop. And he says, “Well now, wait a minute. You know, if I put this seed in the ground, we might have a drought this year, or we might have a flood this year, or we might have a freeze, or we might have a heat wave.” And so he sits around considering what might happen,

and he never plants. Friend, if you want a crop, you're going to have to plant. And don't you let the devil make you a wind-watcher and a cloud-examiner when you ought to be out here planting, planting.

II. The Law of the Harvest Experienced

Now come back to David. David experienced the law of the harvest. David found out that he reaped because he planted. He found out that he reaped the same thing that he planted. He found out that he reaped more than he planted. He found out that he reaped later than he planted. And he found out that he reaped it all, because he was the guy that put it into motion; he was the guy that implemented the plan.

Now God had said to David, "David, I forgive you. Your sin is forgiven." Well then, that brings up the real question: Why didn't God just cancel out the law of the harvest? Friend, He doesn't do it. When God forgives, the law of the harvest goes right on. Now that's what you need to understand—that's what you need to understand. *There are a lot of folks who think they can sow their wild oats and then pray for crop failure.* No, no. The law of the harvest goes right on.

Now here's a man who gets drunk, and he goes out, and he wrecks his automobile, and he cuts off his arm. And he says, "God forgive me." God does forgive him. But he goes through life with one arm, doesn't he? It doesn't mean he's not forgiven; but whatever he sowed, he reaped. And he goes through life with one arm.

I want to show you a very interesting verse in Psalm 99 and verse 8. Just turn to it. It's sort of a rambling sermon, isn't it? But there's a truth here, if you'll hang on. Psalm 99, verse 8: "*Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God:*"—now, what this says, put a star by it—"*thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions*" (Psalm 99:8). Do you know what that means? God forgave them and then carried them to the woodshed. "*Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.*"

Now God said to David, "David, I'm going to forgive you. But David, there are some things that are going to happen in your life. You're going to know sorrow. Your children are going to disgrace you. You're going to reap what you've sown." And God said to David, "One of the reasons I am doing this is the heathen are watching. And even though, David, I have forgiven you, if you did not reap certain consequences, what a lesson it would be to the world! The world would think that you could sin and just simply get away with that sin."

Now dear friend, you cannot. And remember this: that, when God chastises you and when God punishes you, God is not trying to get even with you. The same love that pardons is the love that punishes. And God may forgive you, and you can be perfectly forgiven—David was perfectly forgiven—but the law of the harvest was still operating in

David's life.

And see, to be forgiven just means there's unbroken communion with God. It doesn't mean that you're not going to suffer because of what you've done. When you ask God to forgive you, and you have the sense of His presence in your life, you're just as forgiven as you will ever be. But I still want to tell you that in this life there are certain consequences of your sin that are going to come, and it does not mean that you're not forgiven. God forgave Moses, but Moses did not enter into the Promised Land, because of his disbelief. And God judged Moses, and he died on Mount Nebo. Galatians chapter 6, verse 7, is written to Christians—not to unsaved people—when it says, *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that [sows] to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption”* (Galatians 6:7–8).

I think the best illustration I have from what I'm trying to say to you, an evangelist—Elmer Piper, I believe—was the one who told this story. He said that, when he was a young man, his mother asked him to do something, and he sassed his mother. Now his dad was also a preacher. And he sassed his mother. He said when he sassed his mother, his dad jumped up and looked at him like he'd just shot his dad. And his dad said to him, “Son, I just heard you sass your mother.” He said, “Son, come up to the bedroom. I want to talk with you.” And he brought young Elmer up to the bedroom. And the pastor sat down, and he said, “Now son, I cannot believe that you would talk that way to your very own mother.” He said, “I want to tell you about your mother.”

And he told what a good and a godly woman she was and how she loved God. And then, he told about how he was born and how his mother had gone into the valley of the shadow of death to bring him into this world. And then, he told about how many times she had done without things, that he might have things that he needed, and how she sacrificed, and how she wore the same dress year after year so that he could go to school, and so forth. He told about how she sat up late at night with him and held him in her arms when he was sick, and so forth, and she had sacrificed. By this time, Elmer said he was just crying, he was so ashamed of himself. And he said, the dad was crying, too. And he went on and on and told about what a wonderful mother...what a terrible sin it was to sass one's mother.

And he said, “Elmer, aren't you ashamed?” And he said, “Yes, Daddy, I am ashamed.” He said, “Well, I'm ashamed, too.” And he said, “I want us to go down. First of all, we're going to pray and ask God to forgive you.” And he said, “I got down on my knees with my dear old dad, and he prayed and said, ‘God, I'm so ashamed of my boy.’” He said, “He sassed his mother. O God, I want You to have mercy on him. And God, I want You to forgive my boy.” And he was weeping. And Elmer said, “Oh, I didn't realize what all I'd done.” He said, “I got down on my knees, and I said, ‘God have mercy on me. I'm so sorry that I sassed my mother.’”

He said, “Now son, let’s go downstairs and ask mother to forgive you, and I want you to go tell her.” And he said, “I went downstairs, and I said, ‘Mother, I’m so sorry. You’re such a precious mother, and I’m so sorry that I did this. Mother, I’ve asked God to forgive me. Will you forgive me?’” She said, “Yes, son. I forgive you.” And then, he said, “My dad came in, took me back upstairs, and beat the daylights out of me.” Oh, what a dad—what a dad! What was he doing? He said, “I never wanted to sass my mother again since that time.” That was a very wise dad—not chastising in anger, but chastising in love, saying, “Son, here is something I want you to never forget—never forget.”

God is that way. Oh, He forgave their sins, but, dear friend, the Bible says He “took vengeance upon their inventions” (Psalm 99:8). He did. There’s pardon with punishment. There is cleansing with chastisement. David was forgiven, but the law of the harvest went right on.

Conclusion

You know, I’m glad that I was saved as a kid. I hear these people talk about being saved drunk—drunks getting saved. I thank God that drunks can get saved. But you know, a lot of drunks that got saved still have bad livers. I thank God for dope addicts getting saved, but some dope addicts still have scrambled brains. I thank God that adulterers and whoremongers can be saved, but I thank God that I was able to go to the marriage altar a virgin, and marry one. I thank God for that. I thank God that I didn’t have to have a PhD in sin and then get saved. Because, I want to tell you that the dope addict who gets saved, and the adulterer who gets saved, and the drunkard who gets saved, and the thief who gets saved—he’s saved and God forgives. But friend, you don’t cancel out the law of the harvest. The law of the harvest is there. It is a law. Whatever a man sows he’s going to reap. *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked”* (Galatians 6:7). And David was forgiven.

But oh, somehow we’ve got the idea to these young people that they can just go out, and just sin anyway they like, and then just come running to God, and get saved, and it cancels everything out. Friend, it cancels the sin debt out, as far as your eternal relationship and destiny is concerned, but, I want to tell you, there is a law of the harvest. And Nathan the prophet said to David, “David, God’s forgiven you, but now, I want to tell you what’s going to happen.” And it happened. But David was a man after God’s own heart. And David had learned the truth of the Bible: “No chastening for the present time seems to be joyous, but grievous: but afterward, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to them that exercised thereby” (Hebrews 12:11).

Do you know what David named one of his sons? Nathan—Nathan. Oh, he loved his pastor. He loved the man of God who loved him enough that he would come to him and

say, “You’re the man,” and challenge him with his sin. He was a man after God’s own heart. He was a great sinner, but he was a great repentant.

And I want to tell you, my dear friend, you can drive a nail in a board and pull the nail out—the nail hole is still there. And that sin may be removed, but the scar will go with you to your grave.

It’s better not to sin than it is to sin and get forgiven. There is a law of the harvest. Let’s pray.

Three Mighty Men

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 26, 1987

Main Scripture Text: 2 Samuel 23:9, 14–18, 20

“And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD.”

2 SAMUEL 23:16

Outline

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Introduction

Would you take God’s Word, the Bible, and turn to 2 Samuel chapter 23 with me? It’s a very interesting story tucked away here in the life of David. Many of us know the episodes in the life of David, but this is one that we may not be aware of but, I think, is a wonderful story for us to study tonight before we have together the Lord’s Supper.

Second Samuel 23, and I begin reading in verse 14: *“And David was then in an hold”—*that is, he’s holed up; he’s hiding. He is a refugee, as it were, a fugitive—*“and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem”—*that is, the Philistines had taken the beautiful city of Bethlehem (and David’s hometown), and they had invaded that; and they had conquered Bethlehem. And, verse 15—*“And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate! And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD. And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men.”* (2 Samuel 23:14–17)

Now, let me give you the background of this passage of Scripture. King David has served as a mighty king. No more glorious king, in my estimation, ever ruled than David. And yet, David had been deposed, displaced. His throne had been taken from him. He

is now a fugitive; he is fleeing. He is a king, but he has no crown. He is a ruler, but he has no throne. He's hiding in a hill—in the hills—in a cave named Adullam. *Adullam* means “judgment.” And, he is in a cave—a dark, dismal cave—a king without a crown, a ruler without a throne. His boyhood home, Bethlehem, has been taken by the ungodly Philistines. He's sitting there, and he's thinking; and he has a moment of nostalgia. He remembers, when he was a shepherd boy, he would be out taking care of his father's sheep, and as he would be coming home, there, by the gate, was a well. And, in that well was the coolest, clearest water that he could remember. Now, he's in a cave, and he just mutters; he just sort of speaks out loud. I don't think he was really even aware that anyone else was listening to him. But, he said, “Oh, oh, if...if I could just have a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem! If I could just have that!” (2 Samuel 23:15)

Of course, there was no way possible, as far as he knew, that he could have a drink of water from that well. But, there were three men there—three men—who were called “David's mighty men.” When they heard David express this desire, that wish became their command. And, these three men rose up as one man, and they fought their way through the enemy lines, slashing, fighting—hand-to-hand combat. They made their way to the well in the occupied city, let down that bucket, filled their vessel with water, and brought it back to David in that cave. What devotion! What mighty love! When David saw what these men had done at the risk and the peril of their own lives, he refused to drink it. But, he took that water and said, “This water is the life and the blood of these men,” (2 Samuel 23:17) for they did put their lives in jeopardy, that he might have that water. They gave, as it were, their lives for him. And, he said, “This is their life. This is their blood. I can't drink it.” (2 Samuel 23:17) But, he took it and made it an offering to the Lord, and he poured it out on the ground as an offering to the Lord.

As I looked at that lesson, God spoke to my heart, and I want you to learn some precious truths with me tonight that ought to tune our hearts for the taking of the Lord's Supper. I believe King David, in that cave, represents every one of us without Christ before we were saved. Every one of us is a displaced king if we're not saved, and we're a king without a throne. And, we have, like David, an insatiable thirst. You see, when God created man, God made man to be a king; God made mankind to rule. And, you can read in Genesis 1:26 where God said, “*Let us make man [after] our image...and let them have dominion*”—that is, “Let them rule.” Man was created to be king of the earth, but man lost his throne. Man, rather than being king, is a king without a crown, a ruler without a throne, living in the cave of judgment under the sentence of death. And man, in that situation, has an insatiable thirst. There is, in the heart of every one of us, a thirst for water from Bethlehem's well. That's the reason Jesus said, “*If any man thirst, let him come unto me.*” (John 7:37) That's the reason the Bible says in Revelation 22, speaking of this wonderful water of life, that, “*Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let*

him [come and drink of] the water of life freely.” (Revelation 22:17) The water of this world can never satisfy the deepest longing of the human heart. And, people are trying to satisfy that craving, but there is in every one of us a king—every one of these kings and queens without a throne—an insatiable thirst that can only be satisfied with water from Bethlehem’s well.

But, I want you to think not only of man as a displaced king, but I want you to think what God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit did to satisfy that deepest longing that we have in our heart. Now, notice, as we look at this passage of Scripture one more time... Look at it with me, and you’re going to find out that there were three men who acted as one to bring this water to David. Now, David, here, is thirsting, and David just gives this request out of his heart. And, and, he says here in verse 15: *“Oh that one would give me drink of the water.”* (2 Samuel 23:15) Now, David asked for one to do it. And then, in verse 16, the Bible says, *“And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines.”* (2 Samuel 23:16) David said, *“Oh, that one would...”* (2 Samuel 23:15) And, there were three that acted as one.

I. Abishai: God the Father

Now, I want you to get the names of these three men, because the names of these three mighty men are given. Look, if you will, in verse 18: *“And Abishai, the brother of Joab...”* (2 Samuel 23:18) That was one of these men. The name *Abishai* means “the Father is the Giver.” *Abba* means “father,” and this means, actually, “the gift of the Father,” or “the Father is the Giver.” And, it speaks to me of God the Father, who *“so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”* (John 3:16)

II. Benaiah: God the Son

And then, look with me down in verse 20, and you’re going to see the name of another: *“And Benaiah...”* (2 Samuel 23:20) That is the name of the other of these three mighty men. The name *Ben* means “son,” and the “aiah” speaks of God. And, literally, the name here is “the Son of God.” The first of these three mighty men is “God the Giver,” or “the Father who is the Giver.” The second is the “Son of God.” He was one of these other three mighty that went to bring a drink of water.

III. Eleazar: God the Holy Spirit

And then, look, if you will, in chapter 23, and back up to verse 9: *“And after him was Eleazar...”* (2 Samuel 23:9) *Eleazar* means “God is our Helper”—“Our God, our Helper.” This reminds us of the Holy Spirit, who *“[helps] our infirmities,”* (Romans 8:26) who knows our weaknesses.

And, I see in these three mighty men—and you pardon me if I see too much—but I

see God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. As a matter of fact, when the Bible records this same story in 1 Chronicles 11:19, it doesn't call these three "mighty men," but it calls them "the three mightiest men." And, how they picture for me God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—three in one, working to bring to David the water of life.

And, think of the fearful price that was paid. Look with me in verse 14, and notice what it says: *"And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem."* (2 Samuel 23:14) In order for them to bring this water to David, they had to go right into the stronghold of the enemy, right into the camp of the Philistines, and that reminds me that when our Lord Jesus Christ saved me, when He purchased my salvation, He baptized His soul in hell for me. He invaded the camp of the enemy, that I might have a drink of water from Bethlehem's well. And, since one name means "God is the Giver," it reminds me that God is the One who thought this salvation. The other name means "the Son of God"; it reminds me that Jesus is the One who brought—bought—this salvation. And, the other is the... "God our Helper"—reminds me that the Holy Spirit is the One who brought it. God thought it. Jesus bought it. The Holy Spirit brought it to us. Thank God for this drink from Bethlehem's well!

But, I want you to notice just one other thing before we have the Lord's Supper. I want you to notice what David did when this thing happened. Look again, if you will, in verse 16: *"And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD. And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it."* (2 Samuel 23:16–17) To David, the picture moves dramatically and radically. No longer is it mere water that he's thirsting for. The picture moves up to a higher plain. He says, "This represents blood that was shed for me. These gave their lives for me. And now," he says, "I give it back to the Lord" (2 Samuel 23:16–17)—a life given and a life poured back. "This is their life—this is their blood." (2 Samuel 23:17) And, David says, "Thank you. Thank you, men. I receive it. Thank you for it. And now, I pour it out. I have received it, and now I give it back." The choir sang it this morning. Were you listening?

*Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

—ISAAC WATTS

Conclusion

We're coming to the Lord's Table. And, when we take these precious elements into our bodies, when we hold these things in our hands, we're saying, "This is what God the

Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit did for us, that our deepest thirst might be satisfied.” But, we’re saying, also, “Here, Lord, I give myself away. ’Tis all that I can do”—a life given and a life given back. *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your [body] a living sacrifice.”* (Romans 12:1) And, may tonight, as we have this Lord’s Supper, may we receive it—a life given for us. And then, may we say, “Dear Lord, now I give my life to you.” Father, bless us as we prepare our heart for this Lord’s Supper.