



DAYBREAK

UNIT
4

Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 Kings



<input type="checkbox"/> Judges 1:1-36	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 9:1-27	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Samuel 17:1-29
<input type="checkbox"/> Judges 2:1-23	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 10:1 — 11:15	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Samuel 18:1-33
<input type="checkbox"/> Judges 3:1-31	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 12:1-25	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Samuel 19:1-43
<input type="checkbox"/> Judges 4:1-24	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 13:1-23	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Samuel 20:1-26
<input type="checkbox"/> Judges 5:1-31	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 14:1-52	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Samuel 21:1-22
<input type="checkbox"/> Judges 6:1-40	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 15:1-35	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Samuel 22:1-51
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<input type="checkbox"/> Judges 9:1-57	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 18:1-30	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Kings 1:1-53
<input type="checkbox"/> Judges 10:1-18	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 19:1-17	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Kings 2:1-46
<input type="checkbox"/> Judges 11:1-40	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 19:18 — 20:42	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Kings 3:1-28
<input type="checkbox"/> Judges 12:1-15	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 21:1 — 22:19	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Kings 4:1-34
<input type="checkbox"/> Judges 13:1-25	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 22:20 — 24:22	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Kings 5:1 — 6:38
<input type="checkbox"/> Judges 14:1 — 15:20	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 25:1-44	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Kings 7:1-51
<input type="checkbox"/> Judges 16:1-31	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 26:1 — 27:12	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Kings 8:1-66
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<input type="checkbox"/> Judges 18:1-31	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 29:1 — 31:13	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Kings 10:1-29
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<input type="checkbox"/> Judges 20:1-48	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Samuel 2:1-32	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Kings 12:1-33
<input type="checkbox"/> Judges 21:1-25	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Samuel 3:1 — 4:12	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Kings 13:1-34
<input type="checkbox"/> Ruth 1:1-22	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Samuel 5:1-25	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Kings 14:1-31
<input type="checkbox"/> Ruth 2:1-23	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Samuel 6:1-23	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Kings 15:1-34
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<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 7:1-17	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Samuel 15:1-37	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 8:1-22	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Samuel 16:1-23	

Daybreak is a personal Bible study continuum for the high school and adult levels. Scripture references are taken from the King James Version of the Bible. A companion series of Sunday school lessons, titled Discovery, is also available. All of the material is available on our website, as well as in printed form. The print version is designed to be stored in a binder; subsequent modules can then be easily inserted. Daybreak is an official publication of the Apostolic Faith Church. All rights are reserved.



Overview for Judges

Purpose: Judges is a historical book. Its purpose is to show how God preserved the nation He founded for the purpose of providing a Redeemer, in spite of that nation's idolatry and wickedness. If God had not intervened in miraculous ways many times, the nation would have been exterminated.

Author: Unknown, the Talmud names Samuel as the author

Date Written: Completed about 550 B.C.

Setting: The Book of Judges describes the period of Jewish history between the death of Joshua and the birth of Samuel. The office of "judge" was not continual because there were intervals when no judge ruled the land. In addition, there may have been times when two judges overlapped in different parts of the land. The term "judge" as used in the Bible is different than it is used today. A judge was deliverer and ruler rather than one who held court. As such, he presided over the affairs of at least part of Israel during his period of leadership. From Judges 2:18, we see that God raised up judges from among the children of Israel at His discretion. The period of events covered in this book has been considered the "dark ages" of the Hebrew people, because it shows the repetitive cycle of Israel turning away from God and then turning back to Him.

Key People: Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Jephthah, Samson, and Delilah.

Summary: After Joshua and his generation died, another generation arose who did not know the Lord and had not experienced the works which He had done for Israel (Judges 2:10).

God had promised that Abraham's descendants would become a great nation in the land of Canaan. They were to be a people ruled by God, carrying the promise that a redeemer for all humanity would be provided through them. Regrettably, they fell far short of becoming the great nation that God designed.

Seven times we read of the children of Israel doing evil in the sight of the Lord (Judges 2:11, 3:7, 3:12 twice, 4:1, 6:1, 10:6). Israel's poor moral choices

provided the foundation for their repeated experiences of defeat. Their failure to drive out the inhabitants of the land reveals their belief that they could co-exist with the wicked nations that God had commanded them to destroy.

The Book of Judges covers the approximate era of 300 years between 1400 and 1100 b.c. The events are not clustered around a single individual as in the case of the Book of Joshua and the four books of Moses. The book covers the settlement of Canaan as the tribes struggled to establish themselves against the inhabitants of the land. They were fragmented, dis-united, and constantly under attack.

A common refrain running through the book is that every man did that which was right in his own eyes. Israel was repeatedly falling away from God into idolatry. When they did this, in addition to warring amongst themselves, they were oppressed by the Canaanites, which caused them to cry out to God. God would raise up a deliverer, called a judge, whom He would use to miraculously save Israel. As long as the judge lived, the people would serve God. However, when he died, they again lapsed into idolatry. Often, a state of anarchy existed.

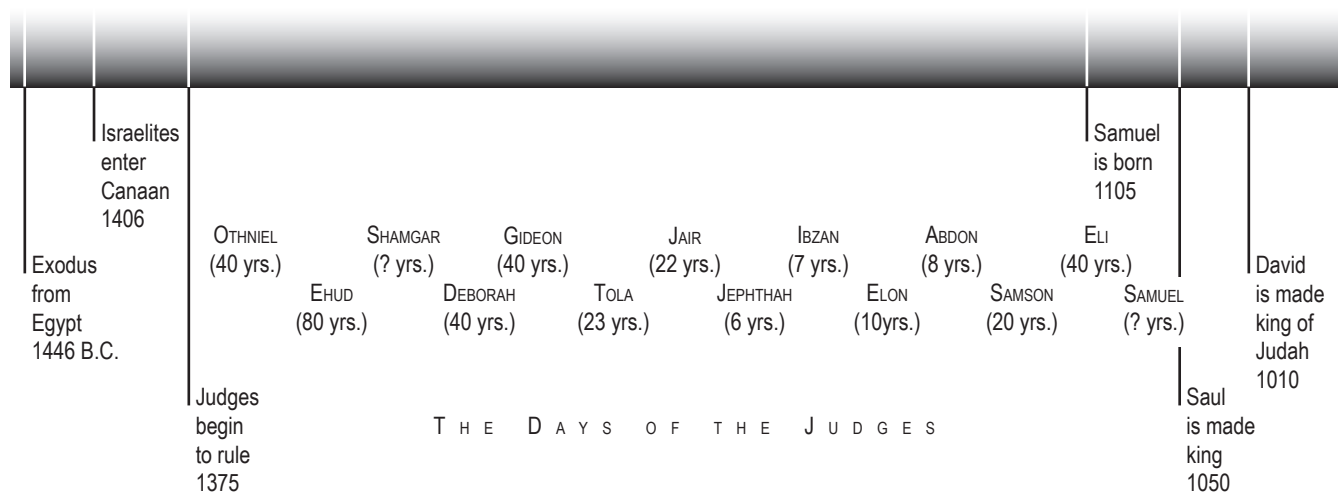
Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson are named in Hebrews 11:32 among the heroes of faith. In spite of any personal shortcomings or failures we observe in their lives, they had faith in God. The Book of Judges shows how God can take the most common among us and out of weakness create giants in the faith.

Even though this period was marked by a constant cycle of disobedience, there were still those who stayed true. The following is evidence of this fact:

- The Tabernacle was still maintained at Shiloh (18:31)
- At least one of the annual feasts was observed (21:5)
- The law of circumcision was observed (21:5)
- Sacrifices were offered (11:31; 13:15-16, 23; 20:26; 21:4)
- Vows were made to the Lord (11:30; 13:5)

Timeline

Many of these dates are approximate, as reference materials differ.



Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

- I. Conditions before the period of the judges (1:1 — 2:5)
 - A. Political conditions: incomplete conquest (1:1-36)
 - B. Religious conditions: broken covenant (2:1-5)
- II. Conditions during the period of the judges (2:6 — 16:31)
 - A. Introduction: the religious character of the period (2:6 — 3:6)
 - B. The judges of the period (3:7 — 8:32)
 - C. Parenthesis: the tyranny of Abimelech (8:33 — 16:31)
- III. Appendices (17:1 — 21:25)
 - A. Gross idolatry during the time of the judges (17:1 — 18:31)
 - B. Moral decline during the time of the judges (19:1 — 21:24)
 - C. Conclusion (21:25)



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?” (Judges 1:1)

The human family needs leadership. God designed us that way, and a righteous leader is a treasure. I have been blessed in my time in the Gospel to have wonderful servants of God as teachers, ministers, and pastors. They have given godly counsel in times of need, and encouragement in periods of trial.

Occasionally, because of circumstances such as military service, job requirements, or illness, we may find ourselves without a direct leader, as Israel did at this time. Even in such situations, God will direct us if we determine to obey Him.

One of our veteran ministers tells of how he heard about salvation during World War II when he was on the USS Enterprise. There was a Bible class on board that ship. None of the young men in that class had been “trained up” to be leaders in the Gospel, but they knew they were saved and were telling others about it. These men invited this young sailor to one of their meetings in the ship’s library. Although they had no special singers or official preacher, God sent conviction, and that night alone on the flight deck after their service, the sailor connected with God. He said those young men told him, “We know what happened to you—you got saved!” God was leading those young men, despite the lack of human leadership, and He will lead us also if we are willing to follow Him.

The Children of Israel had been blessed with excellent leaders: Moses and Joshua. Joshua had been the obvious successor to Moses. However, when Joshua died, he did not appoint a successor. God was supposed to be the ruler of the nation.

God wants to lead us too. If we are blessed to have godly leaders over us, we can be thankful and quick to heed their instructions and counsel. If our circumstances cause us to be without direct leadership, we can trust God to guide us one step at a time.

BACKGROUND

Chapter 1 immediately sets the tone for the Book of Judges. It starts on the right note, with the Children of Israel looking to God for direction after the death of Joshua. However, it declines from there.

The Israelites had been given the land, but had not yet possessed it all. They proceeded from the victories

of Judah, under God’s direction, to a series of limited victories where the Israelites partially possessed the land. In some instances, the previous inhabitants filtered back in, or remained living among the Israelites. The children of Israel had been clearly told to drive out the inhabitants of the land and to rid themselves of the idol worshipers (Numbers 33:51-55), but they did not do so. They then suffered the consequences of this pollution (Joshua 23:12-13).

All of the tribal groups that Israel was trying to conquer in the Promised Land were called Canaanites. Their city-states were self-governed and had to be independently overcome. For example, Adoni-bezek was the ruler of Bezek and had been a severe tyrant. When he was captured, his thumbs and big toes were cut off, making him ineffective militarily and humiliating him, just as he had previously done to others. Israel conquered the city of Jerusalem (verse 8), but did not actually occupy it (verse 21) or retain control of it until David’s time.

Iron-working skills gave some of the Canaanites superior weaponry suitable for flat ground. However, the Canaanites’ idolatrous religion was the most effective method of defeating Israel. Their religion was exceedingly wicked, yet it attracted the Israelites.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- I. Conditions before the period of the judges
 - A. Political conditions: incomplete conquest (1:1-36)
 - 1. Judah’s victories and failure (1:1-20)
 - 2. Benjamin’s failure (1:21)
 - 3. Ephraim’s and Manasseh’s victories and failures (1:22-29)
 - a. The victories (1:22-26)
 - b. Manasseh’s failure (1:27-28)
 - c. Ephraim’s failure (1:29)
 - 4. Zebulun’s failure (1:30)
 - 5. Asher’s failure (1:31-32)
 - 6. Naphtali’s failure (1:33)
 - 7. Dan’s retreat (1:34-36)

A CLOSER LOOK

- 1. Who did God say should fight against the Canaanites first?**

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[illegible]

We must seek God for direction and follow His instructions. At times our circumstances may seem daunting, but we must still follow the leadership that God gives us.

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?” (Judges 2:2)

My husband was a very wholehearted Christian as a young boy. He was not ashamed to tell people about Jesus and even went door-to-door to pass out invitations for special meetings at church. He loved the Lord with all his heart and his greatest happiness was to spend time with the people of God.

As my husband grew into his teenage years, he began to notice some of the worldly attractions around him from which he had been sheltered in his younger years. Unfortunately, about this same time his faithfulness in daily devotions began to wane. As his spiritual vision dimmed, the things of the world began to appear brighter.

Soon he started to get involved in some activities that had suggestions of immorality. As much as he tried to justify his actions, he knew down in his heart he was doing wrong. Suddenly, his attitude became defensive and argumentative and a big wall grew between him and his family, his Christian friends, and God. What had started as a seemingly small attention to a worldly activity became a divide that separated him from the Lord. Thankfully, not too much later, as a miserable young man, my husband repented and experienced anew the joys of salvation.

We live in a sinful world and many of us have to work among people who act, talk, and live in sinful ways. Billboards, the media, and modern life often offer temptations that could distract a Christian from his path. Yet, just as God allowed the heathen to remain in some proximity to Israel to test them, He allows us to be tested in the same way. He has told us that with the temptation, He will provide a way to escape or overcome it. As we overcome, we become stronger and more grounded in our faith.

Although temptations are ever present, God warned Israel not to make leagues with evil people, and He warns us to avoid temptations and to keep our eyes focused upon Him. We keep this focus by meeting with God daily in prayer, studying His Word, and meditating on His promises. One hymn writer, Helen Howarth Lemmel, put it this way: “Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face; And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of His glory and grace.”

BACKGROUND

The setting is Canaan, the Holy Land. The Israelites had won some victories but had failed to destroy all of the Canaanites, as God had commanded. This chapter begins with an Angel of the Lord coming up from Gilgal and reproving Israel for their ingratitude to God and for failing to drive out the Canaanites.

This chapter goes on to tell of the death of Joshua and how the generation that followed did evil in God’s sight and rejected Him in order to serve Baalim, Ashtaroth, and other false gods. Baalim or Baal and Ashtaroth or Astarte were worshipped in other countries under the names of Juno and Venus. These gods were very immoral and abominable and they defiled every city where they were worshipped.

The theme of the whole Book of Judges is contained in today’s chapter. God promised to bless Israel if the people would obey and honor Him, but He would turn against them and allow them to be taken over by oppressors if they turned aside from His way. It tells how the people served God for a time when they had a faithful leader, and then when that judge died, Israel fell back into sin until the oppressors would overtake them again. Then, because of the groanings and cries of the people, God would raise up another judge to deliver them. It was a cycle that occurred repeatedly.

The lesson we can learn from this text is that God does not condone sin. He has wonderful promises for those who obey Him and judgment for those who do not. At the end of the chapter, we see that God used the heathen nations that remained in Canaan to prove Israel, to see if they would be true to Him or if they would succumb to the evil ways of these nations.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- I. Conditions before the period of the judges
 - B. Religious conditions: broken covenant (2:1-5)
- II. Conditions during the period of the judges
 - A. Introduction: the religious character of the period
 1. The character of the era under Joshua and the elders (2:6-10)
 2. The character of the era under the judges
 - a. The idolatry (2:11-13)
 - b. The bondage (2:14-15)
 - c. The deliverance (2:16-18)
 - d. The repetition (2:19)

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CONCLUSION

Let us remember to keep our vision focused on God and not let the worldly things around us entice us. We will then enjoy all the blessings of God's wonderful covenant to us!

NOTES

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DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites: and they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and served Baalim and the groves.” (Judges 3:5-7)

The summer before the start of my third year of high school, I gave my life to the Lord during a camp meeting. Not having been raised to attend Sunday school or church, my theology was limited. Yet, I knew that the Lord had done something wonderful for me, and I wanted to guard it. I sensed that there would be temptations when I went back to school in a non-Christian environment. However, I wanted to remain faithful, and the Lord kept me throughout high school.

The next big challenge was college. I had heard of young people who had lost their faith when they went to college. Again, I was determined to remain true to the Lord, and again, He kept me throughout this challenge. It was the same thing when, shortly after college, I went into military service. The Lord can keep you anywhere that He allows you to be—if you truly want to be kept. But you must realize that you are in a battle, and you must be careful to sincerely stand true to the Lord.

At the time of our text today, the Children of Israel were living in close proximity to many ungodly people who had all sorts of evil practices and religions. Instead of remaining true to the Lord, and perhaps even leading a few individuals from this group into worship of the true God, the Israelites took the downward path. They intermingled in marriage with the heathen (an action expressly forbidden by God) and eventually embraced their false gods. Because the Israelites did not realize that they were in a spiritual battle, they lost their faith in God without even putting up a struggle.

All of us must make choices. Because I was aware that the temptations could creep up on me, I was careful not to attend functions where my faith might be compromised. By a conscious decision, the people I allowed myself to be closest to were those who would not tear down my beliefs. I did not go some places, and I did not associate with some people. Regardless of our age and situation in life (in school, on the job, in the home, retired), we are likely to be around some

people who do not know the Lord. God does not take us out of the world when He saves us, but He does promise to keep us unspotted from the world.

Not only do we need to remain free from the sins of the world, but also we need to be careful that we do not pick up the world’s views on various matters, such as a preoccupation with money and possessions, or of living primarily for pleasure and our own wants. God will help us to remain on an even keel and to be a positive witness for Him, if we pray diligently about this and remain focused on serving Him with all our heart.

BACKGROUND

The Book of Judges contains a series of episodes where, in response to the sins of the people, God allowed them to be overrun and oppressed by ungodly invaders. Eventually, when the people cried out to God, He raised up a deliverer from within their ranks. Under the leadership of this one, God would then overthrow the oppressor and give the people a period of peace. Unfortunately, each new generation had to learn the same lesson.

Israel had not driven out all the Canaanites, and as God had foretold, those people became a snare to them. However, God used those nations to test Israel, giving them an opportunity to choose whether or not to obey.

Othniel was the first of those raised up to deliver Israel, and he became Israel’s first judge. He was from a good family, being related to Caleb (who, in his advanced age, was still strong to fight for the Lord). Not only did Othniel fight valiantly to free Israel, but following this, he judged them faithfully for the Lord for many years. During this time, the land enjoyed peace and prosperity. Yet, once Othniel died, Israel fell away again spiritually.

The next deliverer was Ehud, who was the leader of the entourage taking tribute money to the King of Moab. Ehud undertook the risky business of slaying the wicked king with a dagger. Eglon’s summer parlor (verse 20) was probably a latticed room on the roof, where he rested on hot days. The servants likely thought their king was napping, therefore they waited outside. Meanwhile, Ehud escaped and then rallied the Israelites to rise up and overthrow the invaders, and peace prevailed for eighty years.

The end of this chapter contains a few words about Shamgar, who killed six hundred Philistines using an ox goad. An ox goad was a stick eight or ten feet long. It had a sharp tip, for prodding the animals, and a flat piece of metal that was used to clean

the plow. It is unknown whether Shamgar killed all six hundred men in the same battle, but whatever the case, he demonstrated true courage and trust in God, who used him to deliver Israel.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. Conditions during the period of the judges
 - A. Introduction: the religious character of the period
 - 2. The character of the era under the judges
 - e. The result
 - (2) The testing nations (3:1-6)
 - B. The judges of the period
 - 1. Othniel of Judah (3:7-11)
 - a. Israel's sin (3:7)
 - b. Israel's servitude to Chushan-rishathaim (3:8)
 - c. Israel's deliverance (3:9-10)
 - d. Israel's rest (3:11)
 - 2. Ehud of Benjamin (3:12-30)
 - a. Israel's sin (3:12)
 - b. Israel's servitude to Eglon (3:13-14)
 - c. Israel's deliverance (3:15-29)
 - (1) The murder of Eglon (3:15-25)
 - (2) The demise of Moabite power (3:26-29)
 - d. Israel's rest (3:30)
 - 3. Shamgar (3:31)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How close a relationship should a Christian have with an unbeliever? Why?

2. How many years did the Children of Israel serve Eglon, the king of Moab?

3. Can you think of a case where you did not handle a trial or temptation in the best possible way? What are some steps you can take the next time a similar situation comes up?

CONCLUSION

We can learn a lesson from the Children of Israel — we will be helped spiritually if we do not associate too closely with the ungodly. Let us be diligent to stand true for the Lord.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him.” (Judges 4:14)

During the Second World War in Europe, a father, carrying his young son, rushed from a building that had just been bombed. Ahead, in their front yard, was a shell hole. Amid the smoke, ash, and flying debris, the father set down his son and jumped into the hole, seeking shelter as quickly as possible. He held up his arms and shouted, “Jump, son! I’ll catch you.” But the boy, terrified, cried: “Father, I can’t see you!” Delay meant certain death, for planes were flying overhead. Against the red glow of the sky, the father could see the shadow of his son standing overhead, and he called again: “Jump, son, *for I can see you!*” The boy jumped and was saved from harm because of his implicit trust in his father.

The Christian life is a life of faith. We cannot always see where God is or where He wants us to go, but we can know the Father so well that no matter what He asks, we will obey without fear. Impossible circumstances, opposition, and physical limitations may cause us to pause and wonder how God is going to work, but if we take God at His word, as Barak did, we will see the hand of God work and taste the victory.

That Barak “went down from Mount Tabor” is significant because the Israelites, being infantrymen, had a physical advantage in the mountains; on the plains, the chariots had the advantage. Yet, Barak was so confident that God would bring them victory, that he rushed into the plain in the face of the deadly iron chariots.

How is your faith in God? Do you embrace His promises with such trust that you would, in a sense, “leap out where you cannot see,” or “rush into the face of the enemy”? Faith like that comes from an intimate relationship with the Father who can see what we cannot, and who can overthrow the fiercest of opponents. God honors faith like that.

BACKGROUND

Following the death of Ehud, Deborah was selected by God to save the nation of Israel after they had once again turned away from the Lord. Deborah was a faithful woman chosen by God to serve in the

offices of prophet and judge. She was the one who spoke for the Lord and conveyed God’s will to the Israelites in matters both civil and religious.

Jabin was most likely the generic name for a king in Hazor, much like the title “Pharaoh” in Egypt. This Jabin may have been a descendant of the Jabin defeated by Joshua some one hundred years earlier. Due to their carelessness and backsliding, the Israelites passively allowed the city of Hazor to be rebuilt and repopulated after its destruction by Joshua and the armies of Israel. Now God was using the Canaanites to oppress the Israelites and to cause them to return to Him.

Canaanite chariots were equipped with sharp iron blades on their axles, which would ordinarily have been terrifying to foot soldiers such as the Israelites. In addition, the horses’ hooves and bridles were also covered with sharp spikes. Frequently, two chariots would draw between them a log set aflame with pitch—a fearsome and destructive engine of war.

The armies of Sisera were slaughtered after the Lord sent a sudden storm and confusion upon them (5:20-21). All the men were slain except Sisera, who fled away on foot and found what he hoped to be a safe hiding place in the tent of a sympathetic party. The Kenites, a nomadic tribe which dwelt in the southern region of Judah, were relatives of Moses and friends of the Israelites, but politically neutral. Jael, evidently, did not share her husband’s sympathies with Jabin.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. Conditions during the period of the judges
 - B. The judges of the period
 - 4. Deborah and Barak
 - a. Israel’s sin (4:1)
 - b. Israel’s servitude to Jabin (4:2-3)
 - c. Israel’s deliverance (4:4-24)
 - (1) The preparations for battle (4:4-11)
 - (2) The defeat of Sisera’s army (4:12-16)
 - (3) The death of Sisera (4:17-22)
 - (4) The demise of Jabin (4:23-24)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. When Deborah told Barak that God had promised to give him victory in battle, how did he respond?

[illegible]

God honors faith where we would, in a sense, “leap out where we cannot see,” or “rush into the face of the enemy.” Faith like that comes from having an intimate relationship with the Father who can see what we cannot, and who can overthrow the fiercest of opponents. How is your faith in God?

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DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“My heart is toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless ye the LORD.” (Judges 5:9)

Challenge yourself! How many people can you think of who have “offered themselves willingly” in the Lord’s service? Having been blessed with a rich heritage in the Gospel, many examples come to my mind.

There was a man whose responsibilities regularly caused him to be one of the last people to leave the church after the services. As his wife sat patiently, she often said, “I used to wait for him while he was at the tavern. I’d much rather wait for him at the church!” Both of them were giving of themselves.

A man did without what many of us would consider necessities because he wanted to give as much as he could to help build churches in other countries. Only the Lord knows how many others like him have offered themselves in the same way.

A missionary and his wife left their grandchildren so they could spread the Gospel in another land. Before the time of digital cameras and email, they missed many of their grandchildren’s “big events”—first words, first steps, school awards, and Sunday school specials. However, they were connected to God in prayer, naming each child and grandchild daily in His presence. What a willing offering!

Look around you and you will see many who give of themselves willingly. The church janitor who checks the building after every function and service, gives of himself. The man who comes after work to vacuum the sanctuary carpet, the women who make food for grieving families, the Sunday school teachers who encourage their students by visiting their homes, the mother who drives miles out of her way to pick up a family for Sunday school, and the list goes on.

It is much easier to focus on what we can *get* than on what we can *give*. Today’s chapter contains condemnation for those who were lax, lazy, or just consumed with self-interest. Some have caught a vision of the rewards found in making a willing offering of themselves to God. We can learn a lesson from them. We may not feel qualified or that we have something “big” to give. However, God can use even small efforts and acts of kindness if we offer them to Him. Deborah gave leadership and encouragement, Barak gave by following directions, and Jael gave by being brave and resourceful. We can give too. Will we?

BACKGROUND

In the previous chapter, the Children of Israel had experienced another miraculous deliverance from an overwhelmingly superior foe. For twenty years they had been “mightily” oppressed by Jabin, king of Canaan.

Many commentaries entitle this fifth chapter of the Book of Judges, “Deborah and Barak’s Song of Thanksgiving,” and rightly so. The title is appropriate because they did give thanks—they had the right formula for continued success when following God. Putting the story of this victory into song helped preserve it for future generations. Written in poetic form, the excitement of the triumph can be felt.

This song they sang contains other items in addition to praise to God. Verse 6 indicates that the highways were not safe. Verse 8 shows that Israel had almost no weaponry. There was a call to a continued leadership and the accepting of responsibility (verses 12-13). Also, there was commendation for those who answered the call written of in the previous chapter, and condemnation and even a curse to those who, for whatever reasons, failed to answer the call to battle. The worst rebuke was for the inhabitants of Meroz, which were part of Barak’s own tribe.

Verse 21 sheds more light on how the victory was accomplished. The Israelites fought the Canaanites near Megiddo. Although it was the dry season, God sent rain that made the Kishon River a torrent. There was so much water that the Canaanites had to leave their chariots.

The song clearly indicates that Jael made Sisera think he was safe when he was not, and Jael is praised as a heroine. The phrase “smote off his head” means that Jael crushed his head. At the end of the song, the authors surmised how Sisera’s mother mourned. The Canaanites had expected the Israelite women to be the ones who mourned, but God had turned the situation around.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. Conditions during the period of the judges
 - B. The judges of the period
 - 4. Deborah and Barak
 - d. Israel’s victory song by Deborah (5:1-31)
 - (1) The praise for Jehovah’s deliverance (5:1-5)
 - (2) The condition of the people in bondage (5:6-11)

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CONCLUSION

The call to duty for the Lord should be first and foremost in our lives at all times. If we make a willing offering to do what He wants us to do, God will give us victory no matter what our situation is.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And he said unto him, Oh my LORD, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.” (Judges 6:15)

Gideon felt very insignificant. The least from a poor family, Gideon saw himself as a frightened man hiding from the enemy. However, God looked on his heart and saw a “mighty man of valor,” one He could use to deliver His people from their enemies.

In circumstances not unlike those of Gideon, there was a boy growing up in a poor family on a farm in Tennessee. His life was simple—hard work was the main activity, and he labored in the fields from sunrise to sundown. He joined the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, and found himself living in a camp in Merrill, Oregon. A group of people from the Apostolic Faith Church in Klamath Falls went to the CCC camp and held church services in the main hall. In July of 1938, they invited some of the young men to go with them to a camp meeting-convention in Portland, Oregon. This young man accepted their offer to go, but he was only able to be there one day. At the conclusion of both the morning and afternoon services, he prayed earnestly for an experience of salvation, but it seemed to be of no avail. With the evening service being his final meeting, he felt it was his last chance to find forgiveness from the Lord. In desperation, he finally grasped the needed faith. God accepted his prayer of repentance, and God’s Spirit witnessed to his spirit that he was truly born again.

This young man, Loyce Carver, thought that he would never be in Portland again, and certainly no one there that night ever imagined what the future held for him. But God took the young man from Tennessee and molded him into a leader. Several years later, although he had no confidence in his own ability, and the very thought of such an appointment made him physically ill, by God’s grace he accepted the position of General Overseer of the Apostolic Faith Church. He served God faithfully in that role for many years, and he was a stalwart veteran in the Gospel until the Lord took him to his heavenly reward.

God has a wonderful plan for the life of each of His children. Although we may feel weak and insignificant, He can give us the power and strength to fulfill His will. When we yield ourselves completely to God, we do not know just where He will lead us or how He will use us. However, we can be sure that His plans

are perfect and that following Him will bring true joy and abundant blessing.

BACKGROUND

Because of their disobedience, God caused Israel to fall into the hand of the Midianites. The Midianites were descendants of Abraham and his second wife, Keturah. They were often in conflict with Israel. In our text today, every time the Children of Israel were ready to harvest their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites, and other desert tribes would come and destroy their food. This had been going on for seven years, and the Israelites were desperate. God heard their cries, and He sent an angel to Gideon while he was secretly threshing wheat to hide it from the Midianites.

God told Gideon He had chosen him to deliver Israel, even though Gideon felt he was totally inadequate for the job. Gideon had heard about the miracles that God had performed for the Children of Israel, but he had not personally witnessed any during his lifetime. God was willing to work with Gideon to build his faith and confidence so that he could move forward and accomplish the task God had chosen for him. Gideon needed a sign for reassurance, so the angel patiently waited while Gideon prepared a sacrifice of unleavened cakes and meat. After the angel consumed the sacrifice with fire, Gideon was reassured that God would be with him.

Because Baal was considered the god of fruitfulness who controlled the harvest and food was so scarce, Gideon had to face the wrath of his own people when God told him to tear down the altar of Baal. Any attack on a Canaanite god was considered an attack on the community itself; it would bring serious consequences. Gideon destroyed the altar and grove at night because he feared retribution from the people. Yet, God showed Gideon how He would take care of him by causing his father, Joash, to stand up for him, and to convince the people to let Baal defend himself.

According to verse 33, the armies of Midian and Amalek gathered together in the valley of Jezreel. Because of the valley’s immense resources, many trade routes passed through that area. It was a common site for many battles during that time. Gideon sent messengers throughout Israel to gather his army together to face the enemy.

We often hear the phrase, “to put out a fleece,” as a method of determining God’s will. However, the fleece that Gideon put out was not to determine the will of God, but rather to reaffirm what God had already asked him to do.

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B. The judges of the period

a. Israel's sin (6:1)

c. Israel's deliverance

(2) The summons of the deliverer
(6:11-32)

(b) The worship by Gideon
(6:19-24)

(3) The conflict for deliverance

(b) The assurance of victory
(6:36-40)

1. Why were the Children of Israel so desperate for deliverance?

[illegible]

Like Gideon, we may face a time when God asks us to do something that we feel we are totally inadequate to accomplish. Just as the Lord gave Gideon the reassurance and help he needed to defeat the enemy, God will also give us whatever we need to accomplish His will in our lives.

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.” (Judges 7:15)

The paint was cracked and peeling, falling off with just a touch of my fingers; it was clear that I would have to paint the house this year. I asked my wife to select the colors, and I bought the paint, brushes, and all the necessary tools to prepare the surfaces. Then I took a week of vacation from my job, and started patching, nailing, scraping, and sanding.

By the middle of the second day, I was having trouble doing any work if my arms had to be higher than my shoulders. Though I felt that I did not have the physical strength to do the job, somehow I was able to finish by the end of the week. However, the experience made me realize that I was weak and needed to try to strengthen myself.

Soon a fitness center opened in a building next to the one I worked in, and I was able to join without a fee. Once I was exercising two or three times a week on my lunch hour, I began to feel better and had the strength to do both my job and the work around the house more effectively. The exercise was having its desired results.

Faith is also strengthened by exercise. Gideon is a name that invokes a vision of great faith and courage against overwhelming odds, but he did not start out that way. When God first called him, he questioned God’s power and provision for Israel. However, God kept working with Gideon until he was not afraid to attack an army of 135,000 with only three hundred men. Gideon’s faith was greatly strengthened when he heard the enemy soldier’s dream. As noted in the focus verse, he was ready then to tell his troops that God had given them the victory.

When we obey God in the small things, He will increase our spiritual strength for the days ahead, and like Gideon’s, our faith will increase and God will help us live victoriously for Him.

BACKGROUND

Since the death of the elders who had known Joshua, the Children of Israel had gone through several cycles of backsliding, defeat, oppression by their enemies, crying to the Lord for deliverance, and

being led to victory by a leader raised up by the Lord. At the low point of one cycle, God called Gideon.

In today’s text, Gideon had an army of 32,000 men, and they were camped by “the well of Harod,” which means “trembling.” Then God began the reducing process. The 22,000 men who were afraid, were told to leave. Fear is contagious, and Moses had instructed years before that the fearful should go home (Deuteronomy 20:8). God instituted a test for the remaining men. The men themselves probably did not know they were being tested. No doubt, they went by groups to drink, and Gideon was able to accomplish the sorting one group at a time. The final count of Gideon’s army was three hundred men.

The Israelites were camped about four miles from the Midianites, and God sent Gideon another encouragement. Barley was considered inferior, because it was about half the cost of wheat. Israel’s small band of men was much less than the Midian army, so the enemy’s dream seemed to infer that Gideon’s army was inferior. Yet, it also told who would win the victory! Notice that when he heard this, Gideon took time to worship (verse 15).

In these lands in ancient times, battles were most often fought during the day rather than at night. If armies did fight at night, just a few men had torches to give light, and only some of them carried trumpets. Gideon gave each of the three hundred men a ram’s horn, a torch, and an open-topped pitcher to conceal the torch. He divided his men in thirds and surrounded the enemy camp.

The “beginning of the middle watch” was likely around midnight (see “Watches of the Night” on the next page). When Israel’s three hundred men blew their trumpets and broke their pitchers, to the just-awakened enemy it looked and sounded as if a great army was upon them. They began to kill one another, and then the remaining men began to flee. Gideon rallied more troops to pursue. God gave Israel a great victory, and they knew all the credit belonged to Him.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. Conditions during the period of the judges
 - B. The judges of the period
 - 5. Gideon
 - c. Israel’s deliverance
 - (3) The conflict for deliverance
 - (c) The army reduced (7:1-8)
 - (d) The dream of the Midianite (7:9-14)

- (e) The defeat of the Midianites
 - [1] The strategy (7:15-18)
 - [2] The confusion (7:19-23)
 - [3] The scattering (7:24-25)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. God reduced Gideon's army first by sixty-nine percent, then the remaining by ninety-seven percent. What reason did God give for reducing Israel's forces so drastically?

2. After Gideon had put out a fleece and had been answered, God arranged a special encouragement for him before he was to attack. Why do you think God did this?

3. What should our attitudes be when God gives solutions to situations that seem impossible?

CONCLUSION

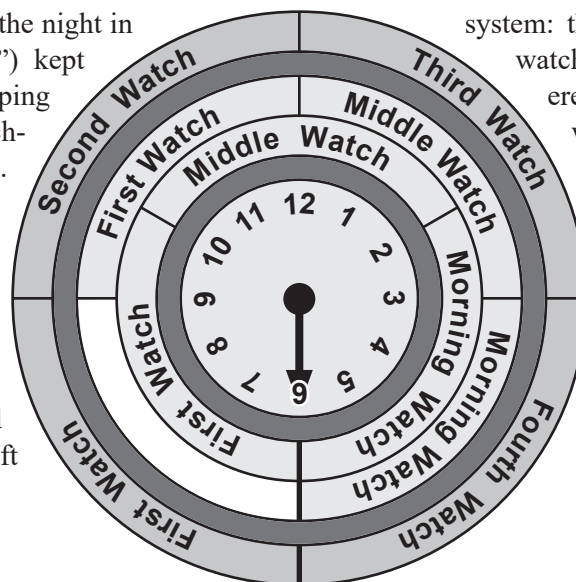
God desires to work with us and increase our trust in Him. As He did for Gideon, God gives us wonderful victories as we obey Him!

NOTES

WATCHES OF THE NIGHT

A "watch" was a division of the night in which soldiers ("watchmen") kept guard and warned their sleeping fellow soldiers of an approaching enemy. The Romans (i.e. the New Testament) used four three-hour shifts (first through fourth watches), beginning at 6:00 p.m. and ending at 6:00 a.m. (For example see Matthew 14:25.) The Hebrews (i.e. the Old Testament) used a three-shift

● **Romans /
New Testament**



system: the first, middle, and morning watches. They may have also covered the twelve-hour night, but with three four-hour shifts. Many scholars, however, believe the Hebrew watchmen began the night watch at 9:00 p.m. and covered the Roman equivalent of the second, third, and fourth watches, leaving out the first as most of the soldiers would still be awake.

● **Hebrews /
Old Testament**



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply.” (Judges 8:1)

When our daughter was quite young, she was extremely sensitive to raised voices. If we instructed her verbally with any increase in volume beyond a normal conversational tone, she would say quietly, “Please don’t yell at me!” While it would have been a stretch to call our tones yelling, her reaction was a reminder to be careful about speaking “sharply.”

How easy it is to inadvertently speak angry, hurtful, or negative words! Yet, once spoken, those words are like feathers in the wind. Most of us have heard the old adage from when feather pillows were common: slit a feather pillow outside, shake it in the wind, and then try to pick up all the feathers. It is impossible! It is just as impossible to take back our words.

The tribe of Ephraim scolded Gideon for not calling them to go and fight the Midianites. Rather than responding harshly, Gideon soothed them by pointing to the portion of the victory that God had given to them. Gideon’s words were much more uplifting than those of the men of Ephraim.

What kind of words do we speak? Are they encouraging and edifying? It could be quite a valuable exercise to review our conversations and comments during the last week. Maybe we can look back and remember how someone said something to us that renewed our strength and courage. Have we extended the same courtesy to someone else? Perhaps a person spoke sharply to us, and our spirits were grieved. Have we used this as an excuse to talk carelessly and hurt another person?

Each one of us needs God’s strength and grace in order to talk as we should. Each day we want to ask His help with our words so that what we say is beneficial to others and brings glory to Him. The Bible indicates that a person who controls his words can control his whole body. Most of us know by experience that this can be a big challenge, but God is more than able to help us if we let Him!

BACKGROUND

The people of the tribe of Ephraim were desirous of sharing in a victory they had done very little to accomplish. They reproved Gideon, asking why he had not called them sooner into battle with the Midianites.

Ephraim was a large tribe and therefore important. They were offended and perhaps jealous of the victory that had been won. Maybe they were upset that they did not receive part of the spoils because they had not participated in the actual battle.

When Gideon and his men were tired and hungry, they asked bread of the men of Succoth and also of Penuel, but were refused. Both of these groups of people were Israelites from the tribe of Gad. They refused, perhaps out of fear that Gideon would not win the battle. Their attitude was an illustration of the lack of unity that prevailed among the Israelites. Without central leadership, various groups ruled themselves. Not only did they refuse to help, but they refused rudely.

Gideon warned those selfish people that they would be punished for their response. He severely disciplined the seventy-seven leaders of Succoth with thorny branches, and slew some of the men of Penuel.

The two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, had killed Gideon’s brothers. According to the law, it was the responsibility of family members to avenge the murder of their relatives (Numbers 35). These kings hoped that flattering Gideon would help their situation, but it did not. Gideon instructed his son to accomplish the execution, since being killed by a boy would have been extremely humiliating for Zebah and Zalmunna. The boy was not mature enough, and the kings challenged Gideon (perhaps somewhat sarcastically) to perform the deed himself.

When Gideon and his men returned to Canaan, the Children of Israel wanted to make him their king. This was Israel’s first request for a king. Gideon refused, and told Israel, “The LORD shall rule over you.”

However, Gideon did request a gift, and he received between forty and seventy pounds of gold. An ephod was either a part of the priest’s apparel (Exodus 28:6) or an image, so it is impossible to know exactly what is meant by the use of the word in this text. Although Gideon’s intentions are unclear, the ephod became an object of idolatrous worship and a snare to Gideon and Israel.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. Conditions during the period of the judges
 - B. The judges of the period
 - 5. Gideon
 - c. Israel’s deliverance
 - (3) The conflict for deliverance
 - (e) The defeat of the Midianites

- [4] The jealousy of Ephraim (8:1-3)
- [5] The search for the Midian kings (8:4-21)
 - [a] The refusal of Succoth and Penue! (8:4-9)
 - [b] The capture of the kings (8:10-12)
 - [c] The punishment of Succoth and Penue! (8:13-18)
 - [d] The death of the Midian kings (8:19-21)
- Gideon's failure (8:22-27)
- Rest (8:28)
- Death (8:29-32)
- Tyranny of Abimelech (8:33-35)

A CLOSER LOOK

- ### 1. What was the sin of the men of Succoth and Penuel?

- 2.** Where did Gideon go wrong in making the ephod?

- 3. How can you encourage someone verbally? Think of someone you could encourage today with kind words. Then challenge yourself to follow through and say them.**

CONCLUSION

What type of words will we speak today? May God help us to say words that will encourage others and glorify Him!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.” (Judges 9:14-15)

Recently we needed some screening between our property and the neighbors, so we installed several trellises and planted some vines. We hoped those vines would grow up quickly. After we had them planted, someone told us, “We have some vines in our yard that grow almost overnight!” The “vine” they referred to is called “morning glory.” It will grow wildly almost anywhere, covering anything in its path, and it is a big challenge to get rid of it once it has started. It reminds me of the brambles in today’s text.

In this chapter, Jotham, Abimelech’s half brother, was telling the people of Shechem a parable. He said that while all the good and valuable trees refused to reign over the other trees, the bramble was more than willing. Yet, it offered a false security. In fact, it would quickly take over, and would eventually kill the other trees. Jotham used this analogy to show the people that they would be foolish to trust Abimelech; he would take over quickly, but hurt them in the end.

Sometimes it may seem to us that the evil in the world today is like the morning glory or the bramble—it grows overnight and covers and kills anything in its path. Oh, that good and righteousness would spread just as quickly!

However, the truths of the Gospel and the godly attributes that we desire in our hearts may be more like the slower-growing trees and vines. They become rooted in our souls as we weather the storms of life and apply God’s Word to life’s challenges. Often, God shows us an area where we can improve or learn a little lesson. Then He gives us opportunity to practice that lesson and really have it rooted in our lives.

Most of us do not want morning glory or brambles in our yards. In the same way, we do not want the fast-growing evils of the world in our hearts. They will offer no protection in eternity. God’s truths, on the other hand, offer the best protection and will take us to Heaven some day.

BACKGROUND

Abimelech was the son of Gideon (also known as Jerubbaal) and a concubine (Judges 6:32). Abimelech

had seventy half brothers, and he killed them all except one—Jotham. It was customary in the ancient East for concubines to live with their own families where they were visited by their husbands occasionally. Therefore, Abimelech may have been closer to the people of Shechem than to his half brothers.

Shechem was a significant place in the history of the Children of Israel for several reasons:

- It had been one of Abraham’s first stops when he entered Canaan.
- Two of Jacob’s sons murdered all the men of Shechem after their prince raped Jacob’s only daughter.
- The bones of Joseph were brought from Egypt and buried in Shechem.
- There, not long before Joshua’s death, Israel restated their purpose to follow God.

The area of Shechem contained the trees and vegetation that Jotham referenced in his parable, which some Bible commentators call “The Parable of the Trees.” There were many olive trees, which produced valuable oil. Fig trees and vineyards also bore fruit plentifully there. Brambles were thorn bushes that were worthless and a hazard because fires started in them when they became dry in the summer. Jotham’s point was that Abimelech offered no security and actually was a threat to the well-being of the people of Shechem. Abimelech and those who followed him eventually destroyed each other.

Verse 22 notes, “Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel.” He did not reign over the whole country, but only over a small area.

At times, while defending a city, the women were asked to come to the wall and drop heavy objects over it onto the invading soldiers at the base of the wall. Abimelech was hit with a piece of a millstone in just such a case. Grain was ground between two millstones. Lower millstones weighed up to several hundred pounds and measured about two feet in diameter. Women could handle upper millstones, which were smaller and thus more movable.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. Conditions during the period of the judges
 - C. Parenthesis: the tyranny of Abimelech
 2. Shechem’s submission to Abimelech (9:1-57)
 - a. Abimelech’s treachery to become king (9:1-6)
 - b. Jotham’s speech (9:7-21)
 - (1) The parable (9:7-15)

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DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim.” (Judges 10:10)

As a child, I loved to go to our boysenberry patch and feast on the berries. My mom had said I could only go there when she went with me. I also had to wear shoes, which was very hard for me to do in the summer. In spite of her instructions, I would often sneak out shoeless and reach over from the grass beside the patch to pick the berries, figuring that if I were careful, I would not get caught. Though at first my conscience bothered me, after I had done it for a while, I did not feel guilty anymore about disobeying.

One day my misdeeds caught up with me. I slipped out, again barefooted, and decided to venture into the middle of the patch where the berries were the biggest. As I started down the overgrown rows, I spotted a large clump of fruit on the bottom of a bush. I bent over to grab the berries, and as I came up, my long hair caught in the briars, and I couldn't get loose. As I moved my foot forward trying to get untangled, I stepped on a bee, which promptly stung me! Effectively trapped in the briars, I started to yell for help, but no one came. I kept screaming, but still no help appeared. Within moments, I was desperate. I didn't care if I got punished, I wanted out of there! I was definitely sorry for disobeying. Finally, my mom heard me and came to my rescue.

The Children of Israel also had a problem with obedience. They had disregarded the commandment of the Lord and had begun to worship Baalim and other gods of the nations round about them. God was angry at the way the Israelites were living. He had delivered them from bondage in Egypt and had done many wonderful miracles for them, yet they had still chosen to worship false gods instead of Him. Because of this, God punished them through crushing defeats by the Philistines and Ammonites. The Israelites had been “stung” by the results of their sin and disobedience. After much oppression and strife, the Children of Israel finally cried out to God. At first, He told them to go and cry for deliverance to the gods that they had chosen instead of Him. In distress, they cried out to God in total repentance and put away the gods of Baalim. God delivered them.

This chapter teaches two important lessons. First, because God is just and will punish sin, disobedience

brings pain and suffering. We may get away with sin for a time, but it will catch up with us! Secondly, if we cry out to God in repentance, He will forgive us. Even though the Children of Israel greatly grieved the Lord by what they had done, when they were truly repentant, He delivered them from their oppressors.

Let us determine to live in obedience to God, rather than going our own way and inevitably suffering the consequences of disobedience!

BACKGROUND

The Israelite trend at this time was the total abandonment of the worship of Jehovah in favor of the gods of other nations. Baal gods were an extensive family of Canaanite gods. They were gods of nature, who supposedly brought rain, and fertility for crops, cattle, and people. The main figure of this religion was Baal, the son of El, the god of storm and rain. The name Baal can also mean “husband” or “Lord,” which made him sound somewhat similar to Israel's God. Perhaps that contributed to Israel's temptation to experiment with paganism. The attempts of Baal's worshippers to please him ranged from gross moral indecency to child sacrifice. The degradation and cruelty of this religion was a major reason for the judgments of God toward Israel as seen in Judges 10:7-9.

The power of the Ammonite nation was at its peak during the time of the judges' leadership of Israel. The land lay just east of the Jordan River across from Jerusalem. The land of Moab lay south of Ammon, and these two countries were usually allies. Together, they were a formidable foe that would be difficult to defeat.

God's response to Israel's initial plea for help indicates the seriousness of their idolatry and apostasy. He did not want His children to become permanent pagans; the implication of His statement in verse 14 was to point out that a god who cannot deliver is not worthy of worship. The response of the Israelites shows genuine repentance on their part. They acknowledged that they had sinned; furthermore, they “put away the strange gods . . . and served the LORD.” True repentance is more than just words; it will result in a definite change of action.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. Conditions during the period of the judges
 - C. Parenthesis: the tyranny of Abimelech
 - 3. Tola (10:1-2)
 - 4. Jair (10:3-5)
 - 5. Jephthah

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DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD’s, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.” (Judges 11:30-31)

It is always touching when a brother in our congregation tells of the time when he made a promise to God. He had been raised in a Christian home and went to church every Sunday, but when he became a man, he got away from this Christian environment. One cold winter’s day he was driving a pickup truck over the ice on Ten Mile Pond. Suddenly, his truck broke through the ice and slowly began sinking. He was alone and trapped inside. As the chilly waters slowly raised, his body began submerging and the perspiration ran down his face, he cried out to God to send someone to rescue him. He promised that if God would spare his life, he would go back to church and give his heart and life to Him. God heard that prayer and sent men to rescue him. The brother kept his word. Close to fifty years have gone by since his rescue, but he is still serving the Lord and excited about God’s mercy and his privilege to be in church every Sunday.

Sometimes extreme circumstances cause people to make promises or vows to God. We need to be careful, even in stressful situations, that we do not make rash or foolish vows. Jephthah is an example of this. Chosen by the Israelites to lead them against the Ammonites, he knew that victory would require a power greater than his own. When he saw that war was inevitable, he made a vow unto the Lord. He had been called to a place of responsibility and wanted to see success at any cost.

God accepted Jephthah’s vow and gave him the victory, and then the real test came. That is often the case with us: the consecration and sometimes vows are made, the victory is won, and then God lays His finger upon our lives. He says, “You promised this. Did you mean it?”

Jephthah said, “I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back.” It is not just upon the field of battle that men display their valour. Sometimes the true test comes during prosperity and honour. Whatever our situation, we are required to pay

our vows to God, so we need to consider carefully before we “open our mouths” to Him.

BACKGROUND

Israel had again turned from God and fallen under the rule of foreign invaders. They called out to God, but found their pleas unheeded. God began to act only after Israel showed true repentance.

Jephthah, the Gileadite, was a mighty man of valour, but he was the son of a harlot. Insisting upon the rigour of the law, his father’s legitimate children had thrust him out from having any inheritance with them. He had been driven from Gilead, east of the Jordan River, and dwelt in the land of Tob, which was located northeast of the Yarmuk River. In his exile, he headed a group of “vain men” Here *vain* means “restless” or “empty,” so perhaps these men were without employment.

With the Ammonites encamped in Gilead, Israel needed a leader, and the elders of Gilead went out and fetched Jephthah. He was invited to be their captain, which he accepted on one condition. If the Lord delivered them from the oppression of the Ammonites, they must give him the position of head or judge over them. They immediately agreed to this.

The King of Ammon charged the Israelites with taking their land when they came out of Egypt, and Jephthah endeavoured to negotiate. He referenced historical facts: that God had given them the land, and that they had been there for three hundred years. The Ammonites would not heed, and war was imminent. Jephthah had reason to be confident of success, for he knew the Spirit of the Lord had come upon him. Yet, still, he vowed rashly.

Bible commentators are divided on the exact meaning of Jephthah’s vow and how he fulfilled it. Some claim that he literally sacrificed his daughter. Others maintain that the original language could mean he vowed to offer whatever (indicating an animal) or to dedicate whoever (indicating a person) to God, and that Jephthah’s daughter was dedicated for service at the tabernacle and therefore never married. They note that her virginity was bewailed, not her death, and that the Bible never says directly that she was killed.

Whatever its meaning and its fulfilment, the Bible is clear that Jephthah paid his vow, and the consequences were serious and caused him grief. This daughter was his only child, so there was no one to perpetuate Jephthah’s inheritance in Israel. He could have been overcome with remorse from the rash vow

made to God, but he did not renege, and his daughter supported him in going through with it.

Jephthah is numbered among the worthies of the Old Testament, who by faith did great exploits (Hebrews 11:32). The events of his life are an object lesson showing that God expects people to pay their vows to Him, and the importance of guarding against rash or foolish statements to God.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. Conditions during the period of the judges
 - C. Parenthesis: the tyranny of Abimelech
 - 5. Jephthah
 - d. Israel's deliverance
 - (1) The preparations for battle
 - (b) The leader secured (11:1-11)
 - [1] His background (11:1-3)
 - [2] His covenant (11:4-11)
 - (c) The messages to Ammon (11:12-28)
 - (2) The vow and victory in battle (11:29-40)
 - (a) The vow made (11:29-31)
 - (b) The victory secured (11:32-33)
 - (c) The vow observed (11:34-40)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What prompted Jephthah to make a vow?

2. What does his daughter's response say about her?

3. Have you ever made a vow to God? If so, how did God honor you for paying the vow?

CONCLUSION

Today's lesson: be cautious! What we have solemnly vowed to God, we must conscientiously go through with, even though it may be ever so difficult and grievous to us.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went northward, and said unto Jephthah, Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? We will burn thine house upon thee with fire.” (Judges 12:1)

During the summer of 1986, two ships collided in the Black Sea, off the coast of Russia. Hundreds of innocent passengers were drowned in the icy waters as the two vessels sank. Families mourned the loss of their fathers, children were instantaneously made orphans, and many young people died without their hopes and dreams ever being realized.

What a tragedy! And yet, when maritime authorities investigated the incident, it was discovered that the collision had been entirely preventable. The problem was not a faulty compass or malfunctioning equipment. The fault did not lie with idle sailors shirking their duty. Not even the dense fog that day was to blame. Rather, the cause of the collision was found to be personal attitude problems.

The investigation revealed that each captain knew about the other and was fully aware of the other ship's presence and proximity. It was due to their personal animosity and pride that neither captain would give way to the other. Pride, jealousy, stubbornness, and anger were the attributes of these men. Furthermore, their animosity toward one another was not merely a personal matter, for their actions that day affected all those on board.

In our text today, the Ephraimites demonstrated serious attitude problems. In a spirit of pettiness and jealousy, they accused Jephthah of neglecting to invite them to join in the fight, which had ended in a resounding victory for Israel. The end result was warfare and loss of life.

We, too, must be mindful of our attitudes. At times we may be tempted to indulge in negative thoughts: feeling sorry for ourselves, nursing a grudge, or insisting on our own way. Yet, if we do, these attitudes affect not only ourselves, but also those around us. Negative and bitter thoughts are destructive attitudes, which, if allowed to rule in our hearts, will cause spiritual shipwreck just as certainly as the attitudes of those sea captains ultimately doomed their vessels.

What is your attitude today?

BACKGROUND

This was the second time the Ephraimites had quarreled with their leader (see Judges 8:1). Although the nation of Israel had been victorious over the Ammonites, who had oppressed them for eighteen years, the tribe of Ephraim was not satisfied. It seems that they were more interested in celebrating the victory than in going to battle when they were not sure who would win. Yet, in their self-centeredness and jealousy, they berated Jephthah for not inviting them to the battle.

Jephthah tried to deal with the Ephraimites logically when he reminded them that he had risked his life in the battle, and that he had called them to help (verse 2), but they had refused to come. The Ephraimites taunted Jephthah and the Gileadites, calling them “fugitives” (verse 4), implying the probable general attitude of much of Israel toward the tribes on the east side of Jordan.

Civil war ensued, and the Gileadites captured the control of the Jordan River fords. Anyone who tried to cross had to say the word “Shibboleth.” Those from Ephraim could not pronounce it correctly, saying an *s* sound rather than a *sh* sound, and thereby were identified. A total of 42,000 men of Ephraim were killed. (A similar test was used in the American civil war.)

Little is known about the three minor judges listed at the end of the chapter—Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon. Many children and animals indicate that Ibzan and Abdon were probably wealthy tribal chieftains. Each of these men ruled a comparatively short time, and they may even have been contemporaries of one another, each ruling in his own area.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. Conditions during the period of the judges
 - C. Parenthesis: the tyranny of Abimelech
 - 5. Jephthah
 - d. Israel's deliverance
 - (3) The strife with Ephraim (12:1-6)
 - (a) Ephraim's jealousy (12:1-3)
 - (b) Ephraim's defeat (12:4-6)
 - (4) The death of Jephthah (12:7)
 - 6. Ibzan (12:8-10)
 - 7. Elon (12:11-12)
 - 8. Abdon (12:13-15)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was the attitude of the Ephraimites as they quarreled with Jephthah?

2. What was the word used for the pronunciation test? How did the Ephraimites say it?

3. How might negative attitudes in our lives or the lives of others cause us grief?

CONCLUSION

Examine your relationships with relatives, friends and co-workers. Are there situations where you can improve your relationship by altering your attitude?

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then Manoah intreated the LORD, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.” (Judges 13:8)

Have you ever witnessed first-time parents with their new baby? The nine months of waiting is finally over and they are jubilant with excitement as they eagerly embrace the new life. I remember when our oldest daughter was born. Initially, we were ecstatic and every moment seemed to be filled with euphoria. However, the euphoric feelings soon gave way to the reality of life with a newborn—the sleepless nights, the rigorous schedule, and very often, the desire that an instruction manual had accompanied the child. Questions arose on a regular basis. What do you do when the baby is crying and nothing seems to help? How do you know if colic or something more serious is causing her discomfort? Is it normal for a baby to sleep this much? Why those long gaps when she didn’t even seem to be breathing? Was it best to pick her up when she cried or was that spoiling her? It seemed that every day brought more questions.

In our text, Manoah and his wife were childless, but an angel of the Lord appeared to his wife and let her know that she would conceive and give birth to a son. The child was to be a Nazirite, and he would begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. Upon hearing the good news, Manoah felt the responsibility that comes with such an announcement, and he entreated the Lord for instructions on how to raise the child.

In our lives, we often feel the weight of the responsibilities that rest upon us each day. We may feel that what is required of us is more than we can handle on our own. Whether it is raising children, performing our jobs, or doing some service in the work of the Lord, we can learn from Manoah and take the time to entreat the Lord for His direction, instruction, or the wisdom that we need.

The Lord has provided the greatest manual the world has ever known—the Bible, which is full of practical help and guidelines for situations that we may encounter. It gives us instructions on how to raise our children, how to treat our spouses, how to get along with our fellowmen, but most importantly, how to make our peace with God and make it to Heaven.

Let us purpose to utilize this God-given resource on a regular basis.

BACKGROUND

The first verse of our text tells us that the Children of Israel corrupted themselves and did evil again in the sight of the Lord. The Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines, who oppressed them for forty years. It was during this forty-year period that an angel appeared to a barren woman and her husband, Manoah, announcing that a son would be born to them, along with specific instructions regarding the child’s care (verses 1-8). Even before the child’s birth, God assigned him a task: Samson was to begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

Samson was to be a *Nazirite* (or *Nazarite*), a term taken from the Hebrew word *nazir*, meaning “consecrated one.” In addition, Manoah’s wife was to observe the requirements of being a Nazarite while she carried the child. The word *Nazirite* has no connection to the term *Nazarene*, which refers to a citizen of Nazareth. Numbers 6 describes the requirements of the Nazirite vow, which included that no razor was to touch the hair, no fruit of the vine or by-product thereof could be consumed, and there was to be no proximity to a dead body, even if the deceased was closely related.

Verses 9-21 record that when the angel appeared a second time to the wife of Manoah, she called her husband. The angel reiterated to him how his wife needed to observe all that he commanded her while she carried the baby, and Manoah responded by inviting the angel to stay and eat with them and asking his name. The angel replied that Manoah needed to sacrifice unto God rather than be concerned about feeding him or knowing his name. When Manoah obeyed and offered a sacrifice unto God, “the angel did wonderfully” while Manoah and his wife looked on. A flame came from the rock and consumed the sacrifice, and then the divine visitor ascended in the flame. Verse 21 indicates that it was not until this point that Manoah and his wife fully realized that “the man of God” was an “angel of the LORD.”

Verses 22-25 describe the response of Manoah and his wife, the birth of Samson, and the fact that the Spirit of the Lord began to “move him at times.”

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. Conditions during the period of the judges
 - C. Parenthesis: the tyranny of Abimelech
 - 9. Samson
 - a. Israel’s sin and servitude (13:1)
 - b. Israel’s deliverance

- (1) The birth of Samson (13:2-25)
 - (a) The angelic promise of a son (13:2-7)
 - (b) The angelic reappearance (13:8-23)
 - [1] The separated life of the child's parents (13:8-14)
 - [2] The sacrifice to the Lord (13:15-23)
 - (c) The birth and childhood of Samson (13:24-25)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. According to verse 1, how many years had the Philistines oppressed the Israelites prior to Samson's birth?

2. Why do you think Manoah desired further instruction on how to take care of the promised child?

3. Consider a situation in your life where you desired instruction from the Lord. What did you do to receive that instruction?

CONCLUSION

As Christians, we are given a challenge to live a life that is holy and set apart from the world. Like Manoah and his wife, we too have access to instructions on how to do this in a pleasing way to the Lord. The Bible is our greatest instructional resource.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands.”
(Judges 15:14)

We are in an ongoing battle with the enemy of our souls. While Samson fought some dramatic battles with his enemies, the skirmishes we face as Christians require as much reliance on God as did those of Samson.

The attacks most of us face likely are not physical hand-to-hand combat, but a trial of our faith. Satan may bring a question to our minds about whether God is able or willing to take care of our needs, or put a doubt to challenge our integrity or that of a brother or sister in the Gospel. The enemy may send illness, accusations, or a myriad of other trials. In every attack, we can call upon the Lord and He will raise up a defense against the enemy.

I think back to the time when my husband was called to be a pastor. While relocating to our new home, we were driving the curvy Redwood highway through the beautiful Smith River Canyon of California. We had left behind several young adult children, one of whom was facing a possible serious illness. My heart was pulling two ways—I felt joy to be answering God’s call, and yet my mother-heart ached at leaving my vulnerable young daughters. As we rounded a turn in the road, we came upon a little fawn that had been struck by a car and was struggling. At that moment my emotions reached the breaking point, and I burst into sobs. My heart was fixed, and there was no thought of turning back, but in that moment I needed extra strength—and it came from the Lord.

At this point in my life, I remember back to that day with gratitude. The Lord took good care of our girls, and my husband and I have been very fulfilled in our call. There have been other battles along the way, but as we have determined to do the Lord’s will, the Holy Spirit has been there every time to comfort us and give us the strength we need. Because God has been our help and strength in these small battles, I know we can trust Him if we ever face huge trials like Samson’s!

BACKGROUND

God had given the land of the Philistines to Israel, but the Philistines still occupied the land, and they were troubling Israel. God had raised up Samson to bring

judgment to these oppressors. Samson was a strong, impulsive man with a quick temper. Nevertheless, he was used as an instrument by God.

Samson was vulnerable to the wiles of desirable women, and the events surrounding the first of these women is covered in today’s text. Chapter 14 describes his involvement with a woman of Timnath, a Philistine town about five miles from Samson’s hometown of Zorah. When Samson expressed his desire to marry a “daughter of the Philistines,” Samson’s parents objected, preferring that he take a wife from among their own people. However, this was part of God’s plan for Israel’s deliverance. Samson traveled to Timnath to make the marriage contract, and during that journey, he encountered a lion. The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and enabled him to kill the lion with nothing more than his bare hands.

Verses 10-20 record that later, at the marriage feast, Samson proposed a riddle about the lion to thirty of the wedding guests. His new wife prevailed on him to tell her the solution to the riddle, which she passed on to those guests. He was enraged when the thirty men gave the answer, and in retaliation he slew thirty other Philistines and gave their clothes to the wedding guests as payment for correctly answering the riddle. When he left and returned to his father’s house, Samson’s wife was given to his “companion” (or friend).

Chapter 15 opens with a description of Samson’s act of revenge for the loss of his wife. He caught three hundred foxes, set their tails on fire, and sent them through the Philistines’ fields. The burning of the enemies’ crops was a common method of warfare in that day. Samson’s act constituted national aggression and made him a chief enemy of the Philistines.

In retaliation for the burning of their crops, the Philistines murdered the woman Samson had recently married, along with her father. Samson took vengeance on the Philistine men who committed this heinous act by slaughtering them (verse 8). To forestall further conflict, the men of Judah offered to give up Samson to the Philistines. This would indicate that Judah did not have faith that God was able to give victory through Samson. However, through the Spirit of the Lord, Samson was able to break the bands by which he was restrained. After slaying a thousand Philistines with a jawbone of an ass and being delivered from extreme thirst by the creation of a fountain of water by God, Samson was appointed judge over Israel. During the twenty years Samson judged Israel, he never was able to rout the Philistines completely but only overcame some of them at times with great feats.

- II. Conditions during the period of the judges
 - C. Parenthesis: the tyranny of Abimelech
 - 9. Samson
 - b. Israel's deliverance
 - (2) The conflict with the Philistines
 - (a) Because of the woman of Timnah
 - [1] Samson's desire for her (14:1-4)
 - [2] Samson's attempt to secure her (14:5-9)
 - [a] The first journey to Timnah: the killing of the lion (14:5-7)
 - [b] The second journey to Timnah: the honey in the lion (14:8-9)
 - [3] Samson's marriage feast (14:10-19)
 - [a] The riddle and the reward (14:10-14)
 - [b] The riddle solved by trickery (14:15-18)
 - [c] The reward secured (14:19)
 - [4] Samson's loss of his wife (14:20—15:8)
 - [a] Her marriage to another (14:20—15:2)
 - [b] Her several revengeful acts (15:3-8)
 - i. Samson's revengeful acts (15:3-5)
 - ii. Philistine reprisals (15:6)
 - iii. Samson's reaction (15:7-8)
 - [5] Samson's fights with the Philistine army (15:9-20)
 - [a] The Philistine attack on Judah (15:9-13)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How did Samson obtain the thirty garments needed to pay his wager?

2. Why do you think God continued to empower Samson when he so often seemed to use that power selfishly?

3. How can the focus verse encourage us when we face a trial that is too big for us to handle?

CONCLUSION

No matter how big the enemy may seem in our Christian warfare, God is much more powerful. With Him we will always win!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him.” (Judges 16:20)

In some ways, our son’s life reminds me of the life of Samson. Like Samson, our son started off with many advantages. We had a Christian home, and he was a cheerful, well-behaved boy of above average scholastic ability. In Sunday school, he knew all the answers. One reason for this was that one of his favorite pastimes was listening to recorded Bible stories, of which we had a large set. Realizing that even this good upbringing was not enough, during the summer before he started high school, he prayed through to salvation.

However, upon entering high school, he faced the allurements of the world. It was not a temptress like Delilah, but rather a group of students who were into tobacco and drugs. The desire to be accepted by these peers became more important to him than anything else. Turning his back on his family, his church, and his God, I am sure our son had no idea how far down the road of sin those early decisions would take him. Like Samson, he probably thought—at least initially—that he could dabble with sin while still remaining in control of his life. That was not the case.

As addictions got hold of him, he eventually left his family, his home, and his schooling. For a number of years, life was hard for him. From time to time, he would do a little better—getting a job and trying to make something of himself—only to slip back into his old ways. Although not literally in jail, this life of bondage to Satan was comparable to Samson’s life in the Philistine prison.

Thankfully our son’s story does not end on that somber note. Recently, we got the phone call from him that all Christian parents with a lost son or daughter are hoping for—the prodigal had come back to God. From the moment our son was saved, he was happy to inform us, he had been drug free. Later, when we were able to visit him in person, we saw that the old sparkle was back in his eyes—something we had not seen for years. Just as Samson turned back to God and saw victory in his final act on earth, our son is now experiencing the victory that comes from life in Christ.

There is extreme risk in tampering with sin. If this devotional finds you in a spiritually lost condition, you, too, can come to God and experience His love.

If you are a Christian who is praying for a lost loved one, don’t give up hope! Maybe soon you, too, will hear the wonderful news that he or she has become a child of God.

BACKGROUND

Gaza was a southern city of the Philistines. Perhaps Samson went to this enemy city because he was proud of his past accomplishments and therefore trusting his personal strength. In spite of this, God did help him. Bible commentators are unsure whether Samson carried the doors of the city gate clear to Hebron. If he did, the distance from Gaza to Hebron was almost thirty-eight miles and it would have been uphill, since Gaza was on the coast near sea level, and Hebron was in the mountains.

God had a special plan for Samson. However, to be usable in God’s service, there were requirements for Samson’s life, and he only partly met them. He fulfilled the vow of the Nazarite in not drinking alcohol or in having his hair cut, but in his relationship with women, Samson would not abide by God’s guidelines. Although the Bible does not directly say so, the implication is that Delilah was a Philistine and a prostitute. As a judge of Israel for twenty years, Samson knew well that he should marry a God-fearing woman of Israel, and have nothing to do with the ungodly Delilah. However, Samson had to have his own way in this matter, even to his own destruction.

Five leaders, or “lords,” ruled the Philistines from five different cities, and each of these men offered Delilah a handsome reward if she could trap Samson. Delilah made it her business to find out Samson’s secret. “Green withs” were fresh bowstrings. The “beam” refers to the loom, where she must have woven his hair something like a piece of fabric. It is quite possible that the first three times Delilah said, “The Philistines be upon thee,” the men who were hiding did not reveal themselves.

The Bible is clear that the source of Samson’s strength was the Spirit of the Lord coming upon him. His hair was an outward symbol of his Nazarite vow. When his hair was cut, it was a visible indication that he had broken his vow. With the Spirit of God departed and his strength gone, the Philistines made Samson a slave, put out his eyes, and took him to Gaza—the city from which he had taken the doors of the gate.

Dagon was the Philistines’ god of grain, and they gave him the credit for their victory over Samson. The site of Samson’s final act, accomplished with God’s strength, may have been a temple for Dagon.

Samson wanted what he wanted, and he ended up paying the ultimate sacrifice for it. It is true that God was able to use Samson a little—first in the early part of his life, and finally at his death. However, his life story would clearly have been different if he had lived consistently for God.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. Conditions during the period of the judges
 - C. Parenthesis: the tyranny of Abimelech
 - 9. Samson
 - b. Israel's deliverance
 - (2) The conflict with the Philistines
 - (b) Because of the harlot in Gaza (16:1-3)
 - [1] Samson's lust (16:1)
 - [2] Philistine's plot (16:2)
 - [3] Samson's escape (16:3)
 - (c) Because of Delilah (16:4-31)
 - [1] Samson's entanglement with Delilah (16:4)
 - [2] Delilah's trickery to secure his source of strength (16:5-20)
 - [a] The secret alluded to (16:5-14)
 - i. The seven fresh cords (16:5-9)
 - ii. The new cords (16:10-12)
 - iii. The seven locks (16:13-14)
 - [b] The secret divulged (16:15-20)
 - [3] Samson's imprisonment (16:21-22)
 - [4] Samson's death (16:23-31)
 - [a] The gathering for a Philistine feast (16:23-27)
 - [b] The death of Samson with the Philistines (16:28-31)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How did Delilah finally discover the secret of Samson's great strength?

2. What are some things Samson could have done to avoid the downward path he chose?

3. How might we as Christians unnecessarily expose ourselves to temptations?

CONCLUSION

Each of us is developing a "life story," one day at a time. Does yours show consistency in serving God? By God's grace, it can.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 17:6)

What confusion can result when a person turns away from the truth and chooses his own way instead! Some years back, a man gave a testimony that illustrates this fact. He told how he was saved, had obtained his deeper experiences, and was being used of the Lord in the Gospel work. However, his attention gradually shifted to the flashy things of this world. He had an insatiable desire to be rich, and, eventually, his desires caused him to turn his back on God.

Then he lost an item that was dear to his heart. He searched for it diligently but to no avail. In a desperate effort to locate his prized item, he did what is common in his culture—he sought after a local fetish priest who had the power of divination. He told his need to the occultist and waited as the man performed the satanic ritual that he expected would give him a clue to the whereabouts of the lost item. Suddenly, the man looked up at the backslidden man with astonishment. With an accusatory glance, he exclaimed, “It was not an item that got lost. It is you that is lost!”

In our Bible text today, we see confusion and strange actions by Micah and his mother. Micah was attracted to his mother’s silver and desired it enough to take it, though that act of thievery was a departure from God’s Law. Then, apparently smitten by guilt when his mother cursed the thief, he returned the silver. Amazingly, his mother then gave a portion of the silver for the purpose of having an idol made. Micah set up the idol in a small sanctuary of his own, which he stocked with images. He even assigned one of his sons to become his priest, though the assumption of the priestly office by anyone not in the family of Aaron was a direct violation of divine law.

Both the backslidden man and Micah were so mixed up in their approach to worship that wrong seemed right to them. God has given us standards and instructions; He has not left our conduct up to us and our opinions. It is a dangerous matter to try to mix our thoughts with what God says! Confusion and bizarre behavior can be the result.

Today, as in Micah’s day, everyone seems to put his or her own interests first. Most people still reject God’s right way of living. How much better it is to

make a personal commitment to follow God’s instructions with all our hearts! What way of life could possibly hold the same level of satisfaction, promise, and peace as the Christian life that the Lord so graciously offers us? Nothing else comes close!

BACKGROUND

Most Bible commentators believe that the last five chapters of Judges are not in chronological order, but took place earlier in the time of the judges. The events in these chapters were recorded as illustrations of the degenerate moral state of Israel. Israel had been instructed in serving God, but they had drifted far from Him. At this time of the rule of the judges, there was no cohesive spiritual or civil leadership. Men like Moses and Joshua, who had been nationally revered by the people, had died. In the void, spiritual and moral decay had swept the nation, and people had embarked on whatever kind of lifestyle suited their fancy. Idol worship, theft, rape, murder, homosexuality, and every imaginable vice and crime became the way of life among the chosen people of God.

The account of Micah and his family typified the moral and spiritual depths to which Israel had succumbed at the time. It also showed Israel’s readiness to experiment with and eventually serve the false idols of the Canaanites.

Though the government of Israel was not centrally administered, God had commissioned the Levites to serve the Israelite people by teaching them the way of the Lord. The Levitical order was so sacred that they were to have no inheritance, but they were to live with and teach the people the precepts of holiness. They were exclusively dedicated to the service of the Lord, a requirement that was aimed at preventing Israel from wandering into sin.

The failure of the Levites to keep their order sacred was the primary cause for the depravity that overcame Israel. They abandoned their duties and failed to cry out against sin, and in the end, they also were overtaken by evil. The behavior of the young Levite from Bethlehem in this chapter is an example of the staggering betrayal of the Levites of their calling before God. He abandoned his godly call in search of wealth and society-defined success. His unrestrained desire for wealth led him to the house of Micah, who was already in idolatry. Micah offered the renegade Levite a mere ten pieces of silver, a suit of clothes, and his upkeep as yearly wage. In exchange, the young Levite gave up any service to God and became, instead, a priest of idols.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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A. Gross idolatry during the time of the judges

- ## CONCLUSION

Regardless of the situations that surround us, God still expects us to be faithful to Him and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. His expectations are legitimate because His grace is sufficient to keep us. Let us determine that our lives in Jesus Christ are not for sale at any price!

- ## NOTES

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- This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And they took the things which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people that were at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire.” (Judges 18:27)

As I surveyed the wall decorations in our daughter's classroom on her first day of school as a sixth grader, I noticed an interesting poster. It pictured row after row of beautiful oranges and, in a row near the bottom, one beautiful green apple. The challenge printed on the poster was supporting individuality. Since our daughter was a Christian, I thought the poster was appropriate. However, on that first day, I did not have a hint as to how many times in the future I would think back to that poster. That year, the teacher routinely made it a practice to tear down our daughter's Christian beliefs and standards. As the months wore on, I thought many times about the mindset that has become so prevalent in the world today—it is all right to be different, as long as the difference is not fundamental Christianity!

Why do people respond that way to fundamental Christians? We live in times of moral relativism where many think right and wrong seem to be “negotiable.” The Danites found themselves in that state at the time of today's text. They had no regard for God's law. Each tribe, including the Danites, had been told to conquer the territory allotted to them. Rather than fight for their God-given inheritance, the Danites took by force something that was not assigned to them.

Those around us may reject the necessity of following God's instructions. However, we want to seek God's help in resisting the thinking of the world. God has established right and wrong, and it is written in His Word. Let us challenge ourselves to live in obedience to His directions and to measure with His measurement. If we do, we will be “different,” but we will also be blessed with God's true goodness.

BACKGROUND

The inheritance of the tribe of Dan had been assigned by Joshua, as had the inheritances of the rest of Israel (Joshua 19:51). However, the Danites did not overcome the inhabitants of their area (Judges 1:34), so they were overcrowded, and finally sent out spies to seek an easy place to conquer so they could expand. The spies traveled about one hundred miles north and found Laish, a city outside their allotted area.

Had the Danites truly been seeking God's direction, they could have asked the high priest for guidance. However, they wanted to go outside of their assigned boundaries, and so the spies began their mission. When they met the Levite who was hired to be in Micah's house, they consulted him. When the spies later returned with the army of six hundred men, they took Micah's idols and told the Levite to come with them, which he did.

The inhabitants of Laish did not have treaties for protection, so they were an easy target. Although this was not a city that God had directed Israel to destroy, the Danites smote it and built their own city there.

The Danites set up Micah's idols in their new city. Thus they became the first Israelite tribe to institute idolatry as their official system of religion. The Levite should have opposed the worship of these images, but he did not seem to have deep religious convictions. He was self-seeking, not God-seeking or God-fearing.

This account shows the degenerate state of Israel. By this time, they had been in the Promised Land for about three hundred years. Instead of conquering the ungodly inhabitants of the land, Israel had adopted their practices.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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III. Appendices

- A. Gross idolatry during the time of the judges
 2. Danite idolatry (18:1-31)
 - a. The Danite search for an inheritance (18:1-10)
 - (1) The spies before Micah's Levite (18:1-6)
 - (2) The spies at Laish (18:7)
 - (3) The spies report (18:8-10)
 - b. The Danite journey to Laish (18:11-31)
 - (1) The journey commenced (18:11-13)
 - (2) The robbery of Micah's idol (18:14-26)
 - (3) The capture of Laish (Dan) (18:27-29)
 - (4) The establishment of idolatrous worship (18:30-31)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How many spies did the tribe of Dan send out?

[illegible]

Let us remember that no matter how those around us think, obeying God always pays.

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds.” (Judges 19:30)

We will not forget 9/11 — the shock, the horror that swept across the United States and the world. The Al Braca family remembers more vividly than most of us — Al worked for Cantor Fitzgerald in Tower One on the 105th floor. He did not like his job because his godly values were so foreign to those around him; in fact, his co-workers called him “The Rev,” but Al felt it was God’s plan for him to continue working there, “to be a light in the darkness.” He witnessed at every opportunity.

By piecing together information from the relatives of other victims in the weeks after 9/11, Al’s family learned that when he realized he and his fellow employees were trapped, he witnessed to fifty people and led them in prayer. More than a month after 9/11, an MCI operator found out how to reach Al’s family and deliver his last message to them, “Tell them that I love them.” Al Braca faced evil and tragedy and used it for the glory of God.¹

Today’s text is a horrific account specifically mentioned to illustrate the awfulness of the conditions in Israel at that time. Both the World Trade Center collapse and this incident in Israel show how urgently the human family needs God’s help. It is wonderful when the national momentum is going in the direction of God, but more often it is the opposite. This chapter, as well as the entire Book of Judges, reveals how important individuals are who purpose to serve God and be true to Him and His Word.

The evil of man is ever-present, and maybe you feel alone in the midst of a world of sin. Yet, we do not have to live with fear or feel vulnerable if we have the peace of God in our hearts. Remember that even one godly life can make a difference. Perhaps you think that your life and purpose to stand for God are insignificant compared to the evils of your coworkers or classmates. Take heart! God is depending on you. Perhaps He is using your life to teach someone else about salvation. Keep on serving Him!

BACKGROUND

Most Bible commentators believe that the last five chapters of Judges are not in chronological sequence,

but took place earlier in the time of the judges. The events in these chapters were recorded as illustrations of the degenerate moral state of Israel. This chapter again points out that there was no king in Israel. God wanted to be their king, but the people were going their own ways.

Concubines carried most of the same responsibilities as a wife, but they received only some of the benefits. Even though the attachment to their husbands was socially legal, concubines and their children did not usually receive part of the inheritance. Often, they were prisoners of war from other countries, although the concubine in this text was probably an Israelite. She was unfaithful to her husband, and went to her father’s home. After four months, the Levite went to Bethlehem, and they were reconciled.

The father-in-law had no apparent ill intent in doing all he could to delay the man’s departure. The fact that his son-in-law was a Levite may have added to his delight in having him in his home. He was probably joyful that the couple was reunited. All of this would have made it more difficult for the Levite to finally insist on departing.

Gibeah was a city of the tribe of Benjamin. From Bethlehem to Gibeah was about ten miles. Travel was dangerous particularly at night (Judges 5:6), and Jerusalem was closer. However, the area was still in the possession of the Jebusites, who were descendants of Canaan and later driven out by David and his men.

Extending hospitality to strangers and travelers was a sacred responsibility in the East, however no Gibeonites offered the travelers a place to stay. Instead, an older man from the tribe of Ephraim took them in. The men of Gibeah were homosexuals and were acting as Sodomites. Incredibly, the Levite gave his concubine to this crowd, and their abuse killed her while he slept!

The actions the Levite took with her body were intended to obtain attention and shock Israel into action. He wanted punishment and justice, but his own acts and negligence had contributed to the woman’s death.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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III. Appendices

- B. Moral decline during the time of the judges
 - 1. The crime at Gibeah (19:1-30)
 - a. The Levite’s unfaithful concubine (19:1-2)
 - b. The Levite’s trip to recover his concubine (19:3-9)

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[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.”
(Judges 20:26)**

One Saturday night, a few days after we moved into our new home in St. Louis, a power surge tripped our main circuit breaker and the electrical supply to the house went off. For many hours, I searched for the cause of the problem. I went to the basement and examined the circuit breakers, trying to set every one of them to “on.” Still the power was not restored. I checked with our neighbors to make sure there was not a widespread outage, but all our neighbors had power in their homes. That night we were unable to cook. The next day was a Sunday, and we went to church without our usual hot breakfast. Everybody in the family was inconvenienced because there was no power supply to the house.

In church that day, I prayed that God would help us out of the situation, and the Lord assured me that He would. Upon returning home, I went back to the switch and pushed it very hard toward “on.” The power came on, and everybody in the house rejoiced! The power had been there all the time, but it could not flow because, on my first attempts, I had failed to push hard enough to make a connection.

Have you ever faced difficulties where you prayed but the problems remained unsolved? Perhaps Scriptural promises indicate that it was God’s will for you to have victory over the troubling problems. Maybe you wrote prayer requests and other believers joined you in prayer on these matters, yet the problem remained. You examined your life and found no sin. You consecrated your life, died daily to self, and you could not think of anything you had not done.

In today’s text, the Children of Israel teamed up together as one man against the tribe of Benjamin to bring justice for an evil perpetrated by a small gang among this tribe. Twice the Israelites prayed, and received the “green light” to fight against Benjamin, yet on two occasions they met defeat. The third time, the Children of Israel prayed and fasted until the evening, and then victory came.

When we face problems that are not quickly solved and we seem to be having trouble making a “connection,” we may need to “push harder.” We may

discover that prayer and fasting are necessary to move the hand of God to work. Israel found that God rewarded such efforts, and you will find that out too.

BACKGROUND

Since Dan was the northernmost city of Israel and Beersheba was the southernmost city, the phrase, “from Dan even to Beersheba” indicates that the whole nation was outraged by the Levite’s action with his concubine’s body. Mizpeh was about eight miles north of Jerusalem and was the place where the nation assembled. A host of 400,000 footmen gathered there to deliberate and decide on what action to take against those who committed this wicked act. When the Levite recounted the story, he noticeably omitted any admission of blame on his part.

Demand was made on the tribe of Benjamin to hand over the perpetrators, because the men of Israel wanted to take action to cleanse the national guilt. Benjamin refused but instead decided to declare war on the rest of the tribes, thereby bringing guilt upon themselves for this sin and wickedness. A costly civil war was the result.

The eleven tribes twice sought the face of God about punishing the tribe of Benjamin, and He indicated that they should. However, in the first two attempts they met defeat. On the third occasion, the Israelites wept, prayed, and fasted until they received the victory on their knees. Using a tactic similar to Joshua’s at Ai, Gibeah was captured, its men were destroyed, and the city was reduced to ashes.

The eleven tribes continued their attack beyond Gibeah. By the end of the war, the tribe of Benjamin was nearly annihilated. When Israel left Egypt, there were 35,400 warriors in the tribe (Numbers 1:37). By the second census (before they entered the Promised Land), their number was 45,600 (Numbers 26:41). At the end of these three days of war, there were only 600 men of Benjamin left.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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III. Appendices

- B. Moral decline during the time of the judges
 - 2. The war against Benjamin
 - a. The disgrace at Gibeah rehearsed (20:1-7)
 - b. The resulting war (20:8-48)
 - (1) Israel’s assembly for war (20:8-11)
 - (2) Benjamin’s assembly for war (20:12-16)

- 4.** What lessons can we learn about problem solving from this account?

1. What did the eleven tribes of Israel want the Benjamites to do with the wicked men?

[illegible][illegible]

Have you been praying to God for a long time on a particular issue in your life that you know is within God's will, yet it seems that Heaven is closed? Don't give up! Tarry with God in prayer, because your miracle is on the way.

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”
(Judges 21:25)**

Sometimes it takes simple honesty to recognize that our choices are from selfish motives. I remember when my wife wanted an automobile of her own. Our children were older, and she felt it was time for her to have more mobility and freedom.

Since my wife didn't know a great deal about automobiles, I decided to choose a car for her myself. I searched car lots and considered options. Then, I saw it—a black 1953 Buick Roadmaster, four-door sedan, with red trim, and lots of chrome. I immediately fell in love with the car.

Auto designers in those days had tremendous imaginations! The grille was huge, and it had chrome-plated casting and vertical posts merging into the bumper. Four chrome “portholes” traveled along each fender. The car was longer and heavier than almost any sedan made today. It possessed various other attractive features, but there was one feature it did not have—power steering. I bought it without even thinking of this factor. After all, who would need power steering?

Later, I found out that my wife did! She valiantly tried to operate the car, tugging with all of her strength on the uncooperative steering wheel, but she could not handle it properly.

When I bought the car, I really meant to do what I thought was the right thing. I just let my own likes and desires get ahead of my wife's needs. I could have chosen a small automobile (with power steering) that would have suited perfectly, although it probably would not have had chrome portholes in the fenders.

While my actions were thoughtless, their consequences were relatively minor. In contrast, the actions of the Children of Israel were far more serious. No doubt they had reasons why they thought the things they did were proper and all right. However, some of the actions that were “right in their own eyes” were an abomination to God.

We want to be certain that our thoughts and actions are acceptable in God's eyes. God's Word should be our real standard for what is right. Daily, we want to submit ourselves to Him and ask for His direction, help, and strength. He will help us live as He wants us to.

BACKGROUND

The Israelites had massacred a total of 25,000 men from the tribe of Benjamin, and made several rash oaths to the Lord. One was to never give their own daughters in marriage to the Benjamites, and another was to kill anyone who did not respond to the call to assembly. In today's text, we read about the aftermath of the onslaught.

The tribe of Benjamin was in danger of extinction, with only 600 men remaining. There were no Benjamite women or children left because the Israelites had invaded the cities of Benjamin and slaughtered them all. The Israelites came to the sober realization that they had almost completely destroyed one of the tribes of God's people. Since they had made the vow never to give their own daughters to the Benjamites in marriage, they looked for another way to make provision for the Benjamites.

The eleven tribes had made an oath to kill those who did not respond to the call to assemble (which explains why the large number of 400,000 responded). At this time, it was determined that no one had rallied to this battle from Jabesh-gilead. So, the Israelite army made another attack. They slew the men, married women, and children in Jabesh-gilead, saving 400 unmarried women to be wives for the Benjamites. However, there were 600 Benjamite men and only 400 Gileadite women, so the elders of Israel decided the Benjamites could capture 200 daughters of Shiloh so that each Benjamite would get his own wife.

The Israelites acted on their own authority and on their own opinions of what was right and wrong. They tried to correct their errors with wrong actions. The results were horrible!

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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III. Appendices

- B. Moral decline during the time of the judges
 - 2. War declared against Benjamin
 - c. The restoration of Benjamin (21:1-24)
 - (1) The sorrow of Israel (21:1-7)
 - (2) The securing of wives for the Benjamite remnant (21:8-24)
 - (a) The virgins of Jabesh-Gilead (21:8-16)
 - (b) The virgins at Shiloh (21:17-24)
- C. Conclusion (21:25)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How many Benjamite men were left after the slaughter at Jabesh-gilead?

2. Why did the Israelites secure wives for the remaining Benjamites?

2. What problems come about when everyone makes their own decisions as to what is right or wrong?

[illegible]

4. When we are faced with problems, how should we make a decision regarding our course of action?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

When we do things that are right in our own eyes, we leave out the most important part—what is right in God’s eyes.

NOTES

[illegible]



Overview for Ruth

Purpose: The Book of Ruth acts as a bridge between Judges and 1 and 2 Samuel.

Author: According to the Talmud, Samuel was the author. However, it seems clear, from the care the author makes in bringing out David's genealogy in Ruth 4:17-22, that the author must have lived in the time when David was thoroughly established on the throne of Israel. This was after the death of Samuel.

Date Written: The Book probably was written or completed in Jerusalem by a court historian during David's or possibly Solomon's reign.

History: In the early narratives and translations, Ruth and Judges were considered to be one book.

Setting: These events take place during the days of the judges—1375-1050 B.C. The narrative begins in Moab, a country, east of the Dead Sea, that oppressed Israel during the period of the judges.

Key People: Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz.

Summary: The Book of Ruth is a romantic yet historic view of a Moabite woman who became an important part in the lineage of Christ. The events of the book began when an Israelite family moved to the land of Moab to escape a famine in Israel. After a period of time, the father died. The two sons married Moabite wives. Then the sons died, leaving the mother, Naomi, and the two daughters-in-law, Ruth and

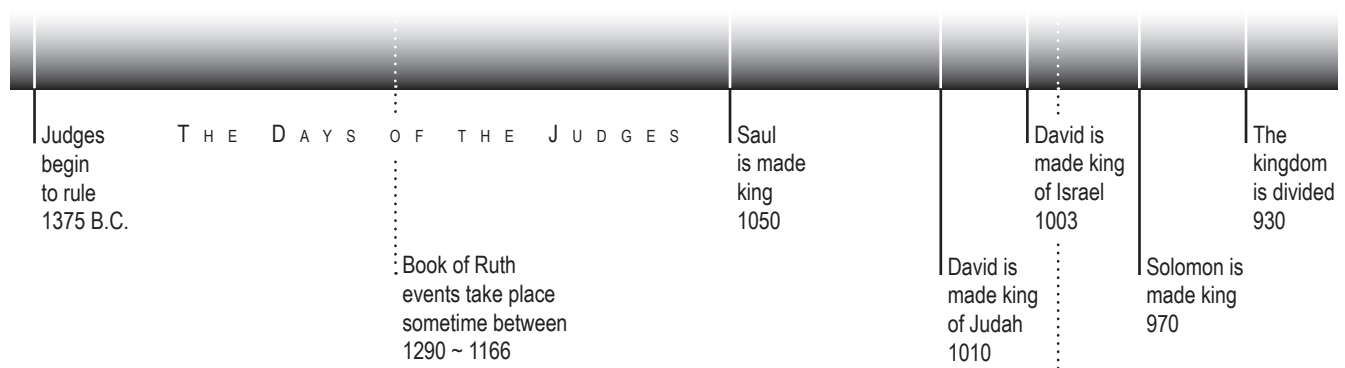
Orpah. Naomi longed to return to her roots, so she decided to go back to her homeland in spite of her love for Ruth and Orpah. She understood what it was like to be in a foreign land and did not encourage them to return with her. At Naomi's urging, Orpah stayed in Moab. Ruth, on the other hand, had bonded with Naomi and her God, and determined that she would accompany her mother-in-law back to Israel. This decision set the stage for a beautiful story of faithfulness, love, and marriage. It is included in the Bible because eventually the Messiah would come from the line of Ruth the Moabitess and her Israelite second husband, Boaz.

The account of Ruth provides a marvelous illustration of redemption. The Old Testament law made provision for women who, due to the death of their husbands, were left without heirs and faced the loss of their property. Both heirs (Deuteronomy 25:5-10) and property (Leviticus 25:25-28) were to be secured by a "close relative," or "kinsman redeemer." This law sanctioned the ancient custom of "brother-in-law" marriage. The account of Ruth illustrates its proper application.

The kinsman redeemer had to meet three qualifications: he must be a blood relative, he must be willing to redeem, and he must be able to pay the redemption price. This illustration of the kinsman redeemer is a beautiful picture of Christ, who met all these qualifications to redeem us.

Timeline

Many of these dates are approximate, as reference materials differ.



1. Sources differ significantly, but conservative scholars generally agree that the book was written during this era. (*King James Bible Commentary*, p. 282.)

Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

- I. Ruth's resolve (1:1-22)
 - A. The setting (1:1-5)
 - B. The decision to return with Naomi to Judah (1:6-18)
 - C. The disgraceful return to Bethlehem (1:19-22)
- II. Ruth's unselfishness (2:1-23)
 - A. The request to glean in Boaz's field (2:1-7)
 - B. The provision of Boaz (2:8-17)
 - C. The report to Naomi (2:18-22)
 - D. The continued labor of Ruth (2:23)
- III. Ruth's appeal (3:1-18)
 - A. The plan of Naomi for Ruth's security (3:1-5)
 - B. The request of Ruth for Boaz to act as a kinsman-redeemer (3:6-15)
 - C. The report to Naomi (3:16-18)
- IV. Ruth's reward (4:1-22)
 - A. The redemption of Ruth by Boaz (4:1-12)
 - B. The marriage and prodigy of Ruth and Boaz (4:13-17)
 - C. The genealogy of David (4:18-22)



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.” (Ruth 1:16)

Great wails accompanied my youngest daughter’s insistent clinging as I attempted to leave her at a friend’s house so I could spend a couple of hours doing some volunteer work. I tried to convince her of the benefits of staying with my friend. I said that her sister would be there too, that she would have more fun playing with the other children, and that Mommy was coming back soon. All my words were to no avail. Our children have a connection with us, and in this case, my daughter did not want that “connection” broken for even a little while.

All of us have connections with other people, and some of those relationships are treasures to us. When I consider my special connections, I think of one gentleman, now growing older, who is a beautiful example of godly wisdom, righteousness, and gentleness. There is a lady who demonstrates gracious behavior and thoughtfulness with her knack of saying things in the right way at the appropriate time. Another lady is a vivacious and enthusiastic Christian. Whenever she speaks of someone, it is in a positive light, and she always believes the best of everyone.

These relationships are special to me because of the Christ-like virtues reflected in the lives of these people. In a similar way, Ruth’s heart had caught a glimpse of something special in the life of Naomi. Ruth had come to the realization that Naomi’s God was the true God, and she determined to accompany Naomi as she left Moab for Israel. The life that Naomi and her family had lived caused Ruth to make a life-changing decision.

Think about the people you know who have been born again because someone witnessed to them at school, on the job, in the home, or at a place of business. Then evaluate your own life. Does rubbing elbows with you enrich the lives of others? Do you exemplify virtues that would cause people to make life-changing decisions to serve God? Let us purpose to live in a way that will draw others to our Savior!

BACKGROUND

The time frame for the Book of Ruth is about one hundred thirty years after the Israelites entered the

land of Canaan, in the era of the judges. Just three generations after Ruth’s story took place, David, the great-grandson of Ruth and Boaz, became the second king of Israel.

Moab was east of Israel, and its people were descendants of Lot. The Moabites often troubled the Children of Israel, so Elimelech left his inheritance in Israel to move to an enemy country. There his sons married Gentile women. Elimelech had endeavored to escape a famine, but eventually there were three funerals. Widows were dependent upon their families to sustain them, and the situation for these three women looked bleak.

After being in Moab for about ten years, Naomi learned that God had graciously visited His people in bringing an end to the famine in Israel, and she desired to return to her beloved land. Naomi and Ruth traveled about fifty or sixty miles and came to Israel in the spring, which was the time of the barley harvest.

In Bible times, names said something about the people who bore them. The name *Naomi* meant “beautiful” or “pleasant.” However, by the time she returned to Israel, she felt she should be called *Mara*, which means “bitter” or “one whose life is grievous.” Naomi’s comments in verses 13, 20, and 21 indicate that she felt the difficulties she had to face were God’s punishment for leaving Israel.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- I. Ruth’s resolve (1:1-22)
 - A. The setting (1:1-5)
 - B. The decision to return with Naomi to Judah (1:6-18)
 - C. The disgraceful return to Bethlehem (1: 19-22)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What might Ruth have expected would happen to her when she arrived in Bethlehem?

2. How were Naomi and Ruth received at Bethlehem?

3. How did Naomi perceive herself as she returned to her homeland?

4. What actions in our lives could show that we are as completely convinced and submitted as Ruth was?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

Each day, let us purpose to obey God and then pray that our lives will influence others toward Him. If we do, the Lord will help us.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.”
(Ruth 2:12)**

A young woman (also named Ruth) faced a choice. She had been saved, sanctified, and baptized with the Holy Spirit, but she knew that God wanted her to consecrate more. She said, “I was afraid if I completely surrendered my life to the Lord, my own plans might never materialize. My desires were not sinful, but they were not God’s plan for me.”

This Ruth battled internally for over a year. Finally, one Sunday she knew she had to make a decision. She found a place to be alone with God, and the conflict raged between her ambitions and the deep feeling within her heart that she must do God’s will.

Then the Lord showed her two paths. One was sunny and sheltered with trees, had lovely homes and children playing, and the Lord stood at the end of it. The other was rutted and muddy, unprotected and hard, and the Lord stood at the end of that path also. She realized she could have her ambitions and still make Heaven, but she also knew that the Lord wanted her to take the difficult path. That day, with all her heart, she told the Lord she would take His way. Years later, she said, “The path God chose for me far surpassed any ambitions or dreams I ever had.” God opened the door for fulltime service and used her to write countless letters to people in Africa, helping them find the Lord and continue in their Christian walk.

Ruth in the Bible also made choices. She chose to go with Naomi to Israel. In today’s text, when she decided to glean, she made a choice to get busy and do something about her situation. As a result, Boaz spoke the words of blessing that are recorded in our focus verse.

God was unfolding a wonderful plan for both of these women named Ruth, but His plan was only possible because of the choices they made. The Ruth of the Bible did not fret about who she would marry or if she would ever marry again. She could have worried about how she would make a living and survive. All those things were unknown to her, but in spite of that, she stepped out in faith and made the right choice.

Sometimes we worry about things down the road that we have no control over. Careers, marriage, and family, are big decisions to be sure. But the best way

to have those choices turn out right is to make the right choices now. If we follow God day by day, we too will find a “full reward” from the Lord.

BACKGROUND

Ruth, a Moabite widow, had to trust in God for her well-being. She demonstrated determination to do her part and work as hard as she could, by looking for a field in which she could glean. Gleaning was picking up the loose stalks from the fields after the wheat and barley had been cut and tied in bundles. Israel’s law provided for gleaning as a method of helping the poor (Leviticus 19:9-10).

Ruth took a chance, because as a stranger she did not know who owned the various parcels of ground that made up the fields. Also, being an outsider as well as a woman, she was vulnerable. The poorest people gleaned, so she was among the lowest socially.

Verse 3 indicates that she “happened” to work in a portion of the field that belonged to Boaz. Boaz took an immediate interest in this stranger, and promised her protection and provision (2:9, 14-16). He instructed his servants regarding where she should glean and even told them to let some extra grain fall for her to pick up. She was allowed to eat and drink with his workers. Boaz himself ate with her and even handed her food (verse 14). Some Bible commentators believe that Boaz was attracted to Ruth from the start.

The Lord was taking care of Ruth! She “bowed herself to the ground” in response to Boaz’s kindness. An ephah of grain was approximately half a bushel, which was enough food for Naomi and Ruth for about five days.

Upon hearing Ruth’s good news, Naomi took heart because of who Boaz was, and the kindness he had shown to Ruth. “Next kinsman” (verse 20) indicates that Boaz was one of Elimelech’s closest relatives, and therefore, he could redeem Elimelech’s inheritance. The order of next kinsmen was brothers, uncles, and then male cousins. The kinsman’s responsibility was to be sure the property stayed in the family. Included in this responsibility was marrying the widow if a man died childless, and raising up children for his name. No wonder Naomi was excited and thanked God! On her first day, Ruth had become acquainted with a man who could redeem both of them. Nothing was “chance” about these events, but God’s hand was in it all.

Naomi instructed Ruth to stay in Boaz’s field for the barley harvest (March and April) and the wheat harvest (June and July).

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. Ruth's unselfishness (2:1-23)
 - A. The request to glean in Boaz's field (2:1-7)
 - B. The provision of Boaz (2:8-17)
 - C. The report to Naomi (2:18-22)
 - D. The continued labor of Ruth (2:23)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was Ruth's reaction in her new situation in a strange land? What does this reveal about her character?

2. What did Boaz know about Ruth?

3. What does Boaz's reaction to Ruth reveal about His character?

4. What blessings or privileges have you received from the Lord because of a correct decision you made?

CONCLUSION

We cannot possibly know what tomorrow will bring. In her wildest fancies, Ruth of the Bible could not have imagined what God would do for her. Her decision to trust Him was rewarded beyond what she could have even known to ask for. We, too, will be rewarded if we choose to fully commit ourselves to God.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?” (Ruth 3:1)

All people desire rest for their souls. Many years ago, a young girl from a troubled home was longing for such rest. Then she heard about a camp meeting being held in a large tent. She said, “The minute I entered, I felt a calm come over me.” At the end of the service, she knelt to pray, and before long God answered. Unrest and grief disappeared, and she had joy and peace.

After this salvation experience, Edna was severely persecuted and beaten at home. The day she turned eighteen, she was asked to leave, so she packed her few belongings in an old suitcase and departed. However, the God she served did not let her down. Before long, she had the opportunity to live in a Christian home—the home of Florence Crawford, the founder of the Apostolic Faith Church. She said, “My joy was almost more than I could contain.”

Later she married Florence Crawford’s son, Raymond, who succeeded his mother in the leadership of the church. Even though this young woman faced distressing circumstances and had to leave her family, she had joy and rest in her soul. She had found the Redeemer.¹

Ruth also faced difficult situations. She forsook her family, her homeland, and the Moabite gods in order to follow the true God. Ruth did this with her whole heart, never looking back. By leaving her old friends and life, she found a new place with the people of God, and she was able to receive the redemption offered by Boaz as a near kinsman, and ultimately spiritual redemption by the Lord. In today’s text, Ruth presented herself to Boaz as a humble petitioner. She diligently followed Naomi’s instructions and laid herself at his feet. As a result, she found rest and protection.

In the same way, we are to follow the instructions of the Holy Spirit. By faith, we should lay ourselves at the feet of Jesus Christ. The Spirit invites us to this position of protection and rest when He says, “Come.” We, too, are to turn away from anything or anyone that would hinder us from fully following God. Through Jesus we find a new life and great reward, for He is the one who saves us from the old path of sin. True rest is found only at the feet of the Redeemer.

BACKGROUND

Chapter 3 tells how Naomi began the process of notifying Boaz that it would be in order for him to perform the part of a kinsman. Israelite parents arranged their children’s marriages, so Naomi was acting as Ruth’s mother. The instructions that Naomi gave Ruth were specific and appropriate according to the customs of that time.

Naomi told Ruth to wash and anoint herself, change her clothes, and go to the threshing floor. Fragrant oils were used at that time for both protection and healing, while making a person pleasing to those around. In essence, Naomi was suggesting that Ruth follow the Israelite custom, which would let Boaz know that as her kinsman-redeemer he should find someone to marry her or even marry her himself. Ruth may not have understood why Naomi gave all the instructions she did, but she promised to do as she was told (verse 5).

At the threshing floor, the kernels of grain were separated from the outside shell (chaff). To accomplish this, the harvested stalks were crushed by oxen or by beating on them, and then the grain was winnowed (thrown up so the chaff blew away and the grain fell to the ground). By threshing at night, these men took advantage of the evening breezes and also were then free to harvest during the day. Owners spent the night to ensure honesty and also to be there when their turns came to use the floor.

The uncovering of the feet of Boaz (Ruth 3:7) was a morally acceptable custom that alerted the woman’s kinsman to the fact that she sought his protection. The word “covering” is the translation of the same Hebrew word that refers to the “wings” of God. Boaz was the son of Rahab, the harlot from Jericho (Matthew 1:5). He was from the tribe of Judah, a wealthy farmer and an honorable man. He was a man of his word, sensitive to those in need, and cared for his workers. He was also surprised to find a woman at his feet!

Verse 10 indicates that Boaz was a number of years older than Ruth, and verse 11 shows that she had a reputation of being virtuous. Boaz’s response could indicate that he had given some thought to the kinsman matter, because he knew already that there was someone with a closer relationship. He promised to take immediate action, and sent Ruth home with a large gift.

Boaz’s redemption of Ruth was a picture of the redemption price Jesus paid for us, since we cannot pay it ourselves.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- III. Ruth's appeal (3:1-18)
 - A. The plan of Naomi for Ruth's security (3:1-5)
 - B. The request of Ruth for Boaz to act as a kinsman-redeemer (3:6-15)
 - 1. The request of Ruth (3:6-13)
 - 2. The gift for Ruth (3:14-15)
 - C. The report to Naomi (3:16-18)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What gift did Boaz give Ruth before she left the threshing floor?

2. What blessings did Ruth enjoy because she followed Naomi's instructions?

3. How has Christ acted as your Redeemer? What blessings has that brought into your life?

CONCLUSION

Boaz, Ruth, and Naomi knew it was the Lord who cared for them, guided them, and redeemed them. He *was* their rest. Jesus Christ extends a personal invitation to every person to enjoy the rest that only He can give. Have you found His rest?

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel.” (Ruth 4:14)

Some years ago, while spending time with some close friends, I heard the father ask his teenage daughter a question before she left with friends for the evening. “What is your name?” She dutifully responded with a wide smile and the word “Olson,” which was their family surname. As she turned to leave, the father cheerfully reminded her, “Don’t forget.” What was this father’s point? He wanted his daughter to remember that what she did reflected on their whole family. My spouse and I were so impressed with this exchange that we began to ask the same question of our growing children whenever they were going somewhere beyond our direct influence.

Our name often defines our past and affects our future. Sometimes film stars adopt new names. Businesses spend millions to find and then promote just the right name for a new product. Consider the child in our text, *Obed*, whose name means “serving.” Why did his name become important?

Obed’s name was known in the land of Israel because of the faithfulness of his father Boaz to redeem Ruth. Obed’s birth restored a name for his mother Ruth and grandmother Naomi. He was the one who became the continuing link between his ancestral father Judah and Israel’s King David. Perhaps his parents and grandmother at times reminded him that his actions would reflect on the family’s reputation.

God offers us a name as one of His children through Jesus Christ. Through Jesus, redemption has been made available to all humanity. It was through His faithfulness that we have been called into the “family of God” and have been included as a part of His lineage. We should remember each day that our actions will reflect on His Name and family.

BACKGROUND

The city gate was the business center. Merchants sold near the gate, and official business was transacted. Since those entering or exiting the city came through the city gate, it was easy to find ten witnesses. On this particular day, the other kinsman himself came by, and Boaz called him to discuss the redemption business before the elders, thus opening the way for his own offer of redemption to Ruth and Naomi.

The Hebrew word *ga’al* is translated as *kinsman* in most of the account. Some translators have used the phrase “kinsman-redeemer” to show the fullness of the Hebrew meaning. Others have simply used the word *redeemer* in places. This act of redemption took on several forms: marrying a kinsman’s widow, freeing family members from bondage, purchasing a mortgaged piece of family property, and avenging the loss of family. It is interesting to note in this chapter that the nearest kinsman is not named, while Boaz, Ruth, Naomi, and Obed are all named, thus giving them honor for their faithfulness in following God’s plan.

The elders’ blessing equating Ruth with Rachel and Leah, alludes to her inclusion in the lineage of Jacob/Israel. Their mention of the children of Tamar (who was also a Gentile) shows their understanding of the ridicule and curse which followed the failure to raise children to maintain the inheritance within a family unit within Israel.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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IV. Ruth’s reward (4:1-22)

- A. The redemption of Ruth by Boaz (4:1-12)
 - 1. The option of the nearest kinsman (4:1-5)
 - 2. The refusal of the nearest kinsman (4:6-8)
 - 3. The redemption by Boaz (4:9-12)
- B. The marriage and prodigy of Ruth and Boaz (4:13-17)
- C. The genealogy of David (4:18-22)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What connection was there between David, the most famous king of Israel, and Obed?

2. What is significant about King David having a Moabite among his ancestors?

[illegible]

When someone asks you, “What is your name?” will your answer include the family name, “Christian”? Will your life support the claim that you have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and are now living a life by His power and for His glory?

[illegible]



Overview for 1 Samuel

Purpose: The two Books of Samuel, together with Joshua, Judges, and the two Books of Kings, offer a history of God's providential dealings with His people. The Book of 1 Samuel records the life of Samuel, the first prominent person in the history of the monarchy; the reign and decline of Saul, the first king; and the selection and preparation of David, Israel's greatest king.

Author: Unknown, but some think Samuel had much to do with the compiling of information later put in this book. Some have suggested that Nathan's son Zabud may have been the author (1 Kings 4:5). The book also includes the writings of Nathan and Gad (1 Chronicles 29:29).

Date Written: The exact date is unknown, though a general time frame can be made based on internal evidence. Samuel was born prior to 1100 B.C., during the Philistine oppression.

Setting: The Book of 1 Samuel describes Israel's transition from a theocracy (led by God) to a monarchy (led by a king). It was a time of spiritual degradation, when every man did what was "... right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6). The cycles of sin, oppression, repentance, and deliverance were escalating into a deadly spin to destruction. Samuel was God's man of the hour, and he led the people through this time of transition.

Key People: Eli, Hannah, Samuel, Saul, Jonathan, and David.

Summary: In the Hebrew, the manuscripts forming 1 and 2 Samuel are one book. The book was separated into two volumes by the Septuagint translators, later adopted in the Vulgate translation, and was first translated in the Hebrew Bibles at Venice in 1518. The division between the books was appropriately made at the death of Saul, which was a turning point in the history of Israel.

The books bear many evidences of being compiled from pre-existing documents. History was documented

and kept by scribes, and these records became the principal authorities from which historical works were established.

An example of historical documentation is in 1 Samuel 10:25, where it said that Samuel wrote a book descriptive of the manner of the kingdom; he may also have written other books. Most of the accounts and descriptive narratives may be the accounts of eyewitnesses. These were written down by the inspiration of the Spirit of God, so that the finished product was neither strictly history nor biography, but the living Word of God.

The Book of 1 Samuel is divided into three main sections: the history of Samuel (I Samuel 1-12), the history of Saul (I Samuel 9-31), and the beginning and early life of David (I Samuel 16-31). It is a book of both great beginnings and tragic endings.

Eli was judge and priest at the time of Samuel's early years and had ruled for forty years. However, he was a careless father and did not correct his sons, who were also priests. Their immorality and corruption brought the downfall of Eli's house. Eli's death marked the decline of the priesthood, and the rise of the prophets in Israel.

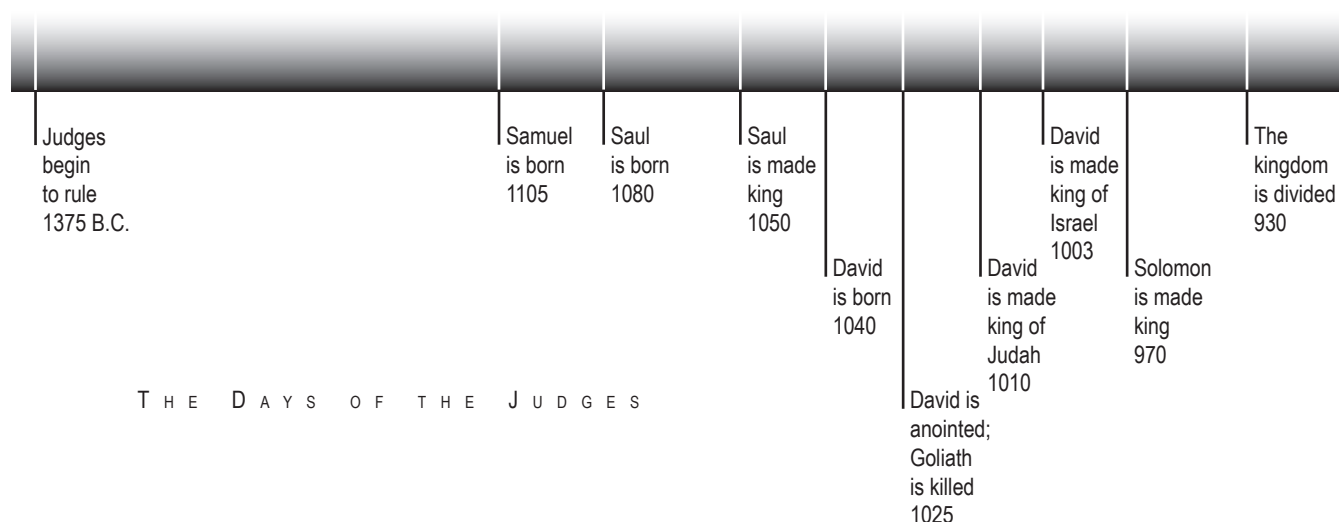
Samuel, who was dedicated by his mother to God's service, became one of Israel's greatest prophets. He was a man who was closely in touch with God—a spiritual leader who completed the work of the judges, initiated the school of the prophets, and anointed Israel's first kings.

Saul, God's choice as Israel's first king, started well—humility, leadership, and bravery marked his early reign. However, he disobeyed God, became jealous of David, and finally had his kingship removed from him by God.

The early years of David occurred during the reign of Saul. A man who followed God, David ministered to Saul, and became a great and acclaimed warrior. His story is continued in the Book of 2 Samuel.

Timeline

Many of these dates are approximate, as reference materials differ.



Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

- I. The judgeship of Samuel (1:1 — 7:17)
 - A. The birth and parentage of Samuel (1:1 — 2:10)
 - B. The call of Samuel (2:11 — 3:21)
 - C. The deliverance by Samuel (4:1 — 7:17)
- II. The reign of Saul (8:1 — 31:13)
 - A. The rise of King Saul (8:1 — 15:35)
 - B. The decline of King Saul and the rise of David (16:1 — 31:13)



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.”
(1 Samuel 1:18)

During World War II, a dreaded message came to my mother-in-law — her son was missing in action! Later they would learn he was actually a prisoner of war. My father-in-law immediately thought the very worst — George would never come home! The family remembers, however, that their mother did not despair. She and her older sister prayed and read the Bible, finding God’s great comfort in Psalm 18, especially verses 27-30. She didn’t talk about the situation a lot, but quietly went about her duties, tending the family and keeping an attitude of prayer.

After fourteen months under terrible prison conditions, her son, along with other captured pilots, returned to their loved ones. She gave God the glory for his return. From the time they were born, she was rearing her children with prayers and a hope that they would serve God and lead honorable lives. Her prayers followed them, and their children, all the days of her life. She reminded me of Hannah, who poured out her soul before the Lord, then went her way, and her countenance was no more sad.

Each year when Elkanah made the trip to Shiloh to worship and offer sacrifices, Hannah would have to endure antagonizing remarks from Peninnah (Elkanah’s other wife) about her inability to conceive a child (verse 6). She longed to have children of her own, so the pain in watching Elkanah with the children of his other wife must have been felt deeply. Through it all, she remembered that she was the “handmaid” or servant of the Lord.

Hannah poured out her heart to God before she voiced her petition to Eli, the priest. When she dedicated her unborn son to God, she was consecrating her own heart and motherly instincts as well. She was trusting God without compromise for Samuel’s future. After all, conditions at the Tabernacle had deteriorated due to Eli’s refusal to deal with his immoral sons, Hophni and Phinehas. As an honest follower of God, Hannah knew that she needed to pay the vow she had made to God.

Hannah is mentioned again in chapter 2 but then we hear of her no more. Although she has just a brief appearance in Scripture, one thing is sure — she kept

her promise to God and the whole land of Israel was blessed through the leadership of her son, Samuel. Today we can benefit from her example of doing what we know we need to do, even though we may have to sacrifice.

BACKGROUND

Eli, the High Priest who saw Hannah praying for a son, also served as a judge during his tenure. However, at this time in his life, Eli was not obeying the Levitical standards as closely as when he assumed his role of priest.

Hannah shared her husband, Elkanah, with his other wife, Peninnah. Jewish law did not forbid polygamy, but it was not part of God’s original plan; His plan was one woman, married to one man, for a lifetime. Elkanah was faithful in taking his family to the “house of the Lord,” which may also be referred to as “the temple,” God’s “habitation,” or “the tabernacle of the congregation.”

Under the Mosaic Law, any person making a vow was bound by God to perform what he or she had uttered. Only under very specific circumstances could a vow be disallowed, as in the case of a husband (or father if a woman was unmarried) disallowing his wife’s vow. In the day that he heard about it, if the husband held his peace, the vow remained in effect and the wife had to perform what was promised. If the husband chose to disallow the vow, the wife was released from it and the Lord would forgive her. (See Numbers 30:2-13.)

It is unclear if or when Elkanah learned of his wife Hannah’s vow to give Samuel “unto the LORD all the days of his life.” However, verses 22 and 23 indicate that he did not resist Hannah when she told him of her desire for Samuel to “abide forever” in the house of the Lord. Considering that Samuel would be his firstborn son of a wife he loved, this shows consecration on his part as well as Hannah’s.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- I. The judgeship of Samuel
 - A. The birth and parentage of Samuel
 1. The ancestry of Samuel (1:1)
 2. The barrenness of Hannah (1:2-8)
 3. The prayer of Hannah (1:9-18)
 - a. The vow (1:9-11)
 - b. The blessing of Eli (1:12-18)
 4. The birth of Samuel (1:19-20)
 5. The dedication of Samuel (1:21-28)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why was Hannah so distressed during the journey, and also at the Temple in Shiloh?

2. The name “Hannah” means “woman of grace.” How do you think Hannah exemplified her name?

3. How have times of deep distress brought you closer to God?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

Adversity often allows us to see our great need of God's grace and strength. As we determine to allow God to work in our lives, and faithfully bring our petitions before Him, there will come a deep-settled peace and assurance that He will hear and answer.

NOTES

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.”
(1 Samuel 2:26)**

The mighty oak tree stands tall as an example of strength and endurance. Few trees have a greater geographical range than the oak; its nearly 300 species grow all across Europe and northern America. The oak may reach heights of sixty to one hundred feet, and acquire a diameter of eight to ten feet.

However, the single mark of supremacy which distinguishes the oak from any other tree in the forest is its ability to defy gravity. Most trees grow primarily in a vertical direction, thus minimizing the pull of gravity. But the oak not only grows vertically but also spreads its limbs horizontally for fifty or sixty feet, so the forces of gravity are greater. Few woods are so durable under all circumstances, so the oak has had a wide variety of uses. It was a favorite wood of the Greeks and Romans for ship building. The Anglo-Saxons used the wood for church building. The tree was also used as a mold for smelting cannons.

In our text today, we see Samuel growing strong before the Lord, even in difficult circumstances. It is not uncommon to struggle spiritually when times are hard. Some people blame their lack of spiritual growth and maturity on these circumstances or their environment—placing the blame on others. Samuel provides the example that one can grow spiritually in spite of one's circumstances. Eli's sons had turned away from God and were committing sin in the house of the Lord, and against the people who came to worship. In the midst of this hardship and wrongdoing, we read that Samuel ministered unto the Lord. Samuel apparently had a desire to do whatever the Lord wanted him to do, and he did it with all of his heart despite the circumstances or environment he was in. In verse 21, we read how he grew before the Lord. In our focus verse we read he “grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.” He became spiritually strong as he continued to serve the Lord. This strength was recognized by the Lord and those who came to the temple to worship.

If we serve the Lord with all our hearts, despite how hard our circumstances or environmental conditions are, we will find ourselves growing spiritually. Like the mighty oak, we can resist the downward pull of “gravity” found in the influences of the world. With God's help we can be an example of strength

and endurance. Maybe today you are facing an especially challenging situation. Put your trust in God and grow stronger in Him!

BACKGROUND

This chapter is one that may be overlooked in the account of Samuel's early years. Chapter 1 records Hannah's vow to God and Samuel's birth. Chapter 3 tells of God's call to Samuel in the night. Tucked between these two chapters, however, are clues to Samuel's eventual call by God: his faithfulness to serve, and his spiritual growth as he served. The word *minister* (used in verses 11 and 18) in the original language means “to serve.”

This chapter opens with Hannah's song. Hannah had just brought Samuel to the house of the Lord in obedience to her promise to the Lord for giving her a son. The song is one of the earliest and most stirring poems in the Old Testament. It describes the attributes of God such as holiness, strength, knowledge, and discernment. It speaks of how God deals with mankind and how His judgment is supreme. Hannah's song is so messianic in character that Mary, the mother of Jesus, incorporated it into her own song of triumph in which she praised God for choosing her to be the mother of Jesus.

Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, did not know the Lord and were very evil. They stole offerings from the people of Israel to use for themselves, and even committed sexual sins with women who came to the Tabernacle. Eli chastised his sons for their actions but they refused to listen to him, so judgment was prophesied against Eli as well as his sons. A prophecy was also given that God would raise up a man to be the faithful priest in the house of the Lord forever. This prophecy was partially fulfilled in Zadoc, of the family of Eleazar, in the beginning of Solomon's reign (see Ezekiel 40:46). The ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy is found in the priesthood of Jesus, the merciful and faithful High Priest.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- I. The judgeship of Samuel
 - A. The birth and parentage of Samuel
 6. The song of Hannah (2:1-10)
 - a. Praise for Jehovah's person (2:1-3)
 - b. Praise for Jehovah's power (2:4-8)
 - c. Praise for prophetic assurances (2:9-10)
 - B. The call of Samuel
 1. The failure of Eli's house (2:11-36)

- a. The presence of Samuel at Shiloh (2:11)
- b. The degeneracy of Eli's sons (2:12-17)
- c. The blessing upon Elkanah and Hannah (2:18-21)
- d. The warning of Eli to his sons (2:22-26)
- e. The prophecy against Eli's house (2:27-36)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was the custom for the sacrifice offering?
What does the text say about the sins of Eli's sons?

2. Why do you think Eli was also judged for the sins of his sons?

3. What are three steps we can take in our personal lives that will encourage spiritual growth?

CONCLUSION

Mature oak trees are not produced overnight, and neither are servants of God. Keep serving God faithfully with all your heart, and see if you don't find yourself growing spiritually!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.”
(1 Samuel 3:10)

My two youngest daughters enjoy using the computer to talk online with their friends. Whenever a call comes on our phone line and my daughters are using the Internet, the name and number of who is calling pops up on the computer screen. They have the choice at this time to accept the call and get off line to answer it, or to ignore the call and continue talking with their friends. Often, from what I have heard, they choose not to answer the phone. When confronted about this, they will usually say that they did not know the caller. The screen had told them the caller's name was “unavailable.”

In today's text, Samuel did not know what the call of God sounded like nor “was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him” (verse 7). Still he answered, running to Eli the priest when he heard his name called, thinking that Eli had called him. As we see in verse 19, Samuel grew and the Lord was with him because he responded to God's call.

In the world today, God calls Christians to be His messengers. Maybe they will not hear an audible voice as Samuel did, but their calling is just as real. Some may be called to preach or to minister to the sick. Others may be called to share their testimony with a neighbor or relative. Some may be called to give their time to writing a message of salvation and hope to those in need.

Regretfully, some choose to ignore God's call. They may rationalize that they want to do something different or less demanding. As a result, they miss out on wonderful blessings the Lord wanted to give them. Because of their disobedience, they also put themselves in grave danger of missing Heaven and eternal life.

Like Samuel, we, too, can have the reputation among those who know us that we are the Lord's. As we endeavor to hear the Lord's voice in this noisy world, He will be faithful to guide our lives and to make us a blessing to those around us.

May we always listen for the Lord's voice and be quick to answer, no matter what His message is. As we heed God's call, others may feel inspired to follow our example. Many souls could be won for God's kingdom as a result of our decision. Let's each

be a “Samuel” today, listening and answering God's call, telling the world there is salvation and eternal life through the Savior of the world.

BACKGROUND

Samuel started his ministry under Eli's guidance. This was a dark time in the history of the Tabernacle worship. Eli was the high priest, but he did nothing to restrain the behaviors of his two sons, even though he knew that they were desecrating the Tabernacle. Weak leadership often leads to moral decay as evidenced in the lives of Eli's sons and the people of Israel, who apparently also worshipped idols at this time. Most seemed uninterested in God or His messages to them.

Verse 7 says, “Samuel did not yet know the LORD.” This means he did not yet have the experience of receiving God's Word. When God called, Samuel did not recognize that he was hearing the voice of God. After hearing his name called for the third time and running to Eli, Eli understood that something great was happening and helped shape Samuel's answer for when God called again.

Eli was 98 years old at this time and almost blind. He lived in a room next to the sanctuary. Samuel is thought to have been about twelve years old when the Lord called him. He slept near where the Lamp and the Ark of God were kept. The Lamp in the sanctuary was supposed to burn continually, not just during the night, and it was Samuel's job to see that it stayed lit. Because of this as well as Samuel's ministry in the Tabernacle, there was still a divine presence in Israel.

It is interesting to note that God chose to tell Samuel His message, rather than the high priest. Eli then had to seek God's message from the child, Samuel. The phrase in verse 20, “all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba,” referred to the widespread reputation that Samuel was developing. Dan was the farthest north of the provinces, while Beer-sheba was the southernmost territory, thus giving a visual of the far-reaching effects Samuel had in the land.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- I. The judgeship of Samuel
 - B. The call of Samuel
 2. The summons of Samuel (3:1-21)
 - a. The call to Samuel (3:1-9)
 - b. The word to Samuel (3:10-15)
 - c. The words related to Eli (3:16-18)
 - d. The fame of Samuel (3:19-21)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Samuel do when he first heard the voice of the Lord?

2. Why did Eli respond with acceptance and offer no excuses when Samuel told him what the Lord had said?

3. How might the Lord call us today? Is it in a different way than He called Samuel?

CONCLUSION

Many times it may seem easier to ignore God's message and continue on with what we are doing or "sleep" through it. We may ignore a phone call once in a while, a call to dinner because we are working, or a call to do something we don't have time for, but let's always keep our hearts tuned for the call of God!

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.” (1 Samuel 4:3)

A while back, my mother gave me a letter she had copied more than fifty years ago. It was called, “Our Saviour’s Letter.” Some of its contents stated that if the commandments were observed, many blessings would be received. If a woman in childbirth had a copy of this letter about her, she would safely deliver her child. Any seagoing vessel having a copy of this letter on board would not be lost. The original writer of the letter stated that it had been written by our Blessed Lord Jesus and had been found under a stone eighteen miles from Jerusalem, sixty-eight years after His crucifixion. I was told that over the years, this letter had been kept as a good luck letter, and my mother was told that if this letter were kept in the house, there was no danger of the house burning. In fact, it was just a piece of paper with words written on it, and it had no power at all.

Similarly, I have heard of others carrying a New Testament in a shirt pocket for good luck. While keeping a Bible close by is good, unless it is read and practiced it will not keep individuals safe or bring good fortune. True security is not in possessing a letter or even a Bible; true security is in having faith in the living God to provide, protect, and bless our lives.

The Children of Israel had been defeated by the Philistines, and in the process had lost four thousand men. This loss was due to Israel’s disobedience to God. Instead of searching their hearts and confessing their sins, the elders believed that if they had the Ark of the Covenant in their possession, it would save them from the enemy. Actually, they were merely attempting to use God to accomplish their own purpose.

In order to move the Ark from one location to another, it had to be carried upon the shoulders of four priests. Eli’s two wicked sons were sent to fetch the Ark from Shiloh and bring it to their battlefield. God will not be used to fulfill selfish purposes of sinful people. The Children of Israel were looking to the Ark of the Covenant to save them, like people trusting good-luck charms. Possessing a symbol of God does not ensure His presence or power. Needless to say,

their faith in the Ark was misplaced. They lost thirty thousand footmen, and the enemy captured the Ark.

God requires obedience, submission, and heart purity. A “good-luck” letter will not stop a vessel from breaking apart in rough seas. Neither did the Ark of the Covenant prevent God from pronouncing judgment upon sins. If we are covered by the Blood of Jesus Christ, we can fully trust in God for daily victories.

BACKGROUND

This chapter covers Israel’s defeat in battle, as well as the capture of the Ark of the Covenant by the Philistines.

The Philistines were a people who had migrated to the Mediterranean coastline from Greece and Crete. By Samuel’s era (about 1050 B.C.) they controlled five city-states and continually attempted to advance inland against Israel’s territory. While Israel could compete on a fairly equal basis with other neighboring nations such as Moab and Ammon, the Philistines had military equipment from Greece. As the first nation in the region to process iron, they also had helmets, shields, swords, and spears that gave them a significant advantage militarily. Throughout the book of 1 Samuel, they were Israel’s major enemy.

After the Israelite conquest of Canaan, the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant had been installed in Shiloh, a city in the territory of Ephraim that served as Israel’s religious center during the period of the judges (see Joshua 18:1). When the conflict with the Philistines resulted in the death of four thousand Israelite soldiers, the elders of the people decided that the next battle could be won if the Ark was with them in battle. This symbol of God’s presence had been in battle before. For example, the Ark went in front of the marchers around the city of Jericho (see Joshua 6:6-8), but in that case, it had been carried at the command of God. In this case, the elders simply viewed its presence as a sort of good luck charm.

The Ark was constructed of a wood called eron (in Hebrew), but more commonly known as acacia. It measured five spans; a span being the distance between the tip of the thumb and the tip of the little finger fully extended; generally accepted to be nine inches. The breadth and height were three spans each. The lid of the box was solid gold, and was crowned by a pair of gold cherubim facing each other. Two golden rings were attached to each of the longer boards. Gilt bars or staves passed along each board through the rings to enable the priests to carry it on

their shoulders. The entire Ark was overlaid inside and out with pure gold so the wood was not seen.

Verses 10-11 record that in spite of the presence of the Ark, Israel was defeated once more by the Philistines, with an even greater loss of life, and the Ark of God was taken.

God had told Samuel about the impending judgment of Eli and his evil sons (see 1 Samuel 3:11-14). Verses 12-22 record that Hophni and Phinehas were slain in the battle that day, and when Eli heard of their death and that the Ark of God has been captured, he died as well.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- I. The judgeship of Samuel
 - C. The deliverance by Samuel
 - 1. The defeat of Israel
 - a. The judgment upon Eli's house (4:1-22)
 - (1) The historical setting (4:1-4)
 - (2) The death of Eli's sons (4:5-11)
 - (3) The death of Eli (4:12-18)
 - (4) The birth of Ichabod (4:19-22)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What happened to Eli after he was told the Ark had been captured?

2. What should Israel have done after losing the first battle with the Philistines?

3. Name three specific instances in your life that have caused you to have confidence in God?

CONCLUSION

A person who has his heart covered by Jesus' Blood has the greatest protection afforded to mankind. Such a person has no need of a good-luck charm.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god.” (1 Samuel 5:7)

After an introductory period as a substitute bus driver, I was given my first regular school bus route—the notorious Route B-18. My initiation to the hazards of this route was not long in coming. One evening, a veritable snowstorm of paper balls was unleashed throughout the length of the bus. If you had been there, you might almost have thought the situation was funny—if you weren’t the one who had to clean up afterward. I counted over one hundred wadded up eight-and-one-half by eleven sheets.

Several factors put me at a disadvantage: As the driver, I had my back toward the students and had to rely on the occasional glimpse in the rearview mirror to monitor the situation. Also, when many kids are involved, you can’t just pick out a few individuals and reprimand them. Since I was new, I did not know the students by name. Finally, even if I had been able to identify specific individuals, the discipline options open to me were few and tended to be rather slow in developing.

The Philistines initially viewed God in much the same way as my riders viewed me: having some power but fairly remote. God, however, left the Philistines with no doubt as to who was responsible for their troubles and that He was not inhibited by any restrictions. He let them know that His Ark did not belong beside their idol Dagon. They viewed the Ark like a pagan idol. Then they found it was more—it represented the God who had power over Dagon.

Today, people need to be keenly aware that the true and living God does not suffer from any limitations. God sees everything that we do regardless of where we are or who we are with. Furthermore, He has the power to control every circumstance. Although His judgment may not always be as swift as it was for the Philistines, He is just, and His judgment will come. Ultimately, He will assist and defend His own children.

BACKGROUND

The Israelites had gone to war with the Philistines without the blessing of God. They lost four thousand men. Instead of beseeching God to go before them, they arrogantly sent for the Ark of the Covenant and

two priests to carry it out before them. God had set in place rules regarding how the Ark would be transported, and this involved four priests, not two. These two priests, Hophni and Phinehas, were the evil sons of Eli. They believed that the Ark was the winner of wars, rather than God, whose glory was represented by the Ark. Therefore, Israel lost the battle and the Ark.

The Philistines were not unfamiliar with the God of the Israelites. They had heard stories of the Israelites escape from Egypt and their crossing of the Red Sea. They were aware of the power of God. When they heard the noise the Israelites made when the Ark entered into the camp, they were afraid, but they challenged themselves and chose to fight diligently. The result was that they killed thirty thousand Israelites and captured the Ark of the Covenant.

The Philistines often brought the spoils of war to their temple as an offering to their god. Accordingly, they placed the Ark in the temple of Dagon, in the city of Ashdod. Dagon was the Philistines’ primary god. Today, the image of Dagon might be referred to as a mermaid, with the upper body and head of a woman and the lower part a fish.

At this time, the Philistines had five capital cities—Gath, Ekron, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Gaza—and each city had a “lord.” The Ark was taken to three of these cities, and judgment came on the people in these places. Bible scholars feel the plague may have been the bubonic plague, perhaps spread by rats or mice.

The “trespass offering,” which the Philistines made to stop the judgment, was typical of how they would have tried to pacify their gods when they thought they were angry. They incorporated another test to confirm whether or not Israel’s God had really sent the plagues. Only God could cause cows to leave their newborn calves and go in another direction.

Beth-shemesh was a priestly city, and the men there should have treated the Ark according to God’s directions. Because some looked into it, judgment fell on them also.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The judgeship of Samuel
 - C. The deliverance by Samuel
 - 1. The defeat of Israel
 - b. The capture of the Ark
 - (1) The judgment upon the Philistines (5:1-12)
 - (a) Upon their god, Dagon (5:1-5)
 - (b) Upon the people (5:6-12)

- (2) The return of the Ark
 - (a) The counsel of the Philistines (6:1-9)
 - (b) The Ark at Bethshemesh (6:10-21)
 - [1] The return of the Ark (6:10-16)
 - [2] The symbols in the Ark (6:17-18)
 - [3] The judgment because of the Ark (6:19-21)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How many city-states comprised the land of the Philistines?

2. Why did God send such severe judgment upon Beth-shemesh?

3. How would you behave differently in your every-day life if you believed someone was watching?

CONCLUSION

We want to remember the importance of showing reverence to God and His power. The primary way to do this is by living a life of obedience to Him.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.” (1 Samuel 7:12)

You have probably seen signs along highways that say, “Historical Marker ¼ mile ahead.” The purpose of a historical marker is to point out a particular place where some significant event transpired, and to give a mini-history lesson. Something worth remembering happened at that place.

We need to have spiritual historical markers—landmarks that we can look back to when we are facing spiritual battles. The experience of salvation is such a marker; sometimes people say, “I could take you to the very place where God saved me.” One man in our congregation testifies, “In the tabernacle, right under the flagpole, that was my spot.” Receiving sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Ghost are also landmarks in a Christian’s life.

Additionally, we need to have faith landmarks, times when God worked for us personally. When our son was a senior in high school, God made it possible for him to have a job-school arrangement that was different from any others in his school. His counselor said, “I have never heard of this being done here before.” We told our son that her comment was an additional confirmation sent by the Lord, so that when the enemy came and said the circumstances “just happened,” we would have that verification of the miracle. That experience has been a reminder to our family that God can do the impossible.

You and your family may have similar stories of times when the Lord helped financially, gave miraculous healing, or protected from danger. Some people write these experiences down to help preserve the landmark.

In our focus verse, Samuel established a historical marker. He had Israel put up a memorial to commemorate the great victory that the Lord had won for them. They called it Ebenezer and said that the Lord had helped them to that point.

We can benefit from the example of the Israelites. Just as they established physical landmarks, let us make certain we establish spiritual landmarks. Then, if we take time to review them periodically, our faith will increase in God who performed these miracles in our behalf.

BACKGROUND

The departure of the Ark of the Lord, captured by the Philistines in battle, signified that God had forsaken the people of Israel and would not help them. The Philistines quickly learned that the presence of God’s Ark was not compatible with their idolatrous ways, and in time, they voluntarily returned it to Israel. The Ark eventually was taken to Kirjath-jearim, where it was put in the care of Abinadab and Eleazar and remained there until King David brought it to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6).

Having spent twenty years in a state of defeat and subjugation, the Israelites realized that they were in a pathetic condition. With the help of Samuel who exhorted and prayed for them, Israel turned back to the Lord. The nation repented and destroyed the idols. In the Canaanite religion, Baal was the son of Dagon, and the chief god. *Baalim* is the plural form of *Baal*, which indicates there were many statues of Baal at different places.

Israel recommitted themselves to the Lord. Their confession, “We have sinned against the LORD” (verse 6) was crucial to God working for them. The glory of God returned to Israel. The power of God was once more upon the people, and they regularly gathered together to worship Him.

The Philistines heard that the Israelites were gathering, and waged war against Israel. At this time, Israel did not have a standing army (a permanent army maintained in peacetime as well as war). Samuel and the people called upon the Lord, and God thundered on the Philistines, causing them confusion, and giving Israel a miraculous victory.

The meaning of Ebenezer is “stone of help.” It was placed as a memorial to remind Israel that they had only received victory because God had helped them. This memorial is referenced in the old hymn, *Come, Thou Fount*, by Robert Robinson, when it says, “Here I raise mine Ebenezer; hither by Thy help I’m come.”

Samuel was the last of Israel’s judges. He was also a prophet, a priest, and a ruler. It appears that almost single-handedly, through God’s help, he was instrumental in this national revival and in educating the people again in God’s laws.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The judgeship of Samuel
 - C. The deliverance by Samuel

1. The defeat of Israel
 - b. The capture of the Ark
 - (2) The return of the Ark
 - (c) The Ark at Kirjath-jearim (7:1-2)
2. The victory of Israel (7:3-17)
 - a. Samuel's promise of deliverance (7:3-4)
 - b. The defeat of the Philistines (7:5-14)
 - c. Samuel's ministry summarized (7:15-17)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Samuel tell the Israelites to do if they were serious about serving God?

2. What do you think Israel expected would happen when they asked Samuel to pray for them as they faced the Philistines?

3. What lessons can we learn from the way God helped Israel when they returned to the Lord?

4. How can you preserve accounts of the extraordinary helps that the Lord has given you so you can pass them on to your family and friends?

CONCLUSION

God is our Helper. As long as we maintain our loyalty to Him and stay within His will, we can expect to have victories that will cause us to praise Him for His supernatural works.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.”
(1 Samuel 8:7)

Our pastor tells of a time when he was applying for a different employment position, one that he really wanted. He had been interviewed, and it seemed that he was going to be awarded this job. As he was driving to what he expected would be the final interview, he prayed, “Lord, You know that I really want this job. I want it so much that I am not sure if I can truly see Your will. Please help me! If this position is not Your will for me, please close the opportunity.” He did not get the job, and he was disappointed at the time. However, within a year that company was no longer in business. He had proved, once again, that following God is the best plan.

Though most of us know that principle in our heads, sometimes when we want something badly, we may be tempted to press God to give us our way. The Lord has a particular plan for each of our lives, but He can only direct us on an individual basis if we are willing to do what He says. If we are determined to have our own way, He may allow that—granting His permissive will—but it will not be to our advantage. God’s plans for us are the best, and we cannot improve upon them by pushing for our own ways.

In our text today, the Children of Israel determined to have a king. They pressed until God said yes. Their willful rejection of God’s kingly rule and His plans for them was wrong. However, God granted their desire, although their self-centered request had tragic results. The Omniscient Lord could see their future unhappiness, and He had Samuel warn them of the disadvantages to having a king. Still, they determined to have their own way.

What we consider right by our natural thinking is not always spiritually best for us. Doing what God wants us to do may not always be according to our will. If we will yield to Him and follow His instructions, we will be blessed every time. Obeying God always results in good, although we may not see that good until eternity.

BACKGROUND

The time between chapters 7 and 8 may have been twenty or twenty-five years. This chapter marks

a transition between the era of the judges and the beginning of the monarchy.

Samuel had judged Israel well, saved them from the Philistines, and led them back to God. However, by this time he was an old man, and the Children of Israel did not want another judge. Instead, they demanded to be given a king to judge them and lead them in battle (verse 20), so they could be like the nations around them.

God knew that Israel would someday want a king, and so through Moses gave directions regarding that time (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). Even before that, God had told Abraham and Jacob that their descendant would include kings (Genesis 17:6; 35:11). In his final days, Jacob had said, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah” (Genesis 49:10). God wanted these changes to come at His timing and instigation, but Israel was determined to have a king and refused to wait on God’s timing.

At God’s instruction, Samuel warned them, carefully explaining the negative consequences of such a choice. He said the king would:

- Take their children to serve in the palace and army
- Take the best of their grains, grapes, olives, and animals
- Demand slave labor
- Tax them

These predictions were fulfilled, especially in the time of Solomon’s reign.

In spite of the warnings, Israel insisted on a king. Their rejection was not of Samuel, but rather of God, that He would not reign over them. God granted their request, and for the next 450 years, they had forty-one kings, most of whom did not follow God but led the people far from Him.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The reign of Saul
 - A. The rise of King Saul
 - 1. The demand of Israel for a king (8:1-22)
 - a. The failure of Samuel’s successors (8:1-3)
 - b. The request of the elders of Israel (8:4-9)
 - (1) The request of the elders (8:4-6)
 - (2) The counsel to Samuel (8:7-9)
 - c. The Lord’s warning about the request (8:10-18)
 - d. The request renewed (8:19-22)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why do you think God allowed Israel to have a king at this time?

[illegible]

2. What was the result of their request?

[illegible]

3. What safeguards can we place in our lives to help us do God's will even when it seems difficult?

CONCLUSION

Sometimes we may be tempted to want to go our own way rather than to obey God. We need to be careful to submit to and obey Him, because His ways are always best in the long term.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me.” (1 Samuel 9:15-16)

George Washington Carver was a famous African-American botanist. He developed over four hundred synthetic substances, among them a milk substitute made from peanuts and sweet potatoes. In a lecture, he revealed his secret of success:

“I asked, ‘Dear Creator, please tell me what the universe was made for?’

“The great Creator answered, ‘You want to know too much for that little mind of yours. Ask something more your size.’

“Then I asked, ‘Dear Mr. Creator, tell me what man was made for.’

“Again the great Creator replied, ‘Little man, you still ask too much. Cut down the extent of your request and improve the intent.’

“So then I asked, ‘Please, Mr. Creator, will you tell me why the peanut was made?’

“‘That’s better, but even then it’s infinite. What do you want to know about the peanut?’

“‘Mr. Creator, can I make milk out of the peanut?’”

“‘What kind of milk do you want, good Jersey milk or just plain boarding-house milk?’

“And then the great Creator taught me how to take the peanut apart and put it together again.”¹

George Washington Carver knew that if a person communicated with God, God would direct him. Samuel knew that too, and the focus verse indicates that on this occasion, the Lord “told Samuel in his ear” what he should do.

God may not show us how to take the peanut apart or instruct us to anoint a king. However, He will be faithful to direct us if we will communicate with Him.

In order to do that, we will need to make sure we are obeying Him and heeding His Word. We will need to develop a relationship of regular prayer and thanksgiving. Then we can follow George Washington Carver’s advice and “walk and talk with God and let Him direct your path.”²

BACKGROUND

This chapter marks the shift of focus from Samuel to Saul. The first two verses of the chapter show that Saul’s family had prestige and that, from man’s perspective, Saul appeared to be an excellent choice for a king. It is important to remember that God directed Samuel to anoint Saul, but it was only God’s permissive will, because the Children of Israel insisted on having a king.

Saul’s father had sent him on a mission to find their lost donkeys. In Biblical times, donkeys were considered necessities and were used for many purposes, including farming, hauling, and transportation. Even the poorest families owned at least one. To own a number of donkeys indicated wealth, and losing them was a disaster. Kish, Saul’s father, was wealthy, as evidenced by his many donkeys.

In verse 6, Saul and his servant prepared to travel to the city where Samuel the prophet lived—believed to be Ramah. The phrase, “All that he saith cometh surely to pass” confirms Samuel as a true prophet according to Deuteronomy 18:22.

Before Saul arrived, God had revealed to Samuel that he was to anoint Saul to be captain over Israel. He also told him about the missing donkeys. Although Samuel’s heart was heavy because of Israel’s insistence upon having a king, he obeyed God and prepared for Saul’s anointing. Because the maidens were preparing to draw water, we know that Saul and his servant arrived at the city in the evening. The “high place” these young women referred to (verse 12) was a place for sacrifice and prayer. It evidently also had a banquet hall (“parlour” in verse 22), and thirty people were invited to the special meal that Samuel had arranged.

Saul did not understand at this time the full implications of all Samuel said to him. However, he did humbly protest that his family was “the least in the smallest” tribe in Israel. Samuel disregarded that comment; he knew that was not important to God.

The right shoulder of the animal was the portion of the offering that went to the priest, yet Samuel had reserved it for Saul. After the feast, Samuel had Saul spend the night with him so they could talk. By the time Saul left Samuel, he clearly knew what was happening.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The reign of Saul
 - A. The rise of King Saul

- 3.** Name four things we should do when we need direction from God.

[illegible]

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What situation did the Lord use to arrange a private meeting between Saul and Samuel?

2. Why do you think Saul reacted the way he did to Samuel's words in verses 19-27?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

When God gives you direction, listen and obey!
God's way is always the best way!

NOTES

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes, and by your thousands.” (1 Samuel 10:19)

My wife always has crafts for the little ones in her pre-school Sunday school class. She does her best to provide them with materials to make something especially nice that they can be excited to take home and show to their families. Of course, when dealing with such young children, she makes the craft simple, and demonstrates with careful step-by-step instructions.

Even so, there are some youngsters who feel they MUST do everything their own way! No amount of encouragement and careful demonstration will sway them otherwise. As you might expect, the results vary! How disappointing it is to see a messed-up project. However, her love for the little ones in her class keeps her going, and you can be sure next Sunday there will be another charming craft for the children to work on.

The Children of Israel insisted on their own way in having a king. God had given them everything they needed to be successful, including step-by-step instructions. They had not followed His commandments, and at this time they were convinced that having a king would be the solution to their problems.

Perhaps you can look back in your life and see times where you followed your own way and ended up in a mess. Also, you may be able to look back to situations when you heeded God's step-by-step instructions, possibly without understanding them, and saw the Lord work out details in your life in a better way than you could have imagined.

How it must grieve the Lord when He sets out a pattern for our success, but we are so consumed with our own desires that we are blinded to His plans! How often do we settle for a “mess” when God has far greater plans for our lives? Today, may the purpose of our hearts be to follow God's directions and have His will worked out in our lives.

BACKGROUND

God's plan for Israel was that He should be their King. From time to time, He had raised up leaders as needed. Gideon, Barak, and Samson were examples of military leaders, and Deborah and Samuel were examples of spiritual leaders.

At the time of today's text, Samuel had served the nation of Israel well for many years as a prophet and priest. The end of his life was drawing near, and without an heir apparent, the people wanted a king to lead them so they would be just like all their neighboring countries. This clearly was against God's will, and Samuel plainly told them as much, but they were resolute in their demands. Therefore, God chose Saul to be a captain (“commander” in the original Hebrew) of his people.

When Samuel anointed Saul, it was a symbolic act showing that he was appointed by God. Priests or prophets anointed Israel's kings. The oil was a special mixture with costly spices, myrrh, and olive oil, and this same oil was used to anoint the priests.

To confirm the authenticity of the anointing, Samuel foretold three events that would happen to Saul: two men would report the asses had been found and that Kish, his father, was concerned about Saul; he would receive two loaves of bread from three men; and a company of prophets would meet him, and God's Spirit would come upon him. All these events came to pass.

Saul was given a spiritual anointing from God when he received a new heart and the Spirit of God came upon him (verses 6 and 9-10). God came into Saul's life and changed him from what he had been before, thereby enabling him to do what God had called him to do, which was to be the king. When he met the prophets and God's Spirit came upon him, Saul praised God and worshipped Him. The surprise of the people who knew Saul (“Is Saul also among the prophets?”) indicates that Saul had been noticeably changed.

The public appointment of Saul as king took place at Mizpeh, where God had previously delivered Israel from the Philistines (chapter 7). When Samuel told the people the “manner of the kingdom” (verse 25), he was, no doubt, confirming that Israel's government would operate in the manner that God directed in Deuteronomy 17:14-20.

Gibeah was Saul's home and therefore became the political capital of Israel at this time. Samuel resided in Ramah, and therefore that town was the religious center. This was the first time the political and religious centers were separated.

In chapter 11, God established Saul as king in the hearts of his countrymen. The Ammonites were Lot's descendants. Nahash means “snake.” When Saul heard that the people of Jabesh were threatened, the Spirit of God came upon him. Further proof that God

was in control was shown when the fear of the Lord fell on the people as Saul moved into action. Ultimately, the mighty army of the Ammonites was partially destroyed and completely scattered, while the nation of Israel was unified under their new king. As a result, Saul's position as king was solidified, and the whole nation rejoiced and gave thanks to God.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The reign of Saul
 - A. The rise of King Saul
 - 2. The anointing of Saul to be King
 - c. Saul's anointing by Samuel (10:1-16)
 - (1) The anointing and instructions by Samuel (10:1-8)
 - (2) The prophesying of Saul (10:9-13)
 - (3) The return of Saul (10:14-16)
 - 3. The vindication of Saul as king (10:17 — 11:15)
 - a. Saul's appointment as king (10:17-27)
 - b. Saul's defeat of the Ammonites (11:1-11)
 - (1) The threat to Jabesh-gilead (11:1-5)
 - (2) The defeat of Nahash (11:6-11)
 - c. Saul's approval by Israel (11:12-15)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why did the people of the nation of Israel want a king? Why did Samuel oppose the idea?

2. How did Saul react to being chosen as the leader of the people?

3. How do you suppose the history of the nation of Israel would have been different if they had not insisted on having a king?

4. In what ways do we benefit when we discern the will of God for our lives and follow His leading?

CONCLUSION

In God's infinite love and mercy, He continues to bless us when we stray into His permissive will rather than cling to His perfect will. How much greater our blessings are when we stay centered in His perfect will.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Behold, here I am: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.”
(1 Samuel 12:3)

As a mother, I am responsible for many different aspects of my children’s care: grooming, clothing, meals, and much to their chagrin, discipline. My husband and I have established a policy of following through with what we say. If we say we will go to the park, we make every effort to take them there. Follow through carries into the discipline area, as well. If we tell our children there are consequences for certain behaviors, we follow through. As we do, it assures them that they can count on us to do what we say.

Do they understand this principle? I believe they do. Not long ago, as I drove my son to preschool, I told him that I would look for new sneakers while he was at school. When I picked him up from school, he asked me if I brought his new sneakers in the car. I asked him, “How did you know I had new sneakers for you?” He said, “You told me you were going to get some.” Then I asked him if I always do what I say I’m going to do. He quickly said, “Yes!”

Although my son may sometimes hope I don’t follow through with my words, he knows that he can depend on me for the truth. I have established a track record.

In this verse, Samuel was making a point about his track record with the Children of Israel. He asked them, “Whose ox have I taken?” “Whom have I defrauded?” The Children of Israel answered back that Samuel spoke the truth! He was to be believed because his track record was clean. Samuel was establishing a point of reference. Basically it was: I have not lied to you and I am not going to start now; believe me when I tell you that you have done wrong.

We should be careful to keep our word. Then those around us can always be sure that we will do what we say.

BACKGROUND

Judges had governed Israel for almost five hundred years. With the anointing of a king, Samuel took the opportunity to remind the Children of Israel of his own credibility. It was common at that time for

officials to make money because of their positions, but Samuel had not done that.

Samuel also reminded the Israelites of how God had sent leaders who had helped them in the past. He referenced the cycle that had become common to Israel, of forgetting God and then repenting and seeking deliverance. In verse 11, Jerubbaal is another name for Gideon, and Bedan probably refers to Barak.

Finally, Samuel challenged them to obey God’s commandments. “The LORD” is mentioned over thirty times in this chapter, indicating how much Samuel wanted Israel to serve God. Samuel’s own intentions were clear. He planned to continue serving God, and this included interceding for the people of Israel and teaching them God’s Word.

Samuel was meeting with the Children of Israel in late May to early June—an important time in wheat harvesting. There were two rainy seasons: *yoreh* (the early rains) and *malqosh* (the latter rains). Today, we would refer to these times as fall and spring. Knowing this, the thunderstorm that ensued was considered miraculous, as rain rarely fell during the harvest time. The people knew that rain at this time could cause great damage to the crops and that it was a sign of God’s displeasure regarding their request for a king. The miracle also confirmed that Samuel’s words were from God.

God chose Israel as His people because He wanted them to help other nations learn about Him. God promised not to abandon them, but He would discipline them for disobedience in an effort to cause them to live right.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The reign of Saul
 - A. The rise of King Saul
 - 4. The final address of Samuel (12:1-25)
 - a. Samuel’s integrity cited (12:1-5)
 - b. Samuel’s plea for obedience to the Lord (12:6-18)
 - c. Samuel’s words of comfort (12:19-25)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What miracle did God perform at Samuel’s request?

2. Why was Samuel frustrated with the Children of Israel?

3. What lessons can we apply to our own lives about keeping God first?

CONCLUSION

What is your track record? We want a reputation that we do what we say we will. Even more importantly, we want to obey what God says to do.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.” (1 Samuel 13:13)

Disobedience does not pay. That is a concept that we try to teach our children while they are still young. The discipline we give them is intended to help them understand just how foolish their disobedience was, and also to cause them to remember not to disobey in the future.

However, once we become adults, we must take care not to forget this concept ourselves. For example, if we disregard speed zones when we are driving, we may have to pay for our lack of obedience to the traffic laws in the form of a traffic citation. At a much more critical level, we need to be sure that we do not become neglectful or impatient and thus disobey God.

Waiting on God can be one of the strongest tests of obedience. One lady testifies that she prayed about a husband. God clearly let her know that He would give her one, and that He had a duty for her in that marriage. God helped her to understand that she would have to wait for a period of time, but never did she guess that she would have to wait over fourteen years! The waiting was hard, but now she is married to a leader in our church. She is so glad that she held on to God’s promise and kept waiting. What a sad story it would be if she had given up after a few years!

In today’s text, Saul became nervous when Samuel did not arrive, and the men of his army began to desert him. He disobeyed God’s commandments when he made a sacrifice, which should have been done only by a priest. Samuel told him that he had “done foolishly.”

As we face each day, we do not want to do foolishly. We want to ask God to help us obey Him. We will be glad that we did!

BACKGROUND

King Saul started out with high ideals, good motivation, and God’s strength behind him. Two years into his reign he chose a small group of three thousand fighting men. Michmash was north of Jerusalem. Gibeah, where Jonathan and his one thousand men were camped, was approximately fifteen miles away. Jonathan and his troops defeated the Philistine garrison at Geba, and King Saul sent the word around to

encourage his people. The Philistines took this act as a declaration of war and gathered their massive army together to fight against Israel.

The Children of Israel, seeing the army gathering against them, quickly became fearful. Many went into hiding, and those who stuck with Saul were described as “trembling.” Saul became impatient and made a sacrifice just before Samuel arrived. Saul’s downward slide was characterized by three attitudes: impatience, pride, and unbelief. Saul made unwise decisions because he looked at things with the natural eye instead of the spiritual eye of faith. He then tried to cover up his actions with half-truths and lies, minimizing his own faults and not taking any blame.

Israel was greatly outnumbered. The Philistines were “as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude” (verse 5). In verse 2, Saul had three thousand men. By verse 15, he was down to six hundred. Also, the army of Israel was without weapons. There were not even Israelite blacksmiths who could sharpen the farming tools.

“Spoilers,” referenced in verse 17, were raiders, and these bands of men were on the roads going north, south, east, and west. Ophrah was to the north, Zeboim was to the east, and Beth-horon was to the west. The “passage of Michmash,” referenced in verse 23, was to the south. In the natural, Israel’s situation looked hopeless.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The reign of Saul
 - A. The rise of King Saul
 - 5. Saul’s initial conflict with the Philistines
 - a. The scattering of Israel’s army (13:1-7)
 - b. The impetuosity of Saul (13:8-14)
 - (1) Saul’s sin (13:8-10)
 - (2) Saul’s excuses (13:11-13)
 - (3) Saul’s rejection announced (13:14)
 - c. The oppression of Israel (13:15-23)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why did King Saul offer the sacrifice himself?

2. Saul's downward slide seems to follow a pattern in 13:8-12. What pattern do you see? How could a pattern like this apply to one's spiritual maturity?

[illegible]

3. Perhaps you are waiting for an answer from God. How can you encourage yourself to keep holding on in faith?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

God is never late. He wants us to wait on Him no matter what the circumstances appear to be. He wants to help us build our faith and spiritual maturity and to lead us to victories. If we are obedient, God will give us the victory in His time.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armourbearer, and said, Come up to us, and we will shew you a thing. And Jonathan said unto his armourbearer, Come up after me: for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel.” (1 Samuel 14:12)

Agnes could sing—that was obvious from the time she was a child. When she was a young teenager, Agnes gave her heart to the Lord. As a young woman, she had the opportunity to take voice lessons from a prominent maestro in San Francisco, California. This man was impressed with her talent, and he pushed her to join the opera and go on to obtain fame and fortune. Agnes just shook her head and asked him, “Don’t you think the Lord needs some good talent too? I want to sing for the glory of God!” One day, another singer came into the studio during Agnes’ lesson. Her teacher introduced Agnes, saying, “This is the lady who is going to sing for the Lord!”

Agnes had a different perspective than many people do. She chose to follow God rather than to go in the direction the world would have recommended. She made that choice because her sole desire was for God to be glorified by her singing and her life.

Jonathan also had a different perspective. We can see that from the focus verse, which gives a little glimpse into his heart. Jonathan did not go into battle to bring glory to himself. He wanted a victory that would honor and glorify God and benefit their nation.

Who receives the credit for what we do? What is our motivation for our activities? Do we pray that God will be honored by our lives? A sense of fulfillment quite naturally goes with securing a large contract on the job, or getting an excellent grade on a college final, or even successfully presenting a musical number in church. It is natural to feel good when our children are well-behaved, or when the meal we made for a family whose mother is ill turns out perfectly.

There is nothing wrong with the satisfaction that comes with a job well done, yet we want to be certain that the purpose of our hearts is to bring glory to God, not to ourselves. Agnes knew that God had given her the ability to sing, and that she would be accountable for using that talent for Him. Jonathan knew that victory came only through God. We can have a clear understanding in our hearts that God is the reason for every success in our lives. He deserves the glory, and we want to give it to Him.

BACKGROUND

Even though Saul was the king and leader of the Children of Israel, in this chapter, Jonathan was the one who stood out as the hero. Jonathan believed that numbers did not matter with God. He believed that God would stand behind His promises and work for Israel, and he and his armor bearer were brave enough to believe God and take action.

Saul and his men were camped under a tree, and Ahiah the priest was with them. The ephod, in verse 3, was a part of the priest’s robes, which contained the Urim and Thummim. The Urim and Thummim were two flat stones or plates used for finding God’s will. The meaning of the names are “curses” and “perfection,” and their relative positions when they came out of the ephod indicated a yes or no answer from God. This way of finding God’s leading was also referenced in verse 19 when Saul said, “Withdraw thine hand.” Jonathan, however, asked God directly for a sign as to whether or not he and his armor bearer should go up to the Philistines (verse 9).

The text implies that the terrain was not easy. The two men climbed up using their hands. When they arrived at the top, they engaged in hand-to-hand combat and twenty men were killed. God sent help in the form of an earthquake. The result was confusion among the Philistines, and a disorderly retreat in which the Philistines killed one another. Israelites came out of hiding to fight, and some Israelites that had been in the Philistine army changed back to Israel’s side.

Sadly, Saul made rash and unwise decisions. His oath that no one should eat caused his men to be faint and tired when they should have been fighting. Then once the oath had expired, they were so hungry that they did not prepare the food properly and ate it with the blood, which was a violation of the Law.

Jonathan was not aware of his father’s command. He ate some honey, and nearly had to die when the lots that were cast showed that he was guilty. Saul was not willing to admit that he had made a mistake and a rash command. He would have allowed his son to be killed, but the people rescued Jonathan.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The reign of Saul
 - A. The rise of King Saul
 - 5. Saul’s initial conflict with the Philistines
 - d. The route of the Philistines (14:1-23)

- 3.** You may not be facing a Philistine stronghold today, but you may be facing daunting difficulties. How can you show the same type of faith that Jonathan showed?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

God wants to be glorified in your life. He can be if you will trust Him as Jonathan did. Who knows how He might use you today!

NOTES

[illegible]

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”
(1 Samuel 15:22)

My father gave me a bit of advice when I embarked on my first experience as an employee, and his words illustrate the importance of heeding those in authority over us. He said, “You may not always agree with your boss’s instructions or methods, but perform as instructed just because he is your boss and he signs your check!” He was not referring to being asked to do something sinful or illegal, of course. He was warning me not to do things in my own way, but rather to simply follow directions.

How often people desire to substitute some other action for obedience! Yet, “obedience is better than sacrifice.” Any number of good works or positive actions cannot take the place of following instructions. This is especially true when it comes to yielding ourselves to God and doing His will.

One man testifies of how sinful and desperately unhappy he was. He said, “I thought I was going to lose my mind. Hoping to shake the feeling, I started going to church. I thought that maybe giving money to the church would help. I even tried to ‘help the poor’ by making about fifty bologna sandwiches to take downtown and hand out to the street people. Nothing helped.” He was trying to rid himself of guilt by making “sacrifices.”

This man came to a church service one evening, and the minister asked, “Who are you serving?” The man knew that he was not serving God. At the end of that service, he went forward to an altar of prayer and cried out from the depths of his soul, “God, have mercy on me!” God answered and changed his life. He found out that obedience to God was what mattered.

In today’s text, Saul had followed his own judgment and the will of the people rather than obeying God. He told Samuel that they had saved the cattle to sacrifice them to God. However, God was looking for obedience, not Saul’s excuses and plans.

God is looking for obedience in our lives too. Let’s do what God says to do today!

BACKGROUND

In this chapter, God gave Saul another opportunity to choose complete obedience to His instructions.

Explicit commands were given, but verse 9 gives an accurate account of what actually transpired.

To “utterly destroy” may seem like a harsh directive, but the Amalekites lived by using guerrilla terrorist tactics. They attacked nations and took their riches and families. Descendants of Esau, they first fought the Children of Israel not long after the exodus from Egypt. After Israel arrived in the Promised Land, the Amalekites attacked them, and continued their raids whenever they possibly could. They wanted to wipe out Israel. Additionally, their idolatry was a threat to Israel’s obedience to God.

Saul’s actions were a direct violation of God’s commands. Then Saul was hypocritical enough to tell Samuel that he had followed God’s directions. When Samuel challenged him, Saul blamed the people.

When God said, “It repenteth me,” in verse 11, He was not indicating He had made a mistake in making Saul king, but He was expressing His sorrow at Saul’s disobedience. Later in verse 29, Samuel said that God would not repent, meaning He would not change His mind or His course of action.

“To obey is better than sacrifice” is a phrase that defines a Biblical principle—giving something to God cannot replace a heartfelt desire to do God’s will. How could Saul expect God to accept sacrifices of animals that God had commanded should be killed? Samuel’s words were not discounting the Law and Israel’s worship system. Rather, he was challenging Saul to look at his own hypocrisy.

Although Saul finally said, “I have sinned,” a truly contrite admission of guilt before God never took place. Verse 30 reveals that Saul wanted to save his reputation as king. He was more concerned about heeding the people than he was about obeying God. His rebellion cost him the kingdom.

Samuel’s execution of King Agag in verse 33 reveals an action that might seem out of character for him, since it was done in such a gruesome manner. However, Samuel was God’s appointed judge and priest. Saul had failed to follow God’s commands, but Samuel was obedient and made sure that God’s instructions were accomplished.

Note Samuel’s grief for Saul and his legacy of failed assignments.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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II. The reign of Saul

A. The rise of King Saul

6. Saul’s failure and rejection as king (15:1-35)

- a. Samuel's instructions to destroy Amalek (15:1-3)
- b. Saul's defeat of the Amalekites (15:4-9)
- c. Samuel's disclosure of Saul's failure (15:10-19)
- d. Saul's reply (15:20-24)
 - (1) His excuse (15:20-23)
 - (2) His request for forgiveness (15:24)
- e. Saul's rejection by the Lord (15:25-31)
- f. Samuel's slaying of Agag (15:32-35)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Compare verses 3 and 9. What are the differences between what God commanded and what was performed?

2. Why do you think Saul listened to the people rather than obeying God's instructions?

3. What are some blessings that result from our obedience?

CONCLUSION

God is looking for those who will obey Him.
Will you?

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7)

The man was tall and gangling; most people said he was homely. His life was marked by numerous disappointments. In his early years, he lived in poverty, and had little formal education. His mother died when he was young. Later, he failed in business and lost repeatedly when running for political office. Looking at these facts alone, one might conclude that the man was a failure. However, history records that Abraham Lincoln was truly a great man, one who led the United States of America through its most crucial national crisis.

How many times have we been disappointed or surprised when we based our opinions on what we could see? What problems could arise if an employer hired an employee by how he or she looked, rather than checking the resume for qualifications? How many people have chosen a mate because of physical attraction, only to find after marriage that the person had traits that were quite difficult to live with? Man often judges by sight, but God does not—He looks on the heart. We may see how people look, but God knows what they are.

Samuel, going to the house of Jesse to anoint a king, at first did as most people in that position would do. When the first son came before him, he looked at the height of his stature and his countenance, and deeming those qualities favorable, thought Eliab was the man to be king. However, God rejected him. God sees differently than man. He sees the disposition of the heart. He recognizes the willingness, faithfulness, obedience, and purity of the soul, or the absence of those attributes. He reads the thoughts, efforts, motives and attitudes of each individual. God often exalts those that men wouldn't even think of.

Rather than operating by sight, let us look to God in faith to lead in every aspect of our daily lives. His evaluations are perfect, and His directions are unfailingly right!

BACKGROUND

Because of Saul's disobedience, God rejected him from being king over Israel. The prophet Samuel

loved Saul, and Saul's failure to repent caused Samuel to mourn. In the original language, the word *mourn* meant “to mourn for the dead.” This shows how deeply Samuel was grieved. Eventually, God said that Samuel had mourned long enough.

God sent Samuel to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse, and told him to anoint one of Jesse's sons to be the next king. Samuel's home was in Ramah, and in order to get to Bethlehem, he had to take a road that went by Gibeah, the location of Saul's headquarters. At the Lord's direction, Samuel concealed his chief purpose for the trip, and took a heifer to offer sacrifices as he usually did when on his duties as circuit rider. The directions for “sanctifying” as used in this text were given in the Law and included bathing and changing clothes.

As the sons of Jesse came before Samuel, he may have been looking for someone with a stature similar to Saul's, but God had already made His choice by looking at the heart. The Bible indicates that David was handsome. “Ruddy” means red. It may mean that David had red hair, or it may indicate that he was fair-skinned. Either characteristic would have been unusual among the Hebrews. In the East at that time, red hair was considered “a rare mark of beauty.” “Of a beautiful countenance” may refer to David's eyes, indicating that they were penetrating, keen, lively, and warm.

David was chosen by God because of his inner qualities, and Samuel anointed him in a simple ceremony before his brothers. This was not a public appointment. Legally, Saul continued as the king, and David respected him as God's anointed until Saul's death. The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward to guide and empower him, making him strong and efficient. God helped David to behave wisely and with courage.

The Spirit of the Lord departed from King Saul. The evil spirit that God allowed to come upon him caused a mental condition near to insanity. His servants thought that music might soothe him. Harps were part of Israel's musical culture, and were known for their ability to soothe. At this time, simple harps were made from curved pieces of wood or two wood pieces fastened to each other at right angles. Strings were from twisted grass or animal intestines that were dried. Some harps had as many as forty strings. David was a skillful harpist and also wrote songs, many of which are recorded in the Book of Psalms.

In verse 18, “a mighty valiant man” may refer to David having killed wild beasts while shepherding. In

The events in the Book of 1 Samuel are not always listed chronologically. Therefore, it is possible that David did not immediately become Saul's armor bearer. While serving Saul, David had the opportunity to learn about a royal household and being a national leader.

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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B. The decline of King Saul and the rise of David

a. The anointing of David (16:1-23)

- ## A CLOSER LOOK

[illegible]

It is easy to react to what we can observe. However, it is good to remember that we can see only the surface. God can see the heart!

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give you into our hands.” (1 Samuel 17:47)

We know there are degrees of fear—it can range from anxious concern to sheer terror. Fear associated with the danger of imminent death is no doubt one of the most terrifying.

My brother tells of an incident that occurred when he was in Vietnam. He was serving in a Marine Recon Battalion and had been dropped behind enemy lines. One night, his team of six people was being hunted by a regiment of the North Vietnamese army. All night they were essentially “pinned down” in a jungle thicket with enemy troops searching for them—at times within fifty feet of their location. For seven long hours, my brother was convinced that he was going to be killed. His mind agonized about dying. He visualized his funeral, and thought about who would be attending it. That was terror—seven hours of terror.

However, focusing on the fact that “the battle is the LORD’s” can make a difference in a person’s state of mind when facing death. A World War II veteran who served as a frontline infantryman testified, “I found that God was right there to take good care of anyone who would trust Him. Shrapnel came so close to me that it burned the side of my head parallel to the stem of my eyeglasses, but it never even drew blood. I crawled through muddy drainage ditches until my knees were raw, with machine gun slugs whizzing over my head, yet God brought me through it all.”

The Children of Israel knew about the fear of death. In today’s text, King Saul and the Israelite army were on one side of the valley; the Philistine enemy was on the other. However, the two forces were not evenly matched. Facing the giant Goliath decked in his military armor, the Israelites were filled with fear. Verse 11 states they were “greatly afraid.” The fact is, they were terrified! Apparently, they were facing their circumstances in their own strength, and they had been in terror for forty days.

David, possibly the youngest Israelite in the valley of Elah, had a different perspective. He undoubtedly had less military experience than Saul or the Israelite army; yet David had experience that gave him confidence to overcome the fear that crippled the Israelites. He had proven that God was a match for circumstances that can cause fear; he realized that

“the battle is the LORD’s,” and he relied on God for protection.

How much easier it is to face fearful situations when we understand this principle! Circumstances, such as persecution for a person’s faith, a health crisis, a terrible traffic accident, or walking in an unsafe neighborhood, can cause fear. However, the all-powerful God will fight our battles even if we have fear. Beyond that, He can calm our fears, like He obviously did in David’s situation. Relying on God and His protection is the way—the only way—to really overcome fear.

BACKGROUND

This battle between the Israelites and the Philistines took place around 1025 B.C. The Philistines were an aggressive sea people who invaded the eastern Mediterranean coast and settled coastal Palestine about 1200 B.C. They had been Israel’s principal enemy from the time of Samson. During those years, the Israelites had lost many battles and experienced major defeats at the hands of the Philistines. With their history of many victories, and with Goliath as their champion, the Philistines were confident they would be victorious this time as well. To minimize bloodshed, armies of that time would choose the strongest warrior from each side to fight against each other.

At the time of this battle, David, the youngest of Jesse’s eight sons, was not a warrior. This does not mean he had not shown himself to be courageous and capable of dealing with conflict. He had killed a bear and lion while caring for his father’s sheep.

The historical accounts in 1 Samuel are not meant to be in chronological order. This account is given here to show that God intended to use David to deliver Israel. Also, God used this event to spread the fame of David’s name throughout the nation. David may have acted as Saul’s armor bearer at a later date, or the title may have been honorary.

Goliath was over nine feet tall. A coat of mail was made of overlapping brass plates, and Goliath’s armor probably weighed about 125 to 150 pounds. Greaves were armor for the shins. The target of brass was a spear that was slung on his back. His iron spearhead weighed between fifteen and eighteen pounds.

The trench in verse 20 refers to the camp or the baggage and vehicles around the edge of the camp. “The host was going forth to fight” means that Israel’s army was marching out to put themselves into formation for a battle.

While it may seem strange that Saul did not recognize David, it is possible that David was with Saul when he needed the soothing harp music, and then went home to Bethlehem when Saul was feeling better. Perhaps Saul's mental state caused him to forget David, or maybe David had been back in Bethlehem for some time.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The reign of Saul
 - B. The decline of King Saul and the rise of David
 - 1. David in the court of Saul
 - b. The slaughter of Goliath by David (17:1-58)
 - (1) The defiance of Goliath (17:1-11)
 - (2) The arrival of David (17:12-30)
 - (a) The sons of Jesse (17:12-16)
 - (b) The mission of David (17:17-19)
 - (c) The fear of Israel (17:20-25)
 - (d) The inquiry of David (17:26-27)
 - (e) The rebuff of David's brothers (17:28-30)
 - (3) The request of David (17:31-40)
 - (4) The confrontation with Goliath (17:41-49)
 - (5) The defeat of the Philistines (17:50-54)
 - (6) The inquiry of Saul (17:55-58)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What statements did David make that showed his confidence in God's ability to protect him against Goliath?

2. What does David's attitude and perspective tell us about his relationship with God?

3. Perhaps you are facing a fear-causing event. What can you do to encourage yourself to be like David and expect deliverance from God?

CONCLUSION

David said, "The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." This shows where he placed his trust. Just as David did not have fear when facing the giant, we can be shielded from fear when we face the Goliaths in our lives, by looking to the Lord for our deliverance and protection.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him.” (1 Samuel 18:14)

Abraham Lincoln once stated, “Character was like a tree, and reputation like its shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree was the real thing.”¹ Throughout his administration, Lincoln was a president under political fire, especially during the scarring years of the Civil War. Though he knew he would make errors while in office, he resolved never to compromise his integrity. So strong was this resolve that he declared, “I desire so to conduct the affairs of this administration that if, at the end, when I come to lay down the reins of power, I have lost every other friend on earth, I shall at least have one friend left, and that friend shall be down inside of me.”²

In our text today, we see how David exhibited his character and integrity before God, King Saul, and the people of Israel. After the slaying of Goliath, Saul became very jealous of David. Everything David did was upright and acceptable. Verse 5 tells us, “He was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul’s servants.” David did not let his position or successes go to his head.

We know David’s actions were right in the sight of God because the text says, “the LORD was with him.” God led him in battle and he was able to defeat the Philistines in every conflict. Even when King Saul sent David into battle with the hope he would be killed, God provided the victory.

If we have the true love of God down in our hearts, our character and integrity will reflect the indwelling presence of God. As we behave ourselves wisely in all our ways, we can have the confidence that God will be with us.

BACKGROUND

In our text David had just returned from killing the Philistine giant, Goliath. He was taken before King Saul, who took him into his own house. As a man perhaps as young as eighteen years of age, this must have made a real impression on David. There were probably many temptations that came with living in the King’s palace and having a position of authority in the army, but we read how David behaved himself in spite of these temptations.

David and Jonathan, Saul’s son, had a deep and close friendship. This was based on their mutual trust

in God and the fellowship in their souls that resulted from that trust. Both men were warriors who were victorious because they believed God would give Israel the victory. It is possible that Jonathan was as much as ten years older than David. Jonathan’s gift to David was symbolic of the covenant between the two of them.

When David was successful in battle, he received praise from the people of Israel. Although the numbers the women sang about were exaggerated, King Saul became jealous and twice tried to kill David. He even devised a plan to send David into a battle that appeared to be certain defeat and his probable death, but God was with David. We read three times the statement, “David behaved himself wisely” (verses 5, 14, 30). He was prudent.

Saul had not fulfilled his promise to give his daughter in marriage to the warrior who slew Goliath. In this chapter, he demanded a further dowry from David. The requested dowry seemed humanly impossible, but with God’s help, David brought twice the required number.

The intense jealousy King Saul had for David turned to fear, because he knew the Lord was with David and had departed from himself. This combination of jealousy and fear made King Saul perceive David as his enemy. These feelings continued until King Saul finally committed suicide in battle a few years later.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The reign of Saul
 - B. The decline of King Saul and the rise of David
 - 1. David in the court of Saul
 - c. The separation of David from Saul
 - (1) Jonathan’s love for David (18:1-5)
 - (2) Saul’s jealousy of David (18:6-9)
 - (3) Saul’s attempts to kill David
 - (a) His attempt to spear David (18:10-16)
 - (b) His attempt to have David killed by the Philistines (18:17-30)
 - [1] Saul’s aborted promise of Merab (18:17-19)
 - [2] Saul’s promise of Michal (18:20-30)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What quality in David's character is revealed in verse 18?

2. Why do you think the Lord withdrew his presence from King Saul?

3. Consider your own character and integrity. Do you find any weaknesses? If so, what steps can you take to strengthen your Christian integrity?

CONCLUSION

What we do in private is the real indicator of who we are. May God help us to spend quality time with Him privately, so that we may behave ourselves wisely, with character and integrity, when we are in public and living our lives before the watching world.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good.” (1 Samuel 19:4)

Have you ever had a situation when you needed an intercessor—a time when your explanation would not be heard or accepted, but you thought maybe the words of someone else would get through?

Years ago, I worked with someone whose attitude indicated that I must have offended her in some way. Yet, no matter how much I thought about it, I could not think of what it might be. As I took the matter to the Lord in prayer, I considered apologizing. However, I was concerned that doing so would make the situation even more awkward. She was probably thinking that any hard feelings she had for me were completely hidden. Worse yet, maybe she had not even realized resentment was there! I did not know what to do, so I continued to pray with all my heart that God would show me, or that somehow the situation would change.

Suddenly, and in a way I cannot account for, God answered that prayer. Her attitude changed seemingly overnight and I had a new friend. The only plausible explanation is that the ultimate Intercessor spoke on my behalf. Through the years since, I am still awed at how the Lord completely turned that situation around.

In our text, Jonathan was an intercessor to his father, King Saul, on behalf of his best friend, David. Saul was extremely jealous of David's success in battle and his resulting popularity with the people (1 Samuel 18:6-7), so much so that he sought to kill David. In our focus verse, Jonathan reminded Saul that David had always been good to them and persuaded Saul to put aside his jealousy.

It was not long, however, before Saul was once again seeking to take David's life—just after the next battle in fact. The truth is that human intercession can only do so much good. It is only the influence of the ultimate Intercessor that can make remarkable and lasting changes in a life. If Saul had humbled himself before God, He would have turned Saul's heart completely, as He did in my situation. However, because of Saul's disobedience, the kingdom was taken from him and given to David, a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). David also learned many valuable lessons while running for his life, and we benefit today by his thoughts recorded in the Book of Psalms.

Do you need an intercessor today? Trust Jesus with the situation! He can work wonders in difficult places, and even if the situation does not work out as you would have liked, He always has your best interest at heart and will do what is ultimately best.

BACKGROUND

In the previous chapter, when Saul failed on two occasions to take David's life by throwing a javelin at him, he tried placing David in harm's way during battle and through a cunning dowry price for his daughter, Michal. By the time the events in today's text occurred, however, Saul was no longer trying to be discreet in his hatred, but openly commanded Jonathan and his other servants to kill David—despite the fact that David was now his son-in-law. Jonathan, being David's best friend and seeing the error of his father's ways, refused to do so. Instead, he warned David and interceded for him to Saul. That conversation calmed Saul, but only until David was once again successful in the next battle.

After that, Saul planned to have his men wait at David's house through the night and kill him the next morning. Michal loved her husband and did not want her father to succeed in his wicked schemes. She, like her brother Jonathan, warned David of the threat to his life and encouraged him to flee. Their house was likely built on a wall, and she was able to help him escape through the window without Saul's "messengers" knowing.

Michal then came up with her own cunning plan to buy David some time. The *image* she placed in David's bed may have been a statue of a pagan household god. The Hebrew word used here, *teraphim*, means, "family idol." (The same word is used in Genesis 31:19 when Rachel stole her father's two household idols.) It is unusual that such an idol would be life-size. It may have been a bust that she covered with a pillow of goats' hair for the head. It is also possible that the word is used figuratively meaning a depiction of a human. Whatever the case, her creation of the appearance of a person sleeping was at least somewhat convincing, for it was not until Saul ordered the messengers to bring David up in his bed that they realized what Michal had done. When Saul confronted her with her deception, rather than use wise words to appease him as Jonathan had done, she simply lied to him, saying David had threatened to kill her if she did not help him escape.

Michal schemed, but David prayed. Psalm 59 records his thoughts and prayers during this time. This

event marked the beginning of approximately ten years in which he was exiled and running for his life, always trusting God for his deliverance.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The reign of Saul
 - B. The decline of King Saul and the rise of David
 - 1. David in the court of Saul
 - c. The separation of David from Saul
 - (3) Saul's attempts to kill David
 - (c) His attempt to spear David again (19:1-17)
 - [1] Saul's promise of safety (19:1-7)
 - [2] Saul's attempt on David (19:8-10)
 - [3] Saul's pursuit of David (19:11-17)

A CLOSER LOOK

- 1. Why was Saul seeking to kill David?

- 2. What do we learn about Jonathan's character in this chapter?

3. How did David's wife, Michal, show her love and fidelity to her husband?

4. What should a Christian do when a conflict arises with someone else?

CONCLUSION

David trusted God to be his ultimate Intercessor and Deliverer. Do the same in your life so that God can bless you as He did David!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.” (1 Samuel 20:17)

A plaque on my living room wall says, “Friendship is a priceless gift that can’t be bought or sold. Its value is far greater than mountains made of gold. If you should ask God for a gift, be thankful if He sends, not diamonds, pearls, or riches, but the love and trust of friends.” Each time I read that, I am reminded of the many friends that God has blessed me with. I can remember my next-door neighbor whose granddaughter was a good friend to me during the younger years of my life. When my family moved, I was delighted to meet a family who not only had two boys, but also had one girl who was nine years of age—I was ten years old at the time. Marie and I were best friends for the next five years. When I was fifteen years old, my family moved once again, and this time it was to the United States. A few weeks after taking our residence here, I went to high school. There, Sue, a very friendly junior who took an interest in students of different cultures, was kind enough to show me around and help me with my English. She was a Godsend. Later, at church, there were many others who extended their friendship to me. In fact, a friend that I met long ago gave me the plaque that I quoted. Looking back, it seems that God was always faithful to bring the right person to be my friend when I most needed friendship.

David also had a friend when he really needed one. He had some unusual circumstances take place in his life. He went from taking care of sheep to being anointed king over Israel. Imagine such a change! A lot of events were to take place in David’s life before he sat upon the throne, and God was faithful to bring Jonathan along at that time to help him through the difficult days ahead.

Jonathan, King Saul’s son, loved David. The Bible says, “Jonathan loved him as he loved his own soul” (1 Samuel 18:1). That is quite a friend! God knew that David needed just that type of a friend. God is so good. I remember a time when a friend gave me his car to drive to work, and he took the bus! I could not imagine that, but he insisted, so I did! The worst part about that kind gesture is that I wrecked his car twice, and he was still kind to me and had it fixed and gave it back to me! I was flabbergasted. I used to ask myself, how could someone be so good to me?

Well, I did not let that one pass me by—I married him. He is still kind to me to this day, after seventeen years of marriage.

Though David and Jonathan’s relationship was unusual, given the circumstances, it withstood great challenges. The element that made it possible was that they both loved God. Jonathan, though loyal to his father, recognized that God’s plan included David being the next king. From a human standpoint, that must have been difficult to deal with, however, Jonathan loved God and he submitted to His plan. This made it possible for him to extend his friendship to David at a time when David needed it most.

Today, the same elements can be present in our friendships. When God is at the center of our lives, we can extend ourselves to others in acts of kindness. As Christians, we have experienced God extending His love to us each day. That makes us the most qualified individuals to spread kindness to others. We must look for ways to do just that each day.

BACKGROUND

David found himself in Ramah, fleeing Saul’s attempts to kill him. Naioth was not a city, but the dwelling place of a particular school of prophets. Likely, it was a temporary village set up adjacent to Ramah, where Samuel lived. The Bible tells us that David “dwelt” there; how long he remained with Samuel is unknown.

While David was there, Saul sent three sets of messengers to Ramah to capture David. Finally, Saul went himself. When he arrived in Naioth, Saul was overcome by the Spirit of God, as his messengers had been. He removed his outer garments—his armor and royal robes—and lay all that day and night, singing and praising God. In this manner, God showed His power over the hearts of men—even the king—and provided David with time to make his escape.

Ramah was about four miles from Gibeah where David returned to talk to Jonathan, while Saul was looking for him in Ramah. Jonathan was David’s loyal friend and David wanted to share with him the fact that he thought Saul was out to kill him.

Each new moon marked the beginning of a new month, when the Law required the people to offer burnt sacrifices unto the Lord. It was a religious holiday, and the Jews were very careful to observe it. Though God had rejected Saul, he continued to bring sacrifices to God in a public way. It was also customary for him to eat publicly on this occasion along with his family and chief officers. David knew this and

requested of Jonathan to be excused from this assembly. He knew that if Saul indeed had it in his heart to kill him, his displeasure would show and it would be revealed to Jonathan that indeed Saul was in definite pursuit of him.

After devising the plan to test Saul, David and Jonathan went into a field where they laid out their plan before God. Verses 8 and 16 describe their covenant. In verse 8, it is called a “covenant of the LORD,” and verse 16 speaks of a covenant Jonathan was making with the house of David to protect his seed. A covenant was a binding contract of two or more persons who have agreed to its terms. It is usually created by deed in writing, sealed, and executed. In this case, it was a verbal agreement between two friends whose utmost desire was to do God’s will and to be true to their friendship. Their covenant was witnessed by God, whose presence they implored, and who would be the final executor of its terms. In their covenant, they agreed to be honest in their communication with each other regarding what would transpire in David’s absence.

At the feast, when Saul angrily made it known that Jonathan was a traitor for letting David leave, Jonathan knew that David’s life was in danger. According to their agreed upon signal, Jonathan shot the three arrows beyond the place where David was. David knew that this meant to leave and the two friends parted after much grief and tears—Jonathan back to his father and family and David away from it.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The reign of Saul
 - B. The decline of King Saul and the rise of David
 - 2. David in exile from Saul
 - a. His flight to Samuel at Ramah (19:18-24)
 - b. The plot to ascertain Saul’s motives (20:1-42)
 - (1) The plot formulated (20:1-23)
 - (2) The intentions of Saul revealed (20:24-34)
 - (3) The separation of David and Saul (20:35-42)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How many arrows did Jonathan agree to shoot?

2. Why do you think God allowed David to be chased by Saul?

3. Consider ways you can extend some acts of kindness to the people that you are acquainted with. Write them down and then specify when you will do them.

CONCLUSION

A friend you can trust is of great value in time of need. God has extended His love to us, so we must show kindness to others. By being true and loyal to God, you will be the friend that God intends for you to be to someone in need.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath.”
(1 Samuel 21:10)**

To be the object of a search is a miserable and terrifying experience. About twenty-five years ago, when Romania was still under Communist rule, the police came one night to a pastor's home. They were searching for religious books—specifically for a Bible. The pastor's six-year-old daughter heard what was being said at the door of the house. She quickly took their Bible, wrapped it in a newspaper that was close by, and put it inside the oven of a wood-burning stove which was in use. The policemen searched the house, but without success.

Several hours after they left, the father commented about how they had not found the Bible, but then he wondered where it was. The girl remembered and said, “I put it in the stove.” The family opened the oven and found that the newspaper had burned off, but the Bible was fine. Had the police found the Bible, the pastor would have been arrested and severely beaten. However, God protected both His Book and His people.

In this text, David was the object of Saul's search. For approximately ten years Saul tried to find David and kill him, while David sought refuge or hid in various places, yet God knew where David was and kept His hand over him.

Today, we are probably not running for our lives to flee a wicked king, and it may be unlikely that policemen will come to our doors searching for our Bibles. (There are, however, many Christians in the world now who are being pursued and persecuted for their faith, and we need to pray for these servants of God to have His strength to stand.) Even if we are not facing physical persecution, the enemy of our souls will pursue us with temptations and try to discourage us from following the Lord. We are running for our lives spiritually, and the safe refuge is Heaven. Until we reach that Goal, we need to be sure that we stay tuned to God's directions for us, and then remember that He knows where we are and will be with us.

BACKGROUND

King Saul, a man who had been an example of humility and grace, had become the vicious pursuer of David, a man after God's own heart. Something had happened to Saul. He lost his favor with God through

disobedience. In today's text, Saul hunted down one whose only crime was doing the will of God.

At this time, the Tabernacle was in Nob, a city south of Gibeah and north of Jerusalem. Nob could be seen from Jerusalem. The “common bread,” referred to in verse 4, meant bread that anyone could eat. HalLOWed bread was also called “shewbread.” Each Sabbath, twelve fresh loaves were put in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle by a priest. Only the priests could eat the bread from the week before. Ahimelech confirmed with David that his men were ceremonially clean, and then he applied the spirit of God's laws when he gave the bread to David. Jesus cited this occasion to illustrate that the spirit of the Law was more important than the letter of the Law (Mark 2:25-26).

The following details add to an understanding of this text. Gath was about twenty-three miles from Nob, and Achish was the Philistine king. David pretended insanity in order to gain refuge there. The word *scrabbled* means “scratched.” Sane men would not allow saliva to fall down upon their beards. The cave of Adullam was approximately ten miles east of Gath, and fifteen miles west of Bethlehem. His brothers, no doubt, deserted the army of Saul to join David. The “discontented” refers to those who did not like how Saul governed. Largely, this was a group of outlaws, yet David managed them wisely enough to make them become mighty and heroic.

The height of Saul's spiritual depravity was clearly apparent when, in addition to pursuing David, he commanded the destruction of the priests of God. Eighty-five persons died because he felt that they supported David.

David ran farther from Saul and sought refuge for his family in Mizpeh under the king of Moab. Moab was not friendly toward Israel, however, Ruth, David's great-grandmother, was from Moab, which may have made some difference. Saul's hostile actions against David made him a greater threat than the heathen kings.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The reign of Saul
 - B. The decline of King Saul and the rise of David
 - 2. David in exile from Saul
 - c. His flight to Ahimelech at Nob (21:1-9)
 - (1) His request for food (21:1-7)
 - (2) His request for weapons (21:8-9)

- d. His flight to Achish, king of Gath (21:10-15)
- e. His flight to the cave of Adullam (22:1-2)
- f. His flight to Mizpah of Moab (22:3-5)
- g. Saul's vengeance on Ahimelech
 - (1) The discovery of Ahimelech's aid to David (22:6-10)
 - (2) The massacre of Ahimelech, the priests and Nob (22:11-19)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why do you suppose David fled to Ahimelech at Nob?

2. What was the significance of David getting hold of Goliath's sword?

3. Who was Doeg?

4. Name some areas of life from which we might like to run, and explain how God could give deliverance.

CONCLUSION

No matter what trials or temptations are "pursuing" us, we know that God can give us the victory. The key is in having a heart toward God, as David did.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.” (1 Samuel 24:15)

The man was consumed by revenge. Thugs had beaten his son so badly that he had a skull fracture. The doctors suspected brain damage and possible permanent vision loss. The father tried everything he could to locate the perpetrators. Meanwhile, the son showed no signs of improvement. One Sunday in church the father was considering what he would do if he caught these fellows. Even though he was not really listening, he realized the minister was preaching about forgiveness, and he did not care for the subject! As the preacher continued, though, the man realized he could not pray for his son's healing without first forgiving those who had hurt his son. That morning he asked God to help him forgive. God released his soul from the hatred, and he prayed for both the son and the attackers. That day, when he went to the hospital, his son was sitting up! New x-rays were taken, and the fracture had been healed. His son left the hospital on Monday, completely well.¹

This father knew that his son needed a touch from God to deliver him from his injuries. However, the father also needed a touch from God to deliver him from his own vengeful spirit. In today's society, many need deliverance—from addictions, troubling situations, financial difficulties, or broken relationships. Others need deliverance from wrong attitudes and fears.

God can bring true deliverance, and David found this out. In our text, we read repeatedly about David's desire for deliverance. Each step of the way, David continued to seek God's will, and the Lord helped him every time.

Do you need deliverance in your life today? Open your heart to God, and tell Him your needs, because He answers prayer. God does not answer or deliver according to our will. For example, His deliverance may be the grace to cope with a situation. However, He never fails, and He wants to deliver us in the best possible way.

BACKGROUND

David loved God with all his heart. Before any major decision he sought God's direction and will. In our text, David was being pursued by Saul almost continually. Saul was obsessed with finding and killing

David, because he was jealous of David, and he knew David would be the king someday. Although David wanted deliverance from his enemy, he still wanted God's will in the situation.

Abiathar, a priest, escaped Saul's massacre of the priests of Nob, and he managed to take an ephod with him. This means that he had the Urim and Thummin with him when he came to David. The Urim and Thummin were two flat stones that were used to discern the will of God. David welcomed Abiathar and promised him protection. Although Saul had spies looking for David, Abiathar was able to give the Word of God to David and advise him on what God wanted him to do.

The meeting between Jonathan and David that is mentioned in this text may have been the last time they saw each other. Being a true friend, Jonathan encouraged David.

At one time, Saul and his army were within one mountain ridge of David and his men. Then a messenger came to call Saul to battle with the Philistines, and God once again delivered David.

En-gedi is a natural fortress that overlooks the Dead Sea. The area has many caves, and some were used as houses or tombs. Some caves were big enough that thousands of people could get inside them.

“To cover his feet,” means that Saul went into a cave to relieve himself. The Law of Moses had strict rules regarding sanitation, so Saul was probably away from his camp. He no doubt left his robe at the cave's entrance. Since David and his men were hidden in the sides of the cave, they had easy access to Saul. David's respect for God and also for Saul's position as king provided deliverance for Saul.

As our focus verse mentions, David called on the Lord, asking Him to declare David innocent and keep him from Saul. God did not fail. David was safe in God's hands and was delivered from his enemy.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The reign of Saul
 - B. The decline of King Saul and the rise of David
 - 2. David in exile from Saul
 - g. Saul's vengeance on Ahimelech
 - (3) The escape of Abiathar (22:20-23)
 - h. David's defeat of the Philistines at Keilah (23:1-13)
 - (1) David's defeat of the Philistines (23:1-5)

- (2) Saul's pursuit of David Saul (23:6-13)
- i. His flight in the wilderness of Ziph (23:14-23)
- j. His flight in the wilderness of Maon (23:24-27)
- k. His flight in the wilderness of Engedi (23:28 — 24:22)
 - (1) The sparing of Saul's life (23:28 — 24:7)
 - (2) The words of David to Saul (24:8-15)
 - (3) The reply of Saul to David (24:16-22)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why do you think Saul wanted David killed?

2. How did David receive deliverance from Saul and his pursuing army?

3. What types of deliverance might God give today from hard situations?

CONCLUSION

Let us be like David and rely on the Lord in every situation. God is waiting for us to ask Him to work in our lives.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which has kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.” (1 Samuel 25:32-33)

Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you knew you had been wronged? After my husband and I were first married, we moved back to a town where he had gone to college. There we attempted to find work. We were both teachers by trade and work was extremely scarce. The first job I landed was a sales position in a dress shop in a mall. It was the only steady income we had, and it was very important to our survival. My plan was to work there only until my teaching license could be approved.

I started working at the shop in August, and by the beginning of November, my teaching approval was just around the corner. One day, I mentioned to the store manager that I was hoping to have the approval by the end of the year. Within twenty-four hours, I was terminated from my position! I was so frustrated! This was our only guaranteed income, and now it was gone.

My first instinct was to overreact and to march down to that dress shop and give the manager a piece of my mind. How could she just terminate me! However, it was a Wednesday night so there was a prayer meeting in our little branch church. Before prayer meeting, we had Sunday school round table. The lesson that night was on giving thanks in all things. I have to admit I was not feeling very thankful. In fact, I was feeling decidedly indignant. That night I really prayed and asked God to help me be thankful, even though I could not understand why I had lost my job.

The very next day, an opportunity came up for a better position, closer to my field of study, and paying \$3.00 more per hour. If I had not been fired from the dress shop, I would not have even been looking for this opportunity. God had a plan!

No doubt, we will all face situations at some time where we feel we have been wronged. Our first impulse may be to retaliate or at least hope the other party gets what they deserve. God would have us turn these types of situations over to Him. We cannot see the whole picture, and even if we could, we might not understand all the implications. By asking the Lord to help us feel a spirit of thanksgiving, and by

leaving the situation in His hands, we can rest assured that God’s will for our lives can be worked out in a perfect manner.

BACKGROUND

At the beginning of this chapter, it is noted that Samuel died. David did not go to the funeral, though Samuel had been a great mentor to him. It is possible that David realized Saul’s spies would be at the funeral and it was not a safe place for him to be. Instead, David retreated to the wilderness.

Nabal’s name means “a fool.” The word *churlish* in verse 3 means “hard to deal with.” The phrase “son of Belial” (verse 17) was used to refer to someone considered to be a wicked, worthless man.

David’s irritation at Nabal was not unfounded. First, the social etiquette of the day required that travelers were to be fed, regardless of number. Nabal was financially able to do this. Second, David and his men had been protecting Nabal’s men and his sheep, and a meal was the least he should have offered as a token of appreciation.

Abigail was a wise woman, and God used her wisdom to stop David from making an unwise and extremely harmful action—taking vengeance upon Nabal and also killing innocent people. Abigail clearly understood that David would be king. Nabal indicated his unwillingness to acknowledge that when he said, “Who is David?” (verse 10). The rest of that verse shows that Nabal was a backer of King Saul. Abigail honored David; fourteen times she called him “lord.” David showed his own wisdom by listening to the advice of this woman and admitting his error.

The phrase “he became as a stone” (verse 37), probably means that Nabal had a stroke. Ten days later, he died.

Michal was David’s first wife, Saul’s daughter, whom Saul had given to David. When David fled, Saul gave Michal to Phalti, forcing her into adultery. No doubt Saul felt that removing Michal from David’s household further weakened David’s claim to the throne by severing his legal ties with royalty.

When Abigail became David’s wife, Nabal’s property and riches came to him also. The land was near Hebron, which David later made his royal residence.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The reign of Saul
 - B. The decline of King Saul and the rise of David
 - 2. David in exile from Saul

1. His flight in the wilderness of Paran (25:1-44)
 - (1) The death of Samuel (25:1)
 - (2) The refusal of Nabal (25:2-13)
 - (3) The intercession of Abigail (25:14-31)
 - (4) The acceptance by David (25:32-35)
 - (5) The death of Nabal (25:36-38)
 - (6) The marriage of Abigail to David (25:39-42)
 - (7) The marriage of Ahinoam to David (25:43)
 - (8) The fate of Michal (25:44)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was David's reaction when he heard Nabal's response to his request?

2. What are some possible reasons that Abigail stepped in to remedy the situation?

3. Think of a time in your life when you wanted to seek revenge. How did you overcome that feeling?

CONCLUSION

God used Abigail to prevent David from taking justice into his own hands. If we will let him, God will help us handle difficult situations when they arise.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness: for the LORD delivered thee into my hand to day, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD’s anointed.”

(1 Samuel 26:23)

One time, our family had the opportunity to observe a glassblower at work. She was shaping a vase, which was mounted on a tube so she could put it into the furnace for heating. Repeatedly she placed the vase in the furnace, then took it out and shaped it by rolling it against newspapers that she held in her gloved hand. The glass was so hot that the newspapers charred.

When the artist was satisfied with the vase, she prepared to remove it from the tube. She said that this was one of the most critical points of the whole process. The vase was heated again and then cooled to a particular temperature. Next she gave a sharp blow at the exact point of the mounting. She told us that sometimes a vase breaks under the sharp blow, and then all her labor is wasted.

Watching the glassblower was an object lesson in how God works on us. He may allow us to be heated in the furnace of affliction—financial problems, stresses, difficult relationships, loss of a loved one—so that we can be shaped as He desires. If God in His infinite wisdom allows a “sharp blow” as a test, we do not want to “shatter” at that moment.

God had been shaping David in the furnace of affliction. He had been running and hiding from Saul for a number of years. At the time of our text, David experienced a sharp blow—a test of his integrity. When he had the opportunity to take his enemy’s life, David did not shatter. He knew that God had appointed Saul to be king and that, in His own time, God would work out every detail. His respect for God’s anointed led David to act honorably.

God can help us behave honorably also when a sharp blow comes to us. We cannot survive in our own strength, but by God’s strength we can be victorious.

BACKGROUND

Saul had ample warnings to change from his murderous ways. On an earlier occasion, after David had spared his life, he seemed to have repented and had promised to leave David alone, but that resolve was not genuine. Evil had taken root in Saul’s life and was firmly in control of him. With three thousand men, Saul resumed his hot pursuit of David.

This pursuit of David was encouraged by the tale-bearing Ziphites. They betrayed David’s location to Saul as a means of obtaining favor from him. The Ziphites had two distinct reasons why they should not have done this. They were related to Caleb, one of Israel’s founding spiritual giants, though they shared none of his spiritual valor. Secondly, like David, they were members of the tribe of Judah. They had every reason to be loyal, but they went in the opposite direction, jeopardizing the life of a man of God. Still, the Lord’s hand of protection was on David, and all their efforts were futile.

David had a strategic need to know Saul’s location so he could stay ahead of him. Through his network of spies, David kept abreast of Saul’s exact location and the strength of the army with him. Verse 12 mentions that a “deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them.” God’s hand was clearly protecting David.

This was the second distinct time that David had the opportunity to take Saul’s life if he had wanted to do so. The first time is noted in chapter 24 where we see that the locations, David’s companions, the items removed from Saul, and the verbal exchanges between David and Saul were all different.

Abner was the captain of Saul’s army and also his cousin (1 Samuel 14:50). Abishai was David’s nephew. “Sleeping within the trench” means that Saul was in the camp and the baggage and wagons were around the outside.

On this occasion, as in the first, David’s men urged him to take Saul’s life. David’s refusal was based on his reverence for God and the fact that Saul had been appointed by God. David had learned to discern and respect anything that had God’s signature on it, and God had directed Samuel to anoint Saul as king. David knew that even when Saul had forfeited his kingship, respect for God’s appointment was still needed.

Taking Saul’s water jug and spear proved that David had been right beside him, and also that he had no intension of taking Saul’s life. The spear was a king’s symbol of authority. The ensuing dialog between Saul and David was their last.

David knew that in spite of his words, Saul could not be trusted, so he went again to Philistia. The Philistines had five major cities and five co-rulers. Achish was the ruler of Gath, and he allowed David to move to Ziklag. From there, David and his men made guerrilla-type attacks that benefited and helped both the Philistines and the Israelites. It is possible that the group of people with David may have numbered as many as two or three thousand.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The reign of Saul
 - B. The decline of King Saul and the rise of David
 - 2. David in exile from Saul
 - m. His flight in the wilderness of Ziph (26:1-25)
 - (1) The Ziphites again inform on David (26:1-5)
 - (2) David again spares Saul (26:6-12)
 - (3) David's words to Abner (26:13-16)
 - (4) David's words to Saul (26:17-20)
 - (5) Saul's reply (26:21-25)
 - n. His flight to Philistia
 - (1) His stay in Gath (27:1-4)
 - (2) His residence at Ziklag (27:5-7)
 - (3) His deception (27:8-12)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Saul say when he found that David had spared his life again?

2. Why do you think God allowed David this opportunity to kill Saul?

3. How can actions in small matters of integrity prepare us to act honorably in a crisis?

CONCLUSION

A deep respect for God and His actions and timing can help us stay right in our hearts. God may be working on us today, but He will bring us through if we honor Him.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?” (1 Samuel 28:16)

Our seven-year-old daughter loves to socialize. She does not meet strangers—just people she has not met before. One day, she was invited to a slumber party by one of her school classmates. As her dad, I saw several legitimate reasons not to let her go. One of my parental responsibilities is ensuring the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of my children. My wife and I try to be very careful in exposing our children to influences and atmospheres that run contrary to a wholesome Christian home.

I did not know the parents of her classmate nor the lifestyle they lived, and there was not time to check into the home and family. Therefore, when my daughter came to me and asked if she could go, I told her she could not. She said, “Everyone else is going. It’s not fair that you always say no!” Then, wanting to have her own way in the matter, she went to her mother and pled her case—within my earshot. I took her aside and asked what she hoped to gain by going to her mom when the answer was clearly no. I knew my wife and I were in total agreement on this issue, and despite her tears and pleas to go, my wife and I remained firm in our decision because we felt it was in her best interest.

Oftentimes we encounter situations in life where we are tempted to do what we want to do, even though we have been explicitly told not to. King Saul, a man anointed and chosen by God, made some choices that were in direct opposition to God’s instructions. Due to his disobedience and subsequent lies, God removed the kingship from him and gave it to David.

At the point recorded in today’s text, we see King Saul asking for help from a source that he himself had banished from the land of Israel—witchcraft. Saul felt so lost and alone as he faced the impending fight with the Philistines that he was determined to go to any length to receive guidance from God—even if it meant using witchcraft to try to call Samuel back from the dead.

The message to King Saul did not change. It was the same as what would have been expected had Samuel still been alive. Whatever hope King Saul expected to receive by meeting with a “resurrected” Samuel was dashed to pieces when he heard of his own imminent death.

We would do well to heed God’s voice and instructions when He speaks to us, and not take matters into our own hands. The ultimate rejection will occur if we refuse God and His plan for us. Our success, now and eternally, rests in our acceptance of God’s will and plan for our lives.

BACKGROUND

The Philistine army that gathered at Shunem in the broad valley of Jezreel to fight with Israel, was an awesome spectacle for the much smaller Israelite army that had assembled just south of them in Gilboa. The sight of the Philistine army caused Israel’s King Saul to fear and “his heart greatly trembled” (verse 5).

King Saul had no one he could turn to for help and direction. The prophet Samuel, his primary adviser in matters relating to God, was dead. David, once the protector of the king, had escaped to the land of the Philistines, leaving Saul to his own devices.

Verse 6 tells us that Saul sought the Lord for direction. However, God did not answer him. In that day, divine instruction was generally received in three ways: dreams, Urim, and the prophets. With a dream, individuals prayed for instruction and asked that God would answer by a significant dream. These dreams were either revelations received while the individuals slept, or they were dreams received by prophets.

The Urim was an oracular answer given to the high priest when he was clothed with the ephod and breastplate, which had a pouch that held the Urim and Thummim. These were two small objects that the priests used to determine God’s will when simple yes or no answers were needed. God used them to guide His people.

The prophets were specifically asked by an individual to consult God regarding the subject in question and to report back God’s answer. At this point in history, the prophets may have been those from the schools of the prophets, which were established by Samuel in Naioth and Gibeah.

Endor, mentioned in verse 7, was located north of Shunem. The woman of Endor with a “familiar spirit” has posed questions for countless theologians through the centuries. *Necromancy* is the term for the conjuring of the dead alluded to in verse 11 by the question, “Whom shall I bring up unto thee?” Necromancers typically personified the individual the seeker desired to see. They also were known to assume the form and character of the person and provide information related to the seeking individual. This information was often scanty, vague, and uncertain.

In no way does this incident justify the practice of witchcraft, mediums, spiritualists, etc. God is against all such practices (see Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27).

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- ## A CLOSER LOOK

2. The news that Saul received was not what he wanted to hear. What do you think Saul hoped would be said?

NOTES

Saul experienced the ultimate refusal—rejection by God. Given his history of disobedience and arrogance, we know that Saul caused his own downfall. Through Saul’s mistakes, we can learn to follow God in obedience and enjoy the blessings that come to one who is wholeheartedly doing God’s will.



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.” (1 Samuel 30:6)

“Discouragement is of the devil,” my mother used to say emphatically when I would get in one of my teenage mood swings. I was not sure I believed her then. I rather enjoyed a little pity party occasionally! However, the longer I live, the more certain I become that she was right.

Discouragement—that feeling of gloom, oppression, like nothing will ever work out right again—spiritually disables us as long as we allow it to remain.

Madame Guyon lived a wonderful Christian life in the early 1700s. She was persecuted and imprisoned for her faith. This is what she had to say about discouragement:

“I entreat you, give no place to despondency. This is a dangerous temptation—a refined, not a gross temptation of the adversary. Melancholy contracts and withers the heart, and renders it unfit to receive the impressions of grace. It magnifies and gives a false coloring to objects, and thus renders your burdens too heavy to bear. God’s designs regarding you, and the methods of bringing about those designs, are infinitely wise.”¹

You might respond, “But my problems are real, not just a teenage girl’s mood swings.” David’s problems were real too! His family and the families of all his men had been kidnapped, and now his men were talking, not of banding together to rescue the captives, but of stoning David! “And David was greatly distressed.” Sometimes things happen that will be distressing. When they do, we must follow David’s example.

First, “David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.” The Bible does not say exactly how he did this. Maybe he pulled out his harp and sang one of his psalms. One great way to encourage ourselves is to sing a song of praise. Perhaps David rehearsed how the Lord had delivered the giant, Goliath, into his hand when all of the army of Israel thought the situation was impossible. Remembering how the Lord helped us through a hard time, or helped someone else when they faced a problem similar to ours, is another great way to encourage ourselves in the Lord.

After David had encouraged himself, he asked the Lord what he should do about his problem. The Lord invites us to “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

God told David what to do, and the end of the story is that not only did David and his men rescue their families; they also got much spoil from the enemy and were better off than they were before.

God wants all of us to be more than conquerors. If only we will ask, He will lead us through every difficulty we face, and we will find ourselves spiritually richer at the conclusion of the trial than we were at its beginning.

BACKGROUND

David’s battle with the Amalekites was a direct result of Saul’s disobedience. God commanded Saul to destroy all of the Amalekites, but Saul chose not to complete his mission. As a result, the people of Ziklag suffered and David was forced into another battle. David and his men destroyed the Amalekites.

While David was fighting the Amalekites, Saul and his army were fighting the Philistines on Mount Gilboa. After being mortally wounded, Saul requested that his armor bearer take his life. The Philistines had a well-earned reputation for torturing their captives. One of the first priorities of combat was to capture the king. Once captured, the king was often tortured and mutilated if still alive. Saul knew he was going to die, and when his armor bearer refused to kill him, he fell upon his sword.

The men of Jabesh-gilead heard about Saul and his sons being slain, and risked their lives, traveling ten to twenty miles to rescue the bodies and carry them back across the Jordan River. The flesh was then burned off the bodies, in accordance with the tradition of the day, when it was not possible to give a proper burial to the bodies in their current state.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The reign of Saul
 - B. The decline of King Saul and the rise of David
 - 2. David in exile from Saul
 - n. His flight to Philistia
 - (4) The Philistine advance on Israel
 - (b) The departure of David from the Philistine ranks (29:1 — 30:31)

- [1] The reaction of the Philistine lords (29:1-5)
- [2] The dismissal of David (29:6-11)
- [3] The Amalekites raid Ziklag (30:1-6)
- [4] The pursuit of David after the Amalekites (30:7-31)
 - [a] The inquiry of the Lord (30:7-10)
 - [b] The finding of an Egyptian slave (30:11-15)
 - [c] The slaughter of the Amalekites (30:16-20)
 - [d] The dividing of the spoils (30:21-31)
- (c) The dividing of the spoils (31:1-13)
 - [1] The death of Saul (31:1-6)
 - [2] The dishonoring of Saul (31:7-10)
 - [3] The recovery of Saul's body (31:11-13)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How did God use the Egyptian slave, which the Amalekites had left behind, to assist David?

2. Why did David send some of the battle plunder to the tribe of Judah?

3. How can we apply the provisions and guidance God provided for David to our own situation in life?

[illegible]

4. What example of David can we follow to ensure we have God's guidance?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

Are you tempted to feel discouraged by life's dilemmas? Encourage yourself in the Lord, and trust God to guide and help you overcome!

NOTES

[illegible]



Overview for 2 Samuel

Purpose: The Books of Samuel, together with Joshua, Judges, and the Books of Kings, offer a history of God's providential dealings with His people. The Book of 2 Samuel records the history of David's reign, and demonstrates that obedience to God brings reward, while disobedience brings punishment.

Author: Unknown, but some think Samuel had much to do with the compiling of information later put in this book. Some have suggested that Zabud, Nathan's son, may have been the author (1 Kings 4:5). The book also includes the writings of Nathan and Gad (1 Chronicles 29:29).

Date Written: The exact date is unknown, though a general time frame can be made based on internal evidence. Samuel was born prior to 1100 B.C. during the Philistine oppression. The conclusion of the book cannot be ascribed to a period earlier than the closing years of David's reign, since it contains the last words of the king but no mention of his death. Most commentators feel that it was completed somewhere between 1050 and 930 B.C.

Setting: The Book of 2 Samuel records the history of David's reign over Judah and then over all of Israel.

Key People: David, Abner, Joab, Michal, Ishbaal, Bathsheba, Nathan, and Absalom.

Summary: In the Hebrew, the manuscripts forming 1 and 2 Samuel are one book. The book was separated into two volumes by the Septuagint translators, later adopted in the Vulgate translation, and was first translated in the Hebrew Bibles at Venice in 1518. The division between the books was appropriately made

at the death of Saul, which was a turning point in the history of Israel.

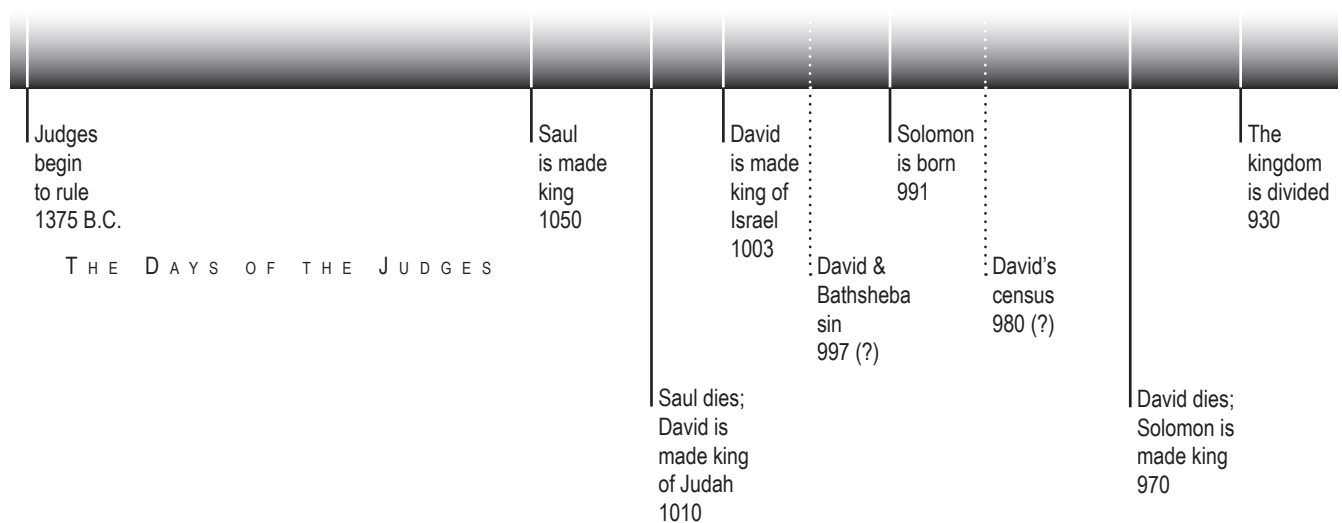
The books bear many evidences of being compiled from pre-existing documents. History was documented and kept by scribes, and these records became the principal authorities from which historical works were established. An example of historical documentation is in 1 Samuel 10:25, where it said that Samuel wrote a book descriptive of the manner of the kingdom; he may also have written other books. Most of the accounts and descriptive narratives may be the accounts of eyewitnesses. These were written down by the inspiration of the Spirit of God, so that the finished product was neither strictly history nor biography, but the living Word of God.

The Book of 2 Samuel deals almost completely with the account of David as king, which is concluded in 1 Kings. The events in 2 Samuel are a direct continuation of the history recorded in 1 Samuel. This book tells how David attained the throne of Israel, and how he administered successfully the affairs of the kingdom through an eventful period of forty years. The account can be divided into three sections: David's rise (chapter 2-10), David's fall and punishment (chapters 11-20), and David's closing days (chapters 21-24).

After the rebellion, in which some of David's own family turned against him, he regained the rulership over Israel. David began the reconstruction and collected great provisions for the building of the Temple. He was not allowed to build the Temple, but the last verses of 2 Samuel tell of David's purchase of Araunah's threshing floor, on which David erected an altar (chapter 24:24-25). This later became the very spot where the Temple was built (2 Chronicles 3:1).

Timeline

Many of these dates are approximate, as reference materials differ.



Outline

*Hannah's Bible Outlines used by permission per WORDsearch.
A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.*

- I. The success of King David (1:1 — 9:13)
 - A. His reign over Judah (1:1 — 4:12)
 - B. His reign over all Israel (5:1 — 9:13)
- II. The shame of King David (10:1 — 20:26)
 - A. David's sin with Bathsheba (10:1 — 12:31)
 - B. David's problems with his family (13:1 — 20:26)
- III. Appendices (21:1 — 24:25)
 - A. The famine because of Saul's wrath (21:1-14)
 - B. The destruction of Goliath's descendants (21:15-22)
 - C. The song of David's deliverance from Saul (22:1-51)
 - D. The concluding words of David (23:1-7)
 - E. The roster of David's mighty men (23:8-39)
 - F. The sin of David in numbering the people (24:1-25)



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that were with him: and they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword.” (2 Samuel 1:11-12)

It seemed as though the world stood still for a space of time when the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked on September 11, 2001. People watched the news reports in shock and disbelief. The heart-bruised sensation that accompanied the attacks lingered for weeks, even for those of us on the other side of the continent who had no relatives among the lost. It was difficult to grasp the degree of mourning experienced by those who lost multiple beloved friends and family members on that fateful day. Our prayers went up on their behalf to our loving Heavenly Father, who alone could provide the healing balm needed to assuage their grief.

Our text tells of David’s reaction to the death of Saul, his honored ruler, and of Saul’s son Jonathan, whose heart was knit together with David’s. David was deeply distressed by the news of their deaths, and he lamented aloud, mourning and weeping until evening. However, David’s trust in God was unshaken, and he continued to look to the Lord for leading in the ensuing days.

David’s example in time of sorrow is helpful to each of us because he knew where to turn for strength. Mourning is part of life—inevitably we all will experience the death of someone we love—and it is due to our attachments to others that we are vulnerable to grief. However, we remember God’s promise that those who mourn will be comforted. Then, when we have received the Lord’s comfort, we are more able to comfort others.

Grieving educates us in areas we do not learn otherwise. The lesson of sorrow is not to avoid loving others simply because it will inevitably cause heartache when we lose them. God commands us to love, and we recognize that our lives are wholly enriched by our love for and interaction with lives around us. Eventually it sinks in that our most important mission is to show forth God’s love to the people whose lives we touch, rather than leaving some visible mark on the world around us. In doing so we will reap the benefits of rejoicing with them in their joys, and we will also weep with those who are weeping. Once we have

gone through grief ourselves and experienced God’s help as we get through each day, we are able to share this knowledge with others in their hour of need.

Let us learn from David’s example and keep the lines of communication with God open continually. Through His guidance we can react appropriately, be comforted in sorrow, and be able to help comfort others.

BACKGROUND

Samuel had anointed David to be the successor to Saul as king around 1063 B.C. Near that time, David had been called to play his harp for King Saul in order to calm the King. Saul and David’s relationship had started out beautifully, but as soon as David received greater applause for killing Goliath than Saul was receiving, Saul had tried to spear David with a javelin. For the next seven to ten years, David had been forced to run from Saul to preserve his life.

Despite this persecution, David had high respect for Saul as the anointed king of Israel. Even though Saul hunted David for years, when he twice had an opportunity to take Saul’s life, he did not harm Saul because of his respect for the Lord’s anointed.

It was about eighty miles from the area of battle where Saul was slain to Ziklag where David lived. No doubt the Amalekite who brought the news of Saul’s death thought he would receive a reward. Since 1 Samuel 31:4 and 1 Chronicles 10:4 state that Saul killed himself, it is possible that the Amalekite lied about his own participation in Saul’s death, again in hope of a reward. The Hebrew word for *stranger* means “sojourner,” which indicates he may have been living in Israel and therefore should have known to honor God’s anointed king. Also, the Amalekites were the enemies that Saul had been instructed to destroy. He must have been extremely surprised at David’s reaction.

David’s natural temper was very tender: he was kindly affected even to those that hated him, and he behaved himself honorably and well. David and his men mourned, wept, and fasted for all of the fallen, especially for Saul and Jonathan. Their weapons were also mourned because of the role they played in deliverance and victory for Israel.

David was sincere in his mourning. It affected all that were with him, causing them to also rend their garments and grieve. He did not rejoice over the death of the man who had tried to kill him (showing a desire for public justice over private grievance), and grieved sincerely and publicly over the loss of his king and his friend.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

- I. The success of King David
 - A. His reign over Judah
 1. David's lament for Saul and Jonathan (1:1-27)
 - a. The announcement of their deaths (1:1-10)
 - b. The grief of David (1:11-12)
 - c. The slaying of the Amalekite (1:13-16)
 - d. The lament song of David (1:17-27)

1. How long had David been back home after recovering the wives, children, and possessions of the people of Ziklag before he received word of the death of Saul?

2. In light of the fact that Saul hunted David to kill him for many years, why did David not rejoice over Saul's death?

CONCLUSION

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said unto them, Blessed be ye of the LORD, that ye have shewed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him. And now the LORD shew kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing.” (2 Samuel 2:5-6)

An anecdote about Abraham Lincoln reflects the principle illustrated by David’s example. One of Lincoln’s bitter political enemies was Edwin M. Stanton, a member of James Buchanan’s cabinet. Stanton was of a different political party and despised Lincoln, both politically and personally. When Lincoln was elected president, in spite of men like Stanton, he set about to form his own cabinet. When he needed to fill the post of Secretary of War, he chose none other than Edwin Stanton. The Civil War was raging and appointing a political enemy to control the War Department seemed to be a very unwise move. But Lincoln stood by Stanton’s appointment and, as historian James McPherson relates, Stanton “revised his politics and his opinion” of Lincoln after assuming his post. He served Lincoln’s administration, the War Department, and the country with “incorruptible efficiency.” At Lincoln’s death, it was Edwin Stanton who uttered the now-famous words, “Now he belongs to the ages.”

Another anecdote about Lincoln demonstrates this aspect of Lincoln’s character even more graphically. During the Civil War, Lincoln shocked a bystander by making a favorable remark about the South. After a woman expressed her reaction, Lincoln answered, “Madam, do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?”

We are not really fighting human enemies, but enmity itself. By the power of God’s love we can defeat the hostility that the devil tries to put between us and others. Saul let enmity come between himself and David, but David would give the devil no such victory. If circumstances or people oppose us, especially in our relationship with God, we need to recognize our enemy’s real identity. Like David, we need to call on our truest Ally. God is ready to fight for us as He did for David, and only He can win all our battles.

BACKGROUND

This text demonstrates why David stood apart from other earthly kings and why God called him a

man after His own heart. Saul had pursued David to kill him, but when Saul himself died, David mourned him bitterly. He did so, not because of what Saul did, but because of who he was by God’s calling: the King of Israel.

David also showed a godly character by praying to God for guidance. Rather than simply assuming his place as king in Saul’s absence, he asked God what to do. God told him to go to Judah, and when David asked which city, God told him to go to Hebron. This also shows something about David. The fact that David could discern God’s voice to such a precise degree reveals the closeness of his relationship with God. Since David’s instructions were of God, it is not surprising that they met with success; David was anointed king in Hebron.

One of his first acts as king was to praise the city of Jabesh-gilead for burying Saul and Jonathan. This was clearly no political move—David had secured the crown—but this once again demonstrates the complete absence of vengeance or malice in David’s heart. He then encouraged the people of Jabesh-gilead to continue as the people of God. David had a clear vision of what God’s mission was for Israel.

A rivalry soon appeared to David’s throne, however, when Abner anointed Saul’s son, Ishbosheth, to be king. Abner’s move may have seemed logical to him, but it was not according to God’s will. For a while, the majority of the people followed Ishbosheth, the man chosen by men’s wisdom, while comparatively few followed David, the man chosen by God. Tension between the two groups of followers grew until civil war broke out and it ended in the tragic death of Joab’s brother, Asahel. Nevertheless, Abner’s side in the battle had many more casualties than David’s side, and David’s strength grew while Ishbosheth’s strength weakened continually. In fact, it is noteworthy that Ishbosheth did not take the initiative to claim the crown, but was set up by a general, and Abner clearly appears to have been the real leader.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- I. The success of King David
 - A. His reign over Judah
 2. David’s anointing as king (2:1-7)
 3. David’s securing of his throne
 - a. The revolt of Abner against David (2:8-11)
 - b. The pursuit of Abner by Joab (2:12-32)
 - (1) Joab’s initial victory (2:12-17)

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[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them: as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people.” (2 Samuel 3:36)

The little girl clumsily descended the stairs, one hand clutching the stair rail and a purse, the other struggling to keep her skirt out of the way of the high-heeled shoes which threatened to fall off at every step. Her hat kept falling down over one eye, making it even more difficult to safely negotiate the final steps. She may have presented a comical sight to an onlooker, but she was very serious in what she was doing—she was being a “beautiful lady,” just like her mother, grandmother, or some other feminine influence in her life.

A young boy brought his toy toolbox into the kitchen, where his father was stretched out full-length with his head under the kitchen sink. Pretty soon there were two pairs of legs protruding across the kitchen floor as the little one manfully tried to “help” his father repair the clogged drain.

In both of these cases, the motivation for the child’s actions was a desire to be like someone else. Children learn from the people around them—how to walk, how to talk, how to treat others, and how to love and serve God. In today’s passage, David was presented with several challenges where his godly attitude became very apparent. He was leaning heavily on God for strength and guidance, and this showed in his interaction with the people. In his humility and sensitivity to the will of God, he provided an example that pleased the people and caused them to desire to follow him.

Each time he was presented with a difficult situation, David sought God and responded according to His directions. When Joab and Abishai killed Abner, David made a public display of his sorrow, and honored Abner by leading the people in mourning at his burial. David also instructed the brothers to take part in this public ceremony. When Abner’s captains took matters into their own hands, and thinking to gain favor in David’s eyes, killed Ishbosheth, David’s response was quick and sure. He reminded them of what had happened to the messenger who attempted to gain favor by pretending to have killed God’s anointed (Saul), and dealt with them in the same manner. He took no delight in the death of Ishbosheth, and mourned for him and treated his body with respect.

David was willing to let God place him on the throne in His own time and in His own way, and his

attitude before the people reflected this. He was looking to God in every aspect of his life by maintaining a close relationship, and being sensitive to His guidance.

People are watching us every day. What do they see? Are we living and reacting in ways that will make us the kind of role models that will be pleasing before God and man? When we face difficult situations, we want to have a godly reaction, like David did, so that others will know we have spent time with God, and He will be glorified by our lives.

BACKGROUND

In the time since Samuel had anointed David king, he had spent many years as a fugitive from King Saul. However, rather than becoming bitter or hard through this experience, he had used that time to grow stronger in his relationship with God.

Upon hearing of Saul’s death, David inquired of the Lord for guidance, rather than immediately seizing control of the throne. Following God’s instruction, he moved to Hebron, and the “men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah” (2 Samuel 2:4). His first recorded act as king was to show kindness to the men of Jabesh-gilead, who had buried Saul and his sons.

Even though David had been anointed king by Judah, there were many who did not want to follow him. Civil war ensued, and it was over seven years before David was finally crowned king over all of Israel.

Under Abner’s direction, the rest of Israel made Saul’s son Ishbosheth king. Ishbosheth reigned for two years. Quite possibly, Abner, who was Saul’s nephew as well as his military commander, saw in Ishbosheth an opportunity for personal gain and also to maintain control of the country. This thought is borne out in 2 Samuel 2:14, when Abner proposed that twelve young men from each side should fight. He planned to prove to the men of Benjamin that they were stronger than the men of Judah. Instead, all twenty-four of the young men were killed. This resulted in a severe battle that same day, and Abner and the men of Israel were defeated by David’s men.

The captain of David’s army was Joab, who was the son of David’s sister, Zeruiah. Joab had two brothers, Asahel and Abishai, who also served in David’s army. While the army of Israel was in retreat, Asahel pursued Abner and challenged him. Abner apparently did not wish to harm him, but Asahel was persistent. Finally, Abner struck Asahel with the butt of his spear, and Asahel died. Joab and Abishai eventually killed Abner because of Asahel’s death.

The sum of the entire situation was, “David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker” (2 Samuel 3:1). David, as God’s anointed one, was walking close to God and remembering to rely on Him for triumph over Ishbosheth and Abner, and his eventual kingship over the entire nation of Israel.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- I. The success of King David
 - A. His reign over Judah
 - 3. David’s securement of his throne
 - c. The extended civil war (3:1)
 - d. The increase of David’s family (3:2-5)
 - e. The defection of Abner from Ishbosheth (3:6-39)
 - (1) The cause of the defection (3:6-11)
 - (2) The negotiations for the defection (3:12-16)
 - (3) The consultation after the defection (3:17-21)
 - (4) The death of Abner by Joab (3:22-30)
 - (5) The lament of David for Abner (3:31-39)
 - f. The cessation of the revolt (4:1-12)
 - (1) The capitulation of Ishbosheth (4:1-3)
 - (2) The assassination of Ishbosheth (4:4-8)
 - (3) The punishment of the assassins (4:9-12)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. List the names of David’s sons born while they were in Hebron.

2. What do you find in today’s reading that would cause you to believe that Ishbosheth was a “puppet king” and that Abner was the real leader of Israel?

3. What spiritual qualities in your life have been impacted by the example of others?

CONCLUSION

Are you listening closely for God’s voice to guide you in every aspect of your life? If you maintain a close relationship with Him, He will make you a person who is an example that will lead others to Christ.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines.” (2 Samuel 5:24)

For many months, I had a particular burden on my heart concerning one of my children. I wept many tears and prayed for hours. Often in the night, I woke and beseeched the Lord on behalf of my child. I would remind the Lord of promises in His Word. I rebuked Satan and claimed victory through Christ. At times the burden eased, but then it would come again.

One night, as I lay in bed talking to the Lord about my child, it felt like the Spirit of the Lord came down and suddenly a wonderful peace filled my being. It was my personal indication—my going in the mulberry trees—and somehow I knew God was going to work. Instantly, my burden was completely gone. The worry and anxiety that had oppressed me was totally lifted. I felt light and free—similar to the feeling after salvation. Only this time, it was not the burden of sin that was gone but the burden for my child. For days afterward a wonderful joy filled my heart.

There have been good days and hard days in my life since then, but never has the certainty left me that the Lord will work out every need for my child. Instead of entreating, I now thank the Lord for what He is doing. The peace of knowing the Lord is in control of the situation has never left me. His Spirit has witnessed to my spirit that He has begun to work in answer to my prayers.

God let David know that there would be clear indications when he and his army should move. Similarly, God let me know that He had heard and would answer my prayers. What a great encouragement the focus verse is for anyone seeking the Lord! There is a time of searching the heart, a time of consecration, but then when God has shown His acceptance of the sacrifice, and His Spirit hovers near, it is like the going in the mulberry trees. The evidence of His Spirit is there with the promise of victory. It is then we can move forward and claim the promise!

BACKGROUND

The chapter begins after Saul’s death, with elders from all of the tribes in Israel gathering in Hebron to anoint David as king over all Israel. This was the third time David had been anointed, the first being by

Samuel, and the second when David was made King over the tribe of Judah.

David determined to establish his kingdom in Jerusalem, which was still inhabited and controlled by the Jebusites, a Canaanite tribe of people. The city was well fortified and the Jebusites taunted David saying that even the blind and the lame could defend the city and prevail because it was so impregnable. David’s men were able to enter Jerusalem by a water tunnel. In just the last century, a shaft has been discovered in Jerusalem, connecting to a water tunnel forty-feet deep and leading outside the walls of the city. After this victory, Jerusalem was called the City of David.

When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over all Israel, they set out to stop him from taking control of the land. They camped in the Valley of Rephaim, which was only a short distance from Jerusalem. After enquiring of the Lord and receiving instruction to go against the Philistines, David defeated them. When they came again, God told David to go to battle only when he heard the sound in the mulberry trees. David obeyed, and won the victory over the Philistines.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The success of King David
 - B. His reign over all Israel
 1. The anointing of David as king (5:1-5)
 2. The securing of David as king (5:6-25)
 - a. The conquest of Zion, the new capitol (5:6-10)
 - b. The friendship of King Hiram (5:11-12)
 - c. The increased family of David (5:13-16)
 - d. The defeat of the Philistines (5:17-25)
 - (1) At Baal-perazim (5:17-21)
 - (2) From Geba to Gazer (5:22-25)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why did God exalt David’s kingdom?

[illegible][illegible]

It may take seeking, consecration, and time spent in prayer, but God will come with His Spirit and lead us to victory!

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And when they came to Nachon’s threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.” (2 Samuel 6:6-7)

Some years ago, a man named Earl Weaver managed the Baltimore Orioles baseball team. Weaver was a sharp, calculating man with strict rules for his players. One of these rules was that no runner was to steal a base without a sign from the coach.

Reggie Jackson was a star player in those days, and he fancied himself quite skilled at stealing bases. He knew the strengths and weaknesses of each team’s catchers and pitchers, and he studied their habits to know exactly when he would have the opportunity to break and run for the next base. It was one of Reggie Jackson’s specialties.

Reggie chafed under the restrictions imposed upon him by Earl Weaver, thinking he could judge the players well enough to make his own determinations about when to steal or not to steal a base. One day, Reggie decided to steal a base without a sign. Marking the moves of the pitcher, Reggie made a daring dash for second base, and easily beat the catcher’s throw to second. He grinned smugly as he dusted off his uniform and stood between second and third bases. Reggie was delighted that he had finally demonstrated to his manager that he, for one, did not need to be told what to do.

Later, Earl Weaver took Reggie aside and explained to him why he had not given the sign for Reggie to steal. The batter following him was Lee May, a big hitter, and because Reggie had left first base open, the pitcher walked May rather than giving him the opportunity to hit. The batter following May had not been strong against that particular pitcher, so Weaver had been forced to substitute with a pinch hitter in an attempt to bring the men on base home. This switch left the batting line-up weak later in the game.

Reggie Jackson’s hasty decision to disobey was costly to the team. However, he learned a valuable lesson: that his manager had his eyes on the whole game, whereas Reggie had only been thinking of himself.

As Christians, we may be tempted to take shortcuts or disregard God’s commands simply because we think we have a good reason. Like Reggie Jackson, we may take matters into our own hands, reasoning

that we are doing a good thing. But Reggie discovered that his “good” choice was not the “best” choice, and that his disobedience had far-reaching consequences. David likewise learned that there was danger in taking matters into his own hands, for in his zeal to bring the Ark to Jerusalem, he and the priests assisting him broke the express commandments of God regarding how the Ark was to be carried.

When Uzzah put forth his hand to steady the Ark, he was in violation of God’s law, which forbid human hands from touching it. Though it may appear that his intentions were noble, his death taught David and Israel that obedience was paramount. Let us remember their lessons and be careful always to obey the Lord implicitly.

BACKGROUND

Shortly after his ascension to the throne of Israel, David desired to restore the Ark of the Covenant to its rightful place in Jerusalem. David had secured political unity with his capture of Jerusalem from the Jebusites. Bringing the Ark to Jerusalem would result in religious unity, and further strengthen the rule of the new king. Unfortunately, in his zeal David evidently had not inquired of the Lord before making these plans. He and the priests in charge at the time overlooked God’s strict regulations concerning the Ark, which included that the Ark was not to be transported on a wagon or cart, but on the shoulders of the Kohathites (Numbers 7:9) and that the Ark was not to be touched (Numbers 4:15). Rather than following the strict instructions laid out in the Book of Numbers, David commenced to transport the Ark in a common fashion, just like the Philistines had once done (1 Samuel 6:7).

The “breach” upon Uzzah means a tearing away, that is, the taking of his life suddenly. This word graphically shows God’s terrible destroying power. Uzzah’s actions lacked proper respect for the holy presence of God that the Ark represented. David was displeased by this event, and at himself for allowing this calamity to take place.

After the sudden death of Uzzah, David realized the awesome responsibility he had undertaken, and changed his plans. Rather than taking the Ark to Jerusalem, he sent it to the house of Obed-edom, a Levite and Kohathite, who could properly care for it. The subsequent blessing of the Lord upon Obed-edom’s household was a sign to David that it was now safe for him to transport the Ark to Jerusalem, provided that he did it according to God’s instructions.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The success of King David
 - B. His reign over all Israel
 - 3. The establishment of a new center of worship (6:1-23)
 - a. The Ark transported to Zion (6:1-5)
 - b. The sin of Uzziah (6:6-11)
 - c. The placing of the Ark in David's tent (6:12-19)
 - d. The mockery of Michal (6:20-23)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did David do to demonstrate his happiness upon bringing the Ark properly into Jerusalem?

2. Why do you think Michal was displeased with David's exuberance? What do you think her motives might have been?

3. What could be some consequences of choosing our way over God's way?

CONCLUSION

In his excitement to do something "good," David overlooked what was "best"—that is to obey the Lord fully. The commandments of the Lord are not something we can take lightly!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.” (2 Samuel 7:14-15)

Our first home was located on a street in a rather poor district of our city. Most of the homes surrounding it were rentals with residents who had little interest in maintaining the properties. However, across the street from us was a beautiful colonial-style white home. It was the nicest house on that street! I loved to look at it and see the owners constantly improving the landscaping by manicuring the lawn and planting flowers.

Some time later, I noticed that the grass was getting taller before it was mowed, and nobody planted flowers in the spring. In fact, after a few months of neglect, the house looked deserted! In talking with some of the neighbors, I found out that the family living there had split up. The wife and son had moved away and only the husband remained in the house.

For the rest of the time that we lived there, the condition of the home deteriorated. Recently, I drove by the house and was surprised to see that still no improvements had been made to it. In fact, it looked worse than ever. As I drove away, I was reminded of what the devil does in the lives of people. He shows no mercy, but loves to divide and destroy the lives of individuals and their families.

In today’s text we read where God had promised David that His mercy would not depart from his son, who would become king after him. This was significant, because God had rejected Saul. What a thrill it must have been to David to know that mercy would temper God’s justice in the life of his son!

We, too, can be spared God’s judgment if we ask Him to forgive us our sins. We are not worthy of His mercy, but He freely gives it to us. Do you want God’s mercy to envelop your life and the lives of those you love? Fear God, keep His commandments, and serve Him with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. God will honor your faithfulness and extend His mercy to you.

BACKGROUND

The Lord had established David and his kingdom. Verse 1 of this chapter begins by stating that “the

king sat in his house.” After years of unrest and war, David was finally able to live in the palace that Hiram, king of Tyre, had built for him (2 Samuel 5:11). During this time of peace in his kingdom, David voiced his desire to build a house for the Lord. David noted that he was living in a “house of cedar,” and the Ark of God was placed “within curtains.” He voiced his thoughts to Nathan, the prophet of God. Upon hearing David’s suggestions, Nathan immediately approved and encouraged David to do what was on his heart. However, God spoke to Nathan and let him know that He had other plans. He told him to speak to David and tell him that He had chosen David’s son to build the house of God.

Included in God’s message, through Nathan, was the promise that God would build a spiritual house through David. This was a prophetic reference to Jesus Christ. When David heard this, he did not respond to God through Nathan. He himself “sat before the LORD” and opened his heart to Him and voiced his gratitude. The statement that he “sat before the LORD” likely indicates that he went to the Tabernacle and presented himself before the Lord with thanksgiving. Instead of kneeling or standing to pray, he sat. This implies that David took his time to meditate on what God said and also formulate his own response to God.

Though David was a man of extraordinary gifts and graces, who was honorable as a king and successful against his enemies, he spoke to God as though he was astounded that God would choose him and his family for this great purpose. Before he gave praise to God for His greatness, he acknowledged that God knew his heart, which was the heart of a servant. The word “servant” comes from the Hebrew root word *abad*, which means “to work, to serve, to enslave, to be a bondman.” His acceptance speech included humbling himself to the lowest rank. His discourse to God ended with him claiming his blessing and asking God to therefore grant it upon his “house” (posterity) forever.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The success of King David
 - B. His reign over all Israel
 4. The promise of a perpetual dynasty (7:1-29)
 - a. The desire of David (7:1-3)
 - b. The promises from Jehovah through Nathan (7:4-17)
 - c. The worship of David (7:18-29)

A CLOSER LOOK

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

NOTES

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?” (2 Samuel 9:1)

Many years ago, my grandparents moved their family of eight children to Portland, Oregon, so they could worship with the people of the Apostolic Faith Church. Not long after they arrived, one of their sons contracted diphtheria and passed away. During his illness, the entire family was quarantined, so my grandfather could not work. Even though my grandparents were new to the congregation, at various times people from the church brought groceries and supplies and left them on the porch. My grandparents felt loved and cared for! They had moved because of the teachings of the church and the Spirit in the services, but the kindness of the people wrapped a bond around their hearts. A family was grounded in the Gospel, and in the years since then, many family members from five generations have chosen to serve God.

As we follow the story of Mephibosheth, we see how one generation benefited from the love and friendship of a former generation. In 1 Samuel, we read of the bond between King Saul’s son Jonathan and David. Now that David had been crowned king over the entire nation of Israel, had captured the city of Jerusalem, and had subdued the enemies that surrounded them, he began to make good on his personal promise to Jonathan that his family would not be harmed. He sought out Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth and cared for him with kindness, “for Jonathan thy father’s sake” (2 Samuel 9:7).

God makes it possible for each of us to come to Him with humility, and for Jesus’ sake, be made His children. Like Mephibosheth, we might feel unworthy, but what blessings are in store for us when we realize that they are for us, and accept them! As Christians, we also see an important example in David’s actions. He demonstrated his love for Jonathan by seeking out and “adopting” his son. God has done the same thing for us through the shed Blood of His Son, Jesus. We should desire to share that love with others by seeking to show kindness whenever possible. Who knows how far-reaching the blessings might be!

BACKGROUND

Chapter 8 shows how David and his armies systematically conquered one enemy after another, until all of the surrounding nations had been subdued.

The Philistines were to Israel’s west, the Moabites were to their east, the Syrians were to their north, and the Edomites were to their south. The covenant with Abraham had promised Israel the land from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates River, and the Lord helped David to expand the boundaries of the nation to the largest they had ever been.

It is certain that these outlying provinces provided income and materials that would be needed in the future for the building project that David had desired. The “gifts” mentioned in verse 6 were a type of taxes. Besides helping support the government of Israel, these taxes indicated that Israel was in control of the subjected nations. David ruled with justice; he was fair. As a result, the people of Israel were pleased with him and so was God.

It was a common practice in those days for the king of a new dynasty to completely eradicate the members of the former ruler’s family. That must have been a dominant thought in Mephibosheth’s mind as he traveled from Lodebar, east of the Jordan River, to Jerusalem to appear before David. As soon as he entered the presence of the king, Mephibosheth prostrated himself and declared his unworthiness. What immense surprise and relief he must have felt when David told him that because of Jonathan and the love they had held for each other, Mephibosheth and his son were to become members of David’s own family, live in his house, and eat at his table!

Mephibosheth was probably about twenty-one years old at this time. Along with treating him as a son, David gave Mephibosheth the land that would have been Jonathan’s inheritance.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- I. The success of King David
 - B. His reign over all Israel
 5. The extension of David’s kingdom (8:1-18)
 - a. The conquest of the Philistines (8:1)
 - b. The conquest of the Moabites (8:2)
 - c. The conquest of the Zobahs (8:3-4)
 - d. The conquest of the Syrians (8:5-8)
 - e. The diplomatic victory over Hamath (8:9-12)
 - f. The conquest of Edom (8:13-14)
 - g. The description of David’s reign (8:15-18)
 6. The care of David for Mephibosheth (9:1-13)

- a. Mephibosheth brought to David (9:1-6)
- b. David's kindness extended to Mephibosheth (9:7-13)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How did David find Mephibosheth?

2. David demonstrated both kingship and kindness. Explain why both of these were important in David's actions toward Mephibosheth.

3. Is there someone in your life who you can be kind to? Name three specific actions you could take to demonstrate kindness to someone of a different generation or socioeconomic status.

CONCLUSION

Just as David showed kindness to Mephibosheth and his family for Jonathan's sake, we should show kindness to others—even those that we might perceive to be our enemies—for Jesus' sake.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee.” (2 Samuel 10:11)

We are in a spiritual warfare. We are not alone in the battle because the Lord is with us. We also stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the people of God around the world who have joined this great fray.

Many of the spiritual soldiers in this battle are not young specimens of physical strength. I think of my mother who, in the latter part of her life, was a very frail lady. But could she pray! She had long prayer lists, and when she heard of a need, she wrote it on her list. After months of praying, she would ask how the situation was coming along—after we forgot we had ever mentioned it to her. Another thing my mother did was to write letters of encouragement to people who were housebound. She was legally blind, so she wrote with large letters, but she got her message across. Although not rich in this world’s goods, my mother was very generous, giving little gifts here or there where she saw a need. Of course, we feel she was very rich in soul and character!

Then one day, my mother became very ill. Now it was our turn to lend a helping hand. We were able to bring her into our home for the last months of her life. I can say it was a privilege to take care of her—it was like caring for an angel. The tables had turned: my mother, who had given so much to others, was in a position to receive help from someone else. How much like the family of God! At times we have resources to share, and at other times we are the recipients. Each person looks out for the other and lends a helping hand when needed.

We are encouraged in God’s Word to help carry the burdens of those around us. We should be on the lookout for those who seem heavy-hearted or overwhelmed by their circumstances. We need to be quick to lend a helping hand or to offer an encouraging word. Let us remember to pray for a brother or sister who is going through a trial. As we endeavor to do this, we will find the saints of God are eager to show empathy for our burdens and to help us carry our loads when necessary.

God’s family reaches around the world. Many of our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ suffer persecution and even martyrdom. Let us not forget to help them bear their burdens by spending time in prayer

for those who are suffering. As we help to lift the burdens of others, we will be fulfilling one of Christ’s commissions to His people.

BACKGROUND

After Nahash the king of Ammon died, David sent condolences to Hanun the new king. Hanun distrusted David’s motives and shamed David’s messengers by cutting off part of their garments and cutting off half their beards. Full beards were regarded as a sign of maturity and authority in Israelite culture, so Hanun’s act caused great offense. When King Hanun realized how seriously this act had angered David, he gathered his forces together and joined with certain Syrian armies to come toward Jerusalem to battle.

Joab, David’s army captain, divided his army into two groups, and he put one group into the control of Abishai his brother, enabling them to come against the enemy on two fronts. They met Ammon’s forces near Rabbah, which was northeast of Jerusalem, and won the victory as the enemy forces fled before Israel.

The enemy regrouped and summoned additional Syrian forces to fight Israel, and they gathered in Helam, which was much farther north. David gathered the Israeli army and led the attack at Helam. Again the enemy fled and David was victorious. The Syrians proceeded to make peace and serve Israel because they feared to attack Israel again.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The shame of King David
 - A. David’s sin with Bathsheba
 - 1. The background of David’s shame
 - a. Hanun’s insult to David (10:1-5)
 - b. Hanun’s coalition with the Syrians (10:6-8)
 - c. Joab’s initial defeat of the coalition (10:9-14)
 - d. David’s second defeat of the Syrians (10:15-19)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How many warriors did Hanun hire to fight against Israel?

[illegible][illegible]

Let us be quick to sense a need in the family of God and then do our best to help fill it.

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.” (2 Samuel 11:27)

As a young girl, my friend became a Christian, but in her teenage years, she let God’s love go from her heart. One night, when she was ready to enter her senior year of college, she was driving on the freeway and God called her to make a decision. He asked whether or not she was going to serve Him. That night she prayed, and the Lord saved her. She decided to move home and commute an hour each way to school because she knew that if she lived on campus, there would be some situations that might cause her to stumble spiritually. She thought it was better to remove herself completely from the situation rather than taking a chance that, again, she would turn her back on the Lord.

Temptations come to each of us. When we face them, we have a choice. My friend made the choice to remove herself from the potential problem—a wise decision. In today’s text, David did not make that choice. When he observed Bathsheba on a neighboring rooftop, he could have turned into his house from his roof and busied himself with some kingdom business. Instead, David chose to entertain the temptation and then to act upon it.

Day by day we will face situations where we need to make a choice. If our car radio is on and the station begins to play an ungodly song, do we turn it off? If we rent a movie and find it to be inappropriate for Christians, do we turn it off? What is our reaction when someone wants to share some gossip with us?

Our choices may not seem to have the big impact that David’s did. They will, however, affect our Christian walk. We do not have to face tempting situations in our own strength, for God has promised to be with us. However, at times we will need to take action to remove ourselves from temptation’s path. The Bible says that the Lord was displeased with David. We want God to be pleased, not displeased, with our decisions each day.

BACKGROUND

Today’s text tells of David’s temptation and fall into sin with Bathsheba, the wife of one of his faithful soldiers. Although the Bible indicates that David was a “man after God’s own heart,” we find that he was

vulnerable to temptation. When he did not resist the temptation, sin followed.

The Bible is brutally honest concerning this difficult and sad situation. This honesty adds verification to the Bible’s validity, for this painful chapter could easily have been omitted, and David would have appeared in a far better light.

The Biblical account shows the progression of the sin of David. He moved from idleness to imagination, to committing, to covering. The covering of his sin certainly did not bring prosperity, and his sin left horrible scars on his kingly reign.

The nations in this area often fought battles in the spring because it was not the rainy season. Roads were drier at that time, so it was easier to move the troops and their equipment. Also, wheat and barley crops were ready for harvest and therefore available for food. The author of 2 Samuel indicates that David should have gone to the battle with his troops. Even if he had not engaged in physical warfare, he should have been there for tactical leadership and moral support. It is thought that David was approximately fifty years old at the time of this account.

In houses in the East, the roof was one of the most pleasant places to spend time. They were flat so there was room to walk, and the breezes cooled the area. David could have fled the temptation by leaving his palace roof. Instead he proceeded in a plan that he knew was sinful, and he committed both adultery and murder. As a result of his actions, innocent people died.

The meaning of the name Uriah is “Yahweh (God) is my Light.” This name indicates that Uriah worshiped God, although he had a Hittite background. Uriah proved himself to be a loyal and faithful warrior, conducting himself appropriately for a military man of that time.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The shame of King David
 - A. David’s sin with Bathsheba
 - 1. The background of David’s shame
 - e. David’s vengeance on Ammon (11:1)
 - 2. The act of David’s shame (11:2-27)
 - a. David’s adultery with Bathsheba (11:2-5)
 - b. David’s attempt to hide his crime by recalling Uriah (11:6-13)
 - c. David’s murder of Uriah (11:14-25)
 - d. David’s marriage to Bathsheba (11:26-27)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why did Uriah the Hittite refuse to go to his own home after being recalled to Jerusalem by King David?

2. Contrast the integrity of Uriah with that of King David. What can we learn from both?

[illegible]

3. What steps can we take to help us resist temptation when it comes our way?

CONCLUSION

When we face temptations, God wants to help us win the victory. Let us purpose to seek His strength and remove ourselves from temptation whenever we can.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.” (2 Samuel 12:13)

One man tells how he lived for years without any understanding of what it meant to be a Christian. Then he was invited to church and began attending services. He heard people tell of salvation and of victory over sin. One night he knelt and prayed, “Lord, forgive me if I am a sinner.” He said, “Suddenly there was no doubt left. God showed me that I was a sinner, all right! He showed me forty-eight years of sinning—what a sight!” When the man cried out to God for forgiveness, God changed his life. Peace and joy came into his heart, and he had the power to walk up-rightly before the Lord.

We cannot find forgiveness from God until we first recognize that we are guilty. We must admit that we have done wrong in order to confess and repent. That is true now, and it was true in David’s time.

Today’s text opens with the prophet Nathan receiving instruction from God to go to David and confront him with his sins. Nathan used a story that angered David and caused him to condemn the person who committed the actions mentioned. Imagine how he felt when he realized that the man he was condemning was really himself! David took the right steps. He faced his sin, admitted his guilt, and repented.

From David’s example in this chapter, we can learn how to respond if God puts His finger on any areas in our lives that are not pleasing to Him. We need to take responsibility for our actions, seek forgiveness from God and anyone that we have wronged, and accept the chastening of God. We can be reconciled to God and have a close bond with Him.

BACKGROUND

Probably several months passed from the time Bathsheba realized she was with child until God instructed the prophet Nathan to deliver His message of judgment to David. Obviously, Nathan had divine help to accomplish his mission so tactfully and skillfully. In the parable that Nathan gave to cause David to confront his sin, Uriah was the poor man, David the rich man, Bathsheba the ewe lamb, and the traveler represented the temptation and the lust. This allegory was so understandable that David immediately grasped it when Nathan said, “Thou art the man.”

Nathan told David that God would bring evil and death to his family as a result of his sin. According to the law, David and Bathsheba should both have been stoned because of the adultery they had committed. At once, David confessed his sin and demonstrated true repentance (see Psalm 51), which resulted in the Lord not requiring his life for the sin. Instead, Nathan informed David that the child he and Bathsheba had conceived would die. While David’s sin was forgiven, all the consequences were not removed.

Upon hearing this news, David immediately began to fast and pray, for he knew that God might spare the life of the child. However, when David heard that the child had died, he accepted what God had done. When he said, “I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me,” David showed how firmly he believed in immortality. David knew the baby was with God and that when he himself died, he would see the boy again.

According to 1 Chronicles 3:5, David and Bathsheba had four sons, including Solomon, whom God promised David would be king.

When God’s chastisement was over, David took up his regular business again. Rabbah was the capital city of Ammon. (Today the city is Amman, Jordan.) Israel had been gaining territory a little at a time. Just before the city was conquered, Joab sent word for David to come. Joab wanted David to have the honor of this victory. David went immediately and was present for the final conquest. They entered the city, captured many slaves, and collected much treasure, including a crown, which weighed between fifty and seventy-five pounds.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The shame of King David
 - A. David’s sin with Bathsheba
 - 3. The confession of David of his sin (12:1-25)
 - a. Nathan’s denunciation of David’s sin (12:1-14)
 - b. David’s chastisement (12:15-23)
 - c. Solomon’s birth (12:24-25)
 - 4. The defeat and subjection of the Ammonites (12:26-31)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How do you think Nathan must have felt when God commanded him to confront David with his sin?

2. What was David’s reaction to the story the prophet told him of the man with the “one little ewe lamb”?

3. What does David’s decision to fast and pray for the child’s life, even after hearing of God’s judgment from Nathan, indicate about David’s relationship with God?

4. How should we react when God chastens us?

CONCLUSION

Sin brings consequences. However, God stands ready to forgive any person who, like David, takes the proper steps of repentance.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do any thing to her.”
(2 Samuel 13:2)**

The job had finally become available! The career position I had wanted so badly was open, and testing was going to begin. I worked hard at studying and getting myself into condition to take the written and physical exams that were required for the job. The thought of getting hired was on my mind day and night. Nothing else seemed to matter—even a call God had placed on my life.

Finally the day came when I was offered the job. However, after accepting the position, my obsession did not stop. I wanted to be the best person possible to do the job, so I took additional schooling during my off time, and worked overtime and extra shifts. Due to my heavy workload, I began to neglect my walk with God, and also my family. And, to my detriment, I continued to neglect the call of God.

My endeavors proved successful, but that success came at a cost. Eventually I suffered several injuries. My health deteriorated with the stress of the job, and I became physically sick. I had become so consumed with what I wanted, that it cost me the career I was so proud of and had worked so hard to achieve. Was my career choice wrong? No, but my obsession with attaining the career, and my neglect of God and His call on my life, was.

While work obsessions can be detrimental, they do not compare with the evil of the obsession described in today's chapter. Amnon became so obsessed with his lust toward Tamar, that he became sick. He was willing to do whatever he could to have her, even if it meant violating her and the Law of God. A plan was conceived with the aid of a friend, and Amnon got what he desired: fulfillment of his lust toward Tamar. However, what he did was wrong, and it eventually cost him his life at the hand of his half-brother Absalom.

We must guard against anything that could start to become an obsession. In the Bible, “lust” often means nothing more than natural desire. If the enemy can, he will prey upon our natural desires through temptation, offering something beside God's plan for our lives. We want to be watchful and ask God to help us stay focused on Him.

BACKGROUND

In the previous chapter, we read how God had chastised David through Nathan the prophet for his affair with Bathsheba and the slaying of her husband, Uriah. God told David that the sword would never depart from his house, and he would raise up evil against him out of his own house.

In this chapter, this evil starts to take place. Troubles continued one after the other for the rest of David's reign. It is interesting to note that adultery and murder were the sins of David, and immediately we see the same sins being committed by his sons, Amnon and Absalom. What heartbreak this must have brought David!

Amnon was David's firstborn son by Ahinoam. Absalom and his beautiful sister, Tamar, were his children by Maacah. As such, Amnon and Tamar were half siblings. When he violated her, the loss of her virginity was a curse to her by the Law. Because incestuous relations were forbidden by the Law, those guilty of such things were to be cut off from the covenant community. Tamar was innocent since she had been assaulted.

To add insult to injury, and in violation of the Law, Amnon sent Tamar away in anger. The Law said that if a man violated a virgin outside of marriage, he must marry her. By sending Tamar away, Amnon's actions showed further that he did not really love Tamar, but only lusted after her. Tamar's actions of tearing her royal robe and placing ashes on her head showed the intensity of her sorrow in losing her purity and further opportunity for marriage.

Two years passed before Absalom put his plan for revenge into place. He picked the time of sheep shearing (an ancient custom of Israel) to host a festival, and put his plan into action, having Amnon killed in revenge for his mistreatment of Tamar. Absalom then fled the royal household and went to his maternal grandfather, Talmai. Since his action had been premeditated murder, he could not take refuge in any of the designated cities of refuge in Israel. He remained with Talmai for three years before returning. It is interesting to note that to show the deep love Absalom had for his sister, Tamar, he later named his own daughter after her (2 Samuel 14:27).

We see here how God's word came to pass, and evil rose up within David's own house. The “secret” sin of David caused continuing heartache, long after he had repented of it.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The shame of King David
 - B. David's problems with his family
 - 1. Amnon's sin against Tamar
 - a. Amnon's desire for his sister (13:1-19)
 - (1) Jonadab's deceitful plan (13:1-6)
 - (2) Amnon's violation of Tamar (13:7-14)
 - (3) Amnon's ensuing hatred of Tamar (13:15-19)
 - b. Absalom's vengeance on Amnon (13:20-29)
 - (1) Absalom's initial reaction (13:20-22)
 - (2) Absalom's party for Amnon (13:23-27)
 - (3) Absalom's murder of Amnon (13:28-29)
 - c. Absalom's flight from David (13:30-39)
 - (1) The report to David (13:30-36)
 - (2) The flight of Absalom (13:37-39)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was David's reaction when he heard about Amnon's assault on Tamar?

2. Why was David reluctant to punish Amnon for his crime against Tamar?

3. Look back over your life for the past month, and the life choices you have made. What might be the eternal benefits or detriments to your spiritual walk with God, as a result of those choices?

CONCLUSION

The choices we make in life can either cause us to grow or to fall spiritually. If we seek to follow the plan God has for our lives, we will grow spiritually. But if we neglect the plan He has for us, we will fall. May we keep our hand in God's hand, and seek His will in each one of our life choices.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.” (2 Samuel 14:25)

One doesn't have to look far in society to find examples where a beautiful exterior facade hides a soul steeped in immorality and wickedness. Television programs, magazines, and movies parade a seemingly endless stream of good-looking people who are embroiled in all manner of sinful activities. While these individuals may appear to be happy, successful, and popular, a closer look at their personal lives often reveals addictions, heartache, loneliness, and bitterness. All of these are due to a failure to have a vital living relationship with the One who created them—the Source of true happiness.

Today's text shows that in spite of his handsome appearance and popularity, rebellion was already beginning in Absalom's life. Even as a young man, he schemed and acted independently. David did not control him, and evidently no one else did either. As a consequence, Absalom became used to having his own way and doing as he wished. Setting Joab's field on fire was an example of this. Very possibly, his good looks increased his self-centered attitude.

In today's high-fashion industry, Absalom would probably be a super model. Yet, when we look deeper into his life, we quickly realize that his self-serving attitudes and desires controlled his motives. Though his weaknesses may not have been discernable to man's casual observation, we know that God looks on the heart. What is found there is of far greater importance than what is seen externally.

When we look into the mirror to prepare for our day, let us take a minute to consider the heart of the person looking back at us. When we see one who has been redeemed by the precious Blood of Jesus, that light of Heaven will shine out through our actions each day. Ultimately, those around us will be drawn to us, not because we are so beautiful on the outside, but because they can see God's love in us.

BACKGROUND

The punishment for murder was death so Absalom had to flee Israel after he murdered Amnon. Even the cities of refuge that were established throughout the land could offer no protection since this was premeditated murder, and not an accidental death.

The woman Joab used to manipulate King David lived in Tekoah, a small city located approximately twelve miles from Jerusalem. This was not a random choice but rather a well-thought-out plan with the express purpose of eliciting a compassionate response from the king. Because she was a widow, David would most likely have responded more favorably to her dire need, since she had no husband to plead her case. The twelve miles she traveled ensured that her story could not readily be known to be fraudulent. She was an older woman—again to elicit a caring response from David. She wore the garb of a mourner, which further heightened the perceived level of distress she was under. Her woeful tale of murder and potential death of her only remaining son, coupled with her convincing disguise, made a strong impression on the heart of King David.

The demise of a family line was avoided at all cost within the Jewish community. Bloodline and genealogy were considered extremely important, and families often went to extreme measures to ensure future descendants. Joab was undoubtedly aware of this cultural emphasis and used it to bring David to the point of realizing he was wrong in banishing Absalom.

After promising forgiveness and protection to this widow's only son, the true nature of her visit was revealed. When David realized that he offered protection to a stranger for the same offence his son had committed, he was left with no other option but to extend forgiveness to Absalom.

In order to receive full restoration, a son needed the blessing of his father, which was often given by means of a public audience and a kiss. After two years of living in Jerusalem, Absalom still had not received this much-needed restoration. Until it was given, his existence could be compared to house arrest. It was not until Joab was forced to go to David to seek audience for Absalom, which was granted, that Absalom was fully restored to his father and gained full access to the city to move about as he pleased.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The shame of King David
 - B. David's problems with his family
 - 1. Amnon's sin against Tamar
 - d. Absalom's restoration to David (14:1-33)
 - (1) The scheme of Joab (14:1-3)
 - (2) The women of Tekoah before David (14:4-20)

- (a) The story of the women (14:4-11)
- (b) The point of the story (14:12-17)
- (c) The reason for the story (14:18-20)
- (3) The partial restoration of Absalom (14:21-27)
 - (a) Absalom's residence in Jerusalem (14:21-24)
 - (b) Absalom's beauty (14:25-27)
- (4) The full restoration of Absalom (14:28-33)

3. How can you ensure that the beauty of Christ is evident in your life—regardless of your external appearance?

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What reasons did Absalom have for becoming more vain and self-important?

2. How did the actions of his sons mimic David's own wrong behaviors?

CONCLUSION

Absalom was set on having his own way. We want our purpose to be that of pleasing God. When we allow the Holy Spirit to guide our desires and choices, we will realize the fulfilling life of being in the center of His will, and others will see the beauty of Jesus in us.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.”
(2 Samuel 15:6)**

Some years ago, we had a new neighbor move into a house near the river that ran by our house, and he seemed a social and generous man. He and his wife often invited several couples over for barbecued steaks or a hot dog roast, and in cooler weather, we were included at a lovely sit-down dinner prepared by his gracious wife. Ours is a close neighborhood, and it seemed this couple entertained everyone in the surrounding homes.

After about six months of this most charitable treatment, our new neighbor began to ask favors. We noticed he flattered and dined the older man across the street who was a blacksmith. His services were given gladly and the two men, seemingly, got along famously . . . until the old man could no longer weld or repair or lend. Then the “benevolent” neighbor ceased to call on him.

Next, this new neighbor accused another neighbor of stealing from him, and he later made a fast deal to cheat another out of several hundred dollars. It was apparent that this “social and generous” man had a selfish purpose.

Absalom, David’s son, was a man with a selfish purpose. He wanted his father’s throne, and he set about getting it through devious methods. He flattered and favored the people of Israel, with the goal of wooing them away from David. Absalom patiently employed these tactics for several years, and then eventually committed treason against his own father.

Kind deeds and words of appreciation can be a blessing. However, we want to remember that God sees our hearts and knows our motives. We want to be certain that our desires are to please God and to see His purpose advanced by what we do. Let us ask God to inventory our motives and to help us live in a way that is pleasing to Him.

BACKGROUND

After Absalom had his brother Amnon murdered, he was exiled from Jerusalem, but David longed after him. Joab, David’s general, observed that and persuaded him to let Absalom come back to Jerusalem. Yet, two years after his return, Absalom still had not come face to face with his father. Eventually, Joab

appealed to David for a reunion and David once again established Absalom as a member of the king’s household.

By this time, David was aging, and though he had garnered many military victories for Israel, prosperity had made the people restless. David’s popularity began to decline as resentment grew among the people over higher taxes and the recruitment of troops. Absalom assessed the situation and saw an opportunity to obtain the kingdom for himself.

Absalom was a handsome man with abundant charm. He appealed to the people’s discontentment and convinced them that if he were the king, he would treat them more fairly than they were being treated. With his chariots, horses, and fifty men, he was a compelling presence in Jerusalem, and in time he “stole the hearts of the men of Israel.” Bible scholars believe that the phrase “. . . after forty years,” in verse 7, refers to when David was anointed king of Israel. The consensus is that Absalom spent four years gaining the people’s confidence and waiting for the right time to plan his final revolt.

Hebron was where David had first established his kingdom before moving it to Jerusalem, and Hebron was where Absalom started his insurrection. He even convinced David’s most trusted adviser, Ahithophel, to join him in the revolt. Ahithophel was the grandfather of Bathsheba and may have had some resentment towards David because he had violated his granddaughter and caused the death of Uriah.

As David fled, perhaps he remembered the words of Nathan, the prophet, “Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from thine house.” It had been Bathsheba’s baby, then Amnon, and now Absalom had turned against him. But David knew that God was with him. His prayer is recorded in Psalm 3.

Another trusted adviser to David, Hushai the Archite (a Gentile of Canaanite descent), along with Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, agreed to go back to Jerusalem and pretend to be loyal to Absalom and, in the end, help restore David to his throne.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The shame of King David
 - B. David’s problems with his family
 - 2. Absalom’s revolt against David
 - a. Absalom’s conspiracy against David (15:1-12)
 - (1) Absalom’s trickery (15:1-6)
 - (2) Absalom’s uprising (15:7-12)
 - b. David’s flight from Absalom

- (1) David's evacuation of the city (15:13-18)
- (2) Ittai's allegiance to David (15:19-23)
- (3) Zadok and the Ark remain in the city (15:24-29)
- (4) Hushai, David's informant in the city (15:30-37)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What actions did Absalom take to convince the people that he would make a better king?

2. How do you think David's relationship with God was strengthened during this time of crisis?

3. What lessons can we learn in our Christian walk as we compare the actions of Absalom and David?

CONCLUSION

If our motives are right, and we have a genuine love for our fellow man and for God, we will always esteem others better than ourselves and not use devious ways to get ahead in this world.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day.” (2 Samuel 16:12)

A few days ago I visited with the skipper of a commercial fishing vessel, who is a Christian. Two of his brothers are on his crew. For a whole week their vessel had been equipped for them to go crabbing, but the strong winds prevented them from going the necessary one hundred miles offshore. With other vessels getting abundant catches of mackerel, they decided to remove the crabbing gear from the vessel and replace it with mackerel gear.

Finally, they were ready to go. As they set out, the skipper noticed a light that needed fixing. While attempting to remove the corroded screw, the screwdriver slipped and cut his thumb. He went to get a band-aid, and his brother picked up the screwdriver and attempted to remove the screw. The screwdriver slipped again, and this time went through the palm of the brother's hand. They had to return to the harbor so his brother could be taken to the hospital to have the wound treated.

Two hours later, they were ready to go fishing once more! After they had been out an hour or so, the skipper received a call saying that another one of his brothers (not a crew member) had died suddenly of a heart attack. Once again, they returned to the harbor with no catch. What a chain of unfortunate events! Yet, it seemed clear to me that as the skipper talked, he had a strong hope that God would help and provide.

In today's text, King David seemed to be comforting himself with the hope that God would bring good to him out of his current situation, to balance the trouble he was encountering. He knew that God had allowed these circumstances. So with humility and resignation, David accepted them as reproof from the Lord.

Adversity comes to those who love and serve God as well as to those who do not. However, the children of God know that He allows everything that happens to them for some purpose. Many times God permits difficulties to come our way to try us or bring us closer to Him. Sometimes, God allows tribulations as a form of chastisement. When we face trials, we need to hold fast to God's Word and His promises. He will not fail us, just as He did not fail David.

BACKGROUND

With fair words and flatteries, Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel, thus causing his God-chosen and divinely anointed father, David, to flee from Jerusalem. While fleeing eastward, David and his followers were met on the Mount of Olives by Ziba, the head servant of Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan. Ziba made David a handsome present of provisions, which would do him some good in his present distress.

In his flight, David came to Bahurim. This place lay north of Jerusalem, in the tribe of Benjamin. The name Bahurim means “young men.” This is where Shimei, of the house of Saul, lived. Shimei cursed David and cast stones at his company, unjustly charging David with the blood of the house of Saul. The warriors who were with David would soon have put an end to him, but David restrained them. David considered all this as being permitted by God for his chastisement and humiliation.

With David fleeing from Jerusalem, Absalom took possession of the throne. Hushai greeted him there, and complimented him about his accession to the throne, as if he was satisfied with Absalom being king. However Hushai would not counsel him wisely, because Hushai was a friend of David.

Absalom's most trusted counselor, Ahithophel, advised his leader to make a bold statement of his break with David by taking the ten concubines that David had left in Jerusalem onto the roof of the royal palace and publicly sleeping with each of them. Absalom complied with this counsel. It entirely suited his lewd and wicked mind, and he did not delay to put it into execution. This was a capital crime under the Law (Leviticus 20:11).

The wives of the conquered king were the property of the conqueror. By taking possession of them, he appeared to possess the right to the kingdom. But for a son to take his father's wives was an abomination and he was subject to death under God's Law.

Some think that Ahithophel gave the advice as revenge against David for the injury done to Bathsheba, who was his granddaughter. Bathsheba was the daughter of Eliam (chapter 11:3), who was the son of Ahithophel (chapter 23:34).

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The shame of King David
 - B. David's problems with his family
 - 2. Absalom's revolt against David

- b. David's flight from Absalom
 - (5) David's belief of Ziba's report (16:1-4)
 - (6) David's wise dealings with Shimei (16:5-14)
- c. Absalom's control of Jerusalem (16:15-23)
 - (1) Hushai's pseudo-allegiance to Absalom (16:15-19)
 - (2) Absalom's violation of David's harem (16:20-23)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Mephibosheth's servant, Ziba, present to David?

2. How would you describe David's response to the insult by Shimei?

3. How can we be sure that we are responding to difficult circumstances as God wants us to?

CONCLUSION

When trials come your way, look to God. Remember that He cares about you and will bring you through.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom.” (2 Samuel 17:14)

When we face opposition, betrayal, or attack, it is important to remember that God is in complete control. One woman testified of a recent challenge at the school where she teaches. The father of one of her students falsely reported that she had slapped his child in class. When this teacher was called in to see the principal, she was told there would be an investigation. That night she laid the matter out before the Lord in prayer. The next day, concerned about the impact on her, the principal said, “I was thinking about you last night.” This woman replied, “I did not come here by myself. Where God’s will places me, His grace will sustain me.”

God answered prayer. Although this teacher never found out the motive, it was discovered that there was a conspiracy between the father and a teacher’s aid to implicate her. The Lord undertook in a wonderful way, even allowing this woman’s testimony to be a witness to the principal.

God is well able to defeat the devices and counsel of men. David had prayed fervently that God would “turn Ahithophel’s counsel into foolishness.” Today’s Bible text shows that God answered in a mighty way.

When we face adversity, we want to remember to take the steps that both this woman and David took—they prayed for God to intervene. Sometimes God may answer in a different way than we expect, but He will answer when we pray honestly and in faith. The situations we face may seem impossible to us, but so did David’s. Our focus verse indicates that Ahithophel’s counsel was “good”—in the natural, his strategy may have worked—but God defeated him.

God wants to work in your life today. Will you trust Him to take you through to victory?

BACKGROUND

Absalom attempted to usurp the throne of King David, his father. He sought counsel from Ahithophel, whose outline for victory called for the use of just 12,000 light-footed soldiers. His plan was for these men to set out at once, so they would have the element of surprise in their favor and would capture David

before he crossed the Jordan into the wilderness country on the other side. Ahithophel suggested that the sudden attack would presumably create panic among David’s followers, causing them to flee. He thought that David could be captured and killed.

Although all the elders of Israel approved of Ahithophel’s counsel, Absalom hesitated and sought a second opinion. Absalom had good reason to fear and respect his father, because he had witnessed what his father had accomplished. God overruled when He caused Absalom not to proceed until he had consulted with Hushai, who was, in fact, a spy for David. Hushai advocated a prepared attack, which would take time. When Hushai said “at this time” (verse 7), he indicated that Ahithophel had counseled wisely in the past.

In the natural, Ahithophel’s counsel would have spelled David’s death, but God swept that away. Hushai flattered Absalom, and Absalom became trapped by his own vanity. The counsel of Ahithophel was not the Lord’s will; it was defeated, and the minds of Absalom and the elders of Israel were clouded.

David and the people with him were camped approximately twenty miles from Jerusalem. En-rogel, where David’s runners were located, was less than a mile away from Jerusalem, and Bahurim was to the south about a mile from there. A “wench” (verse 17) means a female servant.

Ahithophel had been one of David’s counselors. He realized that Absalom would be defeated, and then he would be judged for being a traitor. If Ahithophel followed Absalom to get revenge for David’s sin against Bathsheba and Uriah, Ahithophel payed dearly for harboring the bitterness in his heart.

Amasa, who commanded Absalom’s army, was a nephew of David and a cousin to Joab. This was civil war with all its pain.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The shame of King David
 - B. David’s problems with his family
 - 2. Absalom’s revolt against David
 - d. Absalom’s war against David
 - (1) The preparations for the conflict (17:1-29)
 - (a) Ahithophel’s wicked counsel (17:1-4)
 - (b) Hushai’s bitter counsel (17:5-14)
 - (c) David informed of Absalom’s actions (17:15-23)

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DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king’s servant, and me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was.”
(2 Samuel 18:29)

The story of Ahimaaz and Cushi reminds me of an embarrassing moment that I had years ago when I was in the army. We were in the final days of our grueling “first eight weeks,” and we were in the barracks. Someone in our platoon looked out the window and saw a group of raw recruits in the adjacent open area. This led to many of our “seasoned veterans” jeering and making smart remarks out the window.

Suddenly, an officer rushed into our room, and all was instantly quiet. After asking various ones what they thought they were doing behaving like that, he walked up to me and asked if I had been yelling out the window. At that moment, I could not for the life of me recall if I had actually yelled anything or not, even though only a few moments had passed. I didn’t think so, but I was not totally sure. So rather than lie to him, I told him the truth, “I don’t know, Sir.” You can guess how mortified I felt! You can guess also what he thought of me: Either this guy is totally senseless or a liar! The only good thing about the moment was that I was sure I had not said anything untrue!

Ahimaaz must have felt confusion of a similar nature. When King David asked him what had happened to his son Absalom, Ahimaaz said that he did not know. One Bible commentary suggests that because he feared the wrath of the king, he would not say. Because of that, his testimony was worthless. He was told to stand aside, while David waited for someone else to arrive who actually knew what had happened.

As Christians, whether we know anything else or not in life, we had better know that we are spiritually right with God. It is imperative that we have a clear testimony of salvation, including when this experience came to us and what it did for us. It needs to be real in our lives so that we know for sure that we are on the road to Heaven. And we need to be able to put this into words so that we can be effective in helping someone else along the path toward God.

BACKGROUND

At this point in the rebellion of Absalom, David mustered his troops, formed three groups, and assigned Joab, Abishai, and Ittai as their leaders. David’s

people told him to stay in the city, because they understood that this battle was about two men — David and Absalom.

“The wood devoured more,” indicates that the woods were dense and tangled where they were fighting. There may have also been pits and wild beasts.

When Joab “blew the trumpet,” he was signaling the troops to cease fighting and gather together. While the Bible does not say exactly what Joab was thinking when he killed Absalom, it is obvious Joab disobeyed David’s command.

Three sons had been born to Absalom (2 Samuel 14:27), but it appears that they had all died by the time the events of this chapter took place.

Ahimaaz was the son of Zadok, the priest. The name Cushi means this man was actually a Cushite slave. Perhaps Joab thought David might kill whoever brought the message of Absalom’s death, and therefore he sent a servant. The route Ahimaaz took to David was longer but more flat than the route the Cushite took.

It seems that the city of Mahanaim had a double wall, and therefore two gates. David, in his concern over the battle, was sitting between the gate of the outer wall and the gate of the inner wall. This may have been a courtyard-like area.

Verse 33 is a cry of anguish from David’s heart over the death of his son Absalom. David grieved deeply for several reasons. Certainly he grieved for him because he was his son. David also knew that this was part of God’s judgment for his murder of Uriah.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The shame of King David
 - B. David’s problems with his family
 - 2. Absalom’s revolt against David
 - d. Absalom’s war against David
 - (2) The conflict between David and Absalom (18:1-18)
 - (a) David’s army prepared (18:1-5)
 - (b) Absalom’s army defeated (18:6-8)
 - (c) Absalom’s death (18:9-18)
 - [1] Joab’s disobedience (18:9-15)
 - [2] Absalom’s burial (18:16-18)
 - (3) The grief of David for Absalom (18:19-33)

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1. What were David's instructions to Joab and the other generals regarding the treatment of Absalom if he were caught? Did Joab follow these orders?

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Many things in life may be confusing, but our relationship with God should not be one of them. At every moment, we need to know that our hearts are right with Him.

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DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?” (2 Samuel 19:10)

My son and daughter-in-law just came back from Hawaii, where they celebrated their tenth anniversary. They had been planning this trip for over a year. They had made many preparations, including arranging care for their children, finding good airline rates, choosing the hotels, deciding which islands to visit and which activities to enjoy. They visited with friends who had been there and discussed with them what to do and where to go. There was high anticipation and expectation for this trip.

As the flight date drew near, suitcases were pulled out, clothing was chosen and packed, and a list of miscellaneous items was checked off. In part, the pleasure of the trip was dependent upon being certain they had everything they needed.

We devote much time and energy into planning and preparing for a trip. How much more we should be sure we are ready for the return of our King! We must make plans now to meet Him. Various preparations are necessary, such as restitutions, consecrations, and being equipped for His service. We must lay aside weights and cares of this world if we are to get a clear vision of the glory that awaits us.

Through all of our preparation, we need to feel anticipation for Christ's coming. Just as Israel began to call for their king to come back and take possession of his throne in order to bring peace back to their land, we need to long for Jesus to come so that He may set up His Kingdom and bring peace to this world. As great as our anticipation and expectation of Heaven may be, we cannot begin to comprehend the bliss that we will experience when we meet our King.

As we are preparing and anticipating, we also need to spread the Gospel to others who have not yet begun their preparations. They need to know that the King will soon be here, and that is vital for them to be ready for His return. Every effort put into getting ready for Heaven will be worth it!

BACKGROUND

Because of Absalom's insurrection, David was in exile. David had just learned of Absalom's death and was in deep mourning.

Much chaos existed in Israel at this time, and it was imperative that the king take his rightful place in

Jerusalem and unite the people. Joab reproved David, telling him to get up and take action. David arose and sat in the gate in view of the people.

The same ones who a few days before had followed Absalom, now called for David to be put back on the throne. The people of Judah, however, seemed reluctant for David's return.

David displaced Joab by putting Amasa as commander of his army. Joab had been guilty of crimes in the past (3:26-29). Amasa had been Absalom's general, so this appointment would help to unite the army under David. Amasa had great influence over the people of Judah and succeeded in uniting them in allegiance to David.

As David was returning to Jerusalem, there were several incidents of individuals endeavoring to have an understanding with the king. Shimei, who had previously cursed David and cast stones at him and his men (16:5-6), begged for David's forgiveness, which was granted for the time. (Later in 1 Kings 2:8-9, David suggested that Solomon put him to death.) David may not have been sure if either Ziba or Mephibosheth were telling the truth. So, David told Mephibosheth to divide the land with Ziba, but Mephibosheth said that Ziba could have it all. David wanted to reward Barzillai for providing him sustenance while he was in exile. Barzillai requested the honor be done to his son Chimham instead, and David acquiesced.

Even after David was restored to Jerusalem, there was much contention between the people of Judah and those of the other tribes of Israel.

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II. The shame of King David

B. David's problems with his family

2. Absalom's revolt against David

e. David's return to Jerusalem (19:1-43)

(1) David's grief for Absalom concluded (19:1-8)

(2) Israel's desire to bring back David (19:9-10)

(3) Israel's desire to bring back David (19:11-15)

(4) David's wise dealings (19:16-39)

(a) David's mercy toward Shimei (19:16-23)

(b) David's care for Mephibosheth (19:24-30)

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DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him. (2 Samuel 20:9)

“If you don’t vote against this grant proposal, I will quit my post as your vice-president!” The woman standing in my office had issued her ultimatum. As president of the academic senate at a large West Coast college, I sometimes have to deal with intractable administrators, irate staff, and outspoken faculty members, but these words from my colleague were especially distressing and painful. Our difference of opinion on a matter would obviously have a negative effect on our personal and working relationship.

I know that I am not the only Christian who has had to deal with job stress, office intrigue, and political maneuverings at work. I take comfort in knowing that the trials of human beings have not changed much since the days of King David. In 2 Samuel 20, we read of how King David had to deal with the rebellion of Sheba, the incompetence of Amasa, and the violent machinations of Joab.

The events described in this chapter are decidedly unpleasant and gruesome. God’s Word acknowledges the difficult elements of life that we must witness and sometimes even experience ourselves. You might have a rebellious “Sheba” at church, or an incompetent “Amasa” at work, or a manipulative “Joab” in your life. Although we cannot control the actions or attitudes of those around us, we can, like King David, keep our eyes on God. We can affirm, “God is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer.”

BACKGROUND

The narrative of 2 Samuel 20 is framed by the resurrection and death of Sheba, most likely an officer in the northern army of Israel. He did not declare war against David, but he told the armies and citizens of the northern tribes of Israel that they should not follow David. David knew he had to act quickly to quell the potential uprising, because Sheba was trying to raise an army (verse 14). However, Sheba met a quick demise in the city of Abel.

David put away his ten concubines as a political gesture. According to some commentators, the women, who represented David’s rule, were considered contaminated by their time with Absalom. David had to set them apart in a guarded house as a step in reestablishing his kingdom.

Amasa was told to get the loyal Judean troops together in three days, but he could not get the job done. David knew there was no time to spare, so he told Abishai, Joab’s brother, to pursue after Sheba. Evidently, Amasa caught up with Abishai and Joab at Gibeon.

The writer of 2 Samuel does not glorify or condone the violence of Joab. Joab had killed Abner (2 Samuel 3:27) and Absalom (2 Samuel 18:14) against David’s will. David had demoted Joab and advanced Amasa in his place as captain of the host because of the killing of Absalom (2 Samuel 19:13). Joab may have felt that if he eliminated Amasa, he could regain his position as captain. Joab was a man who preferred to destroy those who stood in his way. David gave in to Joab’s “power tactics,” and Joab was reappointed captain of the host.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The shame of King David
 - B. David’s problems with his family
 - 3. Sheba’s revolt against David (20:1-26)
 - a. Sheba’s call to rebellion (20:1-2)
 - b. David’s concubines widowed (20:3)
 - c. David’s attempt to end the rebellion (20:4-22)
 - (1) Amasa’s ineffectiveness (20:4-5)
 - (2) Joab’s murder of Amasa (20:6-13)
 - (3) Sheba’s demise (20:14-22)
 - d. David’s administration listed (20:23-26)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What specific details in the narrative indicate that the historian/writer wants us to be repulsed by the violence of Joab?

[illegible][illegible]

When people seem to be out of control around you, remember that there is a God in Heaven and in your heart who is most certainly in control. His ways are being worked out even in the seemingly chaotic violence that surrounds us.

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DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night.” (2 Samuel 21:10)

I read a story a while ago about a dog in Scotland that had demonstrated an amazing amount of loyalty and faithfulness to his master. The dog was known as “Greyfriars Bobby.” For years, he and his master were inseparable. After his master died and was buried in Greyfriars Churchyard, Bobby took up post on his master’s grave every night for fourteen years—until his own death.

Certainly, the devotion of a dog is not the same thing and really cannot be compared to the devotion portrayed in this chapter. Rizpah exhibited amazing love and faithfulness to her two dead sons during what must have been an agonizing ordeal for her. She stayed by their bodies through the entire harvest season to prevent the vultures from tearing at them during the day and the wild animals from eating them at night.

The pain over the loss of her loved ones—not to mention the way they were killed—had to be excruciating, but seeing their deteriorating bodies as she kept her vigil and protected them for what was likely months is hard to comprehend. What an example of devotion she demonstrated!

As we consider what she did, perhaps we can get a little better understanding of the immense love and the magnitude of the faithfulness that God extends to us. I suspect that there was a lot of love between Rizpah and her sons, and she performed this act of devotion in part because of the love she received as well as the love that she had for her sons.

Even though many people throughout the ages have turned God aside, He sent His Son to earth to sacrifice Himself for us. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. He has been, and still is caring for us. Regardless of how much we have hurt Him, Jesus has been faithfully watching and waiting—not for a season, but since creation—ready to take us into His family.

By His sacrifice on the Cross, and His promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us, Jesus gave us the ultimate example of unselfish love. How have we responded?

BACKGROUND

Some four hundred years before this time, the Gibeonites had tricked Joshua into making a treaty with them (Joshua 9). They dressed in old clothes, and brought old, dried, moldy bread with them, making it appear as though they had traveled a great distance to meet with Joshua. Due to their appearance, Joshua thought they had indeed come from far away and thus were not a people dwelling in the land of Canaan, which he was conquering. Hence, he had no problem signing a treaty with them. It was due to this treaty that the Gibeonites were allowed to remain in the land, though essentially they were slaves of the Israelites.

A concubine of King Saul, Rizpah had borne him two sons. Concubines had very little status or influential power; they were considered “secondary wives,” and were inferior to the “primary wives.” Rizpah was the concubine that Abner (Saul’s commander) had taken, and then Ishbosheth (Saul’s son that Abner had made king in Israel) challenged him on the matter (2 Samuel 3:7). This made Abner angry, so he transferred his allegiance to David. Her actions in this chapter show that Rizpah was a loving and courageous mother.

According to the Law, bodies were to be buried on the day of death. However, these bodies were unburied until the rain came—the evidence that the famine would end. Rizpah protected the bodies from April until October—the harvest season. Her actions prompted David to gather the bones of Saul and of his sons to give them a proper burial in the family tomb, which was important to an Israelite.

The battles listed in verses 15-22 happened earlier and are recounted here. These conflicts were all with descendants of the giants. They may have been of renown at the time, since their names were mentioned. Ishbi-benob’s spear weighed between seven and nine pounds. Abishai was David’s nephew, and he rescued David. After this conflict, David’s military commanders declared that he was too valuable to go with them to the battlefield anymore.

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III. Appendices

- A. The famine because of Saul’s wrath (21:1-14)
 - 1. The request of the Gibeonites (21:1-6)
 - 2. The appeasement of the Gibeonites (21:7-9)
 - 3. Rizpah’s sorrow (21:10-11)

4. The interment of the bones of Saul and Jonathan (21:12-14)
- B. The destruction of Goliath's descendants (21:15-22)
 1. Ishbi-benob (21:15-17)
 2. Saph (21:18)
 3. Goliath (21:19)
 4. Another giant (21:20-22)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How long was the famine in Israel and Judah? Why did the famine occur?

2. Compare Saul's actions and the resulting deaths of his sons and grandsons, with sin and its results.

3. Why do you think the author of 2 Samuel recorded the giants who were killed?

4. How can we apply the example of Rizpah's devotion to our lives?

CONCLUSION

Often when people choose to do things their own way rather than looking to God and striving to follow His will, it ends in tragedy. Both the famine and the killings of Saul's sons and grandsons could have been avoided had Saul looked to the Lord for guidance. In our lives too, we can avoid trouble and problems by following God's plan rather than our own.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer.” (2 Samuel 22:2)

Not too long ago, I was traveling on a scenic highway in the northern region of Washington State. The mountains, the autumn colors, the streams, the clear skies, and the terrain were breathtaking.

Then, while standing on a ridge of solid rock, I noticed something that seemed to be a little out of character. Right in front of me was a small tree with a trunk as gnarled as any I had ever seen. It was projecting out over a 600-foot drop-off in an almost horizontal position. This tree did not compare in beauty with the majestic pines in the mountains nearby, yet the leaves were a beautiful green.

In this terrain and high altitude, the winters are harsh. Looking at that small tree, I wondered how it could have survived through the rough conditions winter brings. Looking more closely, I found that the base and the roots were right under the platform of rock where I was standing. It was safe and solidly anchored, no matter what came.

This can be compared to our Christian walk. Trials and temptations will come our way, and at times we may feel as though they could overwhelm us. Yet, like that tree, we know that our Rock, Christ Jesus, will never move.

David was like that tree. He knew that he was rooted and grounded in a strong Rock—his Fortress and Deliverer. The first verse of this chapter explains that David sang this song as a prayer, thanking the Lord for delivering him from his enemies and King Saul. Being in exile and running for your life would be quite a trial. Yet, David found peace knowing that God was on his side.

There is nothing more comforting and assuring than knowing that our Foundation is secure!

BACKGROUND

This song is also recorded, with minor changes, as Psalm 18, being modified to worship with groups of singers. It is thought that David composed this song early in his reign, probably after the victories recorded in 2 Samuel 8 and 10. It is significant that Saul is not named as one of David's enemies, even though Saul tried at least five times to kill him. David considered Saul to be God's anointed, and would not harm him even when he had the opportunity, waiting instead until he was removed in God's time.

In verses 2 and 3, David used the following words and phrases to praise God and describe his reliance on and experience of God's care and protection:

- Rock: stable, fixed, firm, enduring.
- Fortress: defense, large and permanent protection.
- Deliverer: one who delivers or rescues; a preserver.
- Shield: personal protection and care.
- Horn of my salvation: the source and authority of his salvation.
- High tower: an impregnable place of protection.
- Refuge: shelter or protection from danger or distress.
- Savior: one who saves from danger or destruction.

Saul had hunted David for approximately ten years. Many times David must have felt “there is but a step between me and death” (1 Samuel 20:3). But David cried to God, trusting Him for deliverance.

In verses 8 through 20, the Lord is pictured as moving with irresistible force to disperse and destroy David's enemies who would have killed him. Then God rescued David and moved him to a place of safety and freedom.

In verses 21 through 28, it may seem as though David was boasting that his own abilities enabled him to please God and secure His blessing and protection. However, the word “afflicted” in verse 28 can also be translated as “humble.” David understood that the only way to please God is through submission to Him.

In verse 29, David thanked God for being his “lamp,” and “lighting his darkness.” He then acknowledged that God was giving him safety and victory. Verse 36 states, “Thy gentleness has made me great.” David was amazed that God would reach down and reveal His will to him, but he wanted to give Him the credit for his success. In verses 38 to 43, David declared in graphic language the total victory God had given over his enemies.

God's love gave David victory after victory and placed him on a secure throne. No wonder he exclaimed, “The LORD liveth!” (verse 47). The gods of the nations around him were dead idols, made from wood, stone, or metal, but God heard David's prayers and answered them!

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III. Appendices

- C. The song of David's deliverance from Saul (22:1-51)

1. The occasion for praise (22:1-4)
2. The sorrows of the past (22:5-7)
3. The praise for the Lord's intervention (22:8-20)
4. The fact of the Lord's reward (22:21-28)
5. The judgment of David's enemies (22:29-43)
6. The exaltation of David over his enemies (22:44-49)
7. The concluding praise (22:50-51)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What do you believe was David's primary motivation for living a righteous life, pleasing God or receiving protection and blessings?

2. Verse 35 states, "He teacheth my hands to war." In verse 36, David says, "Thy gentleness hath made me great." How can we reconcile the seeming contradiction of these two statements?

3. David's song covers many years of his life. Why would it be a good thing to look back over our lives and thank God for what He has done?

CONCLUSION

This psalm of praise expresses David's reliance on God, his humility and desire to let others know what God can do for them if they rely on Him. He obeyed God's law and saw the great value in having a "conscience void of offence toward God and toward man" (Acts 24:16).

The trust David had put in God while he was a shepherd had grown to include every aspect of his life. We can follow in the steps of humility, trust, and obedience, knowing God will provide our needs each day.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.” (2 Samuel 23:5)

As my husband carried our luggage to the car, our hostess at the home where we had spent the night shared the early morning traffic report with us. She said that Highway 61 south of Interstate 94 was being rerouted, and we could expect a two-hour delay. Officials were reconstructing a serious accident that had taken place there earlier. The thought occurred to me that it seemed strange, almost ironic, that anyone would want to “reconstruct an accident.” Yet, there is a purpose behind such actions. Researchers are looking for any possible indications of error, mechanical failure, or cause of the problem. They want to learn what they can from the accident.

In today’s text, David was reconstructing, or reviewing, God’s promise to him. He said that God had made “an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things.” He was referencing the covenant made centuries earlier when God had promised that the Messiah would be born of Abraham’s lineage. David had been blessed in so many ways on his path to the throne and also as the King of Israel. In his mind he considered those blessings, reviewed his errors, and thought of the lessons he had learned from them.

Reconstructing our walk with the Lord, like David did, can be a reassuring experience—a way to reaffirm our faith in God and to thank Him again for helping us and for His mercy. Such review can also help us evaluate our current spiritual situation. As we consider times when God has corrected us, we can review the lessons we have learned in those situations. We can meditate upon the promises God has given us as we have walked with Him, and we can inventory whether we are still in as close communication with Him as we should be.

There is value in reconstruction, both of a traffic accident and also of our spiritual lives. Today would be a good time to challenge ourselves to do a little reviewing and considering.

BACKGROUND

Throughout his life, David wrote songs and poetry about God’s faithfulness and deliverance. With few exceptions, David’s life was one of thankfulness.

No wonder, then, that soldiers and military leaders alike were happy to serve him as their “commander in chief.”

After David’s last words about God’s faithfulness, the deeds of many who served under him are listed. This was unusual, as the custom of the time was for the king to receive the honor and credit for any military victory. A text similar to this can also be found in 1 Chronicles 11:10-47.

The most elite among David’s warriors were referred to as “the three,” and then “the thirty” were noted. Since the total of the names was more than thirty, new warriors were probably appointed to that group when one died. Note that Uriah the Hittite was listed. Benaiah was in charge of David’s bodyguard (2 Samuel 20:23). Later, Solomon put Benaiah in charge of his army.

Verses 13-17 contain a wonderful example of David’s heartfelt love and appreciation for God and his faithful soldiers, and also an example of the devotion the soldiers felt for their godly and upright leader. Since this occurred “in the harvest time” there would not have been rain, and so the cistern used to store their water was no doubt dry. With no water in the cave, David was thirsty. He was not giving an order when he expressed his longing for water from Bethlehem’s well, but these three men cared enough to make it happen. They had to go about twelve miles and break through the enemy’s lines in order to obtain the water David craved. David was moved by their devotion. He felt that drinking the water would be like drinking the blood of those men, because they had risked their lives to get it for him, so he poured it out as an offering to God.

This story of valiant warriors is a testimony to David’s leadership ability. These men began to follow him for various reasons, but he was able with God’s help, to mold them into a mighty group.

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III. Appendices

D. The concluding words of David (23:1-7)

E. The roster of David’s mighty men (23:8-39)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What were the names of the first three of David’s mighty men?



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.” (2 Samuel 24:24)

As the anniversary of September 11, 2001, approached, I challenged my sixth grade class to participate in a school-wide “Acts of Kindness” project. Each child had the opportunity to sacrifice their time to do something for others to honor the thousands of people who died on that tragic day. “Do something you wouldn’t normally do,” I encouraged, “and it will be more meaningful.”

The pledges rolled in. Some students pledged to spend time with an elderly neighbor. Some pledged to do the dishes for their mothers. Others offered to take over chores for their siblings. Each pledge was a sacrifice, but the more the children sacrificed, the better they felt.

It was no wonder that David felt he could not escape unhurt by his sin. He knew God would not accept anything but his whole heart. Taking the easy way out, though offered, would have devalued his sacrifice.

God requires sacrifice from every heart. In a still, small voice, He tells each of us what He wants. Faithfully being in our place every day is a sacrifice. God may call you to reach out to someone who is alone and needy. He may ask you to give up a hobby that clutters your mind with the things of the world. He may show you an opportunity to give sacrificially for the spread of the Gospel.

Just as a pledge of kindness cannot reverse the horrible tragedy, sacrifice cannot earn us salvation. The sacrifice alone did not reconcile David to God, but rather, God used the sacrifice as a symbol of David’s submission and humility.

God tells us that to sacrifice our lives to Him is our reasonable service; after all, He mercifully paid our debt. If we offer Him less than our whole lives, we have really offered Him nothing at all.

What has God asked from you? His gift of forgiveness is amazing. Let us also be willing to offer our time, energies, and resources, as well as our hearts.

BACKGROUND

The chapter begins by stating that the Lord was angered with Israel, and David reacted to this anger

by numbering the people. Although many historians are unsure why this act was so wrong, the fact is that David knew it was wrong and obstinately continued even after Joab’s discouragement.

God presented three choices to David. Each was a punishment that God had told the people would result from disobedience: disease, famine, or war. David’s choice was the penalty that came most directly from God—pestilence. This was a punishment for both the house of David and the people of Israel. The Lord was angered with this nation for previous sins. When the plague reached Jerusalem, David saw the angel of the Lord ready to slay the people, and he pleaded with God to spare Israel and let him pay for the sin.

Through Gad, the Lord commanded David to build an altar of sacrifice. This showed David that God had accepted his repentance. The call for sacrifice foreshadowed the need of sacrifice to reconcile sin. Araunah was a Jebusite Gentile and owner of the threshing floor on which David was to sacrifice. He had probably converted to the Jewish faith, and was therefore living among the Israelites. David went to this man himself, rather than sending a messenger, which was a sign of humility.

Araunah offered the land free, plus oxen and any other item needed for the sacrifice. He gave as a king would give. In Hebrew it is worded, “He gave, even the king to the king,” which could indicate that he was the king of the Jebusites in the area. Though Araunah was a foreigner and this was Israelite land, David refused to take the land without payment. He bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver, and later purchased the adjoining ground for six hundred shekels of gold.

The Temple was later built on this property. The threshing floor became the location of the Temple courtyard where the brazen altar for sacrifice was located. Currently this location holds the Dome of the Rock, which is an Islamic mosque. Orthodox Jews are presently preparing for the rebuilding of the Temple on this location.

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III. Appendices

- F. The sin of David in numbering the people (24:1-25)
 - 1. The census taken by David (24:1-9)
 - 2. The confession of David’s sin (24:10-14)

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NOTES

[illegible]



Overview for 1 Kings

Purpose: The Book of 1 Kings recounts significant events in Israel's history from the close of King David's reign through the deaths of Ahab and Jehoshaphat. It also contrasts the lives of those who lived for God and those who failed to do so.

Author: The Jewish Talmud says that Jeremiah wrote the Books of Kings, possibly assisted by other prophets. Some scholars believe that Ezra and the priests compiled the information contained in the books.

Date Written: Sometime after 561 B.C.

Setting: At the beginning of 1 Kings, Israel is one great nation. The Book records the nation's division into Israel (the Northern Kingdom) and Judah (the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, the Southern Kingdom). The nation was also divided spiritually, with Israel going into idolatry first under Jeroboam, and Judah following God intermittently, depending on whether or not they had a righteous king.

Key People: David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Jeroboam, the Queen of Sheba, Elijah, Ahab, Jezebel

Summary: It is believed that the Books of 1 and 2 Kings were originally all one Book. It was first separated into two books in the Septuagint, the earliest translation of the Old Testament. The first division in Hebrew Scriptures is found in the Rabbinic Bible of 1517. The time frame of both books together is about 450 years.

The Book of 1 Kings forms a direct continuation of the two Books of Samuel. It recounts events of 119 years, beginning with some final events of King David's reign, and continuing with Solomon's reign, and the building of the temple (1 Kings 1:1–11:43). It then records the division of the kingdom, and the rule of various kings of Judah and Israel (1 Kings 12–22).

On several occasions, kings encounter a prophet or prophets. Chapters 17 through 22 feature the conflict of Elijah the prophet with Ahab and Jezebel, the rulers of Israel. As well as its religious and theocratic lessons, 1 Kings gives invaluable facts as to the character, conduct, and customs of the kings and people during this period. The insight into the religious, military, and civil institutions of the people, their arts and education, their resources, commerce, and exploits is clear and instructive. Their alliances with other people, the causes of their moral degradation, and their downfall from one nation are also documented.

The first portion of this Book contains a study of the end of the reign of King David, who extended the borders of the kingdom. However, it was Solomon, his son and successor, who developed the economic prosperity of Israel (1 Kings 10:23). This book also covers the golden age of the fine arts in Israel. Several of the books of the Old Testament were written during this period — Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. The worship of God reached an all-time high during the reigns of David and Solomon, which was never to be attained again in Scripture. This worship, however, began to collapse during Solomon's rule. The seeds of the fall of Israel were sown. 1 Kings 11:1–8 describes the weaknesses of Solomon.

The Book of 1 Kings is a history that was written from a theological viewpoint with a specific purpose in mind. The author understood that Israel's covenant with God went back to the time of Abraham and that Israel was given the privilege to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. This, however, carried with it a great responsibility. The kings of Israel and Judah were judged on the basis of whether they obeyed the laws of the covenant.

Timeline

Many of these dates are approximate, as reference materials differ.

David is made king 1010 B.C.		The Temple is finished 959		Asa is made king of Judah 910		Jehoshaphat is made king of Judah 872	Ahab dies 853
	Solomon is made king 970		Shishak invades Jerusalem 925		Ahab is made king of Israel 874	Benhadad attacks Samaria 857	
			The kingdom is divided 930		Elijah begins his ministry 875		

Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.*

- I. The reign of Solomon (1:1 — 11:43)
 - A. The ascension of Solomon (1:1 — 2:12)
 - B. The judgments of Solomon (2:13-46)
 - C. The wisdom of Solomon (3:1-28)
 - D. The administration of Solomon (4:1-34)
 - E. The work of Solomon (5:1 — 8:66)
 - F. The splendor of Solomon (9:1 — 10:29)
 - G. The apostasy of Solomon (11:1-40)
 - H. The death of Solomon (11:41-43)
- II. The reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel (12:1 — 22:53)
 - A. The division of the kingdom (12:1-24)
 - B. The reign of Jeroboam of Israel (12:25 — 14:20)
 - C. The reign of Rehoboam (14:21-31)
 - D. The reign of Abijam (15:1-8)
 - E. The reign of Asa (15:9-24)
 - F. The reign of Nadab of Israel (15:25-31)
 - G. The reign of Baasha of Israel (15:32 — 16:7)
 - H. The reign of Elah of Israel (16:8-14)
 - I. The reign of Zimri of Israel (16:15-20)
 - J. The reign of Omri of Israel (16:21-28)
 - K. The reign of Ahab of Israel (16:29 — 22:40)
 - L. The reign of Jehoshaphat (22:41-50)
 - M. The reign of Ahaziah of Israel (22:51-53)



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Solomon said, If he will shew himself a worthy man, there shall not an hair of him fall to the earth: but if wickedness shall be found in him, he shall die.” (1 Kings 1:52)

Actions have consequences. That is a lesson we try early to instill in our children. Not long ago, a first-grade girl was sitting in church with one of her friends. Paying little attention to what was going on in the service, the little girl and her friend were talking and giggling. Her mother tried to quiet her, but a few moments after her whispered correction, the talking and giggling resumed. Finally, the girl’s mother took her out of the service to discipline her. She told her daughter that because her behavior had been inappropriate, she would not be allowed to sit with any of her friends during church for one month. The girl very sweetly said, “Oh, Mom, I am so sorry. I will not do it again, ever!” The mother accepted that apology, but let her daughter know that the apology did not change the discipline. Actions have consequences!

We can see that concept in today’s text. Adonijah took a bold step and declared himself king. The consequence of that action was that he feared for his life. Nathan took a bold step and devised a plan to prompt David to make Solomon king. The result—Adonijah’s conspiracy was defeated. In our key verse, Solomon let Adonijah know that the consequences of his future actions would be life or death.

Our actions today will have consequences. We may not make life or death decisions or turn the direction of a kingdom, but we will have conversations, go places, and participate in activities. What we say could encourage someone to seek God, or what we do could influence another person to drift in his or her relationship with the Lord. Even seemingly insignificant actions can have lasting consequences. Let us pray that God will help what we do to have results that will glorify Him!

BACKGROUND

The Book of 1 Kings opens with a description of the ailing King David. Though he was aged and weak in his body, his mind and wisdom and will were yet strong—facts that are illustrated by this chapter.

While Abishag was considered a concubine of David, she did not serve as an ordinary concubine. She was David’s companion and probably his personal nurse.

Adonijah may have seemed the likely candidate to succeed his father. As David’s fourth son, he was the oldest one living. Amnon, the firstborn, had been killed by Absalom (2 Samuel 13:20-33). The second son, Daniel, is mentioned only once (1 Chronicles 3:1), so he must have died while he was still young. Absalom, the third son, rebelled and was killed by Joab (2 Samuel 13:1-18). Perhaps thirty-five years old, Adonijah was used to having his own way because his father had not disciplined him (verse 6).

Adonijah gathered followers, including some who had been loyal to David during Absalom’s rebellion (see chart on next page), and set about to make himself king. Adonijah, Abiathar, and Joab may have known that David intended Solomon to succeed him on the throne, yet they chose to ignore that knowledge and forge ahead in a conspiracy. A coronation feast was held in the Kidron Valley, south of Jerusalem.

David had promised Bathsheba, Solomon’s mother, that Solomon would follow him as the king of Israel. The prophet, Nathan, knew of that promise, and also knew that God intended for Solomon to be king. Nathan was courageous enough to take a course of action that was intended to stop Adonijah.

When Bathsheba and Nathan made David aware of the current events regarding Adonijah, he immediately arranged to have Solomon anointed as king. This was accomplished publicly at Gihon, a spring that was less than a mile from Adonijah’s celebration. The people’s excitement was loud enough for Adonijah and his cohorts to hear.

The people of Israel were given several indicators which showed that David had appointed Solomon. At this time, mules were prized animals, and most people rode donkeys. Only the king rode the king’s mule. The blowing of the trumpet indicated that this event was official. The holy anointing oil was used to anoint the high priests and the kings.

Once Adonijah and his followers became aware of Solomon’s coronation, their party quickly disbursed. Adonijah went to the altar, hoping for safety. Solomon let him return home on the condition that he behaved.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- I. The reign of Solomon
 - A. The ascension of Solomon
 - 1. The suppression of Adonijah (1:1-53)
 - a. Adonijah’s plot to be king (1:1-27)
 - (1) David’s decline (1:1-4)
 - (2) Adonijah’s declaration (1:5-10)

- 3.** Note some lessons you have learned because of consequences to your actions.

CONCLUSION

Each day holds a new set of actions and consequences. What sort of results will your life produce today?

NOTES

A CLOSER LOOK

- ### 1. Who declared Adonijah king?

2. In essence, Nathan asked David, “Have you appointed Adonijah king without telling me?” Why do you think Nathan felt free to ask such a question of the king?

Individual	Position	Absolom's rebellion	Adonijah's rebellion
Joab	David's army commander	Sided with David	Sided with Adonijah
Abiathar	High Priest	Sided with David	Sided with Adonijah
Jonathan	Abiathar's son	Sided with David	Sided with Adonijah
Zadok	High Priest	Sided with David	Sided with David
Benaiah	Distinguished warrior (head of David's bodyguard, the Cherethites & Pelethites)	Sided with David	Sided with David
Nathan	Prophet	Not mentioned	Sided with David
Shimei (2 men)		One Shimei cursed David	Another Shimei sided with David
Rei	This text is his only reference		Sided with David



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; and keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself.” (1 Kings 2:2-3)

When I began working in the drilling department of our machine shop, I didn't have a clue about what was required to get the job done. All I knew was that our product came in without holes and had to go to the next department with holes. Fortunately for me (and the quality of our product), I was not sent to figure things out for myself. I was put under the supervision of a qualified person—someone who knew the job and could show me how to follow the procedures. Once I had the knowledge, it was up to me to apply it. I had to utilize the training I had been given and perform the job in the correct manner.

In our Christian walk, we also have “trainers.” It is important to have good examples of faith and godliness to show us the proper procedure. We can read about these people in God's Word or observe them in our day. Then, it is up to us, as individuals, to decide to follow. Although the world around us continually encourages compromise and tempts us to take shortcuts or an easier route, we know that obedience brings the blessing and that shortcuts bring hardship and potential spiritual disaster.

In our devotional text, David knew that he was not going to live much longer and he wanted Solomon to have courage and to follow the right way. Solomon had received the training, and now it was time for him to go solo and prove God's Word. It was up to him to apply the knowledge that had been modeled by his father and to be strong. If he faithfully followed God's commands, David knew Solomon would be showing himself “a man,” someone God could bless and guide.

How about us? Will we choose the right way today? God will be there to help us, just as He has helped others.

BACKGROUND

Today's text gives the account of David's final advice to Solomon and of Solomon's first actions as king. In his advice, David first acknowledged the true

leadership of Israel—God. He laid out the importance of following the commandments of the Lord and of continuing the heritage being handed down to him. In this admonition, David provided the basic foundation for the successful leadership of Israel, which was following God's ways.

David named some people and told Solomon to take note of them and to deal with them according to the way that they had conducted themselves during David's reign—Joab, Barzillai, and Shimei. Joab needed to be dealt with for shedding innocent blood (2 Samuel 3:27 and 20:10) and for supporting Adonijah, Solomon's rival to the throne. Barzillai had provided for and helped David during Absalom's revolt (2 Samuel 17:27-29) and, therefore, his family deserved to be treated well for his loyalty. Shimei had cursed and reviled David in his exile during the reign of Absalom (2 Samuel 16:5-8) and was also a descendant of Saul who could still cause trouble during Solomon's reign.

Solomon then established his leadership by making some hard decisions. His first actions as king included three executions. Two of those people had been shown mercy and would not have died if they had followed Solomon's commands. Adonijah had been allowed to live after his insurrection, but continued in his deceitful bid for the throne. Adonijah asked for Abishag because having the king's concubine was like claiming the throne. Solomon knew this. Shimei broke his agreement with Solomon and brought judgment upon himself.

It was important for Solomon to begin his reign with strength and righteousness. By following God's ways and making important first steps, he secured the kingdom.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- I. The reign of Solomon
 - A. The ascension of Solomon
 2. The charge of David (2:1-9)
 - a. Concerning keeping the law (2:1-4)
 - b. Concerning Joab (2:5-6)
 - c. Concerning Barzillai (2:7)
 - d. Concerning Shimei (2:8-9)
 3. The death of David (2:10-12)
 - B. The judgments of Solomon (2:13-46)
 1. The judgment of Adonijah (2:13-25)
 - a. Adonijah's request (2:13-18)
 - b. Bathsheba's plea for Adonijah (2:19-21)

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1. According to David, why was it important to walk in God's ways?

[illegible]

Although Solomon had to make some hard decisions, he had the strength and help of God to carry the burden. When we are in a situation that requires spiritual fortitude, we can know that God is right there waiting to show His strength through us.

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?” (1 Kings 3:9)

My childhood friends and I used to talk about wishes. We would ask, “What would you wish for if you had three wishes?” Sometimes we would even ask, “What would you ask for if you had only one wish?” It is amusing to look back on those conversations. Our responses then might have been that we wanted all the ice cream we could eat; or when we were a little older, to be attractive, popular, or talented. And there is always money! That can so easily come to mind at any age. As adults, perhaps health, freedom, happiness, or other benefits that we can so easily take for granted might be mentioned.

How many people desire wisdom? This is an attitude that is easily overlooked. Yet God’s Word plainly declares that He will answer if in faith we ask Him for wisdom. He also lets us know the importance of asking with the proper motive, and putting others rather than ourselves at the center of our desires.

We read that Solomon loved the Lord. He desired to worship God, and did so. He wanted to please God, and he prayed a prayer that did just that. Solomon was extremely aware of his own inabilities. Seeing the task before him, he realized his great need of God, and focused on this rather than on the prestige of being king. Solomon illustrated for us the proper formula for asking of God.

True wisdom is beyond good logic; it is a godly insight. It can seem like a lofty and unreachable goal, but God’s Word admonishes us to seek for it. This wisdom cannot come from man. We must desire and request it straight from God himself.

As children, we might have wondered how to cover everything with only one wish. Yet we find that Solomon’s request did exactly that. He asked for the one thing that would help him lead God’s people and he left all else up to God.

Let us purpose to sincerely ask God to give us His wisdom for this day.

BACKGROUND

Solomon’s marriage to Pharaoh’s daughter was a political move with the intent of promoting a diplomatic alliance. Historical records show that at this time the Pharaohs did not ordinarily allow their

daughters to marry into another nation, so this marriage indicated that Egypt was a weak country and that Israel was strong.

History indicates that man has always felt worship to any kind of god should take place in the heights, thus many of the “high places” were places of idol worship and ungodly rituals. High places was the Canaanite term for elevated platforms on which their idolatrous objects were placed and worshiped.

Before the Temple was constructed, Israel worshiped God in some of these areas, including Gibeon (modern El-Jib, located about six miles northwest of Jerusalem). The Tabernacle and brazen altar were located in Gibeon at this time (2 Chronicles 1:3-6), so Solomon made burnt offerings there. Later Solomon went to Jerusalem and offered before the ark, which was housed in a tent that David had made for it (2 Samuel 6:12-17).

When God told Solomon, “Ask what I shall give thee,” Solomon’s response showed humility and his awareness of his youth and lack of experience. Bible commentators think Solomon was about twenty years old when he had this experience with God. The phrase “an understanding heart” means a hearing heart, and indicated Solomon’s desire to obey God.

Solomon’s wisdom was quickly put to the test. The account of the two harlots indicates that Solomon served all the people of his kingdom. His wise judgment in the matter convinced the Israelites that he had God-given wisdom for the administration of justice.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- I. The reign of Solomon
 - C. The wisdom of Solomon (3:1-28)
 - 1. The political marriage of Solomon (3:1)
 - 2. The choice of wisdom by Solomon (3:2-28)
 - a. The setting (3:2-3)
 - b. The request for wisdom (3:4-9)
 - c. The gift of wisdom (3:10-15)
 - d. The demonstration of wisdom (3:16-28)
 - (1) The complaint of the harlots (3:16-22)
 - (2) The solution to the controversy (3:23-28)

A CLOSER LOOK

- 1. How many burnt offerings did Solomon make in Gibeon?
-

2. What do you suppose Solomon had in mind when he asked God for an understanding heart?

3. God gave Solomon wisdom, but Solomon had to apply that in life. Give some examples of how we can apply God's wisdom in our lives.

CONCLUSION

When asking God, we can easily aim too low. God would have us aim for the center of the target by asking for wisdom.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore.” (1 Kings 4:29)

The heart is a tireless, never-ceasing pump. It begins beating way before an infant takes its first breath, and it continues to beat until the moment of death. Though surprisingly small, this cardiac muscle with life-sustaining power contracts and relaxes about 70 to 80 times per minute, and pumps about 4300 gallons of blood per day. Its average size is that of a clenched fist and its weight is approximately 11 ounces. Every cell in the body needs oxygen-rich blood in order to survive, and the heart's main function is to deliver it.

Though modern technology has revealed some of its mystery, there is still much fascination and curiosity surrounding the exploration of the nature and function of the human heart. Solomon must have been intrigued by its complexities as well. In the Book of Proverbs alone, he mentioned the word “heart” 81 times in 78 verses. Solomon understood that the “heart” refers to more than an important physical function—he also understood its spiritual reference.

Physically, God placed the heart in the middle of the chest behind the breastbone, between the lungs, resting in a chamber surrounded by the ribcage, with the diaphragm—a tough layer of muscle—lying below. As a result, the heart is well protected.

The spiritual heart is at the center of our being. In the regenerated heart are trust, faith, forgiveness, and love. In the unregenerated heart are wicked imaginations, lust, envy, and deceit. Our heart is where God's Word will be written or rejected. Solomon spoke often of how to guard it with diligence.

One way to safeguard our spiritual heart is to ask God to take ownership of it. The very essence of who we are as individuals needs to be surrendered to Him. Once we have relinquished control of our lives to Him, He regenerates our hearts. This restoration brings us into a right relationship with our Creator. He erases any sins that we have committed in the past and does not remember them against us any more. This results in us feeling happy, transformed, and new.

As we continue in our walk with God, Satan will try to diminish our joy and cause our hearts to doubt God. However, as we learn to trust God, He will not only keep our hearts “healthy,” but He will expand our capacity to experience new heights and depths and breadths in Him.

The “largeness of heart” that God gave Solomon was an extraordinary ability to grasp things beyond the natural understanding of man. These attributes made him the most widely known king in that era. However, he foreshadowed a greater King who came to this world in a manger. Jesus, though not clothed with the finest physical apparel as King Solomon, held a far more lasting and significant throne. His Kingdom, one not of this world, thrives in the lives of individuals today.

BACKGROUND

God gave Solomon the wisdom and understanding to surround himself with great men. He had princes, scribes, priests, historians, and officers as chief officials. He had twelve officers who took turns providing for his household every month. Solomon reigned over all of Israel and over all the neighboring kingdoms from the River Euphrates on the east, to the Mediterranean Sea on the west, to Egypt in the south. Never in the history of Israel did a king have dominion over such a vast territory.

It took thirty measures of flour, sixty measures of meal, ten fat oxen, twenty oxen out of the pastures, and a hundred sheep, besides harts, roebucks, fallow deer, and fatted fowl to feed Solomon's household for one day. He had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen. He wrote over one thousand songs and more than three thousand proverbs. His knowledge was extensive and encompassed all that was known at that time on topics such as trees, animals, insects, birds, and sea life.

Solomon was wiser than “all men” and, therefore, his fame spread to all the nations in the surrounding area. Many came to see and listen to him because they had heard of his wisdom, power, and wealth.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- I. The reign of Solomon
 - D. The administration of Solomon (4:1-34)
 - 1. The officials of Solomon (4:1-6)
 - 2. The deputies of Solomon (4:7-19)
 - 3. The reign of Solomon (4:20-34)
 - a. His wealth and power (4:20-28)
 - b. His wisdom (4:29-34)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How many officers did Solomon have?
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2. In what ways did Solomon use the gifts God gave him to better Israel?

3. Many sought to hear the wisdom of Solomon. How should we seek the wisdom God offers?

CONCLUSION

Out of His abundance, God gave Solomon what he needed to rule a nation well. He will provide for our daily needs too, as we endeavor to keep our hearts in harmony with Him.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.” (1 Kings 6:7)

Have you ever been on or near a building construction site? If so, you will likely agree it is a very noisy place. You may hear the crackling of fire as wood burns on the scrap pile. There are conversations—sometimes loud conversations—going on between the workers as instructions and requests are shouted back and forth. The roar of heavy equipment, power saws, hammers, and air compressors can be almost overwhelming. However, all of these are necessary if the construction project is to progress.

In our text, we read about a massive construction project. With so many people working on the Temple, one would imagine that much construction noise would have been part of the scene, yet we read that there was no sound of a hammer, ax, or any other tool of iron heard in the Temple during construction. How could that be? All of the cutting of wood and chiseling of stone had been done off-site. When the building materials arrived on-site, they had been perfectly shaped to fit into their designated places in the Temple.

Our lives are like a construction site. We are bombarded daily with the “noise” of this world. There are pressures on our job and in our everyday lives. Noise from the political and moral pressures of the world surround us everywhere we turn. Sometimes it gets so loud we can hardly think, but we have this confidence: the Master Builder, the Lord himself, is on the job. He is chiseling, molding, and shaping us to prepare us to “fit” into His eternal Kingdom.

When we arrive in Heaven, there will be no more construction going on. We will be perfectly shaped to fit into our designated place in Heaven. The distracting and annoying “sounds” of earth will be a thing of the past. The sounds we will hear up there will be singing, rejoicing, praising, and thanksgiving for all God has done for us!

BACKGROUND

God had told David that he could not build the Temple because he was a man of war and had shed much blood; David’s son Solomon would be the one to accomplish that task (1 Chronicles 22:8-10). When the time had come for Solomon to begin construction on

the Temple of God, he sent to Hiram, King of the great Phoenician city of Tyre, requesting building materials. Hiram had been a friend of David, and had already provided building materials that David had stored away until Solomon was ready to use them.

Hiram promised to have timbers cut in Lebanon, transported to the sea (the Mediterranean), made into rafts, and floated down to Joppa (see 2 Chronicles 2:16), which was the nearest port to Jerusalem. There the rafts would be taken apart and the timber transported overland to the construction site.

In return for cedar and fir trees, Solomon promised to provide wheat and oil on a yearly basis for Hiram’s storehouses. Wheat and oil apparently were not available in the region surrounding Tyre, so this benefited Hiram. The two kings set up this treaty, which lasted for many years and resulted in peaceful relations between the two nations.

Solomon recruited more than 180,000 laborers to work in the building program. Hiram sent Sidonians to Israel to assist Solomon in skilled labor, such as preparing the timbers and shaping stones for the construction. Ever mindful of how important the family unit was, and the hardship of having the man away from home, Solomon sent only 10,000 laborers a month to Lebanon to help cut down trees. After the month of labor was up, the men were sent home for two months. Then they were sent back to Lebanon for another month of duty. This rotation process continued for about seven years, until the completion of the Temple.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- I. The reign of Solomon
 - E. The work of Solomon
 - 1. The preparations for the Temple(5:1-18)
 - a. Solomon’s message to Hiram (5:1-6)
 - b. Hiram’s league with Solomon (5:7-12)
 - c. Solomon’s labor force (5:13-18)
 - 2. The construction of the Temple
 - a. The construction of the house, porches, and chambers (6:1-13)
 - (1) The construction (6:1-10)
 - (2) The divine promise (6:11-13)
 - b. The construction within the house (6:14-35)
 - (1) The decoration of the interior (6:14-18)
 - (2) The construction of the inner sanctuary (6:19-28)

- (a) The decorations (6:19-22)
- (b) The cherubim (6:23-28)
- (3) The construction of the doors (6:29-35)
 - (a) The carvings and gold overlay (6:29-30)
 - (b) The doors of the inner sanctuary (6:31-33)
 - (c) The doors of the outer sanctuary (6:34-35)

[illegible]

1. What twofold promise did God give to Solomon concerning the Temple he was building?

If we hold fast our confidence in God, make Jesus the Chief Cornerstone of our lives, and let God himself be the Masterbuilder, we have the assurance that someday we will see Jesus in Heaven.

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And King Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. He was a widow’s son of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass: and he was filled with wisdom, and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass. And he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work.” (1 Kings 7:13-14)

When I started my PhD course, I had no idea what to write my dissertation on. I did my course work hoping that one of my classes would help me in selecting a topic. After three years, I was asked to take a qualifying examination, and with God’s help, I passed. The next stage was for me to write a proposal for the dissertation, but I still did not have a topic.

One day, I decided to pray for wisdom regarding my choice, and I asked God to let me know what topic to work on. God led me to an article that gave me an idea, but no professor in my department was familiar with the topic and theory that God had put in my mind. Even my dissertation director told me that she would be learning with me since she was not familiar with the theory I wanted to use to analyze my data.

I went to work, and every time I got stuck in my data analysis, I would pray. Without fail, each time God would guide me to a solution. One day as I was working on my dissertation, I had a call from one of the professors who had proposed the theory that I was using. He offered to pay my way to visit him at his university in California. He wanted to collect some data from the language I was using for my dissertation. It ended up that he not only paid my way to California and paid me for the data he collected from me, but he also talked with me about many aspects of the theory! In one trip, God made so many details clear to me that I was able to finish my dissertation in a shorter time than expected.

When it was time to defend my dissertation, five professors asked me questions, and then dismissed me so they could evaluate my performance. When I was called back to hear their decision, my director asked the committee to award me honors on the dissertation because, as she put it, “This student worked independently. I did not do much since I was not familiar with the theory used in this dissertation.”

I knew without a doubt that I did not do it myself: It was God! The wisdom and the understanding to complete the dissertation came from Him, from start to finish. Just as He gave Hiram the wisdom he

needed to build the Temple, God was there to help me accomplish the task before me.

God truly is the source of all wisdom and understanding. As a result of this experience, I never hesitate to encourage others to pray for wisdom. God can give us wisdom and understanding to do whatever He wants us to do!

BACKGROUND

The previous chapter ended with the foundation of the Temple being laid and the information that the building of the Temple took seven years.

The beginning of this chapter shifts attention to the building of Solomon’s house and surrounding royal buildings. The palace was part of a collection of buildings near the Temple. In the center of Jerusalem was an outer court with the house of Lebanon and the porch of pillars. Then there was the middle court with the palace and the house for the queen, Pharaoh’s daughter. Next to the middle court was the Temple court where the Temple was built. Both the Temple court and the middle court were within the same outer court.

King Solomon engaged a man named Hiram from the city of Tyre as a craftsman. This was not King Hiram, who was known to King David. This man had an Israelite mother (see 2 Chronicles 2:14). He was “filled with wisdom” in building and metalworking, particularly in brass (bronze). For the building of God’s house, only the best man could be selected for the job, and Hiram was that man.

The entire plan for the Temple had been revealed to David, Solomon’s father, and this was the plan that was used. It followed the basic layout of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, whose plan God had revealed to Moses centuries before, but the Temple was permanent, unlike the temporary nature of the Tabernacle, and therefore had its own unique features with their own powerful significance.

The first feature mentioned in this text was the presence of two large pillars in front of the Temple. These stood twenty-seven feet high, and were eighteen feet in circumference. These pillars had names: one was Jachin, which means, “He [the LORD] shall establish.” The other pillar was named Boaz, which means, “In it is strength.” These names were reminders that God had established not only the Temple, but also the worship ceremonies performed there.

The Temple also had a “molten sea,” a very large bowl used for ritual purification at the front of the Temple. The bowl was about fifteen feet in diameter

and held about twelve thousand gallons of water. This stood between the brazen altar and the sanctuary. The priests washed themselves at this place before they offered sacrifices or entered the Temple.

Ten lavers, each holding over two hundred gallons of water, were in the sanctuary. The lavers were on wheels so that when the water became dirty through washing of hands and instruments, the lavers could be taken to a place where the water was disposed of and the lavers refilled. The tremendous amount of water, both in the lavers and in the molten sea, shows how very important it was to constantly keep all things pure in the Temple.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The reign of Solomon
 - E. The work of Solomon
 - 2. The construction of the Temple
 - e. The construction of the royal palace (7:1-12)
 - f. The construction of the Temple furnishings (7:13-50)
 - (1) The master craftsman employed (7:13-14)
 - (2) The pillars (7:15-22)
 - (3) The brazen sea (7:23-26)
 - (4) The ten lavers (7:27-39)
 - (5) The summary of Hiram's work (7:40-47)
 - (6) The golden utensils (7:48-50)
 - g. The construction completed (7:51)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What were the purposes of the Temple?
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-
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-
-

2. How did the pillars convey a spiritual lesson?
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-
-
-

3. How do we express purity in our service to God today?
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-
-
-
-

CONCLUSION

When we serve God in purity, we can receive His wisdom to do whatever is set before us, and the result will glorify God.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then spake Solomon, The LORD said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever.” (1 Kings 8:12-13)

A number of years ago, my wife and I were building a house. We wanted it to be our dream home, so we spent a lot of time and energy trying to make it perfect. Although our funds were limited, we included upgrades and added “extras” to the extent our resources would allow. Still, though we were happy with the house and excited about the way it turned out, it was not “home” until we actually moved in. Before then, it was just a nice but empty dwelling. We had to put our furniture and our belongings in place before it really felt like our home.

In a way, the same was true with the Temple Solomon built for the Lord, only on an immensely grander scale. Amazing amounts of precious metals, jewels, and only the finest materials went into this structure. Still, until God entered the Temple—until the Ark of the Covenant and His Mercy Seat were brought into the structure—it was just a structure. Yes, it was a highly ornate and very expensive structure, but really just a structure. Only after God took up residence did it become a temple—His Temple.

Each of us is building a structure—the structure of our lives. Day by day we make choices and decisions that determine the construction materials. We want to use upgrades and extras, precious metals and jewels. Some of these “materials” might be kindness, honor, faithfulness, and willingness. We want our lives to be constructed in a way that the Lord will be pleased to dwell in us forever. However, unlike an earthly home or temple, God will “move” into our hearts before our construction project is complete. Then, if we will let Him, He will help us build in a way that is pleasing to Him.

How is your construction project progressing today? Is God dwelling in it?

BACKGROUND

The building of the Temple was a special project. It was tremendously important that the Children of Israel build this structure for God. Its construction was tied to God’s promise that He would dwell among them and would not forsake His people.

Prior to the Temple’s construction, King David recognized the awesome responsibility of this special

undertaking. Because it was to be God’s home, it had to be pure in every aspect. In fact, God forbade David to build the Temple because he was a man of war and had shed much blood.

Solomon started the construction during the fourth year of his reign (about 480 years after Israel’s exodus from Egypt), and it took seven years. The Temple was built with large stones and beams and boards of cedar, which were overlaid with gold and silver. The estimated value of the building today would be several billion dollars. It was built in the general plan of the Tabernacle, but the rooms were double in size. The Children of Israel gave freely for the purpose of building this Temple for God.

In today’s text, Solomon and Israel’s leaders brought the Ark and the holy vessels from the Tabernacle and dedicated the Temple. The cloud, which had been the visible symbol of God’s presence with Israel during their travels from Egypt, filled the house.

“Seven days and seven days, even fourteen days” refers to fourteen days of feasting. The celebration for the dedication of the Temple was seven days. This was followed by the Feast of Tabernacles, which was also seven days.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- I. The reign of Solomon
 - E. The work of Solomon
 - 3. The dedication of the Temple (8:1-66)
 - a. The glory of God in the Temple (8:1-12)
 - b. Solomon’s dedicatory speech (8:13-21)
 - c. Solomon’s dedicatory prayer (8:22-53)
 - d. Solomon’s charge to the people (8:54-61)
 - e. Solomon’s sacrifices and feast (8:62-66)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How did God manifest Himself in the Temple?

2. What does the fact that Solomon called together the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes for the dedication of the Temple say about how he viewed that event?

3. Although we do not sacrifice the way the Israelites did as recorded in this chapter, how might we include sacrifice in our lives to help make us a more perfect temple for God?

CONCLUSION

It was important that the Temple be built exactly to the specifications given by God so that He could dwell there. Just so, it is important that our lives are pure and in agreement with God's Word, so that He is able to dwell within us.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel.” (1 Kings 9:4-5)

As Christians, we must do what God has commanded us, and keep His statutes and judgments. Sometimes we may find this to be a challenge! At times we may need to seek His grace to do what we know He wants us to do. However, if we make the effort, He will unfailingly be with us to help, guide, and encourage us along the way.

Several years ago the Lord put it on my heart that He wanted our family to move from Denver, Colorado, to Portland, Oregon. My continual prayer to the Lord was that I wanted to stay in the center of His will. Life was extremely busy, because I needed to work two jobs and balance my time with two young teenagers. Although I tried not to worry about the details, I was unsure how we were ever going to make the trip and accomplish the move that God had directed.

One day a friend from work told me that her husband, who owned and operated a moving company, would move us. WOW! The price was amazingly low, not to mention that his company loaded and unloaded the truck! God let me see that because I wanted to follow His leading, He would work out the details, and He did it in a marvelous way.

God promised Solomon an established kingdom if he would serve the Lord with his whole heart, as his father David had served Him. God laid down the conditions: the key to Solomon’s success was his obedience.

God lays down conditions for us, too, and obedience to Him is one aspect of life that we can control. We cannot control the circumstances that come into our lives. We cannot control what other people do or how they treat us. However, we certainly can choose to obey God.

Whatever challenges we face, God promises us His help each day if we are walking in obedience to Him. He will enable us to follow His plan if we will step out in faith and do what He asks. Someday, the rewards of obedience will be ours—because God promised!

BACKGROUND

God’s second appearance to Solomon assured him that his prayers would be answered. However, the Lord also gave a warning. His words were similar to those spoken by Moses in Deuteronomy 28:36-37 and 29:24.

Verses 9 through 28 of this chapter summarize the building of the Temple. Solomon spent seven years on this project, and thirteen years constructing his own house, which was twice the size of the Temple.

The 120 talents of gold sent by Hiram, King of Tyre, weighed about four-and-a-half tons. Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities either as a gift or as collateral for the gold. However Hiram did not like these particular cities and called them Cabul, which means “as nothing” or “displeasing.” Eventually, it appears that the cities were returned to Solomon (2 Chronicles 8:2).

Solomon was a builder. The fortress cities of Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer contained horses, chariots, food stores, and weaponry. *Millo* (verse 15) means “to fill” and was a portion of the Jerusalem wall that needed strengthening. Solomon had a seaport at Ezion-geber, which was at the Red Sea’s northern tip. By hiring Hiram’s experienced sailors, Solomon was able to form a navy. Archaeological digging here has revealed remains from copper mines and sophisticated smelting.

Israel’s three yearly feasts were the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Solomon led the people of Israel by example when he brought sacrifices and incense to the Temple for the priests to offer.

Incense is a sweet-smelling substance that was burned as an offering to God on the altar in the Tabernacle and the Temple. Its purpose was to honor God, and it symbolized the prayers of the Hebrew people, which were considered a pleasant aroma ascending to God. The incense used in Israel’s worship was made according to a special formula, and was not to be duplicated for any other purpose.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- I. The reign of Solomon
 - F. The splendor of Solomon
 1. The warning to Solomon of apostasy (9:1-9)
 2. The compensation of Hiram (9:10-14)
 3. The building projects of Solomon (9:15-25)
 4. The assembling of a navy (9:26-28)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. When did God appear to Solomon the second time?

2. Why do you think Solomon invested so much of Israel's manpower and money in building?

3. What blessings has God given you because of your obedience to Him?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

Each day we have the opportunity to follow God's directions. We will need His strength and grace to succeed. He has promised to help us if we ask.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold.” (1 Kings 10:18)

Throughout our lives, most of us look for the best we can afford when we need something. We try to find the best home for a price that fits in our budget. When we go shopping, we may look for clothes that don’t wrinkle, but wear well. If we are in the market for a job, most of us want the best—one with good pay, great working conditions, and flexible hours. The best buys at the grocery store attract those looking for bargains. Long-distance telephone companies and organizations offering credit cards constantly advertise that they are the “best,” as they fill our mailboxes with their persuasive packages. Even when it comes to vacations, we look for the best location, price, hotel, or campground. In the area of relationships, we look for “a best friend” to share our hearts with, or “the best person” to share our lives with.

Sometimes we may obtain what we think is the best, yet end up with less than what we had hoped for. However, if our purpose is to yield ourselves to God and He is at the center of our lives, everything He does or gives exceeds all else in being exactly right for us. Following God’s perfect plan for our lives is the best way to live. His love is the best, and His gifts to us are the most useful and eternally valuable of any we will ever receive.

The “bests” in this life may be wonderful, but they will not last forever, yet what God gives only gets better. When we have the Lord as our Savior, even situations that seem difficult can ultimately be the best. For example, the little crowded house can be the best shelter, the bread and soup we had for lunch can be the best meal, and the job where we work hard to earn every penny can be the best job around if we know they are God’s will for us. The Lord is and gives the “best.” Nothing else will ever be better!

BACKGROUND

The Queen of Sheba’s visit to Solomon’s kingdom was so she could personally investigate the reports she had heard of his great wisdom and wealth. Her “hard questions” may have been riddles or unfathomable sayings.

Since Sheba (a region possibly in today’s Ethiopia or Yemen) was also a wealthy and sophisticated country, the queen brought expensive gifts to present to Solomon. These items may have also functioned as

samples of the merchandise her country had to offer. The queen gave Solomon an abundance of spices and four-and-a-half tons of gold. In return, Solomon gave the queen whatever she requested from his royal bounty.

Solomon’s annual income was 666 talents of gold (approximately 25 tons), and was obtained in various ways including taxes, trade, and gifts. Some of this gold was used for the ceremonial shields and to decorate Solomon’s throne room.

Solomon purchased horses from Egypt, which Moses had forbidden in Deuteronomy 17:16. He even became a horse trader. Deuteronomy 17:17 also stated that a king of Israel should not have many wives or “multiply to himself silver and gold.”

Other royalty beside the Queen of Sheba came to see Solomon’s wealth and wisdom. These visits of foreign dignitaries promoted trade with other nations, which benefited Solomon and all of Israel. However, rather than Israel influencing neighboring countries toward God, they began to adopt the ways of those around them. Although the country reached its zenith as a nation during the reigns of David and Solomon, under Solomon’s leadership, Israel began turning away from God.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- I. The reign of Solomon
 - F. The splendor of Solomon
 - 5. The visit of the Queen of Sheba (10:1-13)
 - 6. The revenue of Solomon (10:14-29)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was the Queen of Sheba’s response to Solomon’s magnificent kingdom?

2. Looking at the vast possessions of Solomon, what do we learn about having riches as believers?

[illegible]

How wonderful it is to know that, with God at the center of our lives, we never have to settle for less than the best.

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father.” (1 Kings 11:6)

As an owner of a construction business, sometimes I face the challenge of finding reliable employees. One young man approached me about work, and I agreed to give him a try. For a while, he did well. He had experience and a good understanding of what we were trying to accomplish. He would do whatever I asked, and he worked hard. However, after a time, he started arriving late for work. As the days passed, he showed up later and later. More than once, I warned him that his job was in jeopardy if he continued this trend. For a few days, his punctuality would improve, but then he would slip back until, sometimes, he was an hour and a half late. Finally, although I knew he had a wife and child to support, I felt I had bent as far as I could, and I had to let him go.

Sadly, an unwise choice or act of disobedience can quickly negate all the good that has been done beforehand. If another employer had contacted me for a work reference for this man, I could have mentioned all the good things about him. However, along with those it would have been necessary to add, “but he can’t get to work on time.”

Our text begins with a small phrase that causes alarm: “But king Solomon . . .” Following those words, we find something that reversed what might have been good for Solomon. By marrying hundreds of women from surrounding nations with false religions, he did exactly what God had said not to do. These women captured his heart and led him down a road that, earlier, he would never have taken. He added something on his resume that was not there before: disobedience, and disobedience cost him God’s favor.

This account has a tragic ending. It illustrates that, as important as a good start is, a good finish is even more important. It will do nothing for us if we eventually decide to do things our own way. If we continue to faithfully follow the Lord, we can avoid any discrediting items on the “resumes” of our lives. May God help us realize that details do matter, and we can retain God’s best if we simply continue to obey Him.

BACKGROUND

Chapters 2-10 of 1 Kings tell about Solomon’s carefulness in building the Temple, and how God’s Spirit filled the Temple so powerfully at its dedication.

Those chapters speak of Solomon’s humility and his God-given wisdom that amazed so many who traveled to hear his words. His untold wealth and the respect the surrounding nations had for him are noted.

In chapter 11 the story changes. Solomon’s glorious reign was clouded by a great mistake—his marriage to hundreds of women from other nations. The text tells us that he clave to these in love. Many of these women (seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, according to 1 Kings 11:3) were idolaters, and for them he built heathen temples and altars, allowing into Israel’s kingdom religious practices that his father David had tried so hard to suppress. Though Solomon had known and benefited from God’s approval in his life, his heart was swayed by his many marriages and associations, and he chose to honor their desires rather than please God (11:3-8). Verse 6 says that Solomon “did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD.” God’s warning regarding heathen marriages is in verse 2.

Although polygamy (marrying more than one woman) occurred under the Law of Moses, it was contrary to God’s plan for marriage. In Deuteronomy 17:17, kings were commanded not to marry a great number of wives. Solomon however did as the other nations and married numerous wives for political alliance and prestige.

The text mentions some of the false gods that Solomon turned to: Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Molech (11:5, 7). Ashtoreth (Ishtar is possibly the same god) was considered the goddess of love and fertility, the giver of life, and was worshipped throughout the Mediterranean coast from Phoenicia to Philistia. Chemosh was the national god of the Moabites. Some think that perhaps Chemosh and Molech were the same god. Molech was the national god of the Ammonites, and children were sacrificed in his worship. Solomon courted disaster in his decision to allow the worship of these strange gods, bringing an end to his reign and contaminating Israel’s worship of the true God. (See “Pagan Gods” supplement.)

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- I. The reign of Solomon
 - G. The apostasy of Solomon (11:1-40)
 - 1. The polygamy and idolatry of Solomon (11:1-8)
 - 2. The anger of Jehovah (11:9-13)
 - 3. The chastisement of Jehovah (11:14-40)
 - a. The rise of Hadad, the Edomite (11:14-22)

- b. The rise of Rezon of Syria (11:23-25)
- c. The rise of Jeroboam (11:26-40)
- H. The death of Solomon (11:41-43)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. God told Jeroboam that He would take ten tribes from the hand of Solomon's son, and thus the kingdom would be divided. Why did God not take all twelve tribes from Rehoboam?

2. How was it that the wisest man who ever lived could not follow his own advice?

3. Perhaps you remember a time when it was hard to follow your own advice. How can we be sure that we act with wisdom?

CONCLUSION

Wisdom must be applied in order for it to help us. We may have knowledge, but we must put it to use in order to benefit from it.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people?” (1 Kings 12:6)

I remember receiving my first big paycheck. How quickly my mind began assessing all of the things I could buy! Suddenly I had been given the ability to get what I wanted. Should I go out to lunch with my friends or buy myself a pizza? Should I buy a video game or maybe a stereo? All at once I was thrown into the middle of decisions I had never faced before.

My mother, being the logical and intelligent person that she is, tried to help me make wise choices. She knew having a car would be something I could enjoy and appreciate for some time. Since one of the reasons I had taken a job was to gain more independence, my mother encouraged me to work toward the purchase of a car. However, that meant saving money instead of spending it!

Regretfully, I did not listen to my mother's counsel. Instead, I made many impulsive and senseless purchases, which left me little to show for the money I had earned. I squandered my paychecks on fulfilling my immediate desires instead of saving toward a long-term goal.

Eventually, I matured enough to recognize the wisdom of my mother's advice, and changed my ways. (I have a car now!) The lesson was a good one—though it may seem easier to please ourselves than to follow wise counsel, the end result is not as good.

In our focus verse, Rehoboam began his reign by asking the elders for advice. He did not like the advice he was given, however, and he sought further advice from his peers, and chose to follow their counsel. In placing his desires ahead of the good of the kingdom, he brought division and years of quarrel and strife to the tribes.

In the Gospel, we have a heritage of godly commandments, counsel, and traditions, both from the Bible itself, and also from veteran Christians. May the Lord help us look for and follow the advice of our elders in the church, and above all to seek and follow the Lord's counsel. If we do, we are certain to reap rich spiritual rewards.

BACKGROUND

This chapter marks a pivotal point in the history of the Children of Israel. The nation that God had

founded and provided for was torn from the hand of King Solomon because he had angered God (1 Kings 11:9-11). For David's sake (1 Kings 11:12; 1 Chronicles 17:13) He waited until Solomon's death and left the line of David with two tribes—Judah and Benjamin. Judah, the largest tribe, and Benjamin, the smallest, were often mentioned as one tribe because they shared the same border.

Jerusalem was the seat of Israel's government at the time of Solomon's death. However, Rehoboam went about thirty-five miles north to Shechem to become king. Possibly, Rehoboam thought it would help rally the support of the northern tribes if he traveled north. The lack of unity between the tribes began in the time of the judges, and was especially noticeable between Judah (in the south) and Ephraim (in the north).

The Law of Moses instructed the men of Israel to go to the Temple three times each year. Afraid that he would lose the loyalty of the northern Israelites, Jeroboam set up his own centers for worship. Bethel was on the main road to Jerusalem, and only about ten miles north. Dan was at the most northern part of Israel, thus sparing the people of that area the inconvenience of travel.

The ten northern tribes—Ephraim, Manasseh, Dan, Reuben, Simeon, Gad, Issachar, Zebulun, Asher, and Naphtali—revolted against Rehoboam's reign and formed the kingdom of Israel. They elected Jeroboam as their king and established their capital as the city of Samaria. This was all done according to the prophecy delivered to Jeroboam by Ahijah the prophet (1 Kings 11:29-39).

Jeroboam had the potential to be the first of a great line of kings. God told him that He would “build thee a sure house, as I built for David” if he would only follow His commandments. Unfortunately, Jeroboam was the first of nineteen evil kings of Israel. He stained the kingdom and led the way for all kings after him, who “walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin where-with he made Israel to sin.” For over two hundred years, there was not a single good king in Israel, and then Assyria conquered the kingdom and took them into captivity.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel
 - A. The division of the kingdom (12:1-24)
 - 1. The occasion of the division (12:1-5)
 - 2. The various counsel to Rehoboam (12:6-11)
 - 3. Rehoboam's foolish decision (12:12-15)

4. The revolt of the northern tribes (12:16-20)
5. The civil war averted (12:21-24)
- B. The reign of Jeroboam of Israel
 1. The wicked scheme of Jeroboam (12:25-33)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How did Rehoboam know the “young men” from whom he took counsel?

2. Contrast the way Rehoboam asked the “old men” for advice with the way he asked the “young men.” What was the difference? (What was his attitude?)

3. What is our responsibility to our elders in the Church today?

CONCLUSION

God has provided us with a wealth of spiritual knowledge. Let us use every resource He has given so we can be assured of every blessing He has for us.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And when the prophet that brought him back from the way heard thereof, he said, It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the LORD: therefore the LORD hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake unto him.” (1 Kings 13:26)

Do you remember trying to get your own way as a child by playing one parent against the other? When Dad said no, you may have tried to circumvent his answer by talking to Mom instead, hoping to get the yes answer you really wanted. If your parents were communicating, they discovered your ploy, and you discovered that no really meant no.

As children of God, we learn in 1 Kings 13 that when God says no, He really means no. God instructed the prophet of Judah not to eat or drink until he returned to his own land. The prophet of Judah clearly understood this command, for he did not accept wicked King Jeroboam’s offer of refreshment. However, when the old prophet lied and tempted the man of God to eat and drink, he gave in: the prophet of Judah wanted God’s no to be yes because he was hungry and thirsty.

We can be tempted to disobey God when we want something He says we should not have, or we want to do something He says we should not do. If we let our wants rule us, then, like children, we will try to find someone who will tell us that what we want is okay, even if it is clearly against God’s Word. That is a dangerous spiritual situation.

We can learn from the prophet of Judah. Obeying God always brings benefits, although those benefits may not be obvious at the outset of a temptation. In every situation, God has our best interests at heart. If we submit our desires to Him and ask Him to help us be willing to obey, we will win every time.

BACKGROUND

King Jeroboam instituted the idolatrous golden calf worship because he did not want the people to go to Jerusalem to worship, for fear that they would give their allegiance to Rehoboam, King of Judah (1 Kings 12:26-27). The “sin of Jeroboam” (golden calf worship) was promoted by every future king of Israel.

The Law instructed that only those from the tribe of Levi were to be priests (Numbers 3:10-12). The penalty for disobedience was death, yet Jeroboam not

only chose whoever he wanted to be priests (verses 33-34), he performed priestly duties himself (verse 1).

The prophecy concerning the desecration of the golden calf altar in 1 Kings 13:2 is amazing because it refers to Josiah by name. This prophecy came to pass approximately three hundred years later, when King Josiah of Judah destroyed the golden calf idols (2 Kings 23:15-18).

Three miracles validated the authenticity of the prophet of Judah’s message—the altar split, Jeroboam lost the ability to move his hand, and God restored his hand. Even after that, Jeroboam still made no move toward changing his ways.

Lions were common enough in Israel during Old Testament times to cause concern for the people and animals. This attack evidenced God’s control—the ass stayed by the prophet’s body and so did the lion, and the lion did not hurt the ass or devour the body.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel
 - B. The reign of Jeroboam of Israel
 2. The warning to Jeroboam (13:1-32)
 - a. The message of the prophet of Judah (13:1-10)
 - b. The misconduct of the prophet of Judah (13:11-20)
 - c. The death of the prophet of Judah (13:21-25)
 - d. The burial of the prophet of Judah (13:26-32)
 3. The impotence of Jeroboam (13:33-34)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. When King Jeroboam offered a reward to the prophet of Judah, what was the prophet of Judah’s response?

2. The Bible never explains the motive of the old prophet who deceived the prophet of Judah. Why do you suppose the old prophet lied to the prophet of Judah and tempted him to disobey God?

3. Perhaps you know someone who would tempt you to disobey God’s Word. What could help you resist that temptation?

CONCLUSION

Let us not fit God’s Word to our wants. Let us allow God’s Word to fit us for His kingdom!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And it was so, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, that he said, Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings.” (1 Kings 14:6)

My father was an identical twin. When he and his brother were in school, as a joke they would sometimes switch desks. Their big challenge then was to remember to answer to the other twin's name. Later, in the military during World War II, they repaired airplanes. When their company would be called together to receive information, one twin would go and the other would keep working. The twin who heard the information would keep the other informed. They could accomplish more that way—kind of like being in two places at once! On a particular day, the twin who reported to the company call came running back to the twin who was working. He said, “Come quick!” They were to receive a commendation that day for their labors, and one twin was about to miss it! Happily, they both made it back just in time to hear their names called.

A switch of identity for humorous or practical reasons is one matter. However, Jeroboam sent his wife to the prophet with the intent to deceive. Jeroboam knew that he had no credibility with either God or Ahijah. Although he had ignored God for a long time, he suddenly wanted answers that he realized only God could provide. Jeroboam tried to have his wife fool the blind prophet of God and obtain what he desired. The prophet Ahijah was physically blind but not spiritually blind, and God told him before Jeroboam's wife reached him, who was coming and why.

Jeroboam and his wife could not fool God, nor can we. He knows our identity. He even knows how many hairs we have on our heads and what thoughts go through our minds. Our wisest course is to be open and honest with Him and then obey His instructions!

BACKGROUND

Jeroboam, who had fled to Egypt to escape the murderous intent of Solomon, came back and was given the kingship of ten tribes of Israel by God. Because he feared losing the following of the people, Jeroboam started his own brand of worship in defiance of God. When his son fell deathly sick, and because, even in his sinful state, he had the knowledge that God could heal, he told his wife to disguise

herself and go to the prophet of the only true God. Her gifts were those a commoner would give, rather than gifts royalty would offer. Even though his eyesight was gone, the prophet Ahijah was told by God who was coming and what to say.

The prophet told Jeroboam's wife that he had bad news for her, and pronounced the fate of their son and of all the family because of the sins of the king. Ahijah prophesied that the descendants of Jeroboam would be eaten by dogs (verse 11). At this time, Israelites did not keep dogs as pets. The dogs were scavengers in the streets, just as the vultures were scavengers outside the cities. It was a great humiliation for a Jewish person not to be buried properly. Baasha was the king who would “cut off the house of Jeroboam” (fulfilled in 1 Kings 15:27-30).

Ahijah's prophecy regarding Israel's future (verse 15) was fulfilled in 722 B.C. when Assyria overpowered them.

The Bible holds up David as the benchmark of spiritual quality for the kings of Judah. In contrast, Jeroboam is used as the standard measurement of depths of sin for the kings of Israel. This is the first time the Bible refers to Jeroboam as the one “who made Israel to sin.” That phrase is repeated eight other times in those exact words, and other references bring the total to at least twenty.

Verse 21 shifts the focus from the northern kingdom of Israel to the southern kingdom of Judah. Rehoboam's mother was from Ammon and worshipped Molech (1 Kings 11:1,7). Solomon reigned forty years, and Rehoboam was forty-one when he was made king, which indicates that Solomon married foreign women before he became king.

The reference to sodomites means male prostitutes who were involved in heathen worship. This shows that the southern kingdom of Judah had also moved far from God.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel
 - B. The reign of Jeroboam of Israel
 - 4. The death of Jeroboam's son (14:1-18)
 - a. The sickness of Jeroboam's son (14:1-5)
 - b. The prophecy of Ahijah (14:6-16)
 - (1) Against the house of Jeroboam (14:6-11)
 - (2) Against Jeroboam's son (14:12-14)
 - (3) Against Israel (14:15-16)

- c. The death of Jeroboam's son (14:17-18)
- 5. The reign and death of Jeroboam (14:19-20)
- C. The reign of Rehoboam (14:21-31)
 - 1. The evil of Rehoboam's reign (14:21-24)
 - 2. The harassment of Shishak (14:25-28)
 - 3. The death of Rehoboam (14:29-31)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why did Abijah's death differ from the rest of the descendants of Jeroboam? How does this show God's mercy and grace?

2. Why do you think Rehoboam made brazen shields to replace the ones that had been taken away by Shishak?

3. How can we keep our hearts open to God and be sure that we are listening for His directions?

CONCLUSION

We can never conceal anything or any thought from God. If we are living in obedience to Him, we want Him involved in every area of our lives.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And he brought in the things which his father had dedicated, and the things which himself had dedicated, into the house of the LORD, silver, and gold, and vessels.” (1 Kings 15:15)

When I graduated from college and got a job, I felt like I went from rags to riches. As a student, I had lived meagerly, counted every penny, drove a junky old car, looked for ways to get free meals, recycled pop cans for extra change—you name it! Then, I got hired into a good position with a solid, dependable salary. In a week, I went from having nothing to getting a regular income!

Not long after getting hired, I purchased a new car. It was brand new, beautiful, and ran smoothly. A few months later, I was looking into buying a condo. My wardrobe began to improve, and I did not have to check my purse every time I wanted to eat out after church. It seemed I suddenly had many treasures.

With the increase of wealth, I felt a deep desire to bring every treasure into the house of the Lord and lay it before Him. Dedicating my treasures to Him had been easier when I had nothing to give, but as the material blessings flowed into my life, I realized that, more than ever, I needed to consecrate them to God.

When Asa became king, he did right before God. It may have been astounding to him to be blessed with wealth that he inherited as king, but he brought the treasures before the Lord and dedicated them to Him. Later, however, he used those dedicated treasures to form an alliance with an ungodly nation.

What treasures do you have in your life? Perhaps you have been blessed financially or with talents that God has given you. Have you dedicated these things to God? Maybe you dedicated them years ago, but have since taken them back. Give them completely to God! The spiritual blessing that comes from dedicating our treasures is of far greater value than any worldly treasures.

BACKGROUND

The Northern Kingdom, Israel, went through nine dynasties in 250 years, while the Southern Kingdom, Judah, was led by David’s dynasty for over 350 years. Although the kings of Judah often had many faults, the kingdom represented the one true God and continued kings in David’s line.

Abijam was also called Abijah (see 2 Chronicles 13). Abijam was not Rehoboam’s oldest son; he

was the son of Rehoboam’s favorite wife Maachah (2 Chronicles 11:18-22). Abijam was not godly, but the Lord supported him because he was a descendant of David. Abijam continued the war that had persisted between Rehoboam and Jeroboam and he defeated the army of Israel and recovered some of Judah’s lost territory. Abijam reigned for only three years.

Asa became king after his father, Abijam, died. During Asa’s reign, he purged the land of idolatry and sodomy and encouraged the people of Judah to seek the Lord. He even removed his grandmother from being queen because of her idolatry. In the fifteenth year of his reign, Asa called for a great assembly to gather at Jerusalem to renew their covenant with the Lord and rededicate the sacrificial altar.

In the last part of Asa’s reign, he entered into war with Baasha, the king of Israel. Instead of trusting God as before, he resorted to politics and gave the dedicated treasures to the pagan nation of Syria in order to form an alliance. Asa became a king whose heart was divided between godly wisdom and earthly wisdom. In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, the Lord afflicted Asa’s feet with disease. Two years later, he died and the throne was given to his son, Jehoshaphat.

In Israel, Jeroboam reigned for twenty-two years as an evil king. Then Nadab became king and followed in the evil ways of his father. After ruling for only two years, Nadab was assassinated by Baasha, who became king. At this time, Jeroboam’s line was wiped out, as had been prophesied (see 1 Kings 14:10-16). Just as kings Jeroboam and Nadab had done before him, Baasha continued with evil leadership.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel
 - D. The reign of Abijam (15:1-8)
 - E. The reign of Asa (15:9-24)
 - 1. The devotion of Asa to the Lord (15:9-15)
 - 2. The war of Asa with Baasha (15:16-22)
 - 3. The death of Asa (15:23-24)
 - F. The reign of Nadab of Israel (15:25-31)
 - G. The reign of Baasha of Israel
 - 1. The evil of Baasha’s reign (15:32-34)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. At the beginning of Asa’s reign, in what ways did he show he had a heart like his forefather David?

2. Asa cleansed the nation of idolatry except for the high places. What do you think this says about Asa?

[illegible]

3. With what kind of treasures has God blessed your life? How can you give them to God?

CONCLUSION

Let us remember that any treasures we have really belong to God. We need to hold them with a loose hand and use them for God's glory.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, and what he did, and his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?” (1 Kings 16:5)

Not long ago, I was summoned for jury service. The rules were quite simple: every week for three months, I would have to call a specific telephone number and see if my juror number had been selected. If it was, the recording would tell me when and where to report for the trial.

The first week I called and listened intently to see if my number had been selected. Numbers went by and finally the closing message was given. I had not been selected. A few weeks went by and still nothing. Then it happened. As juror number 34, I was required to report for trial in the courthouse.

The whole procedure was really quite interesting. In addition to the six jurors (of which I was one), there was a judge, the defendant, two attorneys (prosecuting and defending), a bailiff, a clerk, and a court recorder. I sat and listened while the attorneys stated their cases, called witnesses, and gave arguments. In the course of the trial, one attorney said something that apparently was not appropriate, and the opposing attorney stood and objected. The judge discussed this with both attorneys and ruled that the offending remark must be struck from the record. You see, everything that was said in that room was recorded and kept as a chronicle or history of the trial. The only way it could be removed was by order of the judge.

Like the court case described above, our words and actions are being recorded each day. All of the sins in our lives have been recorded. It is our legacy, unless we put our lives into the hands of Jesus. When, with a repentant heart, we ask Him to forgive us, He strikes our sins from the record.

The thought expressed in the focus verse is found repeatedly throughout 1 and 2 Kings. The actions of each king were chronicled for posterity. So are ours! Let us look for the opportunities to leave a legacy worth remembering, by following the will of God.

BACKGROUND

1 Kings 16 centers on the kings of Israel. It includes the history of five different kings and spans only fifteen to twenty-five years. It records the fall of the second dynasty of Israel (Baasha and his son, Elah), the rise and fall of the third dynasty (Zimri),

and the beginning of the fourth dynasty (Omri and his son, Ahab). Much upheaval took place in Israel during that time. The idolatry started by Jeroboam in the name of God quickly turned into pagan worship of other gods (Baal) by the time of Ahab’s reign.

Baasha did not learn from Jeroboam and the judgment God placed upon him. For twenty-four years, Baasha led Israel in the same sins, and furthermore, he destroyed Jeroboam’s family. In the seven days that Zimri reigned, he managed to exterminate all Baasha’s male descendants, his kinfolds, and his friends, fulfilling the prophet Jehu’s words.

Omri was the king for twelve years, but for approximately five of those years, his reign was disputed by Tibni. He purchased a three-hundred-foot hill and built Samaria. Its hilltop position made it easily defendable. Also, it was located near an important trade route.

Jezebel was a Phoenician (Zidonian) princess. Due to her influence, Ahab built an altar and a temple for Baal. The word *grove* in verse 33 means an idol (see “Pagan Gods” supplement). Ahab was the most wicked king of Israel—what a distinction!

Ahab himself may have encouraged Hiel, the Bethelite, to repair and fortify Jericho (verse 34). However, the curse of Joshua (recorded in Joshua 6:26) was fulfilled, and two of Hiel’s sons died by divine judgment.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel
 - G. The reign of Baasha of Israel
 - 2. The word of Jehu against Baasha (16:1-4)
 - 3. The death of Baasha (16:5-7)
 - H. The reign of Elah of Israel (16:8-14)
 - I. The reign of Zimri of Israel (16:15-20)
 - J. The reign of Omri of Israel (16:21-28)
 - K. The reign of Ahab of Israel
 - 1. The character of Ahab’s reign (16:29-34)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What reason did the prophet give Baasha for God’s judgment upon him? What was that judgment?

2. Why did Israel go through so many kings during this time?

3. While many people today do not worship wooden images or make temples for their gods, what do they worship?

CONCLUSION

Israel had a long line of evil kings, and their actions are recorded for us to read and to learn from. Let us purpose in our hearts to follow the Lord and walk in His paths, that our life stories would bring honor to His name.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.”

(1 Kings 17:8-9)

Our pastor and his wife are very adventuresome. One evening soon after they moved to our town, they set out on an excursion and failed to return home in time for a planned birthday celebration. This caused their four teenaged children to become somewhat stressed. When late evening arrived and their parents still had not returned or phoned, the children called people in our small church family to pray. By midnight there was still no word, and concern had deepened, to say the least.

It turned out the couple had taken a drive into the mountains. When it began to get late, they decided to turn back. In the process of turning the car around, they ran into a snowdrift and got stuck. They did not think they had traveled very far, so they decided to head back toward the highway on foot and attempt to get a ride home. However, as they were walking, they realized they had indeed driven very far. When our pastor's wife (who was wearing high heels) could walk no farther, they decided to sit down beside a tree and try to stay warm until morning. Just then, our pastor spotted a light ahead—it was a house! The two stumbled to the porch and knocked on the door.

An elderly woman, whose husband was in the hospital, answered the door. She had been unable to sleep, so she was making a cup of tea when she heard their knock. The woman wrapped our pastor's wife in warm blankets and gave the two of them cups of hot tea and toast, and she offered her home for the night.

When we heard this wonderful story, we had no doubt that God had prepared that woman for our pastor and his wife, just as surely as He had prepared the widow woman who sustained Elijah in our focus verse. God knows our needs before we do, and He prepares ahead for His children, even before we pray!

BACKGROUND

Israel, the Northern Kingdom, had no faithful kings throughout its history. Elijah the Tishbite was one of the first in a long line of important prophets sent to Israel and Judah. Elijah's name means “The LORD [Jehovah] is my God,” which is fitting for a man who called the people back to the worship of Jehovah.

The kings in this time were wicked, leading the people in worshiping the heathen gods, and the priests they appointed were corrupt and ineffective. Because of this, God called His prophets to try to rescue Israel from its moral and spiritual decline.

The people who worshiped Baal believed he was god over the rains and bountiful harvests. Elijah went to Baal-worshiping King Ahab and announced that the rains would cease for “these years.” King Ahab had built up a strong military, but there was no defense against the drought. He ordered his Baal priests to bring the rains back, but to no avail. This extended drought, announced by Elijah, a prophet of God, was intended to make it clear to the people that Baal was not a true god at all. (See “Pagan Gods” supplement.)

At the brook Cherith, Elijah had safety and sustenance. Ravens were considered “unclean” and “detestable” and were on the Mosaic list of forbidden foods (Leviticus 11:13-15; Deuteronomy 14:14). However, God used them to transport food to Elijah while he was in hiding. The prophet had a steady source of water in the brook until it dried up. Even then, Elijah waited on God to tell him where to go. Scholars believe Elijah remained at Cherith for one year.

Verses 17-24 record the first instance in Scripture of the resurrection of a dead person.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel
 - K. The reign of Ahab of Israel
 - 2. The ministry of Elijah against Ahab's Baal worship
 - a. The background for Mt. Carmel
 - (1) Elijah's prediction of drought (17:1)
 - (2) Elijah's provisions during the drought (17:2-24)
 - (a) At the brook Cherith (17:2-7)
 - (b) At Zarephath (17:8-24)
 - [1] Provision from the widow (17:8-16)
 - [2] Restoration of the widow's son (17:17-24)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How often did the ravens bring food to Elijah?

2. What do you suppose the widow woman thought as she went to make the cake for Elijah?

3. Even though God’s command to go to the widow did not make sense, Elijah went and was provided for. What lessons can you learn from this in your own life?

CONCLUSION

Just as surely as God prepared that widow woman who sustained Elijah in our focus verse, God knows our needs before we do, and He will prepare ahead for us.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.” (1 Kings 18:21)

Life is full of choices, and some of them are life-defining. A man in our church testifies, “Bad habits bound me. I smoked four or five packs of cigarettes a day. Bitterness, blasphemy, and hatred were in my heart. During World War II, I spent five years on ammunition ships and tankers, serving among men who did not care anything about life.

“One day as I stood alone by the ship’s rail, the misery in my heart overwhelmed me. I did not want to live any longer. As I looked into those murky waves, I said to myself, ‘I’m going to end it all. I will jump overboard.’ The devil told me, ‘Jump! Nobody will ever miss you!’ But in that moment, Jesus spoke to my heart. He said, ‘If you jump, what will the end be?’ I knew that Voice came from Heaven, and I did not jump.”

This man’s decision was one that had extreme consequences. Happily, he made the right choice, and later he prayed and was born again. The decisions we face today may not be life or death issues, but we are still called upon to make them. As we review the options, it may be readily apparent what choice is best to make. At other times, the best option may not be so clear.

In our focus verse, Israel was called upon to choose between two options. Elijah challenged them, as a nation, to come to a decision. Would they continue serving Baal, or would “the LORD be God”?

In our spiritual lives, we are confronted with the decision of whom we will serve. We have two choices—the God of salvation, or Satan, the enemy of our souls. Our personal decisions will determine our eternal destination.

Through the ages, many have chosen to serve the Lord. In doing so, they have found Him ready and willing to guide in all of life’s temporal and spiritual decisions. We can access His help daily by asking for it and then standing on the promises in His Word.

BACKGROUND

Obadiah is a person worthy of notice. In charge of wicked Ahab’s house, Obadiah “feared the LORD greatly.” The meaning of his name was “servant of Jehovah.” He was willing to risk his life to hide and

feed one hundred godly prophets when Jezebel tried to wipe them out.

When Ahab and Obadiah were combing the land for food for the animals that were used by the military, Elijah approached Obadiah with a message for Ahab. Obadiah’s reluctance to carry Elijah’s message is understandable, since Ahab had searched internationally for Elijah for some time.

There is a significant contrast between Obadiah’s greeting when he met Elijah, and the greeting that Ahab gave later. Obadiah “fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord Elijah?” Ahab said, “Art thou he that troubleth Israel?”

Baal was a Phoenician god of fertility. His worshippers believed that he sent rain and abundant crops. His worship included extremely immoral practices. In addition to representatives from the tribes of Israel, 450 prophets of Baal and 400 “prophets of the groves” were called to this contest (see “Pagan Gods” supplement). The prophets of the groves were prophets of the Canaanite goddess Asherah (or Astarte), but apparently they did not attend the confrontation. (See verses 22, 26, 40.) Because Mount Carmel was near the border between Phoenicia and Israel, the location would have seemed to be an advantage to Baal.

Elijah challenged the people, “How long halt ye between two opinions?” Many Israelites knew who the true God was. However, idolatrous worship brought sinful pleasure, which they may have been reticent to give up.

The prophets of Baal had every advantage—the choice of sacrifice, the opportunity to go first, and plenty of time. Fanatical and frenzied, they tried to get their god to perform a miracle for them. When they had exhausted themselves with vain praying, Elijah called the people near to watch while he repaired the altar. No doubt Elijah wanted them to know for themselves that there was no sleight-of-hand involved. The twelve stones symbolized the twelve tribes, even though Israel was politically divided.

In contrast to the advantages he had given the prophets of Baal, Elijah incorporated hindrances in his offering. He also sacrificed the most valuable resource in the land—water—to the God of Israel. At the Temple in Jerusalem, the evening sacrifice was offered at 3:00 p.m. That is when Elijah prayed his prayer. God answered by fire that consumed the sacrifice, the altar, the dust, and even the water from the trench.

God had commanded in Deuteronomy 13:1-5 that false prophets were to be killed. Elijah was obeying those instructions when he slew the prophets of Baal.

Although God had promised rain (verse 1), Elijah still had to pray earnestly before it happened. His burden for his people was great, and the answer took more than one short prayer. A small cloud in the distance was proof enough for Elijah. He knew the torrents of rain would soon follow.

The Lord's hand was on Elijah, who ran down the mountain into the valley, arriving ahead of Ahab in Jezreel, which was somewhere between six and seven-teen miles away.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel
 - K. The reign of Ahab of Israel
 - 2. The ministry of Elijah against Ahab's Baal worship
 - a. The background for Mt. Carmel
 - (3) Elijah's confrontation with Ahab (18:1-19)
 - (a) Obadiah's mission from Ahab (18:1-6)
 - (b) Obadiah's mission to Ahab (18:7-15)
 - (c) Elijah's second meeting with Ahab (18:16-19)
 - b. The events on Mt. Carmel (18:20-46)
 - (1) Elijah's challenge (18:20-24)
 - (2) Baal's failure (18:25-29)
 - (3) Jehovah's manifestation (18:30-40)
 - (4) The cessation of the drought (18:41-46)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What would you consider an outstanding attribute of Elijah?

2. Who troubled Israel?

3. What was the reason behind the "contest" between the offerings of the two different sacrifices?

4. How can we know today that we are serving the true God?

CONCLUSION

God's blessing will be upon us as we choose to make decisions based on His Word and His will for us as individuals.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.” (1 Kings 19:11-12)

The clouds were fluffy white against a backdrop of baby blue. The sun at high noon was projecting its brilliant rays down to warm the earth. It appeared to be a day that would be filled with sunshine and perfect outdoor weather. I had just finished lunch with an older friend, and we were chatting as we got ready to climb into my van. Suddenly a powerful wind knocked us into each other. It came with no warning, blasting bits of gravel, sticks, sand, and scraps of paper into our unprotected faces and arms. Caught off guard by its force, my friend and I felt momentarily powerless. The flying particles whirled through the open doors of my van, dusting the carpets and seats with grit. My elderly friend shuddered in disbelief. However, as quickly as it came, the wind swept up and away.

In thinking back on this experience, I understand a little about how Elijah must have felt when God showed him the powers of nature. How often, when viewing nature’s wondrous displays of power, do we think of God as being in them? As we see from the verses mentioned, God was not in the powerful displays Elijah witnessed. The Lord came after nature had spent its fury. He came quietly in a still small Voice.

To hear God speak, we may need to get away from the “roars” of life—the earthquakes that rattle below us, the tornadoes that toss us about like feathers, and the mountains that explode into thunderous smoke. Perhaps we need to find a secluded spot or altar—a place away from the chaos and cares we daily encounter—where we can listen to the quiet Voice of the Lord. As we silently wait there before Him, we will hear His still small Voice speaking to our hearts and filling our souls with His peace.

BACKGROUND

Elijah had just experienced two glorious victories on Mount Carmel—fire on the sacrifice and rain upon

the land. One might expect him to have been on the mountaintop praising the Lord. However, because of Jezebel’s threatening message to him, Elijah ran in fear for his life. Beersheba was at the extreme south of Judah, and therefore beyond Jezebel’s reach.

Elijah was exhausted and discouraged as he sat down under a juniper tree and asked the Lord to take his life. Juniper trees, or “broom trees,” are desert shrubs that flower and can grow up to twelve feet high and provide shade. Today, what Elijah experienced might be called “emotional burnout.” He also had some self-pity. He may have hoped that through his ministry on Mount Carmel, the whole country, including Ahab and Jezebel, would quit praying to Baal and fall to their knees in worship of the true God. When his hopes were not realized, he may have felt like a failure. However, God loved him and provided what he needed: rest and nourishment before his journey to Mount Horeb (another name for Mount Sinai), which was about two hundred miles south of Beersheba.

When Elijah told God that “I, even I only, am left,” he forgot that others had helped him kill Baal’s prophets. The wind, fire, and earthquake were dramatic events for someone to experience, especially while alone. Still there was not a message for Elijah from the Lord in these things. Finally, the “still small voice,” a gentle call, caused Elijah to move out to the entrance of the cave, for he recognized God’s Voice. After Elijah listened, he made a fresh start at obeying God and following His leading.

Elijah finally realized there were still tasks for him to do and that God would be with him to help him do them. God instructed him to anoint three men, and said that these men would bring punishment to Israel. As king of Syria, Hazael would fight against Israel, Jehu would nearly destroy Baal worship in the northern kingdom (2 Kings 10:18-31), and Elisha would succeed Elijah.

Elisha’s family must have been well off financially, since he had twenty-four costly animals.

A mantle was a coat and an extremely important piece of clothing. People used mantles for protection in bad weather, to sit on, to sleep on, to carry items, or to secure a debt. Elisha knew that Elijah’s action was symbolic, and he answered the call.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel
 - K. The reign of Ahab of Israel
 - 2. The ministry of Elijah against Ahab’s Baal worship

- c. The flight after Mt. Carmel (19:1-21)
 - (1) Elijah's flight from Jezebel (19:1-8)
 - (2) Elijah's arrival at Horeb (19:9-18)
 - (a) The despondency of Elijah (19:9-14)
 - (b) The instructions for Elijah (19:15-18)
 - (3) Elijah's anointing of Elisha (19:19-21)

3. What should we do if we become discouraged or feel like a failure?

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why did Elijah run, when for the past three years, he had done nothing without listening to and obeying the Lord's instructions?

2. In what verse of our text does God assure Elijah that his work and ministry were not a failure and that there were still those who were faithful to God in Israel because of his faithfulness?

CONCLUSION

No matter how alone we feel or how much of a failure we think we are, God can use us if we listen and obey.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD.” (1 Kings 20:28)

One night, not long after starting work on a new shift, I began conversing with a co-worker who appeared to be knowledgeable about nearly everything. He was able to explain many topics with ease. The things we talked about were fascinating, and I was amazed by what I was learning.

Soon our discussion worked its way around to religion and God’s Word. He began to tell me how he had spent a year studying the Bible in a cottage out in the woods somewhere—just him, nature, and the Bible. He was very confident in his ability to expound upon the Scriptures and their meaning. Then it happened—he told me that he did not believe in the Trinity or any of the writings of Paul the Apostle. He proceeded to give me many “solid” reasons why he thought these portions of the Bible were wrong.

While my co-worker was quite confident about what he was saying, he was evidencing the fact that he had no real understanding of the things of God. Similarly, the Syrians in today’s text thought they had it all figured out. They were confident that they had the numbers, the strategy, and the skill to utterly defeat the Israelites, and made a judgment call that the Israelites’ God could work in the hills but not in the valleys. They supposed that victory would be theirs if they just moved the place of battle. How wrong they were! God was about to demonstrate in a most vivid way that He was not restricted to the hills as the Syrians had surmised. The wisdom of the Syrians came to naught, and the Lord proved His arm strong on behalf of His children. The sovereign God of all creation was fighting for Israel!

Every day our world finds new reasons why our faith is outdated, ineffective, or irrelevant, offering new ideas that challenge the very foundation on which we stand. Sometimes it is hard not to get angry over the blatant irreverence for God’s Word, or confused by the “eloquence” that is used. However, we can rest in the fact that God is the source of all knowledge and wisdom. Ultimately, we don’t have to defend Him. The Creator of the universe is quite capable of

defending Himself! God’s power will be fully revealed some day, and then those who doubted His existence or denied His Word will realize how tragically wrong they were. What an assurance is ours!

BACKGROUND

Having had two evil and two good kings, Judah wavered between following God and turning idolatrous. The northern kingdom of Israel, however, had eight wicked kings in succession. To punish both kingdoms for departing from Him, God allowed other nations to gain strength and fight against them. Three main enemies threatened Israel and Judah during the next two centuries: Syria, Assyria, and Babylon. In today’s text, Syria, the first to rise to power, was the immediate threat to Ahab and Israel.

The land of Israel had just been through a time of drought and was in a weakened state. Benhadad, King of Syria, decided to take advantage of this and secure Israel as his kingdom. His demands in verse 3 may indicate that Israel was already somewhat subservient to Syria when the events in this chapter occur.

Opinions differ as to whether the Benhadad in this chapter is the Benhadad in 1 Kings 15. There were three Syrian kings with this name. This Benhadad is believed by most commentators to be the second.

A prophet came to Ahab, king of Israel, with important news about how to handle the Syrian army. When Ahab followed the instructions from the Lord, the Syrians were delivered into the hands of Ahab and the Israelites.

Ahab appears to have been affected by the outcome of Elijah’s “God contest” (1 Kings 18), because he began to make good decisions about following the Lord’s commands. Twice, he did what the prophets told him and the Lord won the victories for them. Then, true to his history, he made a very poor decision and let Benhadad go, contrary to God’s will. Ahab followed his pride and greed instead of the Lord.

Since the time of Joshua, Israel’s soldiers had proved to be superior fighters in the hills, but ineffective in the plains because they did not use chariots in battle. Horse-drawn chariots, which were useless in hilly territory, could easily overtake great numbers of foot soldiers on level ground. What Benhadad’s soldiers did not understand was that it was God, not the chariots, that made the difference in the battle.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel
 - K. The reign of Ahab of Israel

3. The conflict between Ahab and Benhadad (20:1-43)
 - a. Benhadad's attack of Samaria (20:1-21)
 - (1) Benhadad's demands (20:1-6)
 - (2) Ahab's refusal of the demands (20:7-12)
 - (3) A prophet's promise of deliverance (20:13-15)
 - (4) Ahab's rout of the Syrians (20:16-21)
 - b. Benhadad's defeat at Aphek (20:22-43)
 - (1) The prophet's prediction of Benhadad's return (20:22-25)
 - (2) Ahab's victory at Aphek (20:26-30)
 - (3) Ahab's release of Benhadad (20:31-34)
 - (4) Ahab's actions condemned (20:35-43)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Benhadad pledge to Ahab when Ahab refused to give him Israel?

2. If Ahab had killed Benhadad, what do you think would have been the future of Israel?

3. How can you make sure that your "defense" is secure?

CONCLUSION

We serve an almighty, invincible, and eternal God. Someday those who deny His Word or His power will realize the truth about Him!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.”
(1 Kings 21:4)

My two-year-old granddaughter is a typically happy, enthusiastic child—most of the time. Occasionally, however, when things are not going her way, she can become extremely pouty. At such times, jokes about watching out for her lower lip so she doesn’t trip over it, do not seem so far-fetched. At age two, this is not extremely unusual, and with a loving, Christ-centered upbringing, she will no doubt outgrow this particular phase in due time.

Childish pouting by an adult is not so funny. In King Ahab’s case, he behaved much like a child, climbing into bed without supper and facing toward the wall—all because Naboth would not sell him his vineyard. Ahab’s pout led to Jezebel’s plot, which in turn led to the staging of a vicious false trial by local political leaders and, ultimately, to the execution of an innocent man.

We must understand very clearly that pouting, and the selfish attitudes that promote it, have no part in a Christian’s life. If you are tempted to react in such a way, immediately pray for strength to reject such behavior, and do not allow it any place in your life. It can cause a separation between even the best of friends, and also between brothers and sisters in the Gospel.

More dangerous yet, pouting can prevent us from hearing the still small Voice of our Savior. When situations do not seem to be going our way, we need to remind ourselves that God allows everything that comes into our lives, and He has some plan for how it will work for our good. This will help us be thankful no matter what the circumstances are around us.

BACKGROUND

Naboth’s refusal to sell his inheritance was in obedience to the Law (Leviticus 25:23 and Numbers 27:8-11). God had told Israel that He owned the land and they were His tenants on it.

Jezebel’s action revealed the depth of her wickedness. In her country of Phoenicia, kings were sovereign. According to the Law, a person who blasphemed

was to be stoned (Leviticus 24:16), and two witnesses were required (Deuteronomy 17:6). Jezebel directed that “sons of Belial,” meaning “worthless men,” were to falsely witness against Naboth.

It is terrible to be lied about publicly, especially to the extent that people believe the lie and turn against the one who is lied about. Naboth not only was lied about, but this was carried to the extreme when he was publicly executed! His sons were also killed, so there was no family to inherit the property (2 Kings 9:26). In some cases, God allows evil to triumph, as He did here. Today in some areas of the world innocent Christians are being severely persecuted for things of which they clearly are not guilty.

Verse 17 says, “The word of the LORD came to Elijah.” The previous reference to Elijah was when he anointed Elisha. Here God used him to pronounce judgment on Ahab and Jezebel.

Elijah prophesied that the dogs would lick up Ahab’s blood, just as they had licked up Naboth’s blood. This prophecy was fulfilled in 1 Kings 22:38. The prophecy regarding the death of Jezebel and also their sons was fulfilled by Jehu (2 Kings 9-10).

Ahab took Elijah’s words to heart and humbled himself. As a result, God allowed him to die before the prophecy was fulfilled regarding his family.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel
 - K. The reign of Ahab of Israel
 - 4. The desire for Naboth’s vineyard (21:1-29)
 - a. Naboth’s refusal (21:1-4)
 - b. Naboth’s murder (21:5-16)
 - (1) Jezebel’s plot against Naboth (21:5-10)
 - (2) Jezebel’s murder of Naboth (21:11-16)
 - c. Elijah’s condemnation of Ahab and Jezebel (21:17-26)
 - d. Ahab’s repentance (21:27-29)

A CLOSER LOOK

- 1. Who was guilty in the mock trial and execution of Naboth?**

2. Because Ahab humbled himself, God allowed him to die without seeing the judgment on his family. What does that indicate about God?

3. How do you think a Christian should respond if false accusations are made against him?

CONCLUSION

In the early part of the twentieth century, Victor Herbert wrote a humorous song containing the words: *“Oh, I want what I want when I want it! That’s all that makes life worth the while.”* As Christians, let us live just the opposite of this, with a new song that goes something like: *“Lord, I want what You want when You want it . . .”* This truly will bring us the happiness that the first song promises but fails to deliver.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the LORD?” (1 Kings 22:16)

Walking back to my room from college classes one day years ago, the song that popped into my heart at the sight of the beautiful sunshine was “Heavenly Sunlight.” For a few seconds I let the song linger, enjoying the melody; but then the words sank in and I remembered that this was a song from my years of church attendance. As a stubborn unbeliever, I did not yet have “glory divine” flooding my soul, and I did not choose to believe any of the words of the song.

The basis of the problem was this: if I did not want to accept the bottom line that each individual will end up in one of two places, Heaven or Hell, I could not accept the rest of Christianity. However, if Christianity was really the truth, I knew exactly which destination I was headed for. I quickly pushed the song out of my mind, behaving like an ostrich with its head in the sand, as if my lack of belief would exempt me from a lost eternity.

Though I had been carefully taught about God and how to live, for many years a rebellious streak kept me from turning my life over to God’s control. I thought a Christian’s lifestyle was too restricted. My life was not really wild because, although I wanted control of every aspect of my life, I was not comfortable with worldly lifestyles. However, God in His faithfulness continued to call after me — this time through a song — in spite of my personal ideas.

I guess it did not occur to me that no matter what I thought, God requires submission to Christ and forgiveness through His Blood. Refusing His gift brings eternal punishment. Even though I was choosing to deny the existence of God, His Word is supreme; regardless of my insignificant thoughts, God’s truth is immutable, and His requirements are absolute.

Similarly, Ahab sought to disregard the truth and hear only pleasant words from his prophets. In his desire to acquire Ramoth-gilead, he did not welcome the prophecies of Micaiah, “For he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.” No matter what he *chose* to believe, God would determine the outcome of the battle.

We should not ask God to bless our plans. Rather, we ought to tell God that we are willing and available to be used in His plans.

BACKGROUND

This is an account of Ahab’s last stand. A portion of land that should have belonged to Israel was in the hands of Syria. Ahab, the wicked king of Israel, asked Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to join with him in claiming the land. Perhaps the reason King Jehoshaphat agreed to this plan was that his son had married Ahab’s daughter. Jehoshaphat’s words, “I am as thou art,” were tragic considering the wickedness of Ahab.

Ahab and Jehoshaphat inquired as to whether they should go to battle, and four hundred prophets prophesied what Ahab wanted to hear. Some Bible commentators believe these may have been Jezebel’s prophets for Asherah (see “Pagan Gods” supplement) who had not come to the confrontation with Elijah on Mount Carmel, and therefore had escaped death. Only the prophet Micaiah dared to challenge the king and speak the words of the Lord, underscoring the fact that, usually, it is a minority who will truly follow God. Ahab did not like the message, and had the prophet locked up in prison for delivering it.

God had given Ahab fair warning that his days were numbered, and Ahab understood that prophecy. However, he chose to turn his back on the truth and follow the advice of his four hundred prophets. It did not matter how, or even whether, Ahab disguised himself. It was God’s ordained time for him to die, and although he was in disguise, an arrow “at a venture” (at random) found its mark through a gap in Ahab’s armor — a clear indication that God designs even the minute details of every life.

Amazingly, Jehoshaphat also ignored Micaiah’s warning. Had not God been in control, Jehoshaphat could have easily lost his life.

At the beginning of 1 Kings, David ruled the strong and united nation of Israel. David’s devotion to God was the benchmark for other kings. By the end of 1 Kings, the nation was divided, and Ahab, Israel’s most wicked king, had died.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel
 - K. The reign of Ahab of Israel
 - 5. Ahab and Jehoshaphat’s confederacy against Ramoth-gilead (22:1-40)
 - a. Ahab’s desire to capture Ramoth-gilead (22:1-4)
 - b. Jehoshaphat’s search for divine approval (22:5-28)

- (1) The word of the false prophets (22:5-12)
- (2) The word of Micaiah (22:13-28)
 - (a) His negative report (22:13-23)
 - (b) His imprisonment (22:24-28)
- c. Ahab's defeat at Ramoth-gilead (22:29-36)
- d. Ahab's death (22:37-40)
- L. The reign of Jehoshaphat (22:41-50)
- M. The reign of Ahaziah of Israel (22:51-53)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How did King Ahab try to circumvent Micaiah's prophecy?

2. What dangers did Jehoshaphat face for his poor choice in joining Ahab?

3. In your life, how can you be sure that you are following the truth?

CONCLUSION

God's Word is sovereign. When He decrees, there is no debate: one ballot, no recount.

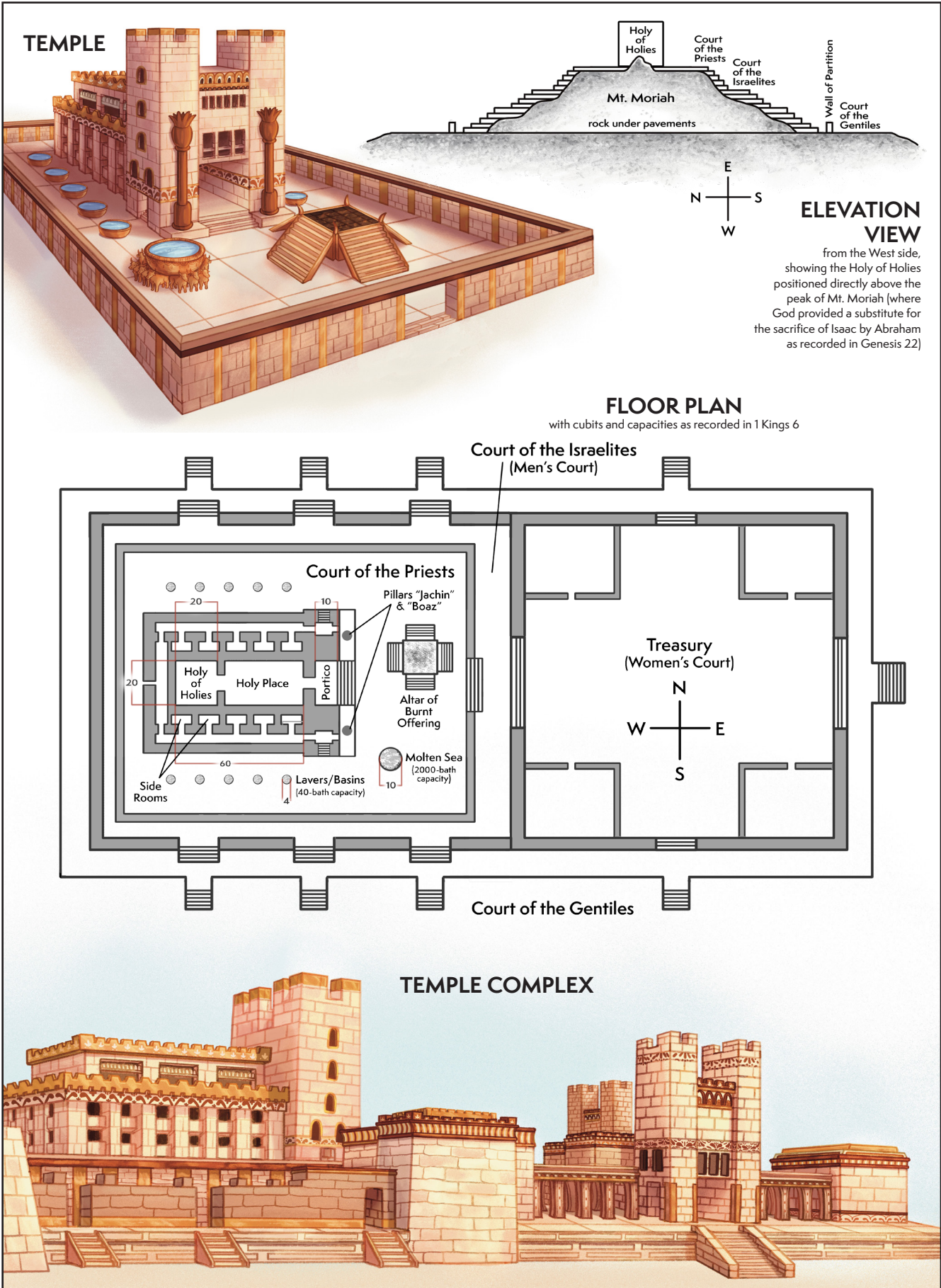
NOTES

Key Locations in Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, & 1 Kings



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A Possible Illustration of Solomon's Temple



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Pagan Gods

BAAL

Baal (Baalim in the plural) was a widely worshiped pagan god of fertility. He was the principal male god of the Phoenicians and Canaanites. The wicked King Ahab and his wife, Jezebel, promoted Baal worship in Israel. The Book of Hosea describes the conflict between worship of the true God and this false god.



Baal worshipers believed he had power over wind, rain, and clouds. When crops were abundant, they worshiped him as the sun-god to give thanks. In times of drought, storms, or other crop devastation, they worshiped him as the storm-god to appease his wrath. The fact that his prophets could not end the three-year drought Elijah had proclaimed illustrated his lack of power, and the supremacy of the God of Israel.

Baal worship involved extremely immoral practices including illicit sex and human sacrifice, usually by burning alive a worshiper's firstborn. Baal is also identified with **Molech** (another pagan deity), the worship of which also included wicked sacrifice rituals such as temple prostitution or human sacrifice, often involving children.



Various locations also had local Baalim. For example, **Baal-peor** was a Moabite god, named so because his obscene rites were performed at Mount Peor. Sometimes compound forms of the word were used

to name locations where he was worshiped, such as **Baal-gad** and **Baal-hermon**.

ASHTORETH

Elijah requested that four hundred “prophets of the groves” attend the showdown recorded in 1 Kings chapter 18. These individuals led the Israelites’ worship of the pagan goddess **Ashtoreth** (Ashtaroth or Astaroth in the plural). The Greek form of her name is **Astarte**. The Hebrew name, **Asherah** (Asherim in the plural), referenced both the goddess and the

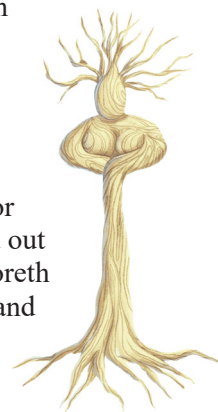


idols used in her worship. The King James Version of the Bible translated this simply as “groves.”

Ashtoreth was widely considered a goddess of love (fertility) and war, and also identified by some worshipers as a “moon goddess,” the “goddess of the morning and evening star,” or the “goddess of the sea.” Her common names included, “Queen of Heaven,” “Mistress of Heaven,” “Lady of Heaven,” and “Lady Asherah of the Sea.”

Ashtoreth was often connected closely to Baal; many myths said she was his wife or mistress. Another tradition called her “the mother goddess,” saying that she had seventy children and that Baal was one of them. The Mesopotamian version of this goddess was called **Ishtar** (or Ashtar) and they said Tammuz, the god of vegetation, was her husband (Ezekiel 8:14). The Moabites called her the spouse of Chemosh, their national god. Later, Ashtoreth was identified with the Greek goddess **Aphrodite** and the Roman **Venus**.

An idol of Ashtoreth was possibly the stem of a tree without branches shaped into an image and planted in the ground (Deuteronomy 16:21) or a similar looking object carved out of wood, silver, or stone. Ashtoreth worship glorified sex and war and included temple prostitution.



DELIBERATE MISSPELLINGS

Scholars suggest that some of the variety in translation and resulting ambiguity in the names of these pagan gods comes from deliberate mispronunciations and misspellings. Biblical writers expressed contempt for pagan gods in this way. For example, the word *Molech* is a combination of the Hebrew words for “ruler” and “shame.” Despite various titles, it is clear that all of these terms (Baal, Molech, Ashtoreth, Astarte, Ishtar, etc.) are used to reference the pagan worship detested by the God of Israel.

Compiled from:

“Gods, Pagan,” “Baal,” “Baal-Peor,” “Molech,” “Asherah,” “Ashtaroth,” and “Ishtar” in *Holman Bible Dictionary*, © 1991 Holman Bible Publishers.

Matthew George Easton, “Baal,” “Ashtoreth,” and “Asherah” in *Easton’s 1897 Bible Dictionary*, Thomas Nelson.

“1 Kings 11:5-8,” “1 Kings 23:4-8,” and “1 Kings 23:6” in *Life Application Study Bible*, © 1988, 1989 Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

