



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Lessons from the Life of David: 1 Samuel 19:1-24, Psalm 59

“The Outlaw: Fleeing Yet Singing”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The Scripture reading for today is in 1 Samuel chapter 19, and I’m going to read the entire chapter, beginning with verse 1. The author writes.

“Now Saul told Jonathan his son and all his servants to put David to death. But Jonathan, Saul's son, greatly delighted in David. So Jonathan told David saying, “Saul my father is seeking to put you to death. Now therefore, please be on guard in the morning, and stay in a secret place and hide yourself and I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak with my father about you; if I find out anything, then I shall tell you.” Then Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, “Do not let the king sin against his servant David, since he has not sinned against you, and since his deeds have been very beneficial to you. For he took his life in his hand and struck the Philistine, and the Lord brought about a great deliverance for all Israel; you saw it and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by putting David to death without a cause?” And Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan, and Saul vowed, As the Lord lives, he shall not be put to death. Then Jonathan called David, and Jonathan told him all these words. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as formerly. [Evidently as his musical psychologist.] When there was war again,

David went out and fought with the Philistines and defeated them with great slaughter, so that they fled before him. Now there was an evil spirit from the Lord on Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand, and David was playing the harp with his hand. And Saul tried to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, so that he stuck the spear into the wall. And David fled and escaped that night. Then Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him, in order to put him to death in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, “If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be put to death.” So Michal let David down through a window, and he went out and fled and escaped. Michal took the household idol [the teraphim] and laid it on the bed, and put a quilt of goats' hair at its head, and covered it with clothes.

Two people after the message this morning asked me about the household idol. It is a revelation, I think, of the spiritual condition of Michal, particularly, but perhaps also reflects a bit upon David as well. After all, David though anointed of God to be king and one of God's own ones, is not a mature believer at this stage.

So Michal let David down through a window, and he went out and fled and escaped. [Now verse 14] When Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, “He is sick.” [I did skip verse 13, but we won't read it.] Then Saul sent messengers to see David, saying, “Bring him up to me on his bed, that I may put him to death.” When the messengers entered, behold, the household idol was on the bed with the quilt of goats' hair at its head. So Saul said to Michal, “Why have you deceived me like this and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped?” And Michal said to Saul, “He said to me, Let me go! Why should I put you to death?” [That also is revealing of Michal's spiritual condition. We know that she is quick with her tongue, at least, and blames David for what has happened.] Now David fled and escaped and came to Samuel at Ramah, and told him all that Saul had

done to him and he and Samuel went and stayed in Naioth. [Which is very close to Ramah, if not a part of Ramah.] It was told Saul, saying, “Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah.” Then Saul sent messengers to take David, but when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing and presiding over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul; and they also prophesied. When it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they also prophesied. So Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they also prophesied. Then he himself went to Ramah and came as far as the large well that is in Secu; and he asked and said, “Where are Samuel and David?” And someone said, “Behold, they are at Naioth in Ramah.” He proceeded there to Naioth in Ramah; and the Spirit of God came upon him also, so that he went along prophesying continually until he came to Naioth in Ramah. He also stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel and lay down naked [Sometimes we in the west misunderstand that. The term naked was used of individuals when their outer garments were taken off. There still was an inner garment that they wore. So, we should understand it in that way.] He lay down naked all that day and all that night Therefore they say, “Is Saul also among the prophets?” You may remember, that question was asked previously in chapter 10.

May the Lord bless this reading of his word and let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for this day that Thou hast given to us. We thank Thee for the goodness shown to us in so many ways. And we thank Thee for the experiences of life, designed to fit us for the future. And we pray that we may be submissive and responsive to the word of God and to the experiences that we have. Enable us, Lord, to apply the word that Thou hast given to us in the paths of life to which Thou art calling us. Today, Lord, we especially remember [name redacted]. We commit them to Thee and pray Thy blessing upon them. Give encouragement and we pray that there may be a

great deal of comfort that the Holy Spirit gives to them in this experience that they are passing through. We pray for [names redacted] and others, the names listed in our calendar of concern as well, all of whom are suffering in various ways and have requested our prayers. We, Lord, bring them all before Thee. We pray that Thou wilt give answers to their petitions that will be pleasing to Thee and pleasing to them as well. We commit them all to Thee.

We thank Thee for the church of Jesus Christ, which is the Body of Christ. We thank Thee for the way in which Thou has, through the centuries, kept and guarded the flock of our great triune God in Heaven. And we pray in the difficult days in which we are living that Thy blessing, Thy blessing may be upon the church of Jesus Christ, wherever individual meetings of its members are taking place. Bless the ministry of the Scriptures. We pray for the outreach of Believers Chapel, for its elders, for its members, and for the friends and visitors who are with us. O God, bless richly in the lives of them and of all of us. Father, enable us to be submissive to Thy truth, we pray.

And now, as we think about the United States of America, we pray for our President and for the decisions that are being made constantly. May they, too, be made in the light of the principles of holy Scripture. Give direction. Give guidance. And protect this great land. Enable us to enjoy the freedoms that, ultimately, Thou hast given to us.

Bless our time together. May the word of God strengthen each of us.
For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today as you will note from the bulletin is “The Outlaw, Fleeing Yet Singing.” The tragedy of Saul, the King of Israel, is the tragedy of everyone who descends into the arena to match his strength with God's strength and to match his strength with our strength in conflict. We sometimes forget the things that the word of God states. To fight with God is always a losing battle. You know, of course, that the apostle has told us in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians that God works all

things according to the counsel of his own will. But that great truth is expressed throughout the word of God.

For example, in the Book of Psalms, and in the 135th of them, the 5th and 6th verses, the psalmist writes these things, “For I know that the Lord is great And that our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the Lord pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.” So to contend with God is as foolish a thing as anyone could possibly do. To think that you can enter into an arena of conflict with God and somehow come out victorious; what could be more foolish than that? But many of us, from past experiences, know that is precisely what we have done. We have known what the word of God states, but in spite of the fact that it is stated the things that we are contemplating doing, we go ahead and do them and think that in some way we’re going to win this little conflict. It cannot be done. All of us will be forced, ultimately, to cry out with Julian the Apostate, “Thou hast conquered, O Galilean.”

This past week, as many of you know, I survey the Today section of the paper, there was a little article about a man who had died in one of the Northern states, and his sons were most impressed about his love for his Mercedes. As a matter of fact, that was the thing that really was the center of his life. And from love of their father, and I do appreciate that, from love of their father and his love of the Mercedes, they buried him in such a way that when you looked at his coffin, you saw a Mercedes. They took things off of Mercedes. They actually used the grill, they did not of a 300 which he possessed, whatever size that is, but when they finished the coffin, the coffin looked like a Mercedes. And one of the boys said, “I know that my father is in heaven and delighting over this and saying, “They finally did right by me.”

I don’t know of anything more pathetic than that. To think that a family coming to the end of the life of one of its members, one of its important members, one that they loved should have no concept of spiritual things than to think that it might be possible for an individual to enjoy the fact that he was buried in something that looked like a

Mercedes. That’s not the first time, incidentally, that that is done, but it just has impressed me so much with the silliness of the life of so many of us. How is it possible for us to think that we can live our lives out upon this earth and not have, ultimately, to contend with the word of God?

1 Samuel chapter 19 is an outward, external look at the beginning of David’s life as an outlaw. That life lasted for about seven years while Saul was on the throne. Constant conflict, David was hunted over the hills and valleys of the land, and for seven years he lived the life of an outlaw. The chapter is very interesting, of course, in itself. But, what is most interesting about it to me is that David later wrote a psalm, and the psalm is designed to reflect how he felt when these experiences were being experienced, in chapter 19, and also it contains a comment upon what happened as a result of his trust in the Lord God, in those times.

In other words, 1 Samuel chapter 19 is an outward, external look at his life and its beginnings as an outlaw, but Psalm 59 is an internal personal reflection on the events and it is of particular significance for us because it reveals the reason for David’s composure in all of these experiences. One cannot read these verses, the 24 of them in this chapter, without wondering how is it possible for David to have maintained his wits in the midst of the experiences being chased by Saul’s messengers on every turn, Saul seeking to slay him, then acting as if he really loved David, which made him even more dangerous. It’s like having a dog wagging its tail who bites you. And so this is the kind of life that David faced.

And one would ask, how is it possible that he maintained his composure? Psalm 59 gives us some clues with reference to that. And what I would like to do is to just go through chapter 19, point out some obvious lessons within it, but then in the final moments of the message, turn to Psalm 59 and take a look at what David wrote some years later, as he looked back upon the experiences that we are reading about in this 19th chapter. The first seventeen verses of the chapter have to do with further attempts on David’s life. And

then the last verses from 18 to 24, have to do with David’s flight to Naioth and his reunion with Samuel.

Now, David, the Scriptures say at this point, is highly esteemed in Israel. If you’ll turn back to the chapter preceding and we’ll simply read the last verse of chapter 18. It reads.

“Then the commanders of the Philistines went out to battle, and it happened as often as they went out, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul. So his name was highly esteemed.”

Actually, the Hebrew term is a term that sometimes connotes the idea of precious. And some have even suggested that perhaps it might be a legitimate translation to say “his name was precious,” that is, precious to his friends and the citizens of the community in which he lived, but highly esteemed does well enough. And if that is true, and it is true according to the word of God, it’s not surprising that the rage of the enemy and the enemies is aroused because that’s a biblical principle. Peter stood up in the midst of the apostles preaching in the early days of the New Testament times and said, “There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” And the authorities in the land were very upset over that and so as the apostles preached that message, they finally brought them in before the council and the council assured them that that was wrong, they should not do that, flogged them and told them not to preach it anymore. And, of course, the apostles went on preaching that and, consequently, from the beginning, they suffered persecution.

In fact, Paul, as he looks back on some of those experiences says, with reference to believing Christians, that all of those who wish to live Godly in Christ Jesus “shall suffer persecution.” It’s legitimate to ask you, “Are you suffering a measure of persecution

because of your trust in our Lord, or is your trust in our Lord so personal that others do not even recognize that you have some stand for our Lord?

Well, the attempts are made; David, highly esteemed, and now the enemy is active. The first attempt is described in the first of the chapter, verses 1 through 7. “Saul told Jonathan his son and all his servants that they were to put David to death.” Moody, melancholy Saul, his spiritual convictions are skin deep, no miracle of mercy has ever been wrought in his heart, he does not know the grace of God that delivers us from eternal damnation. That’s something that was a strange idea to Saul in reality, and so, consequently, he will one moment swear by the Lord God; the next moment seek to put God’s servant to death.

As a matter of fact, the 6th verse says, “Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan, and Saul vowed, [He swore.] As the LORD lives, [As Yahweh lives] he shall not be put to death.” His oaths are very much like Saddam Hussein’s. They constantly change with the circumstances. He can at one point be very religious sounding, and at another point he can be seeking to murder the servants of the Lord God.

There is a passage in the New Testament that fits Saul very well. It’s 2 Peter chapter 2 in verse 20 through 22, “For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, “A dog returns to its own vomit,” and “A sow, after washing, returns to wallow in the mire.” The facts lend strong underlying to the statement that Saul was a dog, Saul was a sow, and consequently, the convictions that he has expressed from time to time are only skin deep.

Well, Jonathan brought David to Saul after he made his vow, and he was in his presences formally, playing his harp. But then the wars continued and David goes out

and he's victorious over the Philistines. They flee before him in great slaughter. But at the same time, the spirit of jealousy and envy falls upon Saul again, an evil spirit from the Lord. And as David was sitting in his home with his harp and Saul is sitting there with his spear in his hand. Why does Saul sit always with a spear or a javelin in his hand? I wonder if David wondered about that as he played the harp. One thing we do know, he kept a wary eye on Saul. But, at any rate, again he seeks to slay David. David manages evasive action and flees and escapes that night. It's very interesting to notice the irony of the passage. David fights the Philistines and we read in verse 8, “They fled before him,” but Saul throws the spear at David and David fled and escaped that night. Not a shaft of hate can hit, someone has said, til the God of love sees fit. So God's hand was upon David and he preserved him from the evil.

The third attempt is a bit more interesting because now Saul sends messengers to David's house to watch him, in order to put him to death in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, “If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be put to death.” The world's children always follow the world's principles and here we have the fleshly scheming of King Saul.

Now, what is interesting about this is the fact that back in the preceding chapter, we had read, “Now Michael Saul's daughter loved David, and when they told Saul, the thing was agreeable to him. And Saul thought, “I will give her to him so that she may be a snare to him and so that the hand of the Philistines may be against him.” So, Michal had been given to David to become a “snare” to him. And, isn't it interesting that here, Michal becomes a snare to Saul and prevents him from carrying out his slaughter of David, the king-to-be. So Saul's sewings bring their similar reapings.

I was sitting down at the table just a few minutes back and someone pointed out to me that there is an expression that is commonly used, I had never heard it. But the saying is, “If you do the crime you also do the time.” Well, the Bible says that when we engage in certain kinds of activities we will reap the results of them. So what we have

here is Saul sewing and reaping a certain result, which is the product of his own kind of sewing. “Whatsoever a man soweth,” the Scripture says, “That” you notice, it’s “that” not something else “Whatsoever a man soweth; that shall he also reap.” The Bible tells us some very interesting things about this. Over and over again, it would seem that we would learn these lessons, but we do not. We enter into the arena with God and we say, “Yes, the Bible does say ‘Whatsoever a man soweth; that shall he reap’ but we can get away with it a little bit.” And so we attempt it.

Now, the Scriptures say things like this. “He has dug a pit and hollowed it out and has fallen into the hole which he made.” That’s precisely what Saul does. He falls into the hole that he has made.

Now, I mentioned to you that I sometimes read the Today section of the paper and I’ve been enjoying very much Calvin and Hobbes, recently, because Calvin is the living illustration of this principle and he’s the living illustration of the fact that we don’t learn from it. What has happened is, essentially, this; for those of you that don’t read that very significant comic strip, is that, about a week ago, Susie, his mortal enemy, happened to leave her little doll on the ground somewhere and Calvin saw it. Now, the little doll’s name is Binkie Betsy. And so Calvin picks up Binkie Betsy, and immediately an idea comes to him. We will exact ransom from Susie. And so he composes a letter and points out that the doll has been stolen or has been taken and that she needs to pay one hundred dollars in ransom for the doll.

So, this has gone on for a week, and they have enjoyed thinking about spending their fifty dollars, Hobbes and Calvin, kind of sauntering down the street with the kind of lilt that you might expect with individuals who are going to get rich and be able to spend it on their pleasures. And, finally, they’ve given a letter, of course, to Susie or she’s received the letter and they expect now that she will put the money by the tree. And as they are walking down the street, they notice the letter is there and so, Calvin says to

Hobbes, “You stand guard and watch for Susie, while I count the money and make sure it’s all there.”

So he puts Hobbes over here, and Hobbes, of course, looks like a little doll when he’s not walking with Calvin, and so, he opens it up and he reads it, and it says, “Hay, there’s no money in here at all. There’s just a note. And it says, ‘Now we’re even. Now we’re even.’ What’s that supposed to mean? Hobbes? Hobbes? Hobbes?” And then there’s a little picture of Susie running off with Hobbes under her arm. [Laughter] He’s lost Hobbes. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; beautiful little illustration and so illustrative too because you can be pretty certain that Calvin will not learn the lesson. He’ll do it again if he possibly can. And in that respect, he’s a perfect illustration of you and me.

So the result of all of this is, finally, David is forced to flee and he never returns again to the court of Saul. He’s an outlaw now. First of all, he flies to Samuel, who’s in Naioth, where the college of the prophets is. He’s the doyen of the college. And so, he flees there and, evidently, though this is not specifically stated, he flees there for comfort and also for counsel and then a further attempt on the part of Saul to do David in. Saul sends messengers to take David and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying with Samuel standing, and presiding over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul and they also prophesied. And it was told Saul and so further messengers were sent. And they too prophesied. And again, another group are sent and then also prophesied. Isn’t it interesting? God works in very interesting ways to accomplish his purposes. And he’s working here, as well. So finally, Saul decides that he’ll go himself and he went to Ramah. He came as far as the large well.

Incidentally, that indicates this is a kind of historical account written by someone who knew the details of it. And he asked, “Where are Samuel and David?” And they said, “They’re at Naioth in Ramah.” And he proceeded there and the Spirit of God came upon him also that he went along prophesying continually until he came to Naioth in

Ramah. And he also stripped off his clothes and he too prophesied before Samuel and lay down naked all that day and that night. Therefore they say, “Is Saul among the prophets?” As if to say, here’s a man that doesn’t belong among them. Back in the first instance, when it is said, “Is Saul among the prophets?” It’s as if he was more significant in the fact that he’s the anointed king than the prophets and should not be there.

Well this raises the question, of course, about the prophets and God’s strange occasional methods. What actually is taking place is an emotional, ecstatic display. These were the frenzied products of the divine afflatus or the divine power poured out upon those messengers and then Saul to accomplish his purpose. In other words, God through the Spirit blew upon them and manifested his power and presence and wisdom in what took place. They were in a kind of trance and the kind of trance was accompanied by the ravings of the prophesying.

Now, I say ravings because if you’ll turn over to chapter 18 in verse 10, we read, “Now it came about on the next day that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul, and he raved in the midst of the house, while David was playing the harp with his hand, as usual; and a spear was in Saul’s hand.” So Saul was raving. But if you look at the original text, the Hebrew of chapter 18 in verse 10, is a reference to the same kind of thing that we have in chapter 19. And the word that is used in chapter 18 verse 10 is the common word that means to prophesy. There we read *bayith na’ba*, and he prophesied; translated and he was raving or he raved. So I suggest to you that what we have here is not true prophecy; what we have here is false prophesying and, in fact, a kind of emotional fanatic kind of raving.

And I suggest to you that what it points out to us is the ambiguity of prophecy in the Bible. That is, prophesy is a term that is used to false prophesying and it’s a term that is used of true prophesying. And one must, guided by the Holy Spirit, be able to discern that which is false and that which is true. In fact, in the Old Testament, there are lengthy

sections given to how to distinguish the false from the true, essentially, when prophecies come to pass they are true.

But, at any rate, in 1 John, the Apostle John writes in the very first verse of the 4th chapter, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” And it’s my opinion, and I think it’s justified, that what we have here is not true prophecy, but we have the kind of frantic ravings produced by the Holy Spirit’s power coming upon them so that they looked as if they were prophesying like true prophets, but, nevertheless, God was working through them to preserve his servant, David, from Saul and his attempts to slay him.

So it’s important that we try the spirits. He stripped off his clothes. One thinks of Jonathan, who stripped off his clothes and gave them to David in token of the fact that he wanted David to be the king, rather than Prince Jonathan to be the king. And if that is the symbol of that, and most of the students of Scripture believe it is, then the symbols of Saul stripping off his clothes, though he himself didn’t realize it, are the stripping off of the garments of the royal position that he has, taken away from him by God’s sovereign power, so that he, himself, illustrated the fact that the kingdom has been taken away from him by the actions that he, himself, engages in.

And we learn this, it’s very important I think, frenzies do not always come from faith. And so when you look at the television screen and you see someone with the name of Jesus Christ constantly upon him, making constant petitions for you to send him money, and he’s raving and ranting as one well-known citizen of Dallas has often done, having now moved to California, his ravings and rantings, you must, as Scripture says, discern the spirits. And realize that there Saul-kind of people. I’m not suggesting this about the spiritual condition of a person. I do not know that, except to know this that the kind of condition in which Saul was in is a kind of condition in which it is extremely possible for someone to preach things that appear to be the word of God, to teach things

over the radio, or the television screen or from behind a pulpit, and not have any true fundamental concept of what real salvation is, or put it another way, never having experienced the mercy and grace of God in conversion. Let us remember that, and if you fall for them, then, of course, the difficulty is not with them, the difficulty is with you.

Incidentally, in the Chaldaic paraphrase that Judaism and some of the rabbis have written, or have interpreted I should say, that expression “he raved” and in contexts like this is said by some of the rabbis to indicate a person is mad. And that is precisely what Saul appears to be in this instance.

Now, I'd like for you to turn with me to Psalm 59 because you might wonder how is it possible for David to withstand all of these things and to keep his wits about him? Well, fortunately, David has given us an indication of the reasons why he was able to maintain his composure. Incidentally, the 59th Psalm begins with, “For the choir director, Natsach, set to Altashheth, A Mikhtam of David, when Saul sent men and they watched the house in order to kill him.” Now, those statements were not inspired. They were added after the word of God was written.

But there is no convincing reason that this Psalm is not related, historically, to Saul's attacks in 1 Samuel chapter 20. If you read verse 3, “For, behold, they have set an ambush for my life; Fierce men launch an attack against me, Not for my transgression nor for my sin, O Lord, For no guilt of mine, they run and set themselves against me.” Or verse 4 [well, I've read the first part of verse 4] “For no guilt of mine, they run and set themselves against me.” Verse 6 and verse 7, “The return at evening, they howl like a dog, go around the city. Behold, they belch forth with their mouth; Swords are in their lips.” Verse 14, “They return at evening, they howl like a dog, And go around the city.” You can sense the experience that David had when he was sought by King Saul and his messengers.

Now, what is striking about it is that he goes on to say now, and this psalm is set after the events, he goes on to say that he hopes that God will make these things, things

that may be remember to the end times. You’ll notice, in verse 5, he says, “Thou, O Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, Awake to punish all the nations; Do not be gracious to any who are treacherous in iniquity.” He sees his own experience as illustrating the ultimate experience of the nations. And so he looks on to the end time. In verse 8, he says, “But Thou, O Lord, laugh at them; You scoff at all the nations.” Verse 11, “Do not slay them, lest my people.” Notice, he now knows that Israel is his people, “My people forget, Scatter them by Thy power, and bring them down.” And finally in verse 13, “Destroy them in wrath, destroy them that they may be no more; That men may know that God rules in Jacob To the ends of the earth.”

What is it that enabled David to withstand the murderous attacks of Saul and keep his wits about him? Well, he gives us a few clues. First of all, he says that God is his stronghold. Notice verse 9. Now, I’m going to translate it as I think the Hebrew text should be rendered. “O my strength, I will watch for Thee. For God is my stronghold. My God in his loving kindness will meet me; God will let me look triumphantly upon my foes.” He writes, remembering how he felt in these experiences. “O my strength, I will watch for Thee. God is my stronghold. My God in his loving kindness will meet me; God will let me look triumphantly upon my foes.” It’s almost as if Paul were telling us, “My son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

David is a god-possessed and a god-encompassed man. And the experiences of life may seem big, but when a person has God before him, then they are not so big. We may say, as Gideon and others said when they were called upon to do something that seemed outrageously difficult, “Who am I, Lord? My family is just an insignificant little family.” David, himself, said that when he, too, was faced with the Philistine Goliath. But when God is our stronghold, then things are changed. The Apostle can say, “I can do all things through Christ, who keeps on pouring his power within me.” So God is his stronghold. He’s god-possessed, god-encompassed, and he knows this great truth that

God is his stronghold. Too weak for a task? Too weak for an experience? No, not too weak; we are too strong, if anything, for God is our stronghold.

Now, you know, I love Scotland, and I love the castles of Scotland, and I've gone all over that land a number of times looking at the castles. I love to look at them. I think of, for example, Edinburgh. Many of you have been there, so you know that one. Edinburgh Castle, it's set upon a high hill.

Now, of course, the royal family, when they were there in those days, they would frequently live down at Holyrood, which is down on the ground. But when trouble came, they would go up the royal mile and get up there in the stronghold for protection. The castle was the stronghold.

If you go over to Dollar in Scotland, and you can climb up a little place, it's hard to even get up it. I went up finally in a car. And it was for one car, some one was coming down, I don't know exactly how you would do it. But, at any rate, you get way up there and you can see all over the valley. And there, in the castle, Campbell Castle in Dollar, one can just sense how if the battle started going the other way, men would find there way to that little path up the way and finally get into the stronghold. And they would say, [sighs] “Now we're safe for awhile.” That was before, of course, the canons came, which could blow down the walls about them. But castles, moats and all of those things represented safety to them. And, if you look around, some of them are set out in the middle of a lake, like Eilean Donnan, or castles up in other places. But safety was the thing that they thought about. David says, “God is my stronghold.” That's his safety.

But now, there's a second thing that he mentions. He waits for God, in innocency. Now, we're not talking about a person who's waiting for God when he's out of fellowship with God. His difficulties may be related to his Christian life, but he waits for God in innocency. He has not done anything against Saul to cause Saul to seek for his life. The word, incidentally, used is the word *shamer*, or *shama*.

I had a dog once, when I was in Birmingham, in the insurance business. You men know that I did work at one time. [Laughter] And I had a dog and we called him *Shama*, that is, keeper. And I didn't know any Hebrew at the time, but nevertheless, someone told me that's what I should name that dog. And so I named the dog, *Shama*, it was a little fox terrier, couldn't keep anything. But, nevertheless, that's the word that's used here. And David watches for him, it commonly means keeper, but it's used for a shepherd watching his flock, its use for a watchman on a tower. It's used for the sentry that paces in his duty. And so the idea back of it is that David knows God is his stronghold and he keeps his eyes upon the Lord God. It's almost as if we have an illustration of what Paul talks about when he says, “We walk not according to the flesh, but we walk according to the Spirit.” We keep our eyes upon God. So he mentions that.

There's a lot of talk today about co-dependency. What does co-dependency mean? I'm not sure. Psychologists have happy ways of mentioning new terms that are very difficult for the common people to understand. Perhaps if they played a harp along with it, I would understand. [Laughter] But, at any rate, co-dependency and someone has defined it as two people that are so dependent upon one another that they cannot do anything independently. Well I'm so thankful in the Christian life, that we are not co-dependents. We are dependents. And David is totally dependent. He's dependent upon the Lord. He's submissive to the Lord. And even when we are not submissive to the Lord, we want to be, having the work of grace and mercy in our hearts, we want to be dependent on him. We know he's not going to be dependent upon us. He's the sovereign God, but we want to be dependent upon him. So he waits for God in his innocency.

But thirdly, he says, “He's the object of covenantal love.” Now, those of you who have listened to preachers around this part of the country know, because frequently in study of the Hebrew text, it's pointed out by professors that the word translated so often loving kindness is a word that is associated with covenantal love, *cheded*. It means, covenantal

love. It's the kind of love in which God undertakes an obligation on our behalf and the responsibility for the carrying out of it rests upon God. And he, sovereignly, says that he will accomplish that.

Now, if you have believed in Christ, you have become part of New Covenant sovereign love and, therefore, your future is certain and secure because God has covenantally brought you into relationship with him and will stand behind you to the end of your days and on throughout the ages of eternity. Halleluiah!

So David is the object of covenantal love. Notice the 10th verse. He says that he will wait for him because God is his stronghold. But he says, “My God in His loving kindness will meet me.” In his *chesed*, in his covenantal love, “God will let me look triumphantly upon my foes.” Now, you could put it around in another way and say, God will look upon me in his electing love, for that's the sense of the *chesed*. And then, if you will look down at verse 17, he says, “O my strength, I will sing praises to Thee, For God is my stronghold, the God who shows me *cheded*, loving kindness.” Covenantal love, so God has the obligation.

But now, I want you to notice the last thing, will you notice that in verse 9, David speaks in the midst of the experience that he went through, at this time, and he says, “O my strength, I will watch for Thee.” And we can see Saul seeking to kill him, but David looking to the Lord. “The Lord is my stronghold. I will look for Thee.”

But now when we turn down to the end of the Psalm, and we remember that David wrote this long after the experience, notice the change in tenses and the change in sense. We read, “But as for me, I shall sing of Thy strength, yes, I shall joyfully sing of thy loving kindness in the morning for Thou hast been my stronghold and a refuge in the day of my distress. O my strength, I will sing praises to Thee.” So it's not so much watching for that is what he did when he was persecuted, but now since he is successfully come through this and God has kept his word with him, and brought him through, now he says, “I'm singing praises to Him. I'm singing praises to Him.”

And further, did you notice in verse 9 he says, “God is my stronghold” in the midst of his trials but now, as he looks back over it, the trials completed and God has brought him through them, he says, “For Thou hast been my stronghold.” You see, he can look back and say, God has loved me with covenantal love. He’s carried it out. I belong to him and the experiences of the murderous attacks of Saul I looked to him. I thought of God as my stronghold. And now, as I sit upon the throne and look over the past, I realize, God has become my stronghold and I’m going to sing praises to him, because of what he’s done.

If you put it in the language of the day, we could render that 17th verse, “O my strength, I will sing praises to Thee for God is my stronghold, the God who loved me.” “Loves me.” “The God who loves me.” Not, the general love of God for all men; there are ways in which God loves all men, but the significant love of his electing grace to us; the God who loves me: the infinite love, the eternal love, the love that can never change. That’s the love with which he’s loved me.

And if you are sitting in this audience, and you’re a believer in the Lord, Jesus Christ, and you may not even understand this, but you are a genuine believer, let me assure you, God’s love for you is eternal. It’s infinite. It will never stop. In all of the experiences of life, it will be sovereignly a love that upholds you and brings you, ultimately, into his presence, infinite, eternal love, the special love of God. The kind of love that all who know Christ enjoy, even when we don’t realize it, we still enjoy that kind of love.

If you are here and you’ve never believed in our Lord, Jesus Christ, and you would like to enjoy that kind of love, the Scriptures call upon us to believe in our Lord, Jesus Christ; to recognize him as the saving sacrifice who has died for sinners and through faith in whom we may have eternal love, eternal life. May God help you to come to him.

Let’s stand for the Benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for the way in which Thou hast guided the saints of so many hundreds of years ago. We thank Thee for the lessons that they learned, which they have imparted to us. Help us, Lord, in the deep experiences of life, to reckon upon the fact that Thou art our stronghold. That Thou art the one to whom we can constantly look. And, above all, that Thou hast loved us in Christ with an eternal love. If there should be some here that do not know our Lord, O God, give them no rest nor peace until they rest in Christ.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.