



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Lessons from the Life of David: 1 Samuel 24:1-22

“David Subduing Saul by Subduing Himself”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The Scripture reading for today is in 1 Samuel chapter 24, and we read the entire chapter, again, as we continue our studies in the life of David. And the author writes, in verse 1.

“Now it happened, when Saul had returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, ‘Take note! David is in the Wilderness of En Gedi.’ [This is down by the Dead Sea.] Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men on the rocks of the wild goats. So he came to the sheepfolds by the road, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to attend to his needs.”

David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave. There were six hundred men in David’s little band and it might be surprising to you that there were that many in the cave and Saul did not know that they were there. But the caves there are very extensive. And some of them, it has been estimated, may hold up to three or four thousand men. So it’s not surprising then that there were six hundred in this cave.

The text says that Saul went in to attend to his needs, as we would say to go to the bathroom. But there is some question over this, precisely, what this means. There is

some indication in the Hebrew text in the light of Judges 3:24 that that's the meaning. And, on the other hand, in the King James Version, for example, it is translated to cover his feet. The Greek translation of the Old Testament has 'to make preparation.' Now, what precisely happened, we don't know. It's possible he went in to go to the bathroom, to attend to his needs as the version I'm reading says. And it's possible that he laid aside his coat. It's possible also that he went in and determined that he would rest a bit and that gave David the opportunity to come up and cut off a piece of his robe. Precisely what happened, we cannot be absolutely sure. But it's likely that the translation that he went in to attend to his needs is probably correct.

“Then the men of David said to him, ‘This is the day of which the Lord said to you, Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you.’”

Now, there's no evidence of that oracle ever having been spoken by the Lord God, and so, David's men have just invented a little oracle to urge him to do what they thought he should do; that is, to kill Saul while he has him in his power.

“And David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe. Now it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe. And he said to his men, ‘The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord.’ So David restrained his servants with these words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul. And Saul got up from the cave and went on his way. David also arose afterward, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, saying, ‘My lord the king!’ And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed down. And David said to Saul: ‘Why do you listen to the words of men who say indeed David seeks your harm? Look,

this day your eyes have seen that the Lord delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me to kill you. But my eye spared you, and I said, I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed. Moreover, my father, see! Yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you. Yet you hunt my life to take it. Let the Lord judge between you and me.”

That's interesting to me, in our society today we have forgotten a great deal of English grammar, and it's very common for you to hear people say, “Let the Lord judge between you and I.” But we can learn some things, even from the versions of the Bible that have nothing to do with anything other than just simple English grammar. So “Let the Lord judge between you and me,” the objective case. And so when you work that into your vocabulary, you'll be taking a step higher in the English language, just from reading the Bible. There is some value in that.

“But my hand shall not be against you. As the proverb of the ancients says, Wickedness proceeds from the wicked. But my hand shall not be against you. After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea? Therefore let the Lord be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand. So it was, when David had finished speaking these words to Saul, that Saul said, ‘Is this your voice, my son David?’ And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. Then he said to David, ‘You are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil. And you have shown this day how you have dealt well with me; for when the Lord delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me. For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely? Therefore may the Lord reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. And now I know indeed

that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand.”

You'll remember that earlier Jonathan had said that his father knew that fact. Here he confesses it.

“Therefore swear now to me by the Lord that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my name from my father's house.’ So David swore to Saul. And Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.”

Now, that would be a clue to you, that last statement, of the status of Saul's heart. David swears to Saul and Saul went home but David and his men went up to the strong hold. Things are not yet as they ought to be.

May the Lord bless this reading of his word, and let's bow together for a time of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these marvelous accounts of the life of the great type of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the son of David. How they do shed light upon our life as followers of our Lord. Enable us to learn the lessons that we should learn and help us, by Thy grace, Lord, to carry them out by Thy power. We thank Thee, Lord, for this day in which Thou hast placed us. And we pray, that in nineteen ninety, we may represent him well who loved us and gave himself for us.

We pray for the whole Church, wherever the body gathers together in their meetings. Lord, may the blessing of God the Holy Spirit rest upon their meetings. May our Lord be exalted in the preaching of the word and may the hearts of the saints be drawn closer to Thee. And for those who attend, who do not know the Lord, may they, too, be gently forced by the Holy Spirit into the family of God through effectual grace.

We thank Thee, Lord, for this country in which we live. We pray Thy blessing upon our President, for others who serve as ministers of God in our day, both nationally, in the state houses and in our cities and towns and villages.

Father, we pray particularly for those who have requested our prayers and for those of our number, too, who are suffering, some in the hospital and some at home. O God, we pray that Thou will lay Thy hand upon them, ease their pain and suffering, minister to them in a spiritual way. Lift up their hearts to Thee. Give them, Lord, the joy of Thy presence in their trials.

We pray, Lord, for the ministry of the word of God through Believers Chapel, for its outreach, for the radio ministry, for other forms of outreach, O Father, may Thy blessing be upon it and may many be able to study the Scriptures and to respond to them, who might not otherwise. Bless our meeting, bless the singing of the hymns, and bless our time of fellowship together.

We ask, In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today is announced in the bulletin is, “David Subduing Saul by Subduing Himself.” He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city. So says the biblical proverb. And, I think, it affords an insight into 1 Samuel chapter 24. One might think of the 15th chapter of Proverbs in the first of the proverbs in that chapter, a soft answer turneth away wrath. But, I believe that the reason that David succeeds and overcomes is because David, by God's grace, let me underline that, by God's grace has learned to rule his own spirit. That's something that rulers often have not been able to learn.

Alexander the Great conquered the world of his day, yet, in his uncontrollable wrath, slew his best friends. The same can be said of Joseph Stalin, who was the ruler of a mighty empire, in numbers at least, slew his thousands at least, many think his millions. Saddam Hussein at one point in his career, slew twenty-two people. Had them executed.

It's a well known historical fact. It's not something that we say simply because we are engaged in warfare with them at this point. But, he slew twenty-two individuals in his administration that he thought were threats to him after they had helped him to power. He, as you know, has been called “The Butcher of Baghdad.” So, we look and we see a man like David, and see him acting in this chapter, we realize that grace has been at work in his heart.

Matthew Henry, in his devotional commentary, has made this comment. “We have hitherto had Saul seeking an opportunity to destroy David and to his shame, he could never find it. In this chapter, David had a fair opportunity to destroy Saul and to his honor, he did not make use of it. And his sparing Saul's life was as great an instance of God's grace in him as the preserving of his own life was of God's providence over him.”

David wrote the Psalm, the 34th, and he wrote the 19th verse, which we cited last week. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” Marvelous text, but of course, not all of God's deliverances are physical. Not all of his deliverances are for further physical life. Abel knew the deliverance of God, but it was not for physical life. It was deliverance into the presence of God for eternity. Zachariah, of whom Matthew writes, in chapter 23, experienced the same martyrdom. Stephen was stoned to death, but he too would have said that text was fulfilled in my life. God delivers in various ways.

David's deliverances are, however, traceable to a deeper purpose, the messianic purpose. And it's important for us to recognize that as we think of the many experiences that he had. He was the great progenitor of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, consequently, since while married at this point, there is no evidence that he had any children. It's important to realize that the redeemer to come, the great son of David, was virtually contained within his own loins. So that when we reflect upon David's experiences, his deliverances are not simply physical deliverances, they are deliverances that have a messianic purpose and character. So it's important to remember that fact.

Jonathan Edwards commented upon this when he said, “Thus was this handful, this little root that had the blessings of the Redeemer in it, preserved in the midst of enemies and dangers, which are not unlike to the preserving of the Ark in the midst of the tempestuous deluge. Israel’s deliverances in Egypt, Israel’s deliverances in the wilderness, when they entered the Promised Land, the deliverances of Israel are Messianic deliverances because of the great promises that are found within that people.” So when we read something like this, we are to reflect upon the fact that we are not talking about something that is simply physical. Saul may slay the priests, but he cannot touch David. And the reason, ultimately, is the Messianic purpose. Edwards also said, “Thus was the precious seed that virtually contained the Redeemer and all the blessings of redemption wondrously preserved when all earth and hell were conspired against it to destroy it.”

You know, you can read through the Bible and see so much of that. Jezebel can make away with Naboth, but not with Elijah. Herod could kill St. James, but not St. Peter. The Roman Catholic persecutors could burn Hus but not Wycliffe, George Wishop but not John Knox. In other words, there are purposes of God that lie behind his dealings that we need to keep in mind.

It’s true. Many are the afflictions of the righteous and the Lord delivers him out of them all. Whether the deliverance is physical or whether it is into the presence of the Lord, that’s a marvelous promise that we all have. But at the same time, when we look at David, there is something else behind it, of Messianic significance that we must keep in mind.

Now, David has said, back in chapter 20 in verse 3, speaking about his own experiences to his friend Jonathan, he said that 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. But truly as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death.” Humanly speaking, yes, but a step between David and death. But since his destiny was not yet completed, what a step. And it’s a step that no one, not even the

angels, not the evil angles, not Satan himself could force David to take until God’s time had come. These are such marvelous events and reflect so many great truths of the word of God, it’s not surprising that this book has been preserved down through the centuries.

Well, now, the chapter is very simple. There is an account of David’s mercy to Saul, who carelessly blundered into the cave where David’s men were. There is the defense of David before Saul – marvelous message that he gave to the King. And, finally, at the conclusion of the chapter, Saul’s emotional penitence and confession. Was it real? Or was it not?

Well, let’s look first for a few moments and David’s mercy, which he exercised toward Saul. You notice in the very first verse of chapter 24, we read, “Now it happened when Saul had returned from following the Philistines that it was told him, saying. The Saul-ian C.I.A. functions well. His spies are active and accurate. As a matter of fact, so far as we know, they function a lot better than ours [laughter] but still, they were functioning. And so Saul was given the information that David was in a certain locality but, of course, the thing that is over looked, that we are able to see now, David’s actions were all guarded by divine providence. It’s true. The information came to Saul, but there is a divine purpose in it, ultimately. So, take note, David is in the wilderness of En Gedi” Saul was told. And, immediately, he takes three thousand men and seeks after David. Now, you will remember, at the end of the last chapter it was stated that a messenger came to Saul as he had David surrounded and in his power, and said, “The Philistines have invaded the land.” And he left and went to take care of the invasion of the Philistines. So, evidently, now that he’s back after his prey, he evidently was successful against the Philistine invasion.

It illustrates again for us, as we will see when we go through this chapter, that success does not indicate the approbation of God. That’s something very useful in Christian circles. Christians tend to look at things very shallowly in many cases. Not all of us but some of us. And so when we see evidences of worldly success, we tend to say

God is blessing. Not necessarily. The largest churches in the Christian confession and, of course, I'm speaking primarily of the greatest of the professing Christian churches in number and in size, are not churches that proclaim the gospel, as you and I understand the gospel. They are not even evangelical. But they have vast, impressive buildings. Success is not the measurement of God's approval. It's important that we remember that.

Now, Saul, I say, blundered into the cave. He's running in the path of Pharaoh to start with. And so, consequently, he is seeking to do what it's evident he cannot do, at least it should be evident to him. In Ecclesiastes, we read in the 8th chapter in the 11th verse, “Because the 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.” And so Saul is running after David to exterminate him, if possible, and establish his continued right to the throne. Blocked providentially? He does what Pharaoh did. He redoubles his efforts. And as David is sought by Saul, so Moses was blocked, apparently, by Pharaoh. And both Saul and Pharaoh illustrate the impossibility of contending against the Lord God.

Well, he blunders into the cave and there as he is in the cave, it's evident that he's fallen into the hands of the men of David. And now, a very significant event in the life of David takes place. We can call it the restraint by David of his men. Saul had come in to attend to his needs, strangely careless, putting himself wholly at David's mercy. And David evidently was moved in the beginning to do something about it. And so he went up and cut off a corner of Saul's robe.

Now, the men of David saw the hand of God in it. Listen to what they say. “This is the day of which the Lord said to you. Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand that you may do to him as it seems good to you.” And so, they considered that the providence of God indicated that this was clearly the will of God. He was to go and he was to slay King Saul, he was in his hands, and it certainly might have seemed that way. But while David went up and cut off the piece of Saul's robe, his conscience began to disturb him a bit about it. He became troubled about it. And for a very good reason; it's

a very critical moment in David's history. Had he listened to his special counselors who urged him to do what providence, seemingly, had put in his way, his life of faith would have come to an end, right at that point.

How often, in our experiences, have we wished for something to happen that might deliver us from the trials that inevitably follow our faith in Christ. Look, if he had just plunged the sword into Saul at that moment, well, just think of the things that would happen. In the moment, he's now the king, he's a hunted man but now he's the king. Farewell poverty. Farewell the life of the hunted goat. Farewell reproached, sneers, defeat. What will he have? The praises and the shouts of the people, their favorite king has come to the throne, David, but at the sacrifice of faith, at the sacrifice of a humbled will, ever waiting on God's time. At the sacrifice of a thousand precious experiences of God's care, God's provision, God's guidance, God's tenderness, not even a throne at that price is too dear. Faith will wait. So someone says. That's true. Men see the hand of God here. After all, results are important to men. Results. Give us results. And so results were here. But the question of how the will of God is to be accomplished is a question we cannot avoid. If we want to stay in the center of God's will.

So David was troubled. We read in verse 5, “Now it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe.” That could have been understood as an indication to Saul that, just like Samuel rent his robe to make the point that the kingdom had been rent from Saul, so David was suggesting that, I'm going to succeed you. I'm going to take the throne from you, the robe being the sign of his authority.

So the question is, how do we handle a question like this? So we read David restrained his servants. Was God testing David's faith? Follow circumstances, or follow the word of God? Now, David knew, of course, Saul was the king and David knew, so far as he was concerned that God had not torn the throne from Saul yet. There'd been an indication it would happen, but time had not been revealed. And so, consequently, the

question that faces individuals is, follow circumstances or follow the word of God? And he remembered the sentiment of the word of God expressed by Peter, when he said that “We are to worship God, but fear the king.”

In other words, it's important for us to remember that those in authority over us are the ministers of God and Saul as David said is the Lord's anointed. So the question is, what shall we do with what has been called the ambiguity of history? Every Christian faces this. There are circumstances and the circumstances may speak to us along one line, but the word of God may speak to us along another line. And sometimes the issues are not altogether plain to us. And, consequently, there is the necessity to wait upon the Lord. The question of how God fulfills his word is the important thing. You may think that circumstances favor a certain action, but in the final analysis, it is what God, the Holy Spirit's speaking in the inmost being of every believer in whom he indwells, that is the final word about what we should do.

And, sometimes, the thing that we do in instances such as this, does not seem to be the wisest thing. Why should David not slay Saul? He faces now, Saul's enmity, for further weeks and months and perhaps years. Who would take one as over against the other, as we thought about it in our minds. David's men stressed, he's our enemy. So, he deserves to be killed. David says, on the other hand to himself, finally, under the guidance of God, I do believe, “He's the Lord's anointed.” And, consequently, we cannot touch him. So the man whom God, himself, had given the special and privilege and status of a king is to stay king until God indicates otherwise. Human nature such as you and I possess in full, with the sin principle dwelling within it, all too often put personal considerations first. But David shows not only that he understands something deeper than that, that God's will and the direction and guidance of the Spirit is to be followed. But he also shows us a great deal of political skill as well. So the argument between David and his men highlights the ambiguity of history. God had put Saul at his mercy;

but that allows two very different interpretations. And every experience in our life allows those interpretations.

Men who follow circumstances as being the providential indication of the will of God often fail to take into consideration that there is something more fundamental than circumstances. We'll often hear people say, “I think that this is the will of God for me because such and such has happened.” If that's all that is involved, that's invalid.

Circumstances are no ultimate clue to the guidance of God. It's well for us to remember that. You can go through the word of God and find, literally, hundreds of illustrations of that very point. Every believer must learn what it is to follow the guidance that comes from the objective Holy Spirit who dwells within us. Never think of that as something subjective. It's inward, but it's objective, the person who dwells within, permanently, every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, David wins the victory and as Saul leaves, he calls out to him and this defense that he makes before Saul is one of the most marvelous speeches in the Old Testament. I think if you ponder this, you'll see how great it is. It's eloquent. It's forcible. It's warm. It's persuasive. He starts out by saying, “Saul, why do you follow the wisdom of the men who are associated with you?” He states, for example, in verse 8, “My lord king. My lord the king.” He bows before him, his face to the earth. And says to him, “Why do you listen to the words of men who say, ‘Indeed, David seeks your harm?’” Explains himself, he wants not only not to slay Saul, the only thing he would slay is the enmity of Saul toward him.

So he asks Saul to reject the words of the men who are giving him bad advice. But then he appeals to the divine tribunal and in verse 11 through verse 13, he makes this so eloquently, “Moreover, my father,” notice the tenderness of it, he was actually his father-in-law. But, “my father,” the words, the tender words. “Look” or “See, yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that there is nether evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not

sinned against you. Yet you hunt my life to take it.” So in effect, with Saul’s head in his hand, David kindly speaks to him. Very much like the Lord Jesus spoke to Judas when he knew, of course, that he was betraying him and called him, friend, friend.

So he cites a proverb. It’s not found in the Bible. I have a good friend, loves the Lord, whenever I quoted anyone outside the Bible, he’d come to me and say, “Why do you quote anything out of the Bible? They’re just human beings. Quote the Bible. Quote only the Bible.” Well, after I recovered from my shock at someone saying that, I did remind him of a couple of places in the Bible, where Paul quoted someone outside the Bible. Whenever I come to something like this, I think of my friend, because this is something not found in the Bible. But, nevertheless, not necessarily everything out of the Bible is wrong. The proverb of the ancients says, “Wickedness proceeds from the wicked. But my hand shall not be against you.” So, in effect, what he says is, man is revealed by his actions, and this is something that is stated in the Bible in numerous places. We don’t have time to turn to them. But, if you’re interested, you can turn to Luke chapter 6 in verse 43. You can turn to Matthew chapter 7 in verse 16 through verse 20, where we know that “a good tree does not yield bad fruit.” Or a bad tree good fruit and so on. That type of thing.

But then he appeals to the irrationality of Saul’s purpose. Notice what he says in verse 14 and verse 15, “After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea?” Well, the Hebrew text is very interesting there. It’s not simply a flea. But it’s “flea one” like one single flea, you know, one special single flea. Have you ever, now I don’t have fleas, [laughter] but I used to have a couple of dogs and occasionally dogs manage to corral a few fleas. But fleas have no really flight pattern at all. Have you noticed that? If you’ve studied fleas, you would have noticed that. [More laughter] Fleas don’t have a flight pattern.

Well, David is very, very true to fact here. He didn’t have any flight pattern. One day he was in En Gedi. One day he was in Hachilah and because it all depended upon

where Saul was. And so he was running all over the land, like a flea. So, you, the great king of Israel, why do you go to such trouble over me? A dead dog? Or a mere flea, as the New English Bible renders it, a single flea, flea one. I'll tell you, it's very interesting that in the Hebrew text that's the way it's put, flea -- *echad*. So it's irrational. And then at the end of the chapter, we have Saul's emotional penitence and confession. It's a pathetic picture of tears, of self-pity and regret but no genuine repentance. The proof of the fact that there is no genuine repentance that after this event and Saul has gone home, and incidentally there is a little clue to it when we read, "And Saul went home; but David went up to the stronghold." Why did he didn't he say, David, come on home with me? And serve as you did before? As my right hand man? No, David went to his strong hold. He wept. He confessed. But he's a far cry from a repentant man, there's no genuine repentance. As a matter of fact, Saul will eventually drive him out of the land entirely. And he will find his way among the Philistines and stay there for a long period of time.

His penitence then, is emotional. He's moved to tears, affected but like Judas, unchanged in heart. Like Pharaoh who said, I've sinned against you Moses, when the plague of the locusts comes. But obviously his heart had not been changed at all. There is one interesting thing about this and that is that he confesses David's high destiny. In fact, his confession proves that David is innocent. He says, "If a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely? Therefore, may the Lord reward you with good for what you have done to me this day." So, David is innocent. But his confession is not sufficient to prove his own repentance.

When Josiah speaks to the nation, he says that their spiritual life, their righteousness, was like a morning cloud. Isn't that a vivid picture? We look out in the morning, early, and the clouds are floating by. And you go out at 10 o'clock and where are they? They are gone. Your righteousness is like that. It's like a morning cloud. He also adds, it's like the dew that falls upon the earth. You go out early in the morning and your feet will be wet if you walk in the grass. But at ten o'clock it's gone. That's their

righteousness. That's Saul's penitence. It's something that's not repentance. And, furthermore, if you carefully look at his words, you'll see that he still has not confessed his true condition. Look at what he says in verse 17, then he said to David, “You are more righteous than I for you have rewarded me with good whereas I have rewarded you with evil.” More righteous than I? Look, Saul, you shouldn't say that. You're not righteous at all. You should say, you're righteous and I'm wicked. That's what you should say. He shouldn't include himself in the company of the righteous, as if David is more righteous than he, a righteous man. But the utmost that he will own is “you are more righteous than I am.” So Saul is unrepentant.

I began the message by citing Proverbs chapter 16 in verse 32. That's the text about ruling ones spirit. In the crises of life, the most desirable authority is self-government under God. David triumphs over himself before triumph over Saul. And underneath it all is God, upon whom he waits.

There's a chapter that F. B. Meyer writes, in his book on David that's, I think, a very excellent little chapter. He makes a distinction between waiting on God and waiting for God. It's something that you and I need to learn. When we wait on God, what are we doing? Well, generally speaking, when we wait on God we are thinking of waiting on God in prayer, or waiting on God in meditation, waiting on God for guidance. But when we wait for God, we are waiting for him to work, and so we wait for God by submission, and we wait for God by patience. In fact, there's one of the Psalms that expresses this very beautifully and it's a Psalm of David, it's the 37th. And you'll remember those phrases; I'll just cite a few of them. “Fret not thyself because of evildoers.” “Trust in the Lord, and do good.” “Dwell in the land.” “Delight yourself in the Lord.” “Commit your way to the Lord.” “Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him.” So David triumphs over himself, morally, before his triumph over Saul. And underneath it all is God, upon whom he waits.

Mr. Meyer goes on to say that, “Waiting for God induces restraint from crime.” That’s what David experienced. Rather than slaying Saul he now confronts him and pleads with him in that marvelously eloquent speech. It inspires courage and waiting for God inspires courage for the simple reason that we learn to trust upon him. As the Prophet Isaiah says, in chapter 54 in verse 17, “No weapon formed against you shall prosper; every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from me, says the Lord.” No weapon shall prosper against us. And, finally, he says, “It induces penitence in others.” In Saul’s case, of course, he recognizes the nobility of David in the expressions that he makes. “I know indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. Therefore now swear to me that you will not cut off my descendants after me.”

I think there’s some of the most interesting and important information here for all of us who are seeking to know the will of God. Circumstances are unreliable guides. The ultimate guidance of God comes from the Holy Spirit who dwells within and the conviction that he brings in the heart of believers. But to learn to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit is a life, and no one will ever learn it who does not start trying to learn it.

It’s like learning to walk. Have you ever seen a little child sitting in a high chair, as he ponders adults walking, reflecting in his mind, I think I understand how this walking goes about, he says, all you do is you stand on your feet and you put one foot forward and transfer your weight on it, and then another foot forward and transfer your weight to that one, and then you will see him take his high chair, well, they don’t use high chairs much anymore , but in my day they did. Take the high chair table over his head, slide down, and walk. No, you know how children learn to walk. They learn to walk by pulling themselves up. They begin by crawling. They pull themselves up. They move around among the furniture for a while. And finally they take one-step and collapse. Take a few more steps and collapse. And, as a matter of fact, even when they

get to be as old as seventy-five years of age, they can fall. It's not something you learn and learn and never make a mistake.

Waiting for God is something every Christian must learn. He must learn like that. That's what we learn from Paul, specifically, walk by the Spirit. One of the terms that he uses means to take a step. So, take each step by the Spirit.

This past week, this individual was in the message this morning, so I'll feel free to say a little bit more about it now. A young man in business and for two years he'd been working on a particular process by which he was hoping to acquire some property for a project they were involved in. For two years, various things came up. Various reasons why there were delays. It looked at times as if he would not be able to acquire the property at all; at other times, possibly.

And finally, when God's time came, after two years of waiting, the property was in bankruptcy, he was called by the bank, the bank said, you may bid for the property. The property had been valued at a figure three times the figure at which they wished the auction to begin. They put in a bid. Nobody else offered a bid. They obtained the property at thirty-three and a third per cent of what they were willing to buy it for by having to wait, having to wait. He told me, personally, afterwards. He said, “You know, I feel that God's hand was in this. We've been waiting, and waiting and waiting and finally we had said, we'll just wait and do what may come up.” Had no indication that they might acquire the property, but he said, afterwards, “I think I learned a lesson about waiting on the Lord.”

I suggest to you businessmen as well as to you who are not businessmen, who have other decisions that you have to make, that when we read in the word of God that we “rest in the Lord and patiently wait,” that there are reasons for that. And David has learned that and in learning that, he has been able to subdue his enemy, Saul, at this point. On the other hand, poor Saul, more interested in the interests of his own family in this world, David, don't cut off my descendants after me. Don't destroy my name from

my family's house, more interested in interests of his family in this world, not in the world to come. How pathetic is melancholy Saul!

May God help us to learn the lessons of waiting on the Lord and waiting for the Lord, in the experiences of life. If you are here today and you've never believed in Christ, we invite you to turn to him who died for sinners and receive in grace as a free gift what God offers to those who acknowledge their need and turn to him.

Let's stand for the Benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for the lessons that are found in the word of God and we marvel at the way Thou didst lead Thy servant David, overcoming the natural tendencies of the sin principle that indwelled him, to reveal the way to life that pleases Thee. Help us, Lord, to learn those lessons and enable us not to look at circumstances entirely for the guiding hand of God, but to learn to know the guidance of him who dwells within forever, the third person of the eternal trinity.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.