



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Lessons from the Life of David

1 Kings 2:1-11

“The Final Days”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Today is the last of our series of messages on the theme of Themes from the Life of David, and the subject, as you can tell from the title, is David's final days. It has to do with the charge that he delivered to Solomon on his deathbed. So will you turn with me to 1 Kings chapter 2, verse 1 through verse 11, and we'll read David's charge to Solomon and the description of his death. 1 Kings chapter 2, verse 1, and the narrator writes.

“Now the days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon his son, saying, ‘I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man. And keep the charge of the Lord, your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn; that the Lord may fulfill His word which He spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul,’ He said, ‘you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’”

Now, you may remember when we were looking at the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel chapter 7, that was one of the things that the Lord said to David. The covenant, itself, is an unconditional covenant and so, consequently, it will be fulfilled. But there was the one conditional aspect of it that as the descendants of David followed one after the other, those that were faithful would sit upon the throne and enjoy the Davidic throne, but those that were unfaithful would lose their throne. And that has been the history of the Davidic throne until, finally, one person came to sit upon the throne of David, was rejected by the people, and now is at the right hand of the throne of God, and as long as he is there, there is no throne of David and no kingdom.

But the time is coming when he shall return and then the one whose days run out into eternity, making it possible for this eternal covenant to come to pass, will return and the kingdom will be set up upon this earth, the kingdom of God among men. So when you read this, you can understand why it is that as the Old Testament continues, the successes of David sometimes lost out and, ultimately, lost the throne of David in exercise. Verse 5.

“Moreover, you know also what Joab the son of Zeruah did to me, and what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner and Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed. And he shed the blood of war in peacetime, and put the blood of war on his belt that was around his waist, and on his sandals that were on his feet. Therefore, do according to your wisdom, and do not let his gray hair go down to the grave in peace. But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table, for so they came to me when I fled from Absalom your brother. And see, you have with you Shimei, the son of Gera, a Benjamite from Bahurim, who cursed me with a malicious curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim. But he came down to meet me at the Jordan, and I swore to him by the Lord, saying, ‘I will not put you to death with the sword.’”

Now, I'd like to underline that and read it this way, “I will not put you to death with the sword.” And so he was given, in a sense, a reprieve from the judgment that he deserved, by David, for as long as David lived. Now, therefore, do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man and know what you ought to do to him; but bring his gray hair down to the grave with blood.” So David rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David. The period that David reigned over Israel was forty years; seven years he reigned in Hebron, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years.

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

[Prayer] Father, we approach Thee through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We thank Thee that through him, who has offered the atonement for our sins, we have the right to approach Thee and to know that Thou dost hear our petition and that Thou wilt accomplish our desires as they accord with Thy wonderful will. We thank Thee for the blessings that are ours as believing men and women. And we pray, Lord, that in the days in which we live our lives out upon this earth, we may be pleasing to Thee in the things that we say and do.

We thank Thee for this great man, David, and for the testimony that his life is, to the glorious grace of God, and to the sovereign majesty of our Lord God. We know that David, like all of the sons of the earth, was indwelt by the sin principle, and we were not shocked or surprised to see how, upon many occasions he fell, but we thank Thee that Thou didst maintain the faith within him and through him accomplish a great task in preparation for the coming of the greater son of David, who did no sin, in whom there was no sin, and who has made it possible for us to live forever by the blood that was shed in atonement on Calvary's cross.

We pray for the whole church of Jesus Christ today. We pray for Believers Chapel as a local body of believers and ask Thy blessing upon the elders, the deacons, the members, the friends, the visitors who are here today, and especially upon our young people. O God, undertake for them as they grow to maturity and keep them in their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And for those who may not yet believe, bring them to the knowledge of him, whom to know is life eternal.

We ask, Lord, for our country, for our President, for others associated with him in government and for other governments under whom we live, we pray for them. We pray for the sick, especially, and we commit them to Thee and ask, Lord, that Thou wilt minister to them, answer their petitions, and the petitions of their family and friends and accomplish the grace of God in their lives. We commit them all to Thee, those who have requested our prayers especially, O God, undertake for them to glorify Thy name.

Be with us today as we worship, as we sing together, as we hear the word of God, enable us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of him who has loved us, our Lord Jesus Christ.

In His Name we ask this, for his sake. Amen.

[Message] That was a very well-chosen hymn because that line or two has that expression, “When life’s fleeting days shall end.” Now, some of us know in experience what that means. Some of you don’t, but it’s something that if our Lord does not return, we all shall know.

The subject, as you can tell from the bulletin is, “The Final Days.” When you read history books, one thing you may notice about them is there are many of them that are simply books of earthly kings and of the reigns that they, themselves, served. And the affairs of the kingdoms are reduced, in effect, to the things that happened in the lives and in the history of certain important men.

Holy Scripture contains the history of the kingdom of God among men. And it is important for us to remember that its kings are simply part of the administration that God has determined should have part in his kingdom of God. Kings existed before the kings of Israel, according to Scripture. The kings of Edom, for example, are mentioned in Genesis chapter 36. But Israel’s king and Israel’s kingdom become the important kings in the word of God and through the remainder of the New Testament, we will have the ups and downs of some of them described for us, until our Lord comes, who is the ultimate king.

The Patriarchs pointed forward to the kings because God spoke to Abraham and said, “Kings shall come out of you.” The Prophets spoke of the kings. The Judges spoke of kings, ideally, led their people in their thinking up to kings. But even their kings when they did come, looked on to the ultimate king, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the eternal king. The Lord Jesus, himself, makes reference to that in Luke chapter 10, in verse 24, in words I’d like to read for you because you can see from this that he, himself, regarded the kings of the Old Testament as pointing forward to The King, and even says expressly that they knew of that fact.

In Luke 24, we read, “For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it; and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it.” And so, not only the Prophets, but the kings themselves who served within God’s administration, historically, of his kingdom, looked forward to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. They look forward to the ultimate king. The Kings of Edom, well, their honor is buried in oblivion. The honor from God, however, is a durable honor and the kings of the Old Testament; we may still read of them. The honor of the world,” Matthew Henry liked to say, “Was like a mushroom, which comes up in the night, and perishes also in the night.”

And so what we are talking about here is the ultimate honor that comes from God. David, the greatest of the only human kings, is in declining health. His days are fleeting.

He knows that his earthly life is nearing its end. He can tell by what happens to his body, as those of us who are old know and experience. We can see the inevitable signs of the deterioration. And David sees that, anticipates his ending with these final words for his son, Solomon.

I can remember when I was just a young man, asking my father about some of the friends that were friends of his and asking how they were doing. I had been living away from home for many years, would come back home usually at least once a year, maybe more, and we would talk about the people that were his friends when I was growing up, which were my friends, too. And I can remember him saying, later on in his life, “Well, he’s no longer alive.” And then I remember him making the statement that “The majority of my friends have gone on.” He lived to be 84 years of age and they began to drift off, from time to time, and finally when he reached his eighties, many of his friends were no longer living. And his friends were being reduced constantly.

Now, I understand by experience. My sister in Charleston writes me frequently and she will enclose clippings from the *Charleston News and Courier*, and recently I received, it was to me a shocking little clipping, of the death of a lady, really one of the finest ladies I think I’ve ever known, and left her mark on the city of Charleston, in many ways. But she and I sat next to each other in the Latin class at the College of Charleston, for two, three years, at least, constantly with one another. And I read of her death. Found out, also, she was actually a year younger than I, but in the same class. It took me a long time to go through school, of course. [Laughter] But it was really something of a shock to me and I worked in the yard last Saturday, not yesterday, the Saturday before that, I could not get her out of my mind, as thinking that she is no longer alive upon this earth. And I called my cousin in Charleston the other day, who is a manager of a brokerage firm in the city of Charleston, and he told me that he was taking his wife to Atlanta in order to see if he could do something for her disease, which has been going on for some years. So I understand David so perfectly.

The days are fleeting. He’s arrived at the time in which he’s going to have to leave this earth and so he wants to say some things to Solomon before he leaves. And the charges are given to us in the first nine verses. There is a personal one that is for Solomon. There is one that could be called a “public charge” or one that has to do with the public, ultimately. And then he brings before Solomon some particular individuals that he would like to say a word about. And so the section that begins with David, a dying man, ends with David a dead man. What is interesting about this, to me, is also that David is not reticent to admit his condition, “I go the way of all the earth.” And the way in which he puts it in the original text is something like, “I’m walking in the way of all the earth.” Death is a kind of way, a kind of road; or our life is a kind of road and death is part of that road. And so you can think of your life and I can think of my life as simply a journey down a road. And that road ends, as it does for all, in death. “I go the way of all the earth.” And, furthermore, we not only go the way of all the earth, but we go back to earth. And, ultimately, as David, himself, died, was buried, saw corruption; that which is in David’s tomb, today, if we could find the remains, would be dust or earth. There are some marvelous lessons in all of this for us, of course; things that we need to think about constantly, it seems to me.

So death is a way for us all, but for believers it’s all different. It’s a passage to a better life. Paul, himself, speaks of those who are living, you and me, as individuals who are perishing. The gospel is for those who are perishing. Not “will perish,” but are perishing. In other words, the sin principle dwells within us. That’s why we deteriorate. We don’t notice it for a long time. We look at all those young children so filled with life and health, but we fail to realize that once we begin to breath, we are on the way, not simply to maturity, but to maturity and death, finally.

So David, himself, speaks in Psalm 23 about the passage from this life to death and he does it in those magnificent words, characterizing that great psalm of the shepherd, in verse 4 of Psalm 23, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of

death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” So David is reaching the end of the valley of the shadow of death, upon through which he is walking and through which you and I are walking. How marvelous it is to have the Lord God with us; and to know that his rod and staff comfort us as we go along that path. For Christians, everything is different. For the prophets and for the kings, who are believers, things are different.

The apostle in 2 Timothy chapter 4 in verse 6 through verse 8, speaks in similar ways of his coming death. He says in 2 Timothy chapter 4 in verse 6 through verse 8, these magnificent words, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

Now, you may think that it’s a rather gruesome thing to talk about on Sunday morning; to talk about our approaching death. But our Lord and the apostles and the prophets felt it is very, very valid for us to do it, and something that we should pay careful attention to.

Now, he tells Solomon to be strong and, then, he says, “Prove yourself a man.” That’s the kind of spirit in which we are to live our lives. The good spirit! Be strong. Prove yourself a man. And that too is very important. That’s the way in which we should carry out our lives. And David, in his public address, recorded in 1 Chronicles, gives us much more detail about his particular charge to Solomon. In that particular chapter, he talks in a way that is a public address, gives a charge to Solomon, gives a thanksgiving, and also a lengthy prayer, and comes to a worthy conclusion at the end. But it’s shortened here, in 1 Kings, chapter 2.

Now, turning to the public charge, or ones that have to do with the public, in verses 3 and 4, he tells Solomon to, “Keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in

His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses.” Now, notice the two purposes, “That you may prosper in all that you do,” and verse 4, “That the Lord may fulfill His word which He spoke concerning me.” In other words, the good standard that he suggests for Solomon is the word of God. The divine will, as expressed in the word of God, is the thing that Solomon is called upon to keep. “Keep the word of God.” Keep those statutes. Keep those commandments. Keep His judgments. Keep His testimonies. And then, as if to sum it all up, “As it is written in the Law of Moses.”

Now, that is a lesson that we need today. Now, we may modify it. We live after the coming of our Lord. We live after the doing away of the Mosaic Law as a code, but not of the moral law, itself, as found in that code; because the apostles repeat the essence of it in the New Testament in their exhortations to us.

But, I'd like to speak a little more broadly and just speak of keeping the word of God; because we do live in a day in which the Christian Church, supposedly the place where the word of God should be honored and kept, the statutes, the commandments, the principles, the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, the law of Christ: all of those things should be kept. We're finding in the church of Christ an abandonment of rest upon the word of God.

Now, if you'll pardon me, some of you who were here last Sunday night, I'd like to say a few things that I said in the meeting of the Lord's Supper. B. B. Warfield, one of the greatest of the Christian theologians of the twentieth century, wrote these words. “What, indeed, would the church be? What would we, as Christian men, be, without our inspired Bible? Many of us have, no doubt, Jean Paul Richter's vision of a dead Christ, and have shuddered at his pictures of the world from which its Christ has been stolen away. It would be a theme worthy of some genius, to portray for us the vision of a dead Bible; the vision of what this world of ours would be, had there been no living word of

God, cast into its troubles waters, with its voice of power crying, “Peace. Be still.” What does this Christian world of ours not owe to the Bible?”

What we are seeing today in the Christian world, the professing Christian world, is a remarkable thing. We are seeing mainline Christian bodies that have departed from the truth of the sufficiency of the word of God. They have departed from faith in the word of God as we have it before us. And even some of their public figures have been asked in response to actions of these bodies, “Well, what do we do about Holy Scripture?” And they are on record as occasionally saying, “We do not pay a whole lot of attention to the Scriptures, in setting forth the principles by which we are to live our lives.”

Now, I won't go through some of the things that we've been talking about. We talked a good bit about the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, and the report that the committee brought back on human sexuality. I thank God that that committee's recommendations were rejected by the General Assembly. I'm thankful for that. But, I'd like to suggest to you that that does not settle the question because what do we do with men in authority, in high authority, sufficient to be appointed to such a committee and the vast majority of them in harmony. What do we do about such men and the bureaucracy who have so departed from the word of God? The Scriptures tell us that discipline is the proper response. And when denominations or bodies of professing people do not exercise discipline, the door is open for further difficulty within the denomination.

On Friday morning, we had a Presbyterian minister present in the meeting in which the children sang their hymns and I knew him from my days in Alabama, and attended his church in Alabama from time to time, although he lived way on the other side of Birmingham, but we would occasionally go over and I got to know him quite well. I went over to introduce myself again to him and to his wife that we had known for about fifty years. And as we were talking, the subject came up, and he just lifted his hands like this and said, “The organization is corrupt,” and how true that is in so many of our bodies.

Now, when it comes to the question of the word of God, well, the word of God does not have much place among them. And that is evident by the things that have been suggested for them. The Episcopalians are not without their difficulties, too. I'm reading from Time Magazine, a recent edition, in which we find these words. “At next months convention, an official commission chaired by Rhode Island's Bishop George Hunt, is proposing that the church endorse the view that homosexuality is a quote, “God given” unquote state, and that gay relationships are, quote “holy life giving and grace filled,” unquote. The panel wants the church to develop “blessing ceremonies” for same sex couples, and allow local bishops to ordain actively homosexual clergy.” Now, if you talk to such individuals and ask them, “How can you possibly do this in the light of what the Scriptures teach?” They would say, very frankly to you, “We do not follow what Scripture has to say about such matters.” So that raises the question of the sufficiency of the word of God.

I mentioned, also, to the people last Sunday night, what happened at Canberra, in Australia, at the meeting of the World Council of Churches. One of the speakers, there were two invited speakers, this individual was one of them, a Korean feminist theologian, she began her message by taking her shoes off, out of respect for the land of the Australian Aborigines, and called on the audience to do likewise. With a ritual dance, she appealed to the spirits of dead victims who had suffered injustice, such as Joann of Orleans or Orlean and the original population of the earth, who had become the victims in the days of colonialism and the era of the great Christian missionary movement. She praised the East Asian goddess of compassion and wisdom, who is supposed to remain on the earth out of love for all living creatures in order to enter Nirvana with them. She acknowledged this didn't come from her professional training in systematic theology, but out of “an inner feeling from the collective unconscious of my people.” Now, this is the World Council of Churches!

Back in Germany, similar things are happening. This is the first year that they have observed the *Kirchengemeinschaft* a celebration of the Evangelical Church of German; the Evangelical Church, being the Protestant Church, largely Lutheran. And in this year's *Kirchengemeinschaft*, which was held just about two or three weeks ago, one of the speakers was Frau Elga Zorga who left the church after being disciplined, confessing woman's church/witch religion. Now, I must say I am thoroughly in harmony with the church for having disciplined her, but the interesting thing is that she is a speaker in the *Kirchengemeinschaft* which is put on by the German Protestants. So, there are difficulties there, as well. I won't read further things, but what is really happening is, of course, a kind of reversion to Paganism. Oh, there is one thing I should mention, there is on Ascension Day in Wiesbaden, the capital of the German Land of Hesse, in an Ecumenical Benediction service for humans and animals, the Roman Catholic Dean, Karl Wilhelm Bruno, repudiated the whole idea that “man is the crown of creation.” At the service, which was given, dogs, cats and one rat, were dedicated by the participating clergy. That's carrying it a little too far, it seems to me.

According to Scottish Anglican, James Thompson, “There will be animals in heaven as, otherwise, he would prefer to, quote “go to the other place,” unquote.” That seems a rather extreme viewpoint, that if the animals are not there you would be willing to go to hell. The person who reported this is a Christian professor at one of the Christian institutions put a little parenthesis and said, “But can he count on animals being there?” [Laughter]

I mentioned, also, that two weeks ago, I was in Lincoln, Nebraska, in a large evangelical church of over two thousand people, and preaching there Sunday morning and then Sunday night. And in discussing things that had happened in the church, the leaders of the church, the business manager and two or three of the pastors, said to me that since the last time I was there that two things had happened which had reduced their size, noticeably. One of them was the fact that they had had lordship salvation difficulties

and a number of people had left over that issue. But then the second issue was the thing that interested me, particularly, because it bears on what we are talking about; that there had come a division in the church of some magnitude, again, over a hundred people, between a hundred and two hundred, I think, was the figure; left the church over the relationship of psychology to religion that there were a number of people in the church who were insisting on the absolute necessity or essentiality of psychology for Christian living.

Now, let me be as plain as I possibly can, so I'm not misunderstood. I don't deny at all that a Christian psychologist may say something useful and something helpful. That's not the point. The question is; the real point is, Is Christian psychology essential to Christian living? In other words, does a person have to engage in Christian psychology in order to effectively live a Christian life?

I think, if you would just think for a moment, because psychology is a recent discipline, that there were no such in the Old Testament days and yet Abraham and others lived lives that most of us would think were a bit better than ours. And then, in New Testament times, from the time of our Lord down to the last century, because that's about as early, well, maybe the eighteenth century, is the last place that we can put the origin of some form of psychology, Christian psychology? I don't know about that; whether that really belongs in any place but the twentieth century. But, at any rate, the point is that down through the centuries, if psychology is essential, we haven't had that which was essential to Christian living. We haven't had that which was absolutely necessary.

So it all raises the question of the sufficiency of Holy Scripture for salvation, Christian salvation, and Christian living. And, I think, if you look at David's words to Solomon, I think you know exactly where he would stand when he said, “Keep the charge of the Lord Your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper and that you may fulfill the word which God has spoken

concerning me.” I have no doubt in my mind that the word of God is sufficient for our problems. I don’t deny that a Christian psychologist, here or there, may say something helpful. But, let me tell you this, if he says something helpful, you can see it grounded in the word of God, ultimately. And there are many Christian psychologists who could be cited as authority for that statement, honest Christian psychologists and psychiatrists.

Now, we come to David’s particular charges that he gave with reference to Joab, to Barzillai and Shimei. And, here, on his deathbed, now, he wants to alter some past deficiencies and obligations which he, as a failing man, and as a man who did not do the will of God as perfectly as he would have desired, wanted to remedy. And the first that he wanted to talk about was the case of Joab. It was, surely, a blunder for David to let Joab live after he slew Abner and then when he compounded it by slaying Amasa; two outstanding Generals. But, nevertheless, David did nothing to him, and that, I think, to them, and that I think is what he meant when he says: “Moreover, you know also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me.” You remember, he expressed frustration over the sons of Zeruiah more than once in his lifetime.

Joab was obnoxious, to use a legal term. He was obnoxious to the law, having slain Abner and having slain Amasa, and in his relationship with David. He was a tool who had turned tyrant. And his influence over David was an influence that was, generally, evil. Perhaps, the matter of Uriah and the death of Uriah, his murder in cold blood, would never have happened if Joab had been punished ahead of time for his sins.

But, you know, there is something here that I’d like to say just a word about. I wish I could say more but I cannot say more for the sake of time. Do you notice that it was years before this, that Joab did these crimes? And the thing that strikes me about it is the thing that needs emphasis in our day, and that is, that time does not wear out guilt.

Now, we sometimes think that if we have done something that is wrong, that if there intervenes a sufficient time between the time that we have committed this deed, that guilt no longer exists. But that is not true.

Simon Weisenthal and others, who are still occupied in finding the Nazi criminals who spread all over the face of this globe, know that great principle. That is, that crime brings guilt, and guilt is endless because the crime is a crime against an eternal and infinite God in heaven. And so to speak of guilty for ten days or guilty for a month, is what one of the great Christian theologians said, “Hibernian.” It’s the kind of thing that you might have in the great professing church, but it’s not Holy Scripture. It has a bearing on the doctrine of eternal punishment because in our day we have vast numbers of people, even evangelicals, who deny eternal punishment. But endless punishment and, I think, that’s a better term perhaps than eternal punishment because eternal has more than one connotation. Endless punishment is grounded upon a great fact. And that is, endless guilt, unless it is paid for by our Lord Jesus Christ in his atoning sacrifice.

And so in the case of Joab, he was a guilty man, and David recognizes that fact and says, “Therefore do according to your wisdom, and do not let his gray hair go down to the grave in peace.”

I’m going to make just a statement; we don’t have time to discuss it. There are other ways to understand David’s words. He could be understood as, himself, sinning in demanding that Joab be slain at this point. And there are some favorable things that could be said with reference to that. But, just out of consideration of the particular things involved, I would rather think that David was trying to alter past deficiencies and obligations.

At any rate, he goes on to talk about Barzillai the Gileadite, who had been kind to him when he was driven out of the city of David when Absalom rebelled and sought to take the kingship. And he does not forget the kindness that was given to him, and expressed to him by Barzillai and his sons and he says, “Show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table, for so they came to me when I fled from Absalom your brother.”

Incidentally, it's not to my mind contrary to the word of God, at all, but in harmony with it, for us to remember this and to not let the kindness that others have shown to us be buried in our graves. And for those of you who have had kindness shown to you by other Christian friends, remember their children, as well.

These principles that are expressed by David, it seems to me, are thoroughly harmonious with Scriptures. And when Paul talks about the house of Onesiphorus, and reminds Timothy to show kindness to them, in effect, he's doing the same thing. They showed kindness to me and you, Timothy, who owe your soul to me, you show kindness to them, as well.

And Shimei, Alexander White calls Shimei, “A reptile of the royal house of Saul,” because he belonged to that particular house. He never liked David. He thought he should never have been king. And so, he has a word for Shimei, as well. He says, “You have with you Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite from Bahurim, who cursed me with a malicious curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim. But he came down to meet me at the Jordan, and I swore to him by the Lord, saying ‘I will not put you to death with the sword.’” David has kept his word. He has not put him to death; because Shimei should have been put to death. He had cursed the king. Moses speaks against that in the law and says, “That person should die.” But David has kept his word. And so, now, he turns him over to Solomon. He says, “Do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man and know what you ought to do to him; but bring his gray hair down to the grave with blood.” I can identify with that, too. [Laughter]

So now the death of David is described in some beautiful words. “So David rested with his fathers,” *ayish ba'av*, that term is a term that means, strictly speaking, “To lie down.” But Peter interprets it in Acts, chapter 2, as “slept with his fathers.” And the translators, generally now, have translated this, “David slept with his fathers.” And what a beautiful word that is for Christians. Do you know that the Greek term, *koimao*, in the New Testament, which means “to sleep” is a term that when it refers to death, refers only

to the death of believers. In other words, no unbeliever has the right to say, “I will sleep in death,” because you will not sleep in death in the sense that believers sleep in death. I don’t know of any better word than this term because think of a person who is sleeping. Think of me, for example, not in the future, but think of me yesterday, because I worked all day long in my backyard, cutting down a large Yaupon holly, and also a fairly good sized crepe myrtle. And, these old men who get out and do work like that should not do it. I reached the stage where I would work ten minutes and sit down for ten minutes. And work ten minutes and sit down for ten minutes. And, when I finally finished and took a shower and came in, boy, it was really wonderful to lie down on the bed and sleep. I had one thought, and then I was in dreamland.

But now, if you had looked at me, you might have said, “He looks so bad he might not arise,” [Laughter] but, there were three things that were true of me in my sleeping. First of all, I was resting. And I mean I was really resting. And then, secondly, if you’d come over and felt my pulse, you would say, “He’s alive.” And then, you would know that, normally, a person who lies down to sleep is going to arise. That’s true of believers in Christ. They sleep in their death; that is, they rest. They rest from their labors, as the word of God puts it. They are alive. They are in the presence of the Lord. And then, they will experience a resurrection. They will, not only in their life be living, but they will have a body like unto their Lord’s own glorious body. That’s what we talk about when we talk about the resurrection. We talk about the resurrection of the body. If we are not willing to talk about the resurrection of the body in Christian terms, we shouldn’t talk about resurrection at all, in Christian terms.

So David slept with his fathers, was buried in the City of David. His tumultuous life had come to an end and Peter, when he spoke his words on the Day of Pentecost, commented on the fact that David’s tomb was still with them. You may remember, in chapter 2, it’s about verse 29 or so, Peter made reference to that. “Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David that he is both dead and buried, and his

tomb is with us to this day.” But one thing that Peter didn’t say was that David was not dead, in the sense of the unbelievers, as David, himself, expresses it in his psalms. “You will show me the path of life in your presence is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” And when Peter made those words that he had died, he was buried, and his remains are here with us today, he didn’t say the most important thing and that was that David is at the right hand of the Lord God and, lo, enjoying the pleasures forevermore. And in the next psalm he says, “As for me, I will see your face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I wake in your likeness.” And David was experiencing the beginnings of that marvelous resurrection which awaits all of the saints who have gone home to be with the Lord.

I think the finest of the epitaphs for David is one spoken by Paul in his message to the synagogue in Antioch and Pisidian. Listen to what Paul says about David in Acts 13, verse 36. “For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption.” That, I think, is a marvelous statement of the apostle’s review of David’s life. He served his own generation by the will of God. He fell asleep. That’s the term for Christians. He is to have a resurrection. He was buried with his fathers. He saw corruption. Died and buried in the city that he had founded. And now, as he puts it, in another one of his statements in Psalm 16, “My flesh also shall rest in hope.”

Thomas Shepherd made a marvelous statement at one time, about death. I’m going to close my message with a reference to it. He once made this statement about death. I think I have it somewhere in my notes. “Death is the very best of all our Gospel ordinances; for in all his other ordinances, Christ comes on occasion to us. But in a believer’s death, Christ takes us to be forever with him.”

What a marvelous statement! In the experiences of life, our Lord does manifest himself to us many times in special ways. We know he’s constantly with us. But, on special occasions, he manifests himself to us. And we recognize that he is truly ours if we

have believed in him. But death is the time in which he takes us to be with him, and to be with him forever.

George Herbert wrote a stanza or two about this matter. And it's a rather bold kind of statement but you might expect George Herbert to do it. He said, “Death, thou wert an uncouth, hideous thing; nothing but bones. But since our Savior's death, did put some blood into thy face.” That's a marvelous statement, isn't it? “Our Savior's death put some blood into thy face, thou art grown fair and full of grace, much in request, much sought for, as a good.” That is, we look forward to death. We look forward to it with trepidation. We don't anticipate the suffering that may, sometimes, be ours; but we have a Christian's hope that our death is a passage into the presence of the Lord God.

David is a marvelous illustration of an individual who, in his death, thinks about the future for those who are left on the earth. But he, himself, rejoicing in what lies before him, goes to be with the Lord.

If you are here today and you have never believed in Christ, oh, what you're missing; to not know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and not have the comfort that comes from the assurance that, ultimately, our lives are in his hands; for a time and for eternity.

May God, in his marvelous grace, cause you to recognize yourself, to know your need of him, to know your sin, to know your guilt; it's endless, if it is not paid for in the blood of Calvary's Cross. And we pray, as do the elders of this church and the believers here, that you may recognize your lost condition and come to Christ and join the company of the saints, who look forward to the eternal days that lie ahead.

Let's stand for the Benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee for these magnificent chapters that have told us the life of this great man of God, King David. We pray that the positive lessons from his life may not leave us. And we pray that by Thy grace, we may be able

to avoid some of the pitfalls into which he and others have fallen. Deliver us, Lord. We thank Thee for the blood of Christ, which has wiped out our guilt, because we have sinned against Thee. And we thank Thee for the confidence we have, the hope that we have, that through our Lord Jesus Christ and the word of God, we have the sufficiency to meet all of our needs. Go with us as we leave.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.