



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Lessons from the Life of David: 1 Samuel 21:1-15

“The Declension of David”

TRANSCRIPT

Returning to 1 Samuel chapter 21 and reading the fifteen verses of this chapter.

“Now David came to Nob to Ahimelech the priest; and Ahimelech was afraid when he met David and said to him, ‘Why are you alone and no one is with you?’ So David said to Ahimelech the priest, ‘The king has ordered me on some business and said to me, Do not let anyone know anything about the business on which I send you or what I have commanded you; and I have directed my young men to such an such a place. Now therefore, what have you on hand? Give me five loaves of bread in my hand, or whatever can be found.’ And the priest answered David and said, ‘There is no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread; if the young men have at least kept themselves from women.’ Then David answered the priest and said to him, ‘Truly women have been kept from us about three days since I came out and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in effect common even though it was consecrated in the vessel this day?’ So the priest gave him holy bread; for there was no bread there but the show bread which had been taken from before the Lord, in order to put hot bread in its place on the day when it was taken away. Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the Lord; and his name was Doeg an Edomite, the chief of herdsmen who

belonged to Saul. And David said to Ahimelech, ‘Now is there not here on hand a spear or a sword? For I brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste.’ So the priest said, ‘The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah, there it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod; if you will take that, take it, for there is no other except that one here.’ And David said, ‘There is none like it; give it to me.’ Then David arose and fled that day from before Saul, and went to Achish king of Gath. And the servants of Achish said to him, ‘Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of him to one another in dances, saying, Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands?’

It’s rather interesting that they called David the king of the land and, evidently, since of course he was not the king of the land and they knew nothing about the fact that God had already elected him to be the king, but evidently they thought because David had overcome their great Goliath, that that would have ordinarily – would have automatically made him king. At any rate, that’s what they said.

“Now David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish the king of Gath. So he changed his behavior before them, pretended madness in their hands, scratched on the doors of the gate, [Which, evidently, was a gate into the room in which the king held court.] Scratched on the doors of the gate and let his saliva fall down on his beard. Then Achish said to his servants, ‘Look, you see the man is insane. Why have you brought him to me? Have I need of madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence?’ [One of the humorous little notes of the chapter in which Achish says, ‘I’ve got enough madmen around me. I don’t need another madman. Shall this fellow come into my house?’”

May the Lord bless this reading of his word. When we come to the exposition of this chapter, I want to relate it to Psalm 56, which is a psalm that describes David's attitudes and experience while he was at this very time in Gath and fleeing from King Saul. It makes a very interesting comparison to see the inner life of David as well as the outer experiences that chapter 21, here, has described.

But let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the blessings that are ours through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and we thank Thee for the life of David; for its high points and its low points. We thank Thee for the typical relationship that he bore to the coming great son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ. And we thank Thee, also, for the important spiritual lessons of a practical nature that are ours through the study of the life of this truly great man of God. Even though at times, he was a reproach to Thy name.

We ask Lord Thy blessing upon us. We pray, particularly, for those who have requested our prayers. We ask for the ministry of the word of God in the chapel this day, as well as upon its outreach, but may in our Sunday school and in the other meetings of the day. We have the blessing of the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the instruction in the word of God and may our hearts be turned to him, whom to know is life eternal.

We ask Thy blessing upon each one of those who enter into the building this day to hear the word of God and may each be open and responsive to Thy word. Again, we pray for our country in these very difficult days, give wisdom and guidance to those in leadership. We pray for the entire church of the Lord, Jesus Christ, and ask that as a body we may reflect something of the greatness and the glory of the Son of God.

For those, Lord, who are suffering, we especially remember them. Give encouragement, give wisdom to those who minister to them, give healing in accordance with Thy will, above all, be with them and encourage them and console them and

strengthen them in their difficult, trying times. We commit them all to Thee. And we ask Thy blessing upon our meetings today.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today in the continuation of our studies in the life of David is “The Declension of David.” We often talk about what salvation does for us but we also ought to talk of what salvation does not do for us. There are texts of Scripture that suggest both of these things. We are told, for example, in Jude verses 24 and 25 that he is able to keep us from stumbling and to present us before the presence of his glory to his own exceeding joy. But we are also warned, let him who thinks that he stands be careful lest he fall.

Let me just take two stanzas from one of our familiar hymns. “Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God. He to rescue me from danger, interposed his precious blood.” You might think if you sang that stanza that once you come to the Lord, Jesus Christ, you'll never wander again because that's characteristic of the life before you know him. But then, in the same hymn, the hymn writer writes, “Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love. Yet Thou Lord hast deigned to seal it [that is the heart], with Thy Spirit from above.” So we were wandering from the fold of God, and God brought us to Christ but we are prone to wander still. That's characteristic of the life that has been given us in the present time.

David's failure that led to his declension is very plain. What David did was something that, very often, you and I do, and that is he failed to cleave to the Lord. His trouble was, to put it in grammatical terms for those of you who've ever taken a highly declined or I should say afflicted language, his trouble was he should have conjugated when he declined. [Laughter] So I don't guess anyone but a grammarian would understand fully what that means, but one who has for a long time conjugated verbs and declined nouns, maybe will catch the play on words.

The historical situation is described for us in the fifteen verses of 1 Samuel chapter 21. Now, since I was in Canada, last Sunday morning, let me just review for one moment the context, what we have been studying is the life of David. We have noted his call to succeed Saul as king of Israel, elected by God to do that, but while elected by God and while the elect king at this very moment is not king, we studied his contest with Goliath in which he won his great victory as he says, “Leaning upon the name of the Lord God.” And then, since that time, he’s been involved with conflict with the jealous, moody and at sometimes deranged, King Saul. So in chapter 21, we read in the first nine verses of David’s flight to Nob. And there the priests were. There were about eighty-five of them there and the tabernacle was there. So David came to Nob to Ahimelech the priest, and some details are given in the first nine verses of the things that transpired when David came to Nob where Ahimelech and the priests were. The later part of the chapter, verse 10 through verse 15, describes the further flight of David to Achish, the King of Gath.

Now, if you think for a moment and reflect for a moment, you will remember that Gath is the home of Goliath. And so to have fled from Saul to Gath, of all places, the home of Goliath, took the courage of despair. And it also measures the estimate of David’s view of his standing with his people. And now, the new king to be is doubly encircled. He’s encircled by Saul and Saul’s cohorts, and he’s now encircled by the Philistines and in Gath.

Now, what I would like to do in the study is to simply go down the verses of this chapter and point to the personal declension of David and note the steps in David’s downfall; for one can note, surely, in reading the chapter and reflecting upon it that this chapter does express the declension of David.

In the first place, I’d like for you to notice the growing fear of Saul that characterized him. In chapter 20 in verse 1 through verse 3, we read these words:

Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and went and said to Jonathan, “What have I done? What is my iniquity? And what is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life?” So Jonathan said to him, ‘By no means, you shall not die. Indeed, my father will do nothing either great or small without first telling me. And why should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so.’ Then David took an oath again and said, “Your father certainly knows that I have found favor in your eyes and he has said, ‘Do not let Jonathan know this lest he be grieved.’ [In other words, he’s told his men, Don’t tell Jonathan what I’m doing because Jonathan will surely tell David.] But truly, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death.”

Now, notice what that reflects, “There is but a step between me and death.” Now, of course, David has already been told by Samuel he is the anointed king of Israel and being the anointed king of Israel, it’s just not true that there is a step between him and death.

Well, in one sense, it’s true; in one sense, outwardly, looking at the dangers in which David finds himself, yes, one could say that. But it’s not true in the sense that God has already in his sovereign determination informed David as well as Samuel and others that he is the coming king. But what is so particularly indicative here of the fact that we have some declension in the spiritual life of David is the fact that this is the individual who in chapter 17 in verse 45, in his conflict with Goliath says this, “You come to me with a sword with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defiled.” This is the conqueror of Goliath, the great Philistine giant, and now afraid of demented Saul. That’s one step down. It reminds us of Elijah who on the mountains overcame the prophets of Baal, all of them in a mighty victory, relying upon the Lord God, and then when Jezebel hears about it and says to him that your life is going to be just like the life of the prophets of Baal that you have slain, immediately Elijah turns tail and runs.

Well, one can think of Peter in the great boldness of his preaching in the Book of Acts, but then later in Antioch when men from James came down to Antioch, Peter stopped eating with the Gentiles and began to eat only with the Jews, because he feared those of the circumcision. Now, think of it, here is an individual who does not fear them at all but preaches boldly in the city of Jerusalem but, now, when a few men from James come down, supposedly also in the Christian movement, Peter fears and withdraws. The root is the fear that we often have when we think of the experiences of life.

I think, also, of the time when Peter, with our Lord on the sea of Galilee, seeing him coming, walking upon the water, and after our Lord has identified himself, Peter asks that he, too, may walk on the water, and so Peter gets out of the boat and he does walk on the water. But then he sees the winds that are boisterous and seeing the winds that are boisterous, taking his eyes off of the Lord, he begins to sink and our Lord must save him. But, it's very interesting, he walked all the way into the presence of the Lord and Jesus reached out and took his hand and saved him.

It was George Whitefield, some say, and others say it was John Wesley, but they were friends, who said, “As long as I am in the will of God I am immortal.” Well, David could have said the same thing. He was the anointed king, he was the elect one determined by God to rule. There's no reason to fear Saul; there's no reason to fear anyone. The first step is the failure in fear.

Peter, later, when he wrote his letter, first letter, he had learned a little bit of the lessons that he should have learned because he speaks of being “kept by the Lord God unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.” That's the first step to fear.

The second step is the deceit that he practices before Ahimelech. Notice the second verse, particularly, so David said to Ahimelech the priest who had asked him why he was by himself, and no one was with him, “The king has ordered me on some business and said to me, do not let anyone know anything about the business on which I send you.” In other words, he claims to be in Gath as a result of some information that

had come to him from the C.I.A. Now, you would think that Ahimelech would not fall for that, but Ahimelech was the priest and, evidently, he thought highly of David and consequently he's fooled by it. So the deceit of David is the second step in his downfall. A man out of fellowship with the Lord is always fearful and always dangerous. And this was not only something that might be called a passing experience, but if you read on into the next chapter of the Book of 1 Samuel, you will discover that what resulted from this was the slaughter of eighty-six priests. And, consequently, David, himself, regards himself as being responsible for their slaughter. It's a dangerous thing for a saint of God to be out of fellowship with the Lord.

Walter Scott, in his *Marmion*, has a stanza that is appropriate I think. “Thus oft it haps, that when within they shrink at sense of secret sin, a feather daunts the brave; A fool's wild speech confounds the wise, and proudest princes veil their eyes before their meanest slave.” And so, consequently, when a man is out of fellowship with the Lord, he has lost his sense of confidence, lost his sense of assurance, and just as Scott said, a father daunts the brave. And David, the great king to be, who stands before Goliath, is now fearful of King Saul, the demented ruler.

One might ask the question, did David seek the Lord directly? And I won't go into that, but in chapter 22 there's some reason for thinking that when David came to Ahimelech, he did not seek the Lord directly but he sought Ahimelech's help, rather than looking to the Lord.

The third step is the lie regarding haste. Notice the 8<sup>th</sup> verse, “And David said to Ahimelech, ‘Is there not here on hand a spear or a sword, for I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste.’” And so here he lies, in addition to all that has gone up before to this point.

Now, there was the providence of God in the fact that Doeg the Edomite was there. In fact, it's one thing for Christians to remember. When we disobey the Lord God, the world always seems to find out. The world and Satan are always about when



believers get out of the will of God. I think there's a marvelous statement in the Book of Ecclesiastes, I confess, I don't know too many marvelous statements in that book which describes men apart from the Lord God, but this is one that I think is appropriate here in the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter in the 20<sup>th</sup> verse of Ecclesiastes, we read, “Do not curse the king even in your thought. Do not curse the rich even in your bedroom.” That's interesting, isn't it? “Don't curse the rich even in your bedroom.” Now, here's the reason why. “For a bird of the air may carry your voice and a bird in flight may tell the matter.” And so, here is a lie and the lie is something that, ultimately, is known. In Numbers we read, “Be sure your sin will find you out.” And so when David says, “The king's business requires haste,” the lie is the next step in the fall of the great king. Augustine once said, “Who so thinketh that there is any kind of lie that is not sin deceiveth himself.” And David is on the path of declension from the Lord God.

The fourth step is the trust in Goliath's sword. Notice, in verse 9 we read, “For there is no other than this one” and David said, “There is none like it. Give it to me.” Alas, the individual who formerly trusted in the word of the Lord God and in his name, is now speaking as if he trusts in Goliath's sword. This is the same individual who said, “The Lord saveth not with sword and spear.” But now he wants Goliath's sword. It's obvious he's on the path of declension from the Lord God. And the high point of chapter 17 is now something beyond which he's passed, and he's moving down into the valley of declension from the Lord God.

Today, we think about the evangelical mega-shift that is happening in evangelical circles in which there is evidence of a rather clear declension and departure from evangelical teaching of the past generation or so. That's bad. But it's worse when individuals like David begin to decline in their spiritual life and reach this stage.

And then, there is fifthly, the flight to Achish. And we read in verse 10, “Then David arose and fled that day from before Saul and went to Achish, the king of Gath.” The failure of worldly policy in blunder after blunder. In the Proverbs in chapter 29 in

verse 25, I think there is a text that applies to this because there we read, “The fear of a man brings a snare and whoever trusts in the Lord will be safe.” But the fear of man does bring a snare and so David, now, rises and flees into the Philistine country and goes to Achish, the king of Gath.

And the sixth step is described very, very pathetically in verse 13. Now, when David is there and he hears the people of Philistia saying, “Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another in dances, saying, “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?” And David realizes when they know about him that his life is in danger for the Philistines, of course, were the mortal enemies of Israel. And if they know him as the hero of Israel, then his life is not worth much.

So David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish the king of Gath. And so he changed his behavior before them, pretended madness in their hands, scratched on the doors of the gate and let his saliva fall down on his beard. So he scribbles. The Hebrew word is a word that originally meant “to scribble a Tau” which is the last word of the Hebrew alphabet. But, anyway, he scribbles on the gates and then lets his saliva fall down his beard to indicate that he’s lost his mind. Perhaps he learned some of this from Saul because being around Saul, Saul was an individual who fell into this kind of thing. And so he is scribbling and dribbling at the same time. [That was designed to wake you up.] He pretended madness in their hands, scratched on the doors of the gate and let his saliva fall down his beard. So here again, a further step. The ancients, incidentally, thought that an individual who acted like this was possessed of the spirits and so, consequently, there was some fear of this.

There’s a great deal of irony in David’s scribbling. Just think for a moment. This is the individual who puts his hand to the celestial lyre, that’s L-Y-R-E, the celestial lyre and plays those magnificent psalms which he has composed in his own mind and now, the same hand that does that, is scribbling on the doors, making marks of a demented man on the outside of the room where King Achish received his individuals. And so from

the lips, which poured forth the great psalms, now, there drops the saliva of madness. The soul, which has delighted in communion with God, now emulates the foolishness and the unsoundness of a fiend or of an insane man. In all this, someone has said, not brought on by the stroke of heaven, which awes us while it saddens, but devised by a faithless craft. So, in guile, in deception, the anointed king acts like the wild man.

And, finally, in verses 14 and 15, the final stage, and David is driven away from Achish. Then Achish said to his servants, look, you see the man is insane. Why have you brought him to me? I've got enough madmen around me now that you've brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence. Shall this fellow come into my house?" Ridicule for God's servant. So all the way from the individual who in the Name of God, slays the Philistine giant, knows that God doesn't deliver by sword or by spear, here is the individual who is the object of ridicule by the king of Philistia, like Samons in Gaza.

The downward path from chapter 18 in verse 7, "Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands" comes finally to here. You know, the sins of eminent men we tend to lay a great deal of stress upon. When we think of the sins of eminent men, and we generally talk about their sins, but there are some things that may be learned from the sins of eminent men. And the things that we can learn are the things that we should avoid. And the fact that we have in Scripture the greatness of a David and then the declension of a David is of great use to us. And we lose the impact of the story if we do not realize that this is written for our admonition.

And so, consequently, the lamentable lapse of King David is something that should speak to us, who so frequently fall into the same pattern as King David, and a pattern that is characterized by deception before the Lord, by lying before the Lord, by turning away from him, by failing to trust him, by being fearful in the experiences of life. So from this man who experienced these things, let us not lose the lessons of it. We owe some of the subduing, the most spiritually instructive and consolatory of his psalms, psalms which have taught us to trust in the midst of despair and to trust in the midst of

sin, we can learn some things from David’s sin, an eminent man but one whose experiences are somewhat similar to ours.

Now, I’d like for you in the moment that we have to turn to Psalm 56 because this is another of those psalms that was written in connection with this experience. We read, for example, in the introduction to the psalm, in the uninspired headings of the psalms, “To the chief musician, set to “The Silent Dove” in distant lands, a miktam of David, when the Philistines captured him in Gath.”

Now, this psalm was written when the tears of which David speaks have dried upon his face. It was written when he had recovered himself by God’s grace, from the declension that he had experienced at the time. So later, as he looks back in and on his experience, he writes these words. And there are three movements within it and I’d like to read through and just make a comment or two. The first refrain is in verse 1 through verse 4.

“Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up; [The word for man is the word *enowsh*, which means man in his weakness] fighting all day he oppresses me. Mine enemies would hound me all day: for there are many who fight against me, O most High. [Some of you have, ‘in their pride.’] Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what can flesh [Flesh, again, another term that expresses the weakness of man.] What can flesh do to me.”

So he moves from fear to faith. And he indicates where it rests. It rests first of all in God and then where it finds its content, in his word. It’s useless for us to think about trust in God if we do not understand who and what God is and does for us. So his faith is in God but his faith is in God as God is set forth in his word. And the logic is very

plain. Man’s a mere mortal and so, consequently, why should he fear if he has the Lord God on his side. The second refrain follows in verse 5 through verse 11.

“All day they twist my words; all their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather together, they hide, they mark my steps, when they lie in wait for my life. Shall they escape by iniquity? In anger cast down the peoples, O God! You number my wanderings; put my tears into Your bottle; are they not in Your book? When I cry out to You, then my enemies will turn back; this I know, because God *is* for me. In God (I will praise His word), In the Lord [the covenant name] (I will praise His word), In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”

Incidentally, you’ll notice the logic of this is very simple, God’s for me. It’s like Paul when he finishes his great account in Romans 8, of the blessings that are ours by virtue of the Lord, Jesus Christ, and specifically, those five steps from his foreknowledge all the way to likeness to Jesus Christ. And, you remember, the Apostle says something like, “In the light of these things, what can possibly happen to me. God is for me.” And so the Psalmist writes the same thing. It’s almost as if he anticipated the things that Paul writes in Romans chapter 8 in verse 31. So man is earthy, verse 11, another word for man, earthy, made of the dust. And, finally, the third refrain in verses 12 and 13.

“Vows made to You are binding upon me, O God; I will render praises to You, [Now, notice the past tense of verse 13.] For You have delivered my soul from death. Have You not kept my feet from falling, That I may walk before God In the land of the living?”

The explicit point is very simple, it’s this. This psalm is sung to celebrate answered prayer, to keep his pledges. And what we learn is that even in the midst of David’s scrabbling on the gates of Achish, the king of Gath, there was going on within his

heart the turmoil of an individual who in the midst of his deceit, in the midst of his lying, in the midst of his declension, was still an individual who was seeking to walk with God. So, even when scrabbling, God is for him. You know what this teaches us? This teaches us a very important thing about our Christian life. And it's this, an imperfect faith may be a genuine faith. That's so important. An imperfect faith may be a genuine faith. Very often, we are overcome by the experiences of life.

Well, that does not mean that there is not within our hearts, implanted by God, a genuine faith in the Lord God. Here is a man who is struggling and in the midst of the time in Gath when one might, as he looked at the history of it, think David has departed from the Lord entirely, there was going on within his heart, probably, some of the same things that we are talking about. Fear is not good, but I find myself caught in fear, he might have said. On the mount or at the valley of Elah, when I was before Goliath, I was strong. Why am I not strong now? And he found himself overcome by the circumstances of life. I find that so important for us to realize and it's important for us to realize concerning other Christians, that an imperfect faith may be a genuine faith. Even the elect, incidentally, must have their faith tested, and David is the elect king.

The only person who is characterized by faultlessness is the Lord, Jesus Christ. But, let me close with just a word or two about this. This is a sobering case of the ease of decay among the greatest of saints. How much more among us? “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” What a lesson for us? What a lesson for the proud? What a lesson for us who do not think it is possible for us to fall as David fell? The medicine as David puts it in the psalm as he looks back upon it is, “I will trust in you. In God I will praise his word. In God I have put my trust. I will not fear what flesh [Flesh! Saul was flesh. Achish was flesh. All of the experiences that David faced were flesh. And those individuals were flesh.] And in the experiences of life that you and I have, they are flesh. If we belong to the Lord, Jesus Christ and as David learned, trust in him and in him as he is seen in his word, we may expect him to give us deliverance. He

repeats it in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> verses. “In God I will praise His word, in the Lord [The covenant name] I will praise His word, In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”

I cannot help but think again of that passage in Romans chapter 8, which I did not quote exactly. But after Paul has gone through those magnificent blessings of foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification and glorifying, he says, “What then shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? Surely not flesh? Surely not man?” But this is the confidence that we have, that in having Him we have all that is necessary for the kind of life that God would have us live.

Hudson Taylor was a very interesting man and F. B. Meyer has written in one of his books that he remembered so well when Hudson Taylor came to his church the first time. The first time that Meyer ever met him. He stepped on the platform, he opened his Bible to give an address and he said, “Friends, I’ll give you the motto of my life” and he turned to Mark chapter 11 in verse 22, which as you probably know says, “Have faith in God.” The margin of the Bibles and the margin of the Bible that I have, has put as a possible rendering, “Have the faith of God.” Well, that’s a possible rendering but it’s not the probable one. The probable one is “Have faith in God.” That is, God is the object of our faith.

So, Mr. Taylor went on, “All my life has been so fickle. Sometimes I could trust, sometimes I could not. But when I could not trust, then I reckoned that God would be faithful.” There is a text that says, “If we believe not, God abides faithfully.” He cannot deny himself. So when you think about your faith and you think about the experiences of life and you think about what you face and what some of our congregation are facing at the very moment, the most helpful thing that could ever possibly be said to us, is said by the Lord God, “Reckon upon me as the faithful God.”

Hannah wanted a child. Ely gave her the promise from God. She, who was mourning, disturbed, upset, upon her knees before the Lord God, what a way after the

word of God was spoken to her the text of 1 Samuel 1:18 says, “No more sad.” The nobleman came to our Lord for his son, the Lord Jesus gave him the word. In confidence, he turned and went his way. The apostle has put it as well as anyone could possibly put it, “I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.” Reckon upon him as the faithful God. Reckon upon him for forgiveness of your sins. For he says, in his word, “Their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more.”

I read, this week, the article by a lady by the name of Miss Gross, about Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year celebration, the Holidays. I could not help but be disturbed a bit by it because her letter, or her article, in which she sought to express her feeling with reference to the holidays, that she is a Jewish woman felt the constant refrain which she repeated purposely throughout was, “I’m not ready for the holidays.” And she spoke about how it was necessary for her to confess her sins and all of the others were to confess their sins, and I went by the synagogue, and there were lots of people out there confessing their sins, so many were out there that they had to have policemen there. But the sad thing about it is that year after year, the same thing must take place. As she said, every year the ten days of the holidays are days of confessing sins. But it was very interesting, the confession of sins is the confession of sins to their friends. In other words, on the local level and that’s important. She said, our religion teaches us that we cannot expect forgiveness if we do not forgive. Well, that’s expressed by the Apostle Paul in the New Testament. That’s a biblical thing.

But the important thing, of course, is the confession of sin against the Lord God. But most important of all, if we have no hope of the forgiveness of sins eternally, and no hope of the forgiveness of sins, the guilt of them, for now and forever, there is never any peace. And so year after year, the same experiences over and over again, like the sacrifices of the Old Testament. How marvelous it is to know that through the Lord Jesus and the blood that was shed on Calvary’s cross we have the forgiveness of sins, past,



present, and future, and the word of God to support it. “Their sins and their inequities I will remember no more.”

Reckon upon him for guidance. Reckon upon him for provision. And then you’ll be able to sing, as the hymn writer has put it, “The soul that to Jesus has fled for repose he will not, he will not desert to its foes. That soul, though all Hell should endeavor to shake, he’ll never, no never, no never forsake.” He did not forsake David. He will not forsake us who follow in the steps of the saints of Scripture.

If you are here today, and you have never believed in our Lord, we invite you to come to the Lord, Jesus Christ, within your heart, accept the finished work that he’s accomplished for sinners, acknowledge your sin before him, give thanks that he offers salvation, not on the basis of joining the church, not on the basis of good works, not on the basis of education or culture, not on the basis of religion, observing the sacraments, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, but the forgiveness of sins is offered through grace and by means of faith. May God so touch your heart that you come to him and know that your sins, through Christ, are forgiven, past, present, and future.

And while you may have imperfect faith as long as you are here on this earth, and may have the experiences that are up and down, the rock bottom relationship of yourself to the Lord is that you belong to him and you have someone in whom you can entrust all of the affairs of your life. In God, David said later, “I trust. In him, in his word, I praise him.” That was David’s lesson that he, himself, learned and through the experiences that he had in Nob and in Gath, we sit here, listening to him. May God help us to follow the advice of the inspired author, through the Holy Spirit.

Let’s stand for the Benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the word of God and for the lessons that come to us through the lives of the great saints of the Old Testament, such as David. Lord, we can identify with a man who struggles, who fails, who deceives, who even lies,

but, nevertheless, deep within him trusts in Thee, and struggles with the will of God in his life.

Lord, may by Thy grace, we, like David, come to learn the lessons of life and by the sovereign power of our God overcome. This is the victory that overcometh the world, our faith. We thank Thee for David and for his ultimate victory. We pray that we may follow in his steps.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.