



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Lessons from the Life of David

2 Samuel 19

“David Redivivus: Wise and Forgiving”

TRANSCRIPT

We have reached chapter 19 in 2 Samuel in our Lessons in the Life of David and we're going to read verse 1 through verse 39 for our Scripture reading this morning. So if you have your Bibles with you, I hope you do, turn with me to 2 Samuel chapter 19. The narrator of these events in the 1st verse of chapter 19, writes.

“And Joab was told, ‘Behold, the king is weeping and mourning for Absalom. So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people. For the people heard it said that day, ‘The king is grieved for his son.’ And the people stole back into the city that day as people who are ashamed steal away when they flee in battle. But the king covered his face, and the king cried out with a loud voice, ‘O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!’ Then Joab came into the house to the king, and said, ‘Today you have disgraced all your servants who today have saved your life, the lives of your sons and daughters, the lives of your wives and the lives of your concubines, in that you love your enemies and hate your friends. For you have declared today that you regard neither princes nor servants; for today I perceive that if Absalom had lived and all of us had died today, then it would have pleased you well. Now therefore, arise, go out and

“speak comfort to your servants. For I swear by the Lord, if you do not go out, not one will stay with you this night. And that will be worse for you than all the evil that has befallen you from your youth until now.”

You’ll notice in this expression at what Joab is suggesting is that he too will depart from David. And even a threat of a possible rebellion with Joab at its head exists in the background.

“Then the king arose and sat in the gate. And they told all the people saying, ‘There is the king, sitting in the gate.’ So all the people came before the king; for everyone of Israel had fled to his tent. Now all the people were in a dispute throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, ‘The king saved us from the hand of our enemies, he delivered us from the hand of the Philistines, and now he has fled from the land because of Absalom. But Absalom, whom we anointed over us, has died in battle. Now therefore, why do you say nothing about bringing back the king?’”

So it’s very plain, there was a lively dispute among the tribes of Israel about whether David should be brought back to the throne.

“So David sent to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, [Now, they, of course, were in Jerusalem.] saying, ‘Speak to the elders of Judah,’ saying, ‘Why are you the last to bring the king back to his house, since the words of all Israel have come to the king, to his very house? **12** You are my brethren, you are my bone and my flesh. Why then are you the last to bring back the king?’ And say to Amasa.”

Now, remember, Amasa was the one that Absalom had appointed general over the forces of the rebellion. Amasa, incidentally, was a cousin of David. It’s rather striking, is it not,

how closely related so many of these individuals were. Joab was David's nephew, Amasa his cousin. They were related to each other. And this is largely, it seems, a family affair. And verse 14 reads.

"So he swayed the hearts of all the men of Judah, just as the heart of one man, so that they sent this word to the king, 'Return, and all your servants!' Then the king returned and came to the Jordan. [He was, remember, across the Jordan to the east at Mahanaim.] And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to escort the king across the Jordan. And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, who was from Bahurim, hurried and came down with the men of Judah to meet King David. There were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over the Jordan before the king."

And you'll remember that Ziba was the servant of Saul that David gave to Mephibosheth as his servant and was to serve Mephibosheth, the lame son of Jonathan.

"Then a ferryboat went across to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. Now Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king when he had crossed the Jordan. Then he said to the king, 'Do not let my lord impute iniquity to me, or remember what wrong your servant did on the day that my lord the king left Jerusalem, that the king should take it to heart.'"

And those of you that were here a few weeks back will remember that when David was forced out of Jerusalem, it was Shimei who, going down the hills along the way, was shouting curses at David and throwing stones at him. This is the same Shimei.

“For I, your servant, know that I have sinned. Therefore, here I am, the first to come today of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king.’ [It’s very interesting he calls himself “the house of Joseph.” He means the house of Ephraim which, in turn, stands for the tribes to the north.] But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, ‘Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord’s anointed?’ [And, again, you remember that Abishai was the brother of Joab and Ahaziah and he’s concerned about the carrying out of the requirements of the law.] And David said, ‘What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should be adversaries to me today? Shall any man be put to death today in Israel? For do I not know that today I am king over Israel?’ Therefore the king said to Shimei, ‘You shall not die.’ And the king swore to him.”

It’s so striking that later on, when he’s on his death bed, he gives instructions to Solomon to slay Shimei, so evidently the oath that he swears is valid only so long as he lives.

“Now Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king and he had not cared for his feet, nor trimmed his mustache, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he returned in peace. So it was, when he had come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said to him, ‘Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?’ And he answered, ‘My lord, O king, my servant [That is, Ziba.] deceived me. For your servant said, ‘I will saddle a donkey for myself, that I may ride on it and go to the king, because your servant is lame.’ And he has slandered your servant to my lord, the king, but my lord the king is like the angel of God. Therefore, do what is good in your eyes.’”

Now, again, I hope you remember, most of you I guess who were here will, that Ziba when David was forced out had come to him and brought him provisions and had said,

concerning Mephibosheth that Mephibosheth had stayed in Jerusalem because he had said, “Today, God’s going to restore the kingdom to me.” So that is what Mephibosheth alludes to when he says that “Ziba has slandered your servant to my lord the king. Verse 28.

“For all my father’s house were but dead men before my lord the king. Yet you set your servant among those who eat at your own table. Therefore what right have I still to cry out anymore to the king?” So the king said to him, ‘Why do you speak anymore of your matters?’ I have said, ‘You and Ziba divide the land.’”

Won’t go into the mathematics of this, but when David told Ziba to divide the land, actually, what he was doing was short changing Mephibosheth a little bit. Evidence of the fact that David doesn’t completely believe Mephibosheth or Ziba for that matter. But he does not completely believe Mephibosheth. He probably should have believed him but, nevertheless, that’s the way it is. In verse 30.

“Then Mephibosheth said to the king, ‘Rather, let him take it all, inasmuch as my lord the king has come back in peace to his own house.’ And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim and went across the Jordan with the king, to escort him across the Jordan. Now Barzillai was a very aged man, eighty years old. And he had provided the king with supplies while he stayed at Mahanaim, for he was a very rich man. And the king said to Barzillai, ‘Come across with me, and I will provide for you while you are with me in Jerusalem.’ But Barzillai said to the king, ‘How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? I am today eighty years old. Can I discern between the good and bad? Can your servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any longer the voice of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be a further burden to my lord the king? Your servant will go a little way across the Jordan with the

king. And why should the king repay me with such a reward? Please let your servant turn back again, that I may die in my own city, near the grave of my father and mother. And here is your servant Chimham; let him cross over with my lord the king, and do for him what seems good to you.’ [Chimham was his son.] And the king answered, ‘Chimham shall cross over with me, and I will do for him what seems good to you. Now whatever you request of me, I will do for you.’ Then all the people went over the Jordan. And when the king had crossed over, the king kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and he returned to his own place.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his word and I’m cutting it a little short because, actually, the last verses ought to be read as well, but I’ll comment upon them in the message that follows. May the Lord bless this reading of his word and let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we turn to Thee through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee, Lord, that on the authority of Thy word, in approaching Thee through the Lord Jesus Christ we have acceptance. We thank Thee for the marvelous promises that undergird the redemption that Thou hast accomplished for us and into which, by Thy grace, we have been brought. We praise Thee for the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ to come as our representative, to take upon himself our judgment, our punishment, and on Calvary’s Cross to bear that judgment to the full, to finish the work, to accomplish the redemption. And we thank Thee for his resurrection to Thy right hand and the assurance we have thereby that what the Son of God has accomplished is acceptable to Thee.

And we thank Thee that he has done this for us and, therefore we, too, have acceptance with Thee in Him. What a marvelous arrangement that Thou hast devised and accomplished, and we are grateful, indeed, Lord, on this the Lord’s Day. We give Thee

thanks for him who has made it possible. We give Thee thanks for our great Triune God in Heaven and the blessings of life through Thee.

We pray Thy blessing upon the whole Church of Christ today, and ask that Thou wilt richly bless the ministry of the word of God as it goes forth, and particularly in those churches in which believing enlarge the body, through the Gospel we pray, as it pleases Thee.

We pray for our country. We ask Thy blessing upon President Bush and those with him in authority. Give wisdom and guidance to him. And for those, Lord, who have requested our prayers, whose names are in our calendar of concern and some others as well, we ask that Thou wilt answer their petitions affirmatively and favorably as it pleases Thee. We bring them before Thee. We thank Thee for the assurance, Lord, that through Christ these petitions are heard and we ask that Thou wilt minister to those who have need, especially, and to those who minister to them. Give them wisdom and guidance and direction. And may we have reason to be thankful for all that Thou art to us and to those who are suffering.

We thank Thee for this church. We pray Thy blessing upon its leadership. For those here who are in this auditorium, O God, we pray Thy blessing upon them as we sing together, as we listen to the word of God together, may today be a day in which we grow in our faith.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] One of the great joys of Christian fellowship and the time that we have together and the experiences we have with one another is to come in contact with Christians in some difficult situations who, nevertheless, have by God's grace managed to retain the joy of the Lord in some very trying circumstances.

This morning as I was walking out after the first service, I was speaking with an individual who is a regular attender at the Chapel, who's had some rather severe

problems. We discussed her experiences a bit and then she said to me, "But, by God's grace, I'm doing very well."

Through the mail this week, I received a tape from someone who was a regular attender of the Chapel for a number of years and has maintained contact with the Chapel but she has been confined to her home now for, oh, I hesitate to say now, but for a number of years. And she sent me a tape and in the course of it she said something like, "This tape has meant a lot to me and to my husband and I hope that you will enjoy it too." It was some music. And then she signed it, "Rejoicing in the Lord, Always." How nice that is! With all of the trials that she has had, confined to her home, "Rejoicing in the Lord, Always." One of the greatest of the blessings of the Christian life and Christian salvation is to see God's grace working in the hearts of those who have responded to him.

The subject this morning is "David Redivivus: Wise and Forgiving." Or, "David restored, wise and forgiving." As I have been following David's life through these chapters, I as you know, because I've said it several times, have been very much impressed with the experience that the king has been going through. The picture that I see emerging in these chapters is a man of deepest spirituality.

Now, you may not see that as much, if you read only these historical chapters. But if you put them with the Psalms that he wrote during the same periods of time, roughly, I think you'll agree that David was a man of the deepest spirituality. Now, that does not mean, of course, that he does not fall, for he has given us public indication of the fact that he has fallen greatly. No question about that! But David is a man of deepest spirituality and he's surrounded by people who are unable to enter into his anguished struggles. It's not Absalom's ingratitude that primarily troubles David. It's not even Absalom's death that primarily crushes him. The decoding key of everything that is happening to David and the struggles that he's going through is the word, the prophetic word that Nathan gave him after his sin of adultery and murder. And Nathan had said to David.

"Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord to do evil in His sight? You've killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword. You have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' Thus says the Lord! 'Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor. And he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel. Before the sun.'"

What David is troubled about, primarily, is the fact that he is guilty of sin against God. It's that dreadful sin and the realization of that dreadful sin that is troubling David deep down within. To my mind, it is God's chastening hand upon him that is troubling the great king. Now, to give you an illustration of it, think again of David leaving Jerusalem, forced out, and he goes out as he leaves Jerusalem with bare feet, the king mind you with bare feet, the weeping tear-filled eyes, the covered head, the silent ascent up the Mount of Olives with a broken heart. That is precisely what David is experiencing.

I was listening to the radio this morning as I came to church at eight thirty and heard a preacher. Really enjoyed his accent. And in the midst of the message, he made the statement, "Pardon is not impunity," and how true that is. The fact that God said through Nathan, "You have sinned, your sin has been forgiven," does not mean that punishment, chastisement does not come. David's suffering that; that's really the thing that is troubling him deep down in his heart. Oh, I know it sounds as if it's just the loss of Absalom. But the loss of Absalom is the judgment of God. And so when he cries out, "O my son, Absalom. My son, my son, Absalom. If only I had died in your place. O Absalom, my son, my son!" One must look beyond that to the cause. And David does and the evidence of it is to read his psalms that he wrote at this time. Read Psalm 51 and

then reads Psalm 32. And read some of the other expressions that, obviously, are things derived from the experiences the great king had.

If Joab and the others knew Nathan's prophetic utterance, it's not stated in the word of God. I'm inclined to think, probably, they did not know it. But if they did know it, they never understood what Nathan had told David. As a matter of fact, Joab could not understand it. Only those who have sinned against God, only those who have understood something of what it means to sin against God and have seen themselves fail, can understand what is troubling David at the present time. So God's servant, the sweet psalmist of Israel, knows and feels things that others about him do not even enter into.

Well, the situation is very treacherous. David has been forced out by Absalom's rebellion. He's gone across the Jordan in the providence of God. And now, by God's blessing upon him and, again, in the providence of God, when Absalom has attacked, David's men have defeated them and scattered them. And now, one would think at least that David would be getting over what has happened, but no, he's still moping over what has happened. And so, we read here, "Joab was told."

Now, I gather from this that Joab did not really know exactly what was going on in the household of the king, although it seems he has access very easily to the king's household, but here we read, "And Joab was told the king's weeping and mourning for Absalom." So that word is really a providential word because what David needed was this rebuke from Joab. And so he's suitably brutal in the rebuke.

As a matter of fact, he finds at least four ways for pointing out that the king's behavior is abnormal. First of all, he says, "The people who have saved your life and the lives of your wives and children have been rewarded with dishonor." You have not said anything in praise of them. So far as the people are concerned, what has happened has happened, and you are mourning over Absalom. Furthermore, you have turned the commandment of God to love one's neighbor into hating him. It's a rather striking thing because in not praising the people for what they had accomplished for him, and his

acting as if they have done nothing, in effect, what they are saying is, “You don’t love those who’ve helped you, but you love those who were your enemies. For Absalom was his enemy. Absalom is the one who rebelled against him. And Absalom led the rebellion. And all of those who were opposed to him were his enemies. But he seems by his actions to love them and hate the ones who have helped him.

And furthermore, the commanders and the servants are nothing to you. Joab himself is included among those who have been ignored for their pains in achieving the victory. And, finally, Joab says, taking your attitude to its logical conclusion, you would sacrifice all your followers if only Absalom could live. Oh, if Absalom had lived. And the rest of you who’ve given your lives for your benefit, you would have been happy for them to go away, if only Absalom could live.

The king really needed that. David’s pain is obvious. I’m sure that Joab has not grasped his poignant grief. They thought him ungrateful for their victorious support. I think deep down he was grateful. But some things meant more to him at this time than others. It’s called, incidentally, “a victory” in verse 2. The Hebrew word is the word, *tashuw’ab*, which means, “salvation.” It was a salvation for David and his cause. David’s pain is Absalom’s loss, compounded by the sense of divine chastisement.

So Joab’s stern rebuke to David is a true concern. And what he calls upon the king to do is to go out and speak comfort to your servants. The Hebrew expression is, to speak to the heart, or to speak over the heart. [Inaudible] He then says, “For I swear by the Lord, if you do not go out, not one will stay with you this night. And that will be worse for you than all the evil that has befallen you from your youth until now.”

So brutal, coarse, Joab has served a legitimate purpose. And so David goes out to the gate of the city. And there he sits and the people pass by him in review. They receive his thanks. But it’s evident from the background that the situation all over the twelve tribes is very confused and very divided. What is needed is a true diplomat. And David has gifts that were given to him along that line. And he will make something of the

situation as is evident. But some of the wounds will never be solved as long as the nation exists.

Well, in verses 11 through 15, the narrator describes how Judah welcomes the king. And David, himself, implicitly pardons the Judahites who were serving Amasa, in rebellion against him, by saying that he is demoting Joab and he is putting Amasa, making him the General of the Army instead of Joab. I'm sure that that did not sit too well with Joab and if you've read ahead, you'll know that Joab will make it right in his own brutal way, later on. But Amasa, the cousin, supplants Joab. It may have been a sound move apparently, but politically it was questionable. At least it showed the people of Judah, I don't hold anything against you for the rebellion against me.

Now, the remainder of the chapter is an account of the meeting of David with three striking men. Now, that is not providential. Today is Mother's Day, and so we come to a chapter in which three striking men are made the subject of the latter part of the chapter. Thank you, you three ladies who are smiling. The rest of you [Laughter] have not yet adjusted to that. But I did not plan this.

And in the latter part of chapter 19, Shimei, Mephibosheth, and Barzillai have contact with the king. The first who comes is Shimei. And he comes to David, as he crosses the Jordan with his thousand men from Benjamin. Evidently, he was a very influential man. And when David left, and he was on the hills, shouting curses and throwing rocks and stones, David must have known even then that he was a very responsible individual. And, at least, had a number of people in support of him. And so, here, having come over the Jordan, Shimei and the thousand come to David and we read the account in which he comes to David. He falls down before David and he says to the king, "Do not let my lord impute iniquity to me, or remember what wrong your servant did on the day that my lord the king left Jerusalem, that the king should take it to heart. For I, your servant, know that I have sinned. Therefore here I am, the first to come today all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king."

Ovid, whose writings I read when I was going through school many, many years ago, once said, "It's annoying to be honest to no purpose." Now, Shimei was not a person who was known for his honesty. And it's obvious, at least it seems to me, that he's very deceptive at this place. The intense competition among people to be first to welcome David when he crosses the Jordan is, itself, suggestive of the fact that there is a great deal of insincerity on the part of the individuals who are welcoming them. And, I think, that it probably reflects a very uneasy conscience on the part of Shimei. After all, he's cursed the king. And according to the Mosaic Law that should not be permissible. And, in fact, was a death penalty. And so, he comes, he confesses his iniquity. He says, he knows he's sinned. But he's here, "The first of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king."

Now, David didn't believe him. Later on, as I mentioned in the Scripture reading, he had him put to death. When he was on his deathbed, he gave Solomon the word, "Put Shimei to death." He knew that Shimei would be a problem when Solomon came to the throne.

The second individual that he meets is Mephibosheth. Now, I suggest to you that this meeting did not occur right at the Jordan River but, rather, took place in Jerusalem. However, it's recorded here. And the reason I say that is, we read in verse 24, "Now Mephibosheth, the son of Saul, came down to meet the king. And he had not cared for his feet, nor trimmed his mustache, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he returned in peace."

Now, I mentioned this morning that I did not think that that was a particularly noble way in which to carry on his life as he had done. And one of the individuals in the Chapel who owns several cleaning establishments, afterwards, in the hall out there, thanked me for the advertising that I had given for him this morning. [Laughter] Yes, it was he. Someone leaned to someone else and said his name. I could read their lips. You didn't know I could read lips, did you? [More laughter] But, anyway, it was he.

And Mephibosheth is there. And the question is, of course, whether Mephibosheth is honest or not. As Ovid said, "It's annoying to be honest to no purpose." I'm inclined to think that he was honest. At any rate, what we read here is, "So it was, when he had come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king had said to him, 'Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?'" And then he answers. "My lord, O king, my servant deceived me, Ziba.' For your servant said, 'I will saddle a donkey for myself, that I may ride on it and go to the king, because your servant is lame.' And he has slandered your servant to my lord the king, but my lord the king is like the angel of God. Therefore, do what is good in your eyes."

Now, if you look back at verse 24, it says, "The son of Saul came down to meet the king." So I think Mephibosheth did actually go down with the people to the Jordan to meet the king. But, it's such a large crowd. And, after all, remember he is lame on both his feet. He was unable to mingle with the crowd and meet the king. And so we read in verse 25, "So it was when he had come to Jerusalem to meet the king that the king said to him, 'Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?'" So the meeting probably took place in Jerusalem. But he really had been there. The narrator seems to believe Mephibosheth. But the question is, did David? Because he did not restore to him all of his property and benefits as a result of what he thought may have transpired. But, if you think of Mephibosheth as an individual who has not cared for his feet, his moustache is untrimmed. That, in itself would suggest, particularly, his moustache untrimmed that he had not planned really to become the king when David was forced out. He had not washed his clothes. And so I'm inclined to think, then, that Mephibosheth was really very sincere in his love for David and appreciation of him.

We mentioned when we touched on 2 Samuel chapter 9, what Mephibosheth suggests in connection with the gospel because Mephibosheth and the story of his life is something of an illustration of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You remember that David said in response to the covenant that he had made with Jonathan,

"Is there anyone left of the household of Saul to whom I may show the loving kindness of the Lord God." And when we studied Mephibosheth, I made an application with reference to 1 John chapter 2 in verse 12, where the apostle writes, "I write to you little children because your sins are forgiven you for His Name's sake." And I made the application that Mephibosheth was an individual who was lame on both his feet. He illustrates a sinner. He also illustrates an individual who, though a sinner, has goodness and kindness shown to him for the namesake of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jonathan's name, as you know, means "one whom the Lord gave." And so, his name, itself, is suggestive, ultimately, of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, God's blessing through David upon Mephibosheth on account of Jonathan, is a simple but, I think, a true illustration of God's goodness to us, who are sinners, lame on both our feet, by virtue of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I hate to keep saying Mephibosheth because, you may remember, I mentioned a friend of mine who was a preacher and said he'd never preached on Mephibosheth because he hadn't learned how to pronounce the name. [Laughter] But it's very difficult to say it over and over again without mispronouncing it.

At any rate, Mephibosheth then is an illustration of an individual who, by the virtue of grace shown to him, is able to eat at the king's table, though lame on both his feet, we are told in 2 Samuel chapter 9.

Now, there is a further stage in Mephibosheth's life, because David is forced out. The rebellion has taken place. The king is no longer there in Jerusalem. And Mephibosheth illustrates, now, an individual who waits for the return of the king. And so, when Mephibosheth comes in to the presence of King David, the illustration still holds. Mephibosheth is an individual who has kindness shown to him for the sake of someone else. But, at the same time now, having waited patiently for the return of the king, the king comes. And his attitude of waiting, to my mind, is suggestive of the kind of attitude that you and I should have. That is, the great hope that we have as redeemed individuals

is the hope of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, Christian people are waiting people. They are people who wait for the Lord's return from heaven. And Mephibosheth illustrates that point. The patient waiting that characterizes those who long for their king to return.

How about you? Is that your attitude? Is really, the fact of our Lord's return and the hope for it, prominent in your life? Or does the thought only pass through your mind occasionally? Is it a kind of dominating thought?

Well, when you turn to the New Testament and you read what the apostles have to say, you can see what a dominant thing it was for most of them. They thought of the coming of our Lord as something that was very significant and very important for them. In fact, when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, he said, "For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." So that conversion can be described very simply as a turning to God, a serving of him and a waiting for him. It's very simple. And, in those words are summed up the believer's responsibility and the believer's activities with reference to divine redemption.

What I like about this, of course, is here is an old man, and he comes forward as the kind of old man that ought to be an illustration for all of us old men. He's an individual who, of course, I'd like for all old men to be wealthy but he's unique in that sense. We'll pass by that. That's not necessary, really, for a servant of the Lord, but Barzillai meets David. He has come all the way down from Rogelim and he has been there to celebrate the ceremonial of passing over the Jordan into the land again, to assume the throne again. He's 80 years of age. And while he was in the eastern part of the land, David had been supplied by Barzillai, David and his men, and so, he's an individual who committed himself to David in the midst of Absalom's rebellion. But we see his generous

provision for the king when he was in need and, thus, we know him immediately as a kindly old man.

Further, he has a desire to share in the valued society of the king, so far as his strength permits and, therefore, he gives himself, wisely, to the king and to his cause. He committed himself to the king and proved his considerateness, in that he, while committed to the king does not want to be a burden to the king. So, he understands the situation as king and he says David, "I do not want to be a burden to you. I want to go back home."

In addition, he's an individual who obviously had a nice domestic situation because he said, "David, it's nice of you to invite me to come and live in Jerusalem, but let your servant turn back again that I may die in my own city, near the grave of my mother and my father." Domestic affection characterizes this old man as well. His having befriend, honored and loved the banished king, when appearances were against him, and his being privileged to take so tender a leave of the Lord's anointed, was a sign of distinguished loyalty. And you cannot help but admire a man who, when his king is forced out, and apparently faced with tremendous odds, nevertheless, gives himself to David's cause. And not only gives himself to David's cause, but supports his cause to the extent that if Absalom had won and if Absalom's men had taken over, the chances are that this individual might have lost his life.

And so when you put his obvious faith in the right cause when the rebellion was at its height, his identification of his interests with David, the king, his giving to David and his men to supply them, is doing what was right, and then his being unwilling to become a burden to the king, I think you can see, that here is a man who is a godly man.

He'd be a good subject for Father's Day rather than Mother's Day. But, nevertheless, this is what has come up. And we do have this man before us and we cannot help but admire this man. I think, when you put it all together, you cannot fail to say, "How lovely is old age when it is so adorned by such a life." So some of you old

men in the audience, some of you are smiling, others are shocked. [Laughter] What an illustration. And maybe we ought to go around and have a "Barzillai Award" and award to individuals in the congregation that we think might be worthy of it.

Now, it's very interesting, so far as the record is concerned, David and Barzillai never met again. This was the final meeting, so far as we know, of the two. And the chances are it is true. This elderly man has given a beautiful illustration of what an old man ought to be.

The final verses of the chapter are striking because what we see is a struggle between Judah and the other tribes over escorting the king over the Jordan. And, it's evident that the feeling between the two is not good. There is a division. And it is, ultimately, if you will carefully examine what has happened, the division between Judah and Israel is the division that is brought about by the deed of evil that was done in secret, that is, the adultery, the sin against Bathsheba, and the murder of Uriah, her husband. It all goes back to that. And the division in the land is the result of the sin of David.

If there is anything that illustrates the point, my Christian friend, and others who may be here, it is this. And the point illustrated is that sin is a disturber of relations. David's sin affected his relation to God. It affected his relationship to his family. It affects his relationship to the people. No sinner ever sins to himself. Please remember that. You may think that you can do something and it does not affect any body else, but it always affects you, your family, and as a matter of fact, the family of God, if you are a Christian. "Moral evil gives color and form to all things. And it infuses an element of defect, if not positive evil, into every bodily, mental and moral relation sustained by sinning man," someone has said. And I think he said it well.

And this disturbance caused by sin flows on to the remote future, the whole subsequent course of Hebrew history is modified by David's adultery. What that led to, and the murder of Uriah, and the inner troubles that began, they continued until the division between the Northern and the Southern kingdoms, all traceable to that morning

or evening, it was evening, when David looked out from his roof and saw Bathsheba and called her to his home and the adultery was committed.

Well, let me sum up what has been said in just a few words. David is back. The throne is his. But things are altered forever. The depths of anguished sorrow that he has known may be deeper than experienced by any other Old Testament saint. If we read the Psalms with the historical accounts, you cannot help but feel that the struggles that this man went through are deeper, more significant, more deeply felt than any other man in the Old Testament.

When you think of Jacob at Bethel and the troubles, and God's appearing to him to curb his fear. Or when you find Jacob at Peniel, and his fear of Esau, and his struggling with the man, that he later realizes was with the Lord God, pre-incarnate. Or when you look at the Apostle Paul on the Damascus road, dumb and blind for a few days because of his own sin against the Church of Jesus Christ. Or when you think of Peter, who went out after his sin and wept bitterly. Or, if you like an illustration, if you think of Bunyan's Pilgrim, or Christian, in the valley of the shadow of death with the depths on the side and then the quagmires on the other side, and the individuals that he meets on his way, you never find anyone who is so troubled over his sin than David himself.

I love the way Bunyan puts it. And Christian is there, and it's dark and he doesn't even know whether if he puts his foot forward he will step on something that is substantial. And he hears a voice that, in effect, says, "The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. I will not fear though I go down into the valley of the shadow of death." And Christian reasons, "Well, there is somebody else here. And, furthermore, if they can trust in the Lord, perhaps I can trust in the Lord." And Bunyan beautifully pictures him coming out on the other side. But he's passed through the valley of the shadow of death. And that's what David is doing.

And I suggest to you, my Christian friend, that when you sin, that's precisely what you face. May God keep us from sin. Such sorrows cannot be shared fully. Joab is

incapable of understanding. The children of Israel, as a whole, are incapable of understanding. They don't understand. They hear the king saying, “Absalom, my son, my son! Would God I'd died instead of you.” But, fundamentally, it was deeper than that. And one only can learn about it if he turns to Psalm 51 and he reads through that Psalm and reflects upon the things that are said in it in the light of the experiences. Of the people, as with our Lord and his sorrows, there was none with him. And there were none with David. And it is he who cries out, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your loving kindness.” I think it's so interesting that David, in the midst of these trials, in the midst of the guilt that he felt, in the midst of the chastisement now, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your loving kindnesses.”

Chesed, again! Covenantal loving kindness! This is the thing that he realized is the only thing that can truly save him. I mean, save him, in the sense of comfort him and restore him. “Have mercy upon me according to your loving kindnesses; according to the multitude of your tender mercies.” There are no reasons for those things. He does not say, “loving kindnesses because of this.” But loving kindnesses! They are their only reason.

Because, you see, my Christian friend, ultimately, it's God's love, which does not have any other foundation, any other reason other than God's love. It's what he in his troubles appeals to.

“Your loving kindnesses; the multitude of your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions, wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is always before me, against you, you only, have I sinned. And done this evil in your sight that you may be found just when you speak and blameless when you judge. Purge me with hyssop. [That's an interesting word. “Purge me.” That verb comes from the verb, “to sin.” Isn't it interesting? In other

words, the word, sin, is transformed into a verb in this particular stem. And what he is essentially saying is, un-sin me. De-sin me.] And I shall be clean.

And, furthermore, David says something that's not found is the story of the leper, where the word comes from. That is, the figure. He says, "I shall be white as snow." That's what the sweet singer of Israel, David the King, has learned. May God help you to learn it, as well.

If you are here today, and you have never believed in Christ, then your first responsibility is the responsibility to recognize that Christ has offered an atoning sacrifice and you may be saved through faith in him. By God's grace come to him. Confess your need of him. Receive as a free gift eternal life.

For those of you who are Christians, I hope above all else that you and I will bear David's illustration upon our heart constantly, when we, too, are tempted to take steps that may be called, according to the word of God, sin and transgression. Our sins affect not only ourselves, they affect our family, our friends, the Church of Jesus Christ, in fact, the course of human history. So we are taught by the word of God.

Let's stand for the Benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for the lessons from the word of God, for we surely need them. And, Lord, we thank Thee for a man like David whose struggles have been recorded by the narrator of his life. And we thank Thee for David, himself, who has given us in his psalms such insights into his experiences and has admonished us, and encouraged us, and comforted us, by the things that he has learned through the experiences that Thou didst give to him. O God, may we be true pupils who learn from the lessons of the saints of God, from David particularly.

We commit our day to Thee. We pray that if there should be some who do not know our Lord that this day shall not end before they have come to him in the faith that

brings eternal life. And for those of us who are believers who may have sinned or who may not even have confessed our sins, we pray that today may be the day of restoration. For Jesus' sake. Amen.