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**A
MAN
AFTER
GOD'S
OWN
HEART**

- a study of the life of David -

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"CHOSEN BY GOD"

(1 Samuel 16)

Intro ... Beginning this morning, we're going to do something that we haven't done in quite some time ... We're going to settle down in an extensive section of the Scripture and take an intensive look at a particular man of God.

The Section of Scripture is **1st and 2nd Samuel** and the Man of God is **David**. David's story begins in 1 Samuel Chapter 16 ... Let's read it together!

This then is the situation as Chapter Sixteen begins ...

Saul is Israel's King - their first King - (story told in chapters 8-15) - Saul has served as King for nearly 40 years. He has, in many ways, been a successful king. He has subdued the people's enemies and has established certain necessary royal procedures. But Saul has been found guilty of disobedience and has fallen out of the Lord's favor. Samuel - God's prophet - has already communicated that fact to Saul.

So, as chapter 16 begins, Saul is serving to some degree as a "*lame duck King*". He's still in office but he knows and Samuel knows that he is no longer God's choice. God's Spirit and blessing has been withdrawn from him and that fact greatly troubles him. **Samuel** is also troubled. He mourns and grieves for Saul and for the nation.

As Chapter 16 begins, God shows up and officially ends Samuel's personal pity party ...

*"How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as King over Israel?
Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem,
I have chosen one of his sons to be King."*

Have you ever noticed that life doesn't end - the work of God isn't destroyed - every time something changes - even when it's something monumental? God always has a plan and he always has a place for us in his plan if we remain faithful to him. Samuel was finding that out.

And so, after pointing out to the Lord the dangers involved in the decision the Lord had made and the directions the Lord had given, and having received from the Lord a suitable "cover" for his "*King Anointing Venture*", Samuel set out ...

When Samuel arrived in Bethlehem, he threw the entire town into turmoil. The prophet of God and judge of Israel normally did not come unannounced unless there was some kind of serious problem. The elders of Bethlehem feared that some judgment of God was about to fall on their town.

Samuel assures them that he had only come to offer a sacrifice to the Lord and that they are all invited to the service. He makes sure that Jesse and his sons will be in attendance.

What a momentous moment ...

Only Samuel knows for sure what's going on ... The citizens of Bethlehem know that something highly unusual is happening and Jesse knows that his family has been especially invited but only Samuel knows that the fate of the nation lies in his hands as he has been given the responsibility of ***recognizing*** and ***anointing*** the next King of Israel.

There's tension in the air as the town assembles in front of Samuel. The elders are no doubt the first to arrive and perhaps last to arrive is the family of Jesse who've had to travel in from the country. Samuel has greeted every person who has come but he has seemed to pay special attention to Jesse's sons. He looks them up and down as though he were a general reviewing his troops.

If there ever was a man who needed to be in tune with God, it was Samuel. And if there ever was a man in a perfect position to learn some incredible lessons about the workings of God, it was Samuel.

That day he learned ***three incredible lessons*** about the workings of God - three lessons that still hold true today; three lessons that any one of us might need to take to heart even this week. Let's consider them together ...

Lesson #1 ...

GOD'S CHOICE FREQUENTLY CONTRADICTS HUMAN REASONING

"Samuel saw Eliab and thought 'Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord.'" (verse 6)

What relief Samuel must have felt when Jesse's family finally trudged in and presented themselves before him! They came in order from oldest to youngest. There were seven of them but it was obvious to Samuel that he had to look no further than the first strong young man who stood in his presence.

Eliab was his name and he was an impressive specimen ... he was tall and strong and possessed movie star good looks. He would serve the Lord well in the many "*Photo Ops*" and public appearances that Kings must endure. He would be a suitable replacement for King Saul who was himself a most impressive individual - tall and physically powerful.

It must have nearly unnerved Samuel when God said "*Eliab is not the one*". I'm sure that Samuel might have been just about ready to present the case for Eliab, when the Lord revealed to Samuel the reality that explains this **Lesson #1** (vs. 7a)

*"Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him.
The Lord does not look at the things man looks at."*

The Lord is not impressed with the same things that impress men.
The Lord operates in a different realm than men operate in.
Eliab will *not be* the Lord's choice.

And so Samuel cast his gaze upon the second son of Jesse and then the third and the fourth and on down until the seventh and seemingly final son stood in front of him and still the Lord stirred him not ...

At this point the entire enterprise seemed to be doomed for failure ... Had Samuel missed the Lord's nudging - had he gotten so rattled by the Lord's word in response to Eliab that he failed to hear the Lord's voice confirming one of the other six?

And yet if there was one thing that Samuel had never done in his life, it was fail to hear and discern the Word of the Lord. The Lord had just not spoken to him since his examination of Eliab. And so Samuel asked the **"long shot question"** ... *"Are these all of your sons?"*

And wouldn't you know it ... There **was** one more - the youngest - the one so far down the pecking order that he wasn't even invited by his father to attend the sacrifice - the one who was out in the fields tending to the sheep.

Samuel, no doubt with a sense of relief mixed with a bit of irritation, says ...
"Send for him and we will not sit down until he gets here".

Talk about an awkward moment ... the Prophet of God is kept waiting and certainly inconvenienced because Jesse had failed to fully comply with the prophet's instructions. The minutes must have seemed like hours as they stood there anticipating David's arrival.

Finally he came - right from the fields - hair tossed by the wind and the smell of the country on his clothes. He presents himself before Samuel and the welcomed, familiar voice of the Lord says to Samuel ...
"Anoint him for he is the one".

Not one man in the place would have chosen David if they knew what was at stake and if it had been their choice!

Now David was certainly no loser for the Scripture says that *"He was ruddy (healthy), with a fine appearance and handsome features"* but compared to his brothers he was certainly the tail-ender.

He was the handsome youngest son of an impressive family of handsome and capable men. He was a young man on his way to the place where his older brothers had already arrived. And yet he was the one that God chose and in that choice Samuel learned what others had learned before him ...

"God's choice often contradicts human reasoning".

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to argue with God when it seems he is calling you for some spiritual service?

"Lord, I'm too young." "Lord, I'm too old."

"Lord, I don't know enough; I've not been a Christian long enough."

"Lord, they won't listen to me - I'm not influential enough."

"Lord, surely there's someone more qualified than me!"

Moses, of all people, took that approach when singled out by the Lord.

Gideon, when chosen by God, explained at length how unqualified he was.

Honestly ...

David **was** too young - he was just a boy, really.

David was too **inexperienced** - he was just a shepherd, actually.

David was too **emotional** - writing and singing songs all the time.

David did not fit the normal "*profile*" but he was God's choice none the less. Now does that mean that God's choice is illogical, irrational or even impulsive?

No indeed ... there is nothing more carefully thought out and orchestrated than the choices God makes concerning His work in this world but His choice often contradicts human reasoning because as **Lesson #2** reveals ...

Lesson #2 ...

GOD'S CHOICE IS CONDITIONED UPON HEART RESPONSE

Here's the rest of that explanation God gave to Samuel when Samuel was about to make **Eliab** his choice ...

*"Man looks at the outward appearance
but the Lord looks at the heart." (vs. 7)*

That's the most important piece of a person's resume as far as the Lord is concerned ... What's in your heart? What kind of response does your heart bring to the wonders of God that surround you?

An old gospel song questioned ...

*"How about your heart? Is it right with God?
That's the thing that counts today!"*

That's the thing that counts **every** day - That's the thing that God regularly checks out!

So what did God see in David's heart? What did he find there that indicated that David could become an effective and powerful leader of His People?

Samuel couldn't tell us because he couldn't see it but David could tell us. Jesus once said that out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.

Listen to these words of David and see what conclusions you draw.

Psalm 19:1 ...

"The heavens declare the glories of God; the skies proclaim the work of His Hands"
(Those words reveal a heart filled with **wonder** and **worship**.)

Psalm 23:1 ... *"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."*

(Those reveal a heart filled with **trust** and **confidence**.)

Psalm 23:3 and Psalm 119:10 ...

*"Who may ascend the hill of the Lord; who may stand in His holy place?
I seek you with my whole heart! Do not let me stray from your commands!"*
(And those reveal a heart filled with **holy desire**.)

Now that's the kind of heart that pleases God! That's the kind of heart that God desires and requires in those he would choose for significant service. That's the kind of heart that is within the grasp of every single child of God.

That's the kind of heart that caused the Apostle Paul to describe David with one of the most endearing terms in all the Scripture. Speaking by inspiration, Paul described David in Acts 13:14 as *"A man after God's own heart"*.

It's almost as though the Lord said when looking upon David ...

"Here is another like me - Here is one who embodies, in his deepest parts, attitudes and passions that are truly Godly."

How about your heart?

Set your heart on God ...

Allow His Spirit to fill you with ***wonder*** and ***worship***!
Allow His Presence to produce in you ***trust*** and ***confidence***!
Focus your will on living a life of ***Holiness*** and ***Purity***!

And then watch the Lord direct your steps into paths of more and more significant service for him! That's what he did for David.

Another most encouraging lesson to be learned from today's passage:
Lesson #3 ...

GOD'S CHOICE IS ALWAYS ACCOMPANIED BY GOD'S POWER

"From that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power." (vs. 13)

Note that the rest of chapter sixteen reports David's early experiences as a public servant of the Lord ... not as King but as servant to the existing King!

No telling how much time passed between the anointing and the invitation to come and serve Saul ... But a need arose (it always does) ... a need David could fill (and he did). It's a story that could stand by itself but today it functions as an object lesson for the very point of our message - God's power always accompanies God's choice!

Read verses 14-23 ...

And so David the "anointed king" became familiar with royal life and routine as he ministered to the "rejected king".

There's so much more for us to learn as we follow the exploits of this "man after God's own heart" but we conclude today with this ***final thot*** ...

<p><i>Final Thot</i> ... When God calls for service the issue is never "AM I ABLE?" but "AM I WILLING?" Ready your heart and listen for his voice this week.</p>

Sonlife

SELF-STUDY

Life of David

...

Lesson #1

In Sunday's message, "**Chosen By God**" in our new "**Life of David**" series, Pastor Mark pointed out that ...

"God's **CHOICE** Often Contradicts **HUMAN** Reasoning".

The Apostle Paul put it this way ... "God chose the **FOOLISH** things of the world to shame the **WISE**; God chose the **WEAK** things of the world to shame the **STRONG**."
(1 Corinthians 2:27)

In what way would you say that David could have been viewed as foolish or weak in the eyes of the world (his family)? In what way might the world consider **you** to be foolish or weak in its eyes?

Pastor Mark also pointed out that "**God's Choice Is Conditioned Upon HEART RESPONSE**". What were the **three characteristics** of David's heart we discovered Sunday from our look at his psalms?

A Heart Filled With **WONDER** and **WORSHIP**

A Heart Filled With **TRUST** and **CONFIDENCE**

A Heart Filled With **HOLY DESIRE**

On a scale of 1-10 rate the present condition of your heart:

Wonder/Worship ____ and Trust/Confidence ____ and Holy Desire ____.

What was the condition of your heart one year ago?

Wonder/Worship ____ Trust/Confidence ____ Holy Desire ____

How about ten years ago?

Wonder/Worship ____ Trust/Confidence ____ Holy Desire ____

What has most affected the condition of your heart over the years?

Point to Ponder ... Do you think the Lord ever chooses any who are "wise" and "strong" in the eyes of the world to serve Him? Know anybody like that?

"DAVID AND GOLIATH"

(1 Samuel 17)

Intro ... This morning I bring you **message #2** in our new series: "**Man After God's Own Heart**".

Last week we saw that it was the condition of David's heart that caused God to choose him for service over his more physically imposing brothers.

We discovered in that message that David possessed a heart filled with **wonder and worship** - you just can't impress God without that!

We saw secondly that David possessed a heart filled with **trust and confidence** - can't serve God without that!

Lastly we saw that David possessed a heart that was filled with **holy desire** - can't even hope to live a life that pleases God without that!

God himself referred to David as "*A man after my own heart*". Never would God say of David ... "*He honors with his lips but his heart is far from me*"!

It's that heart of David's that God would have us emulate ... It's a heart that stands in awe of God's **Greatness** and that depends entirely upon God's **Goodness** and that seeks to emulate God's **Holiness** that God truly prizes.

The **purpose** of these lessons is to stimulate the development of such a heart in each of us!

Today we come to **lesson #2** ... David's encounter with the giant Goliath - one of the most familiar stories in human literature! It's told in 1 Samuel 17.

In this incredible encounter we see the kind of action that flows from a "*God-pleasing, Man-ignoring, Kingdom-honoring*" heart.

Let look at the story together ... 1 Samuel 1-32 (the stage is set)

Now before we get into the blow by blow of the battle and lest we fall prey to the temptation to treat this story the way that the unbelievers all around us do, let me share several interpretive **key concepts** with you.

You see, this story of David and Goliath has been manipulated by man for so long that it's hard to remember what was really going on.

Men, believers and unbelievers alike, have used this story to embolden themselves when faced with some seemingly impossible task. This story has provided inspiration for every underdog that has ever entered a contest. This story has provided the evidence and the stimulation for the famous phrase "*The bigger they are, the harder they fall*".

Let me suggest to you this morning that more was going on in that encounter than the playing out of a seeming mismatch on an ancient battlefield.

Key Concept #1 ...

GOLIATH was nothing more than a very large
MOUTHPIECE for **SATAN** himself!

David's battle with Goliath was first of all a **spiritual** battle - a battle that the army of Saul was already losing.

Look at verse 11 ...

*"On hearing the Philistine's words,
Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified."*

Look at verse 24 ...

"When the Israelites saw the man, they all ran ... in great fear."

Listen to David's assessment in verse 32 ...

"Let no one lose heart because of this Philistine."

Now isn't that the point ... when you get right down to it that's what the battle was really all about - that's what the battles in this life are always all about.

All battles in life - spiritually speaking - are battles to determine whether or not we will lose heart - whether or not we will cease being **amazed** by and **confident** in and **committed** to our God!

And that recognition brings us to ...

Key Concept #2 ...

Our biggest **BATTLE** in life is always against the Devil for he is the one who seeks to **DESTROY** us!

"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him standing firm in the faith ..."

1 Peter 5:8-9

That's always the story behind the story ... no matter what the surface problem might be that we are facing - no matter what name the seemingly impossible foe goes by - the real story is that the Devil would seek to use the circumstance to defeat us ... to bring us to a point of discouragement in our faith.

The devil wins when we lose heart ... when we lose our sense of wonder at God's **Greatness** and our confidence in his **Goodness** and our passion to emulate His **Holiness**. Everything else is just window dressing for the real battle.

So how do we overcome ... how do we defeat the devil ... how do we keep from losing heart (and faith) in the midst of the kinds of challenges life can send our way?

Key Concept #3 ... We defeat the **DEVIL** in our day the same way **DAVID** defeated **GOLIATH** in his day!

Three Incredible Resources Employed By David In His Battle With Goliath:

1. THE RESOURCE OF HIS PAST EXPERIENCE (vs 34-37)

What experience? That seemed to be the very thing that David didn't have!
vs. 28 ... his brother Eliab mocked him ...
vs. 33 Saul sought to counsel him.

David had zero experience fighting giants but he had loads of experience relying on God and finding God's strength to be sufficient.

verses 34-37 ... David shares his warrior's resume with Saul ... a resume that revealed a warrior's heart. In this recitation David also revealed his understanding of the true nature of the battle ...

"This uncircumcised Philistine has defied the armies of the living God."

Goliath was doing nothing more than mouthing Satan's lines"
"I will be like the Most High ... no one can stand against me."

David was confident that God would not allow this offense to stand; his own jealousy for God's Holy Name thrust him forward.

Experience with God ... it's a vital component for withstanding the attacks of the enemy against us.

Don't **underestimate** the weight of your own resume ... Has God saved you? Has God placed a new heart within you? Have you experienced His Holy Spirit working in you? Have there been any difficult moments in the past that God has brought you through? Have you recorded them - Can you review them?

Now not only did David apply the resource of his **personal experience** to this task, he also applied ...

2. THE RESOURCE OF HIS POTENT EQUIPMENT (vs. 40, 45)

vs. 38-39 ... a humorous but absolutely critical moment.

David could not fight Goliath wearing Saul's armor and using Saul's weapons - he was not used to them. Had he approached Goliath outfitted in Saul's gear he would have been destroyed - he would have been a sitting duck.

He would have been using the same types of weapons against Goliath that Goliath was planning to use against him - weapons with which Goliath was much more familiar!

David wisely chose to rely upon the equipment with which **he** was familiar.

vs. 40 ... the **physical** equipment ... his shepherd's staff, his sling and a pouch of five smooth, newly chosen stones.

vs. 45 ... the **spiritual** equipment ... *"I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied."*

That declaration was not made for Goliath's ears only and maybe not even for Goliath's ears primarily ... that was a message sent directly to Satan himself. *"God's people will not stand for God's name to be defiled ... prepare to meet your doom!"*

What an arsenal ... a staff, a sling with five smooth stones all imprinted with the name of the Lord - that was some **potent** stuff!

What equipment do you have at **your disposal** when you must face the challenges that Satan would send your way?

How aware are you of the arsenal identified in ***Ephesians chapter 6***?

The Belt of Truth ... God's Word - God's Promises

The Breastplate of Righteousness ... My Standing with God

The Helmet of Salvation ... The Truths of God's Redemptive Plan

Shoes of the Gospel ... Stabilizers to keep me "on my feet"

Shield of Faith ... The ability to Believe even when I can't "see"

Sword of the Spirit ... Specific Words for specific needs.

These are the weapons with which God would have **us** become familiar.

Now thirdly and finally and certainly based upon resource 1 and 2, David employed ...

3. THE RESOURCE OF HIS POSITIVE EXPECTATION (verses 45-47)

What a passage ... David certainly didn't see himself as any underdog ... As far as David was concerned, Goliath was the one who was outmatched; Goliath was the one who had no chance of victory.

Positive **Expectation** allows Potent **Equipment** and Past **Experience** to come together in a Powerful **Exhibition**.

Goliath fell with a thud after one shot and was killed with his own huge sword.

Now that's the kind of **positive expectation** God desires each of us to possess!

Romans 8:37 ... "*We are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*"

Now that promise doesn't mean that every trying circumstance we face will miraculously improve and that we will emerge smelling like a rose but it does mean that nothing can ever defeat us ... nothing can ever destroy our confidence in and fellowship with God and that's always going to be what really counts!

God has provided for us the means spiritually and emotionally and sometimes physically to triumph over every challenge - every foe - that comes against us. As people of God we are **Spiritual Winners**. Nothing can destroy us when we walk with him.

Final Thot ...

He whose **HEART** is set on God simply cannot be **CONQUERED!**

Sonlife SELF-STUDY

Life of David

...

Lesson #2

Comment on these observations from Sunday's message "David and Goliath"

*"When you get right down to it that's what the battle was really all about - that's what the battles in this life are always all about. All battles in life - spiritually speaking - are battles to determine whether or not we will lose heart - whether or not we will cease being **amazed** by and **confident** in and **committed** to our God!*

*"The devil wins when we lose heart ... when we lose our sense of wonder at God's **Greatness** and our confidence in his **Goodness** and our passion to emulate His **Holiness**. Everything else is just window dressing."*

Positive **Expectation** allows Potent **Equipment** and Past **Experience** to come together in a Powerful **Exhibition**.

In convincing Saul that he should be allowed to be Israel's "champion" and accept Goliath's challenge, David trotted out his personal resume ...
1 Samuel 17:34-37

How would you express your own resume as a "**spiritual warrior**"?

Resume for _____ **- SPIRITUAL WARRIOR!**

Point To Ponder ...

Are you facing anything right now that could cause you to "**LOSE HEART**"?
Do you see it for the spiritual battle that it really is?

"LOSING TOUCH WITH GOD"

(1 Samuel 28:15)

Intro ... This morning we come to the third message in our new series: "**David - Man After God's Own Heart**" and it's a most sobering message.

It's a message that I don't enjoy preaching as much as some preachers might. It's a message of warning - a message of "*what can happen if we don't watch out*". It's the kind of message that causes kids to say "*Oh Mom!*" when their mothers give it".

It's a message built upon a real Biblical set of events and built around today's **Key Concept** ...

Key Concept ...

Losing touch with God is a believer's **ULTIMATE CALAMITY!**

I can hear the chorus starting already ...

*"Oh Pastor, that's never going to happen to me. I'm saved. I'm squared away.
I'm never going to lose touch with God."*

And like a mother warning her teenagers as they head out the door, I say ...

*"Be careful out there because it **can** happen to you.
It **has** happened to others much like you.
And it's the **worst** thing that can **ever** happen to you."*

My beloved fellow believers, it **can** happen ... it all too frequently **has** happened.

Which of us has not heard or maybe even seen some minister of the gospel forsake his calling; which of us has not observed a fellow-believer fall back into a lifestyle of sin; which of us has not watched some once exuberant follower of Christ become luke-warm and complacent.

Each of these is an example of someone who has "**lost touch with God**" ...

Now let me make it very clear ...

I'm not talking about losing one's salvation (for salvation is a gift of God which due to the faithfulness of God can never be lost) but what I am talking about is losing the "**temporal benefits of salvation**" ...

Losing the **joy** ... Losing the **power** ... Losing the **desire** to serve and please the Lord ... Losing the **peace** of mind and heart.

And these losses are all too common ... these losses testify to the fact that "*touch with God*" has been lost and that our enemy has had one more believer for lunch. The Bible is full of examples of those who have experienced just such a loss ...

Samson the strong man ... "*Did not know that the Lord had left him*"

Solomon the wise man ... "*Compromised his faith by marrying and being influenced by women who followed pagan gods.*"

Demas the companion to Paul ... "*Forsook Paul because he loved the world*".

Today, from our study of the **Life of David**, we will focus upon the Bible's most notable and dramatic example ...

"SAUL - The First King of Israel"

Saul was a mighty man ... a man chosen by God ... a man anointed by Samuel the Prophet to be Israel's First King ... a man empowered by the Spirit of God to lead the nation in great military triumphs ... a man who ruled the nation of Israel successfully for 40 years.

Saul knew what fellowship with God was like ... He knew what it was like to hear and heed the words of God ... He knew what it was like to be overwhelmed by the power of the Spirit of God. He knew what it was like to experience the blessings of God upon his life.

But he also knew what it was like to "**Lose Touch with God**" and to feel forsaken by God. Listen to these agonizing words from his mouth near the end of his life ...

*"I am in great distress ... God has turned away from me.
He no longer answers me either by prophets or by dreams."
(1 Samuel 28:15)*

For one who has known the sweetness of fellowship and the blessings that attend it, there can be no more calamitous condition than that ...

"Touch with the source of all of life's goodness lost."

How did it happen? How **does** it happen? Does it **just** happen or are there some warning signs - some red flags - some flashing lights - that precede such a state?

Believe me, there are warning signs galore ... There were in Saul's life and there will have been in the life of any believer who finds him or herself in Saul's condition.

That's our purpose today ... to identify those warning signs and to examine our own lives to see if we ourselves are involved in the process of "*losing touch with God*" ...

From an examination of Saul's life, we can identify ***Three Warning Signs That Touch With God Is Being Lost*** - three signs indicating that he was a man who was slowly but surely losing touch with God.

1. THE SIGN OF INDEPENDENCE Samuel 15:1-23

God through Samuel the prophet had given Saul a command ... "*completely destroy the Amalekites*" ... leave no trace of them on the face of the earth. This was a time of judgment for that group of people - a judgment that had been a long time coming. (vs. 1-3)

But Saul had a **better idea** (vs. 8-9; 15, 20-21) He kept the King alive and he spared the best of the livestock ... He then defended himself and his behavior in front of Samuel (vs. 20-21)

vs. 22-23 A **Key Principle** is announced ... "*To obey is better than sacrifice*"

And that's how it generally starts ... not as open defiance of the Lord but as some sort of subtle or not so subtle manipulation of what the Lord has said.

Saul manipulated the directions of the Lord to suit his own inclinations and to respond to the pressure of the situation. He took ***independent action***.

The truth Samuel shared is that God **despises** independent actions and the independent thinking that generates them! Independent thinking undermines the very heart of our faith which is **willing surrender** to His Lordship over our lives.

Look at verse 23 ... God equates independent thinking with rebellion and he equates rebellion with divination (witchcraft) and even idolatry. Independent thinking shows the ultimate **arrogance** - putting ourselves in God's place and acting as though we are fully qualified to determine how things should be run. God rightly equates that kind of arrogance with the evil of idolatry.

There is no way that God can allow a spirit of independence or rebellion to just slide by for such a spirit shows that the person in question is seriously losing his grip on and commitment to spiritual reality and is in fact, in the process of being bought out by the "other side".

And there are so many temptations today to think and live independently of God's Word ... We mention them frequently ...

God's Word says "*Be not unequally yoked*" ...
We reason "*I'll win him/her to Christ*".

God's Word says "*Flee Sexual Impurity*" but we reason "*We love each other; nobody got hurt; I have needs; God wouldn't want me to live a frustrated life.*"

God's Word says "*Don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together*"
but we reason "*I have a good excuse for missing - God doesn't expect perfect attendance*".

God's Word says "*Bring the full tithe*" but we reason "*I'll bring what I can afford - what I can bring cheerfully - God wouldn't want me to bankrupt myself or give grudgingly*".

God's Word says "*Love One Another*" but we reason "*We have a personality conflict - it's best that we just ignore each other.*"

And on and on it can go ... us substituting our thoughts for God's directives - us feeling that we have a better take on the situation than what **God's Word** actually says.

Independent Thinking ... it's the first warning sign that we are losing touch with God and heading toward some real serious spiritual consequences.

Some of those consequences are included in the **Second Warning Sign**. It's a sign that I would call ...

2. THE SIGN OF INNER TORMENT 1 Samuel 16:14-17

God does not allow his children to lose touch with him peacefully!

Saul experienced a "*tormenting spirit*" ... Today we would call that "*anxiety, depression, being ill at ease, lacking peace of heart and mind ... feelings of guilt even.*"

Such things are so out of step with the fruitful spirit-filled life that they ought to act as "*flashing danger lights*". Problem is we too often seek to deal with the symptoms rather than with the cause ...

We find relief in a prescription. We read a book on positive mental attitude. We go to a counselor who tells us that our anxieties and feelings of inadequacy are unfounded. We rationalize that all Christians have their difficult moments.

That's what Saul did ... He chose to deal with the symptoms ... He sought out a musician who could play soothing music to calm his mind. (vs. 16-17)

God sent him David ... the very one who might be used to renew in Saul a fresh commitment to the things of God ... David who would sing songs of praise and worship - David whose ministry would drive the troubling spirit away for a time.

But Saul never put two and two together ... He never humbled himself and confessed his sin and sought God's forgiveness and a restoration to fellowship.

Instead Saul's torment grew ...

1 Samuel 18: 8-9 ... anger and jealousy and suspicion

1 Samuel 18:12, 15 ... fear - paranoia

Anger - jealousy - suspicion ...all coalescing into a deep, deep hatred.

Saul's soul was in torment but he refused to heed the signs and turn back to the Lord ... God allowed this to go on for years ... God is incredibly **patient**. Saul's loss of touch with God and the fact that he was spiraling downward toward a bitter end was indicated by the **third and final** sign.

The one I'm calling this morning ...

3. THE SIGN OF PERVERTED BEHAVIOR

Saul's inner torment, having gained control of him, led him into some incredible actions.

1 Samuel 19:9-11 ... Saul tries to **KILL DAVID**

A time came when the music no longer soothed ... the torment had gotten too intense ... the time for healing had pretty well passed by ... the thoughts of David's success and ultimate destination so enrage Saul that he picks up his spear and tries to pin David to the wall.

1 Samuel 20:30-31... Saul tries to **KILL JONATHAN**

Saul's murderous rage toward David spills over to his own son ... How dare Jonathan assist David - Saul would rather see him dead than allied with David.

1 Samuel 22:18-19 ... Saul destroys 85 **PRIESTS** of the **LORD**

It doesn't get any worse than this ... Saul has 85 priests killed because they provided David with some assistance.

At this point if Saul could have attacked God himself he probably would have. It's not too hard to put these words in his mouth ...

"Me and my kingdom are all that matters.

Everything and everyone who stands in my way better watch out!"

By this time Saul was pretty well obsessed and possessed by his own twisted notion of what was right and best and anyone looking on could easily see that he had completely lost touch with the God he once followed.

But even then I believe he could have come back ...

I believe that God allows His Own to even fall into this kind of perverted behavior in the hope that the very bizarre nature of our lives might "*snap us back to reality*" and send us to our knees in repentance.

Today all around us there are professing Christians involved in some pretty perverted behaviors ...

Dishonesty in Business ... Personal Vendettas ... Involvement in drugs or alcohol ... Marital Unfaithfulness ... Involvement with Pornography ...
Divorce for pure convenience sake and on and on.

God would desire that even these most perverted types of behaviors would ***shout out*** these words to any of his own who might be engaged in them ...

"WAKE UP! "

"Hear and heed the convicting voice of the Spirit.

Come back to the place of fellowship and blessing.

Don't force God to bring the full weight of His disciplining judgment upon you for that judgment could mean the loss of your livelihood or the loss of your family or the loss of your church fellowship or maybe even the loss of your life as it did for Saul.

*Be assured that it will certainly mean the loss of all
temporal spiritual blessings"*

Without question ... Losing Touch with God is a believer's ultimate calamity. Don't let it happen to you. Stay "***in touch***" with God through prayer and study and fellowship and worship!

Final Thot ...

You can't ***LOSE TOUCH*** if you are consciously ***HOLDING ON!***

Sonlife **SELF-STUDY**

Life of David

...

Lesson #3

How did/do you respond to Sunday's **Key Concept** ...

*"Losing Touch with God is a believer's **ULTIMATE CALAMITY**".*

In Sunday's message Pastor Mark identified **three warning signs** present in the life of one who is *"Losing Touch With God"* ...

The Warning Sign of **INDEPENDENCE**

The Warning Sign of **INNER TORMENT** and

The Warning Sign of **PERVERTED BEHAVIOR**

Do you think that this process Saul went through is typical for a Christian who is falling out of fellowship and *"losing touch with God"*? Has it ever happened to you?

If it ever did happen to you, what brought you back? Did the **inner torment** or some form of **bizarre behavior** finally cause you to say *"What is going on ... Why am I feeling or acting this way"*? Share with the group ...

In our lesson this week (in contrast to Sunday's message), let's focus upon **"Three Confirming Signs"** present in the life of one who is living **"In Touch"** with God ...

1. Instead of **Independence** there will be **EAGER OBEDIENCE** (Hebrews 10:9)
2. Instead of **Inner Torment** there will be **CONTENTMENT** (Philippians 4:12b)
3. Instead of **Perverted Behavior** there will be **PRAISEWORTHY DEEDS**.
(Matthew 5:16)

Point To Ponder ...

You can't **LOSE TOUCH** if you are consciously **HOLDING ON!**

"THE BEAUTY OF FRIENDSHIP"

(1 Samuel 18-23)

Intro ... Today, in this brief meditation in preparation for communion, I would turn your attention immediately to our **Key Concept** ...

Key Concept ... A genuine **FRIENDSHIP** is one of
LIFE'S greatest **BLESSINGS!**

Oh, how true that is...the writer of Proverbs made this observation centuries ago:

*"A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend
who sticks closer than a brother." (Proverbs 18:24)*

Oh, indeed there is and blessed is the person who has even **one** such friend ...

Remember the old line "*Family is where they **have to** take you in*"?

Well, "*Friendship is where someone has **chosen** to take you in - is **motivated**
to take you in - is **delighted** to take you in!*"

This morning, under the title, "**The Beauty of Friendship**", I want us to consider just what goes into creating and maintaining such a "*life-blessing friendship*".

Our inspiration will come from one of history's most well-known friendships - that between Jonathan and David.

On the surface it was not a very likely friendship ... **Jonathan** was a King's Son - raised for a life of privilege; **David** was a Shepherd's Son - raised for a life in the pasture!

What **was** the secret of their great friendship? What **is** the secret for developing and maintaining genuine friendships - life-blessing friendships - today?

From the story of David and Jonathan we can discover **two vitally important characteristics of genuine friendship ...**

1. GENUINE FRIENDSHIP ARISES FROM SOME SORT OF HEARTFELT CONNECTION.

*"Jonathan became one in **SPIRIT** with David and **LOVED** him as he loved himself." 1 Samuel 18:1*

Genuine friendship begins when the initiating friend sees something in the other that stirs the heart - that suggests, *"Here is another like myself - one with whom my heart, my soul even, can bond."*

What did Jonathan see as he looked upon David ...

He saw a true warrior - He saw a courageous man - He saw a victorious man - He saw a fearless defender of the faith - He saw someone who was zealous for the Name and the Glory of God.

In a word, he saw ***someone like himself*** - Someone like the man that Jonathan would most desire to be!

Turn back to 1 Samuel chapter 14 ... incredible story ...

vs. 1 ... "Come, let us go over to the Philistine outpost..."

*vs. 6 ... "Perhaps the Lord will act on our behalf.
Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few."*

vs.10 ... "If they say, 'Come up to us' we will climb up, because that will be the sign that the Lord has given them into our hands."

vs. 12 ... "The men of the outpost shouted - 'Come up to us and we will teach you a lesson'. So Jonathan said to his armor-bearer, "Climb up after me; the Lord has given them into the hand of Israel."

vs. 13-14 ... "Jonathan climbed up, using his hands and feet, with his armor-bearer right behind him. The Philistines fell before him (and) in that first attack Jonathan and his armor bearer killed some twenty men."

vs. 15 ... "Then panic struck the whole army ... it was a panic sent by God."

Jonathan knew what it was like to be mightily used by God ... Jonathan knew what it took to trust in the Lord with all his heart against overwhelming odds.

When Jonathan looked upon David, he saw another like himself and his heart and soul reached out and formed an unbreakable bond.

Genuine Friendship is built upon a heart-felt connection!

That's how genuine friendships begin. There's a link - a bond - a sense of identity that says *"Here is another like myself - one whose dreams and aspirations and actions mirror my own"*.

That kind of heart-felt bond lies at the center of many great Christian ministries; that kind of heart-felt bond forms the core of all great marriages; that heart-felt bond has stimulate countless numbers of genuine friendships - life-long friendships!

Now consider this other characteristic of genuine friendship ...

2. GENUINE FRIENDSHIP EXPRESSES ITSELF IN SOME SORT OF SELFLESS CONTRIBUTION.

Paulie had it right in the film "Rocky" when he said ...

"Friends do for each other".

Friends look each other as extensions of themselves - they respond to the needs of the other just as if they were responding to their own.

Jonathan understood that and expressed it beautifully ...

* Jonathan gave David his **POSSESSIONS** (1 Samuel 18:4)

A friend thinks how can I have so much and my friend have so little. Standing there with Goliath's massive head in his hand, David was still outfitted like a shepherd boy. Jonathan gave him his robe and his tunic, his sword, his bow and his belt.

* Jonathan gave David his **LOYAL SUPPORT** (1 Sam. 19:4-6)

A friend stands in defense of his friend even in the face of opposition. Jonathan took a great risk to defend David's reputation and honor before his father. This is an example of a friend sticking closer than a brother. David's own brothers were not so loyal or supportive. Jonathan's defense won Saul's heart for the moment.

* Jonathan gave David his **SPIRITUAL COUNSEL** (1 Sam 23:15-18)

What a phrase ... *"Helped him find strength in God"*. There is no greater service a friend can ever render than that. Jonathan counseled David the way that God himself had counseled Joshua *"Be strong and of good courage"*

"Do not be afraid", Jonathan said. *"You are God's chosen one - you will be king and I will be second to you."* ...

How incredible that would have been! What a testimony to the triumph of the spirit over the flesh - but it was not to be for God had another path for him to walk.

"They made a covenant before the Lord" ...

They prayed together. They found strength in their common walk with God - Jonathan *"helped David find (renewed) strength in God"*

You know the commercial ...

"Friends don't let friends drink and drive"?

Well, friends like Jonathan don't let friends weaken in their faith - friends find ways to *"strengthen one another in the Lord"*.

What a beautiful story ... God allowed it to be preserved for a reason ... to stimulate our own living and to picture for us our ultimate friend Jesus himself!

In this case **Jonathan** is the picture of Christ and **David** is the picture of us.

Christ is the one who has fought the battle first and when he looks upon us, fresh from our own victories or even smarting from our defeats, his heart reaches out and says,

"Here are others like myself - here are those who aspire to the same things I do. Here are those whose desire is to serve and please the Father in heaven and I will do all that is in my power - I will put all my possessions at their disposal - so that they might be most successful, for they are my friends!"

Genuine Friendship ... it's one of Life's Greatest Blessings and it is most supremely found in Jesus himself!

Final Thot ...

In the **FACE** of a true **FRIEND** is seen the **IMAGE** of **CHRIST** himself - our **ULTIMATE** friend!

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Life of David

...

Lesson #4

Sunday's message, "*The Beauty of Friendship*" focused on the friendship between **JONATHAN** and **DAVID**.

Pastor Mark pointed out that their friendship was a "picture" of the friendship that **can exist** between Jesus and those who are his. Pastor Mark pointed out that Jonathan was in the role of Jesus and that David was in the role of the believer.

Key Question ... "*Is friendship with Jesus something that comes automatically with **SALVATION** or is it **CONDITIONED** upon something?*" **In other words** "*Are all born-again people "friends" with Jesus?*" What do you think? Why do you think so?

What did Pastor Mark suggest that Jonathan's friendship with David was based upon? **A HEART - FELT CONNECTION!**

What were the **similarities** between Jonathan and David? (1 Sam. 14 and 17)

They both were successful **WARRIORS**.

They both were impressed with God's **MIGHTY POWER**.

They both **TRUSTED** completely in God and put their **LIVES** in his hands.

They both initiated actions that led to larger **VICTORIES**.

Jonathan was drawn toward David because he saw in David the godly qualities that characterized his own life. How about with Jesus?

"You are my **FRIENDS** if you **DO** what I **COMMAND**." (John 15:14)

Is that not just another way of saying ...

"You are my friends when you show that you **VALUE** the same things that I value - when you show that you are the same sort of **PERSON** as I am - when your greatest aspirations are the same as mine and when those aspirations are expressed in **ACTIONS** like mine?"

Point To Ponder ...

God's **SAVING** love is "agape"; Christ's **FRIENDSHIP** love is "phileo".

"DAY OF DESTINY"

(1 Samuel 20)

Intro ... Have you ever had a "**Day of Destiny**" ... a day in which you were faced with making a decision that would determine all the rest of your life?

As today's message in our new series: "**David - Man After God's Own Heart**" begins, we find David experiencing just such a day.

It's recorded in 1 Samuel chapter 20.

Just listen as I share the story with you ... it will be a while before you have to fill in any blanks.

As this day of destiny dawns we find David hunkered down in the middle of a field on the south side of a big rock known as Ezel.

On the north side of the field, there is a young man about David's age preparing for what looks like target practice.

In reality, the young man with the arrows is about to send an air mail message to David ...

If he shoots his arrows in a certain way, it will mean that all is well and that Saul is not actively seeking to kill David and that David can come back to the house of Saul.

However, if he shoots those arrows in another way, it will mean that all is not well and that Saul is definitely seeking David's life and that David has a major decision to make.

David's whole life is hanging in the balance ...
It is truly, for him, a **day of destiny**.

What do you imagine must be filling his mind as he waits in the shadow of that great rock?

No doubt, he must be thinking about his sudden and unexpected **rise to fame!**

Just a few years ago he had been an obscure shepherd boy, the least of the 8 sons of Jesse ... tending sheep, being tended by the Lord ... those were good years - peaceful years ... private years ... years of growing faith.

Then Samuel the prophet of God came to town ... the old prophet, in a special ceremony, chose him and anointed him with oil - a symbol of God's power for special service.

David was willing though completely uninformed concerning what that service might be.

Then men from King Saul came ... a **skilled musician** was needed to serve the King.

Perhaps this was the service for which he had been anointed ... what could be more significant than bringing peace to the King who had himself been chosen of the Lord? Without raising a question, David went and gave himself to this music ministry.

Then came the encounter with **Goliath** ... God's people and God's Name were being challenged - blasphemed even. David responded ...

He became an overnight sensation! He became a champion of Saul and a captain of war. He enjoyed great success in battle leading Saul's troops against the enemy.

He became the people's hero - they composed songs about him!

He was on top of the world ... a long fast climb for a simple shepherd boy!

But as dramatic as his **Rise to Fame** so was his **Fall from Favor!**

King Saul became possessed by jealousy ... King Saul was afraid that David would supplant his own son Jonathan as the next King of Israel - Saul's name and legacy would die out.

King Saul sought to kill David ... David fled to the home of the prophet Samuel. King Saul pursued David to Samuel's house but God miraculously protected him.

David then, desperate and perplexed, ran back to the palace to confer with Jonathan his friend and ally ... And that's how 1 Samuel chapter twenty begins.

Let's look at the account together. **Read verses 1-23** ...

The plan was devised ... the time had passed and now David huddles behind the stone Ezel chilled by the dampness of the morning on what indeed will turn out to be "***His Day of Destiny***" - a day he will make a ***decision*** that will forever change the course of his life - a ***decision*** that will place him even more surely on the path of God's favor and blessing - a ***decision*** that will show him even more clearly to be a "*man after God's own heart*"!

And what decision would that be?

It would be the same decision that Moses made some centuries earlier recorded in the Book of Hebrews chapter 11 verses 24-25 ...

"Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

It would be the same decision that Joshua had made and laid before the nation of Israel recorded in Joshua 24:15 ...

*"Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve ...
But as for me and my house we will serve the Lord!"*

That was the decision that David had to make ... that's why **this day** was a "**Day of Destiny**" ...

**"Would he choose to serve the Lord
regardless of the cost?"**

The arrows of Jonathan would have little to do with the ultimate outcome for even if those arrows communicated the message that Saul was indeed seeking to kill him ... **David would still have his options!**

Option #1 ... He could try to **appease** Saul ... He could promise to support Jonathan's claim to the throne as Saul's rightful heir. He could resign from service and return to his former life ... In choosing **option #1** he would, of course, be **forsaking his unique calling**.

Option #2 ... He could **oppose** Saul ... He could lead an insurrection and assume the throne by force - chances were good that a majority of the army and the citizenry would support such an action. After all probably everyone was aware of Saul's increasingly erratic behavior.

However, in choosing **option #2** he would be **violating his strongly held conviction** that he should not be personally involved in harming God's properly anointed leader.

Or he could exercise **Option #3** ... He could **flee from** Saul ... He could head into a life of exile and trust that God would somehow sustain him and work out His Plan in His own way in His own time.

This was no easy decision that faced David as he awaited Jonathan's arrival on that cold, damp morning ... but I believe that his decision was made long before Jonathan took his first arrow from his quiver.

The Scripture clearly declares what it was ...

1 Samuel 21:10 ... "**That day David fled from Saul ...**"

It was a decision that brought David great hardship - It was a decision that led him through some times of real discouragement but it was a decision that eventually brought David to the place of God's greatest blessing!

So what can we learn from the account of this life-changing "*Day of Destiny*" in the life of David?

What *observations* and *extrapolations* can we draw?

Well, *here are three* I would suggest to you ...

#1. The Decision To Serve The Lord Regardless Of The Cost Comes To EVERY BELIEVER Sooner Or Later.

For some believers it's *sooner* - for this decision (to serve the Lord regardless of the cost) is wrapped up in their initial decision to accept Christ as their Savior and to identify themselves with him. For them just becoming a Christian brings great cost.

For other believers it's *later* - for this decision (to serve the Lord regardless of the cost) doesn't come until they have made some significant encounters with the world around them and have begun to come to grips with the flesh within them.

But, whether sooner or later, it will come to all who become followers of Jesus.

There comes a day - their day of destiny - when the choice is put clearly before them ...

The choice to "*serve God regardless of the cost*" or to "*compromise their commitment and their calling in some way*" so as to avoid paying that price.

Perhaps for some in this room ... today is such a day ... there's a choice before you to live firmly and consistently for Christ or to accommodate yourself to whatever it would take to keep the other side *"off your back"*.

Naturally you would want to see yourself as a true and courageous follower of Christ but you also fear the unknown ... you don't like the idea of just *"walking off into an uncharted wilderness - into an unscripted future"*.

And yet that's pretty much what the decision entails because ...

#2. The Decision To Serve The Lord Regardless Of The Cost Is Always A FAITH Decision.

By Faith ... Moses forsook the pleasures and the privileges of being known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

By Faith ... Abraham heeded the call of God to leave his father's home and all he held dear to go to a land that he knew nothing about - a land that God would reveal to him after he got there.

By Faith ... David headed into exile with not much more than the clothes on his back.

Deciding to follow the Lord regardless of the cost will never be a matter of just gathering all the facts together - it will never be a result of simply weighing the pros and the cons of any particular course of action - it will never be the result of us knowing ahead of time where the Lord will lead and how it will all come out.

Deciding to follow the Lord regardless of the cost will always be a matter of us committing our lives completely to Jesus **by faith** and **trusting him** to guide us and protect us and even sustain us.

And in that commitment and in the decisions that reveal it, we show ourselves to be people after God's own heart, even as David was - for ***faith*** more than anything else is what pleases God.

And now a ***third and final observation*** that is so obvious that it hardly even needs to be mentioned except there are times we would try to either ignore it or deny it ...

#3. The Decision To Serve The Lord Regardless Of The Cost Is A DECISION That MUST Be MADE.

Days of Destiny come into our lives for a reason ...

They can be tests from God - they can be challenges from the Enemy - they can simply be the result of the collision of events in a fallen, sin-twisted world. But they can never be denied, ignored or even debated for long. By their very nature they demand decision.

The rock Ezel - our church, our home, our cell group - can provide a temporary shelter ... a resting place ***while*** we decide ***but decide we must*** ... to move on into a life of God's further leading and blessing or to retreat into a life of human striving and conniving.

If you are facing such a choice this morning ... make the decision David made ... Choose to follow and serve the Lord regardless of the cost - you will never regret it!

Final Thot ...

Ultimately our ***DECISIONS DETERMINE*** our ***DESTINY!***

Sonlife **SELF-STUDY**

Life of David

...

Lesson #5

Sunday's message in our series: "*David - Man After God's Own Heart*" was entitled: "**DAY of DESTINY**".

Pastor Mark suggested that there came a day when David faced a decision that would affect all the rest of his life. What day was that? What was going on? (1 Samuel 19)

How did David assess the situation? (1 Samuel 20:3)

*"There is only a **STEP** between me and **DEATH**."*

Have you ever felt like you were just "one step ahead" of some life-threatening, life-altering situation? Were you a believer at the time? What did you do? What did Pastor Mark say that David did?

He said David made the decision to ...

*"**SERVE** the **LORD** regardless of the **COST** and head into **EXILE** with nothing more than the **CLOTHES** on his back."*

Think of possible **applications** of that statement and decision ...

Only a step between me and **FINANCIAL** death -
I will practice responsible biblical **STEWARDSHIP**
even if it means great adjustments.

Only a step between me and **PROFESSIONAL** death - I will
work as "**UNTO** the **LORD**" as long as the opportunity exists.

Only a step between me and **RELATIONAL** death - I will
exercise both sacrificial **LOVE** and unconditioned
FORGIVENESS and hope for healing.

Point To Ponder ...

How good is it to know that when all is said and done, our real life is actually **HIDDEN** with **CHRIST** in **GOD**? (Col. 3:3)

"PERSECUTED BUT NOT FORSAKEN"

(1 Samuel 19; Psalm 59)

Intro ... As our study of the life of David concluded last week, we saw David, God's choice for King, heading into exile - running for his life, pursued by King Saul himself.

David was learning at a very young age the unpleasant reality of today's
Key Concept #1 ...

Key Concept #1 ...

Every true **BELIEVER** will eventually experience times of
PERSECUTION and **TRIAL**.

Jesus himself said it ... John 16:33 ...

"In this world you will have trouble".

Jesus predicted it but it can still be a bit unnerving when it happens!

Now Jesus wasn't talking about times in our lives when we've wandered away and God uses circumstances to wake us up and bring us back. That's called **discipline** and it can be expected when we stray.

What Jesus was talking about was the kind of trouble - the kind of opposition and even persecution - that comes to a believer who is living a faithful and fruitful life - trouble not sent by God to discipline but trouble created by the unbelieving world around us and perhaps by the enemy of our souls himself.

It can come in the form of ridicule or opposition ... it can come in the form of illness ... it can come in the form of financial reversal ... it can come in some form that we might never even imagine. In fact it might be the very thing that we would never suspect that happens.

That's what happened to David ... he was anointed by God for great service ... he had given himself to every service opportunity that had arisen.

He had used his **musical** skills to soothe King Saul's troubled mind; he had used his **battle** skills to slay the Giant Goliath; he had used his **leadership** skills to lead the army of Saul to several great victories; he had used his **relational** skills to form a tremendous bond with King Saul's son, Jonathan; he had used his **writing** skills to compose songs of praise and adoration to God.

All in all he was living in such a way as to merit the title: "*man after God's own heart*".

It was perhaps the purest and noblest time of David's life.

And yet in the midst of all of that ... **trouble came**.

King Saul laid out a plan to take David's life - he sent men at night to lay in wait around David's house and to kill him the next morning when he came out for the day.

David's wife - Michal, Saul's daughter - became aware of the plan and helped David escape. His escape led to the sequence of events that we looked at last week. David was running for his life and facing life as a fugitive.

David was experiencing at a young age the truth of our **Key Concept #1** ...

Every true **BELIEVER** will eventually experience times of **PERSECUTION** and **TRIAL**.

However, in addition to that, David was also learning while he was still in his twenties, the reality of **Key Concept #2** ...

Key Concept #2 ...

Our **HEART** response to times of persecution and trial is **CRUCIAL** to our long-term spiritual health.

I can say David learned that truth because David kept a journal of his experiences and I've read it ... you have too ... His journal is called *"The Psalms of David"*.

Psalm 59 was written the very night that he fled from Saul's hit men. ... **vs. 1-4** ... David pours out his heart to God.

"Deliver me ...protect me ... save me" ... "I have done nothing wrong ... they conspire against me for no offense or sin of mine."

Can't you just imagine the flood of **emotions** that must have been rushing through David's mind and heart as he sat down to pen this psalm?

No doubt felt **betrayed** by Saul ... *"After all I've done for you"*

No doubt felt some **anger** ... *"How dare you do this to me?"*

No doubt felt considerable **fear** ... *"I'm doomed"*

Just a few days later, he would say to Jonathan ... 1 Samuel 20:3 ...

*"Surely as the Lord lives and as you live,
there is only a step between me and death."*

At times like that it's easy to begin to question God ... to wonder if God even hears us or is taking note of us.

vs. 4 ... *"Arise to help me - look on my plight."*
vs. 5 ... *"O Lord ... rouse yourself"*

Is God asleep on the throne ... does he not see what is happening to me?

How easily doubt can rush into our hearts! How easy it is to succumb to anxiety and even depression if not complete despair.

Our entire **spiritual equilibrium** can be thrown off if we allow ourselves to get fixated on the trouble at hand.

It's a critical time in a believer's life and it was a critical time for David. He could have gone into hiding and never been heard from again.

However, **something** happened to David ... Something lifted his spirits and restored faith to his heart ... even as he was recording this journal entry, a transformation took place.

Look at verses 16-17 ...

*"But (nevertheless - in spite of what things look like) ...
I will sing of your strength in the morning ... O my strength,
I will sing praise to you."*

Something happened indeed ... I believe that through the very process of writing out the thoughts of his heart, David discovered an **incredible truth** - a truth that transformed his perspective on the whole situation ...

David came to the realization (as our title states this morning) that ...
"Though he was persecuted, he was not forsaken".

God had not left him ... God had not forgotten him ... God had not given him up to the whims of his enemy ... God was still God even though David's circumstances had changed dramatically.

And scattered throughout this **59th Psalm** is crucial evidence that indicate David's mastery of **Today's Key Concept #3** ...

Key Concept #3 ...

Emotional and spiritual **EQUILIBRIUM** is re-gained by
re-focusing ourselves on the **PERSON** of **GOD**.

In times of trouble and persecution, in times of opposition and great difficulty, in times even of betrayal and heartache ... times when we will be tempted to doubt God and to question his handling of our lives, it's imperative that we remind ourselves what kind of God we serve.

Re-focusing ourselves on the *Person of God* puts our current circumstances in a much more manageable perspective.

So what *aspects of God's nature* did David find transformational as he sat in the wilderness awaiting the outcome of Saul's vendetta against him?

I find *four incredible affirmational and transformational truths* tucked away in this psalm that flowed from David's heart that night.

Let's consider them together ...

1. GOD IS PERSONAL - HE CONNECTS. (vs. 9-10;17)

"O **my** strength, I watch for you; you, O God, are **my** fortress,
my loving God ... O **my** strength, I sing praise to you;
you, O God, are **my** fortress, **my** loving God"

In times of trouble it's so easy to make the shift from "**My God**" to simply "**God**" ... we believe that he exists but He doesn't seem to be so much "**my God**" anymore. David reminded himself that he and his God were still wonderfully **connected**!

Centuries later, Jesus would say to his disciples ...

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me."
(John 10:14)

Speaking as one of those sheep, the Apostle Peter would write ...

"Cast all your care upon him for he cares for you."
(1 Peter 5:7)

Remembering that it's a personal relationship we have with our God is a powerful first step in maintaining our spiritual equilibrium during times of trial.

2. GOD IS POWERFUL - HE IS CAPABLE. (vs. 5, 16)

vs. 5 ... *"O Lord God Almighty ..."*

vs. 16 ... *"I will sing of your strength ..."*

When you're in a weak position, it good to remember that you have a powerful friend! David might have been one against a thousand but one plus God is always enough!

3. GOD IS PURPOSEFUL - HE COVENANTS. (vs. 5)

vs. 5 ... *"O Lord God Almighty, the **God of Israel** ..."*

David could not use that title "*God of Israel*" without thinking of his incredible national heritage ... couldn't use it without thinking of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jacob name had been changed to "*Israel*".

God had promised each of them in turn that he would bring through their family a great nation through whom all nations would be blessed.

David knew the stories of Joseph and Moses and Joshua and Samuel ...

He knew that he was heir to the promises and to the Covenant.

David knew that God's awesome power is released in according to his purposes.

It still is ... Paul referred to us a "*Spiritual Israel*."

Peter said in 1 Peter 2:9 ...

*"you are a "chosen people - a royal priest-hood,
a people belonging to God that you might declare his praises."*

Paul testified in Philippians 1:6 ...

*"He who has begun a good work in you will
carry it on until completion".*

Remembering that God has a ***purpose*** and that he is working it out in our lives is a great stabilizer in times of trouble.

4. GOD IS PROTECTOR - HE COVERS. (vs.16-17)

"you are my fortress ... my refuge in times of trouble"

Here David is recognizing that "until the storm blows over" God himself will be his hiding place - his sanctuary - his security.

David would say to us ...

*"In times of trouble, rather than **questioning** God,
rather than running **from** God, run **to** God. Let him **protect** you!"*

The ***old hymn*** still says it well ...

*"Under His wings, I am safely abiding; though the night deepens
and tempests are wild; still I can trust him, I know He will keep
me; He has redeemed me and I am His child!"*

In times of unexpected and undeserved trouble, maintain your spiritual equilibrium by reminding yourself that God is

Personal, Powerful, Purposeful, and Protector.

He ***connects***; He is ***capable***; He ***covenants*** and He ***covers***!

Final Thot ...

In times of persecution and trial, ***GOD*** moves even ***CLOSER*** ...
SENSE His Presence and ***REJOICE!***

Sonlife **SELF-STUDY**

Life of David

...

Lesson #6

In Sunday's message Pastor Mark shared **Three Key Concepts**::

1. Every true **believer** will eventually experience times of **persecution** and **trial**.
2. Our **heart** response to times of persecution and trial is **crucial** to our long-term **spiritual health**.
3. Emotional and spiritual **equilibrium** is re-gained by refocusing ourselves on the **Person of God**.

Choose one of these three concepts and comment on it ...

From Psalm 59 Pastor Mark pulled four **transformational truths** about God:

1. God is **PERSONAL** ... He connects!
2. God is **POWERFUL** ... He is capable!
3. God is **PURPOSEFUL** ... He covenants!
4. God is **PROTECTOR** ... He covers!

Which of these is particularly comforting /encouraging to you today?

What do you think of this comment of David's in verse 9 ...

"I **WATCH** for you".

What do those few words tell you about David's outlook? What do those words suggest is our responsibility during such times of trial and persecution/opposition? How easy/hard is that to do?

Relate this experience of David's with Jesus' prayer in John 17:15,17.

"My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you **PROTECT** them from the evil one ... Sanctify (secure and preserve) them by your **TRUTH**."

Point To Ponder ... Someone once said "Every **BATTLE** is ultimately a **TRUTH** Battle" - what do you think?

"GOD'S BASIC OPERATING STRATEGY"

(1 Samuel 22)

Intro ...

Right at the beginning of the message today I would draw your attention to

Today's Key Concept #1 ...

*"God delights in making **SOMETHING** out of **NOTHING**."*

It was true in the creation of the **physical** universe - theologians call it creation "*ex nihilo*" - something out of nothing. Before God spoke there was nothing and after God spoke there was something - something grand and glorious; something that dramatically displayed his wisdom and power - his plan and his purpose.

God delights in taking nothing and making something glorious out of it!

It's even more true in the creation of the **spiritual** universe - the wondrous family of God that is being formed where once there was nothing but fallen, rebellious, sinful man.

Jesus put it this way ...

*"Come unto me all you who weary and burdened, and
I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)*

The **Apostle Paul** reviewed the formation of the church in Corinth with this reminder:

*"Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise
by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth."
(1 Corinthians 1:26)*

In other words not many of you possessed **credentials of greatness** when you came to Christ and were born by faith into the Family of God.

It would be interesting to survey our congregation this morning and see how many of us were at the height of our powers or at the top of our game when we came to Christ ...

Chances are that most of us were not ... Chances are good that most of us came to Christ at a time in our lives when we had seemingly very little to offer and were not thinking of ourselves as any great prize for the kingdom.

Some of us were mere children with little experience or expertise to offer the King; some of us were teenagers in the midst of our young life's most confusing and traumatic moments; and others of us came to Christ in the throes of full blown adult anxiety.

We came not bringing Christ a **deal** but seeking from Christ a **solution** - we came not arrogantly but humbly ... we came not proudly flaunting our resume but honestly admitting our need.

And from the moment we came our life began to be transformed ...
God gave us a new birth into his family and He sent His Spirit into our heart.

Out of nothing of spiritual consequence, God began and has continued to make something of great consequence for His Glory!

And that - above everything else - is what God loves to do!

That's what I want you to see God was doing in the life of David ... He was building a mighty force around David - a group of men who would strengthen David's hand and who would become his valiant defenders and partners in the great task God had chosen for him.

In 1 Samuel chapter 22 we see this process beginning ... focus in on verse two ...

*"All those who were in **distress** or in **debt** or **discontented** gathered around him and he became their leader. About four hundred men were with him."*

Did you pick out the **three key qualities** that characterized these men?

These are the same three qualities that characterize many who find their way to Christ. These three may characterize some of you in this room this morning.

1. Some Were Men Who Were *DISTRESSED* - "Beaten Up *BY* Life."

These were men whose lives had brought them to the point of discouragement and maybe even despair. Who knows what kind of reversals their fortunes had suffered. They had reached bottom - They probably felt that they had exhausted all their options when this hope-generating thought entered their mind ...

"Go hook up with David - He'll take you in."

And ***they*** did ... and ***he*** did!

2. Some Were Men Who Were In *DEBT* - "Over-Extended *IN* Life."

These men had gotten in way over their heads ... they owed more than they could pay. Maybe they had borrowed more money than they could ever return - maybe they had made more promises than they could ever keep. Maybe they had taken on more responsibilities than they could ever maintain ...

Whatever they had done, they had come to the end of their own resources and were staring at an empty cupboard when the liberating thought struck them ...

"Go hook up with David - He'll take you in."

And ***they*** did ... and ***he*** did!

3. Some Were Men Who Were *DISCONTENTED* ... "Unimpressed *WITH* Life."

These were the men that found flaws in everything ... they were not impressed with anything ... they were cynical and proud of it. There was no joy or peace in their hearts but they at least had the satisfaction of knowing that no one had pulled the wool over their eyes ... they hadn't fallen for any politician's phony promises or any slick advertiser's gimmicks.

They were the realists of the Kingdom and therefore ***discontented*** with good reason - life was a crock and they knew it!

But somehow - this David fellow seemed to be cut from a different cloth; his **motives** seemed to be pure; his **behavior** exemplary and his **passion** genuine.

And these **discontented** men - these cynical, "I've seen it all" kind of men found stirring in their hearts a desire to **be** impressed - to find a cause worth believing in and connecting themselves to - and that's when what would have normally been an unbelievable, unacceptable thought took control of their minds ...

"Go hook up with David - He'll take you in."

And **they** did ... and **he** did!

What a collection! They were the **nothings** - the have-nothings and the do-nothings of the nation of Israel ...

No one would have recognized or recommended them as potential core members of David's new regime. But they were the ones that God sent because God knew they were the ones He could use.

And use them he did ... In the weeks to come we will watch David and his men as they prepare themselves to carry out the task for which they had been chosen.

At the end of David's life a number of these men were included within the group that was known as "**David's Mighty Men**" ...

You see ... "God delights in making something out of nothing!"

God still does ... The world is still full of men and women who are distressed and over their heads in various kinds of debt and discontented with life ... there may be some like that in this room this morning.

Well, here's **Word #1** today ...

**"God made something out of *them*
and God can make something out of *you*".**

God can and will make something out of anyone who at the point of desperation embraces the thought ...

"Go hook up with him - He'll take you in".

If *you* do ... *He* will!

But here's Word #2 ... just be sure that you come on His terms ...

*"Come admitting that you have nothing to offer him but a needy heart;
come realizing that the condition in which you come is the
condition in which you must remain."*

Let me repeat the second part of that word ...

*"come realizing that the condition in which you **come** is the
condition in which you must **remain**."*

You see God never intends for us to stop being feeling needy ... He never intends us to get to a point where we no longer are dependent upon Him ... He intends that we should live every day as though our every breath is first breathed out of His own mouth ... He desires that we never lose track of the fact that all that we have become is a result of His Gracious intervention in our lives.

And because that is His desire ... because we could say that is **His Basic Operating Strategy** ... we must recognize the validity of

Key Concept #2 ...

*"God is determined (when necessary) to make
NOTHING out of **SOMETHING**"*

James put it this way in his New Testament letter ... James 4:6

"God opposes the proud but give grace to the humble".

Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount ... Matthew 5:3

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit (those who understand their need of God's grace)
for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven"*

Samuel pointed out that sobering reality to King Saul ... 1 Sam. 15:17

*"Although you were once small in your own eyes, did not you become
head of the tribes of Israel? Why did you not obey the Lord ...?"*

The point is ... Saul had ceased to be "small in his own eyes" ... He had become impressed with his own position and responsibility. He had begun (as it were) to "breathe on his own" and he no longer solely depended upon the Lord.

And as a result it became necessary for the Lord to make **nothing** out of this would be **something**.

*"Because you have rejected the word of the Lord,
he has rejected you as King." (vs. 23)*

The days of Saul's effectiveness had come to an end ... the kingdom would be given to one who would remember that apart from God's sustaining grace he would be and could do **nothing**.

David never forgot that fact ... hear his incredible prayer recorded in 2 Samuel 7:18-19 ...

*"Who am I, O Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? And as if this were not enough in your sight, O Sovereign Lord, you have also spoken about the future of the house of your servant.
Is this your usual way of dealing with man, O Sovereign Lord?"*

This was David, at the end of his long and prosperous ministry, revealing that his heart was still one of **wonder** and **worship**, one of **humbleness** and **awe**.

David knew that **Something** had indeed been made out of **Nothing** and to his dying day he confessed that it had been all God's doing!

David was able to past that perspective on to his son **Solomon** ... 1 Kings 3:7

*"Now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in the place of my father David. But I am only a **little child** and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"*

So here's **the conclusion of the matter** ... We come to God with a needy heart and we walk with God with the same needy heart and as we confess that "apart from Him we can do nothing" he showers us with his grace and blesses us with success.

It is His **Basic Operating Strategy** ... Adopt it as your own!

Final Thot ...

The **SMALLER** I am in my own **EYES** the **LARGER** I become in **HIS**!

Sonlife **SELF-STUDY**

Life of David

...

Lesson #7

In Sunday's message, "**God's Operating Strategy**", Pastor Mark said ...

*"It would be interesting to survey our congregation this morning and see just how many of us were at the height of our powers or at the top of our game when we came to Christ." How was it with **you** when you were saved?*

The point expressed Sunday was that "*God delights in making **SOMETHING** out of **NOTHING***". Isn't that a great truth?

What do you think of the corollary truth - "*God is determined (when necessary) to make **NOTHING** out of **SOMETHING***"?

Here are several statements from Sunday's message ... pick one and comment.

*"Chances are good that most of us came to Christ at a time in our lives when we had seemingly **very little** to offer and were not thinking of ourselves as any great **prize** for the kingdom."*

*"We came not bringing Christ a **deal** but seeking from Christ a **solution** - we came not arrogantly but humbly ... we came not proudly flaunting our resume but honestly admitting our need."*

*"What a collection! They were the **nothings** - the have-nothings and the do-nothings of the nation of Israel ... No one would have recognized or recommended them as potential core members of David's new regime. But they were the ones that God sent because God knew they were the ones He could use."*

*"You see God never intends for us to stop being feeling **needy** ...*

*"So here's **the conclusion of the matter** ... We **come** to God with a **needy** heart and we **walk** with God with the same needy heart and as we confess that "apart from Him we can do nothing" he **showers** us with his grace and **blesses** us with success."*

Point To Ponder ... What can we do to resist becoming a **SAUL?**

"HOW TO REPAIR A BROKEN RELATIONSHIP"

(1 Samuel 24, 26)

Intro ... Today on this Memorial Day Weekend as we remember and reflect upon those who have given their lives in defense of our country, we are reminded that this nation throughout its history has had enemies - real enemies.

And those enemies through the years have exacted a huge cost in terms of human life ... lives have ended, families have been rent asunder, marriages have been brought to an end, friendships have ceased, business partnerships have been dissolved ... all because of war and the devastation war has brought upon this land.

Even as we gather here this morning our country is engaged in yet another war where those very destructive results of war are being experienced on a daily basis. There are enemies out there who would wish every one of us dead - every one of our marriages destroyed, our businesses disrupted, our friendships ruined, our families brought to grief.

This morning, against the all too real backdrop of actual physical warfare, I would draw your attention to the equally real and destructive **spiritual** warfare that we are engaged in and I would more specifically point your attention to one particular aspect of that warfare as illustrated in our ongoing study of the Life of David.

In the first letter of the Apostle Peter to the early church, we are put on notice that ...

"the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour".
(1 Peter 5:8)

We generally take that warning and apply it in some personal way as in ...

"The devil will try to get me to doubt God" or
"The devil will try to get me to give in to discouragement" or
"The devil will try to get me to disobey God in some way".

Nothing wrong with that perspective for the devil does indeed try to derail our personal spiritual lives in just such ways.

However, this morning I want us to see that the devil also has a broader focus to his devouring ways and as a result we need to apply Peter's warning in a broader perspective if we would be fully on guard against him as in ...

*"The devil will try to destroy my family" or
"The devil will try to divide my church" or
"The devil will try to undermine my friendships".*

It's an interesting parallel to that spiritual reality to remember that Memorial Day was first conceived to honor those who had given their lives in one particularly bloody battle of the Civil War - a war in which this great nation was pitted against itself.

That's what Satan most desires to do ... He desires to destroy the work that God through His Holy Spirit is doing in this world, to bring to ruin the new royal nation, the new family of God that is coming into being in this sin-twisted world.

And sad to say, Satan has won many skirmishes in that warfare ...

Now that observation brings us to our **Key Concept** of the morning - a concept that easily arises from our on-going study in the Life of David.

<p>Key Concept ... The spiritual battlefields of the world are littered with BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS!</p>
--

Wherever you find Christians in conflict in their homes, in their churches, in their businesses, in their friendships, you can be sure that Satan has been at work, either causing or encouraging the break-down of the relationship.

If Satan is allowed to have his way ... marriages will end, churches will split, businesses will fail and friendships will cease.

In light of Satan's destructive agenda, it's not hard to grasp the urgency of today's **Key Concern** ...

Key Concern ... Overcoming Satan's work of **DESTRUCTION** and **RESTORING HEALTH** to broken relationships.

That concern of course leads to **Today's Key Question** ...

Key Question ...

What **CAN** we do ... what **SHOULD** we do (or not do) when the enemy has been at work and **SOMEONE** with whom we once enjoyed close **FELLOWSHIP** has turned against us?

We take our lead from David himself in his attempts to deal with his broken relationship with King Saul.

At this point of the story ... Saul has been consumed with a murderous rage toward David - he has tried on two different occasions to kill David himself and is now pursuing David who has fled for his life into the wilderness.

Our **object lesson** is recorded in 1 Samuel chapter 24 and 26 and illustrates for us a powerful **three step process** ...

1. NEVER DISRESPECT THOSE WHO HAVE BROKEN FAITH WITH YOU

"David was conscience stricken for having cut off a corner of his (Saul's) robe. He said to his men, 'The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, or lift up my hand against him, for he is the anointed of the Lord.'"

1 Samuel 24:5-6

Amazingly, here we see David continuing to refer to King Saul as "**master**" and as "**the Lord's anointed**" ...

It's so easy to bad-mouth those who have turned against us ... So absolutely easy to view them simply in terms of their current behavior. So natural to see them as "**our enemy**" ... as someone with whom we want nothing more to do.

That's what David's men were doing ...

*"Look the Lord has delivered your **enemy** into your hand."*

David refused to buy into that line of thinking!

The first big struggle, if we are to have any hope of salvaging the relationship, is a struggle to maintain **proper vision** ... to see them correctly and positively.

In order to gain some traction in that uphill struggle ask yourself this ...

Key Question: "**HOW** does God **SEE** them?"

God sees them as "*one of his own*" ... God sees them as "*your brother or sister in Christ*" ... God sees them as "*one Christ has redeemed*" ... God sees them not as "*your enemy*" but as "*one who has fallen prey to your enemy*".

It's most helpful if we can see them in that same way!

By the way, even if the person who seems out to get you is an **unbeliever**, this question still provides some helpful traction for God sees that person as a human being **created** in his own image worthy of respect and concern for that reason alone; God sees that person as someone **for whom Christ died**, someone upon whom He has set **his love** and someone to whom He would desire to give **forgiveness** of sins and **new birth** into spiritual life.

So step number one ... Never disrespect those who have broken faith with you anymore than you would disrespect any other human being. Keep clear who they are in the eyes of God and look upon them that way yourself!

2. NEVER TRY TO GET EVEN WITH THEM

It's very easy when we are under attack - particularly a hurtful attack by someone who with whom we were once very close - to "*fight fire with fire*" - to seek to destroy them before they succeed in destroying us!

And the truth is ... the opportunity will eventually come. Somehow they will slip up and there will be a moment when we can deal them a fatal blow.

David had two such opportunities ... once in the cave (chapter 24) and once in the camp (chapter 26).

If revenge is on our mind ... these opportunities will seem God-given and will be almost impossible to pass up.

Note David's response at those moments ...

"With these words David rebuked his men and would not allow them to attack Saul." 1 Samuel 24:7

"Don't destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?" 1 Samuel 26:9

So how do you resist the urge to "do your friend-turned-enemy in" when the opportunity presents itself?

Ask yourself this Key Question:

"To whom does VENGEANCE belong?"

David had the answer to that question down pat ... (1 Samuel 24:12)

"May the Lord judge between you and me. And may the Lord avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you."

The Apostle Paul would instruct the believers in Rome with these words ...

"Do not repay anyone evil for evil ... Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge, I will repay', says the Lord." (Romans 12:17-19)

So step number two ... **"Never try to get even with them"** ... remember that they fall under the Lord's jurisdiction not yours!

Remembering that vengeance belongs to the Lord can totally free us from thoughts and plans to take matters into our own hands and even release us to the possibility of serving our "friend-turned-enemy" ...

Being open to that possibility readies us to take **step number three**

3. ALWAYS BE WATCHING FOR A OPPORTUNITY TO RECONNECT WITH THEM

If victory for the Devil is defined by the destruction of a "god-honoring relationship" then victory for the Lord is defined by the restoration of that relationship ...

Victory is not yet achieved simply by us refusing to fight back or us refusing to sink to the level of the one who has broken faith with us ...

Victory is not us simply rising above the negative feelings and being able to lay the past relationship aside and move on to better things.

God-honoring victory is achieved when the relationship is restored and Satan's plan is completely thwarted.

This is by far the hardest step to take and it requires a heart that is truly "after God's own heart" ...

It's not a step that we can orchestrate or force in any way. It's a step that requires willingness and alertness to opportunity. By God's grace the moment will eventually come.

And when that moment comes here's a **Key Question** to stimulate our thoughts as we attempt to reconnect ...

Key Question: "What past CONNECTION can I draw upon?"

That's what we see David attempting to do ...1 Samuel 24:8, 11

*"Then David ... called out to Saul, 'My Lord, the King' ...
See my father ..."*

What a flood of memories that term "**father**" brought to both of these men!

David had shared **meals** at Saul's table.

David had become a dear **friend** to Saul's son.

David had effectively ministered to Saul through **music**.

David had represented Saul in **battle**.

David had **married** into Saul's family.

That single word alone won the day and nearly brought about a full restoration.

Note Saul's response ... 1 Samuel 24:16

"Is that your voice, David my son? And he wept aloud ..."

Saul goes on ... " 'You are more righteous than I ... You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly'... I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands. Now swear to me by the Lord that you will not cut off my descendants or wipe out my name from father's family.'
So David gave his oath to Saul (and) Saul went home. "

How about the second time David spared Saul's life?

Saul says ...

*"I have sinned. Come back David my son. Because you have considered my life precious today, I will not try to harm you again. Surely I have acted like a fool and have erred greatly."
(1 Samuel 26:21)*

Aren't those the very words you would be waiting to hear from your "friend-turned-enemy" ... words that show insight and remorse; words that speak of restoration and fellowship?

Those are words that thrill God's heart when they are spoken first to him and then to the offended party.

Those are words that we will generally **only hear** if we prayerfully and carefully follow these three **steps of response** we have seen demonstrated by David ...

***Never express disrespect ... Never attempt to get even ...
Always look for an opportunity to re-connect.***

It's too bad Saul didn't follow up those words he spoke with some appropriate actions but how close David came to experiencing a wonderful victory of restoration ...

May God grant us the **full victory** if we are ever in such a situation!

Final Thot ...

The **RESURRECTION** of a spiritual relationship strikes a serious blow to our enemy's **AGENDA** and **PRIDE**; it testifies to the fact that God's transforming **GRACE** is still operational in the world today!

Sonlife

SELF-STUDY

Life of David

...

Lesson #8

Sunday's message began with this **Key Concept** ...

*"The spiritual battlefields of the world are littered with
BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS!"*

What do you think of that observation? What was the primary broken relationship we focused on Sunday? **SAUL** and **DAVID**

What do you think of this comment from Sunday's message?

"That's what Satan most desires to do ... to destroy the work that God through His Holy Spirit is doing in this world, to bring to ruin the new royal nation, the new family of God that is coming into being in this sin-twisted world."

What **three steps** did Pastor Mark share as vital if we would seek to rebuild a relationship that seems to be lost (when we are the innocent party)?

1. Never **DISRESPECT** those who have broken **FAITH** with you.
2. Never **TRY** to get **EVEN** with them.
3. Always be **WATCHING** for an opportunity to **RE-CONNECT**.

How tough is that to do?

By the way, what should be our approach if we are either **fully** or **partially** responsible for the break in the relationship?

1. **RECOGNIZE** what we have done *"I have sinned"*
2. **REPENT** ... make the necessary changes.
3. Seek **FORGIVENESS** and **RESTORATION**.

Point To Ponder ...

The **RESURRECTION** of a spiritual relationship strikes a serious blow to our enemy's **AGENDA** and **PRIDE**; it testifies to the fact that God's transforming **GRACE** is still operational in the world today!

"THE WISE WOMAN AND THE FOOL"

(1 Samuel 25)

Intro ... This morning in preparation for communion I would draw your attention to **Today's Key Story** found in 1 Samuel 25.

It reports on one of the most shameful moments in David's life ... a moment of hostility and anger that could have easily disqualified him for the Kingship, a moment that could have removed God's Blessing from him even as it had been removed from Saul.

Today's Key Story ...

The encounter between DAVID and NABAL

The story is told in 1 Samuel chapter 25.
Let's look at it together ... (vs. 1-13)

Do you even recognize this David - this violent, hostile man who angrily sets out to take matters into his own hands and to totally destroy a man's entire family because a personal insult?

Is this the same David we saw just last week exercise such remarkable restraint in his dealings with King Saul? Is this the David we acknowledged last week thoroughly understood the Biblical Principle of

"Vengeance is mine; I will repay", says the Lord"?

Was it not this same David who declared to these same men of his ...

"I will not touch the Lord's anointed" and who announced to King Saul "The Lord judge between you and me; the Lord avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you."?

Is this not the same David whose sensitive and thoughtful applications of the principles of God nearly brought about reconciliation with the man who was sworn to kill him?

Of course it is, but it's hard to recognize him, isn't it?

From this incredibly surprising story arises *Today's Key Question ...*

Today's Key Question ...

How could someone who has **DEMONSTRATED** mastery of a Biblical **PRINCIPLE** so beautifully in one situation **VIOLATE** that same **PRINCIPLE** so completely in another?

Sad to say but it's an all too relevant question ...

David was not the first follower of God and he has certainly not been the last follower of God who has blatantly and dramatically violated in one situation the very Biblical Principle that has been wonderfully demonstrated in a previous situation.

Let's make it personal ... Why is it that we at times violate principles of God's Word in one situation that we have followed properly in previous situations?

Why do we seem to be forever learning and re-learning the same lessons over and over?

Why can't we just learn a lesson - master a concept and have it forever as a practice of our life?

Why must we re-invent the wheel every time we are in a situation that calls for mobility?

Today's Key Answer ...

Because of the **PROBLEM** of **TRANSFERENCE** or more specifically the problem of **LACK** of **TRANSFERENCE!**

You see ... it's not easy and it's certainly not automatic to transfer what we've **learned** and even what we've **done** in one situation to the next situation.

There always seems to be some subtle differences that make us think that the new situation is entirely **unique** and thus completely **isolated** from anything we have encountered in the past.

And as a result, we feel free and even obligated to construct a completely unique response.

I believe that that's what happened to David ...

With Saul (a man with whom he had a significant personal history) David demonstrated a beautiful understanding and application of spiritual truths.

*"He would touch not the Lord's anointed"
"He would allow the Lord to be the judge"
"He would appeal to Saul for understanding
and hope for reconciliation"*

Those were the very responses that sent us home last week saying:

"That's the way I want to respond if I'm ever in a similar situation."

With Nabal however (a man whom David had most likely never met) David responded totally differently.

(Here we must put a few words in David's mouth)

*"How dare he refuse our just due?"
"How dare he treat me like some fugitive from justice?"
"I'll show him - I'll take everything he's got ... including his life!"*

Those are the kinds of responses that all too often might cause us to say ...

*"David's just like me" ...
In my worse moments I could respond just like that".*

What was happening? ... Well, here we have to speculate a bit ...

Obviously, there were some subtle and some not so subtle differences in the two situations - the kinds of differences that can influence and distort our thinking.

Saul was David's ***superior*** (the reigning King) -
Nabal was his ***inferior*** (David was the future King).

Saul had been ***appointed*** by the Lord and deserved respect -
Nabal was just an ***ordinary citizen*** and needed to be taught a lesson.

Saul - at his best - was a ***likeable*** and ***attractive*** man;
Nabal possessed a ***selfish*** and ***distasteful*** personality ...
Even his name (probably a nickname) meant "***fool***".

However, even though there were a lot of differences in these two situations, the ***relevant*** spiritual principle was the same -
"Avenge not yourself".

In whatever way David's mind was working, he failed to make that ***connection*** and therefore he failed to make the necessary ***transference*** from the previous situation to the current one.

Praise God that in God's graciousness to protect David from spiritual disaster, he sent Abigail to him to point out to him those similarities and to cause David to focus his mind and heart upon the appropriate spiritual principle!

vs. 26 ... "the Lord has kept you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself"

vs. 31 ... "my Lord will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged yourself"

Hearing these and other words from Abigail as well, David was able to make the **connection** between the two situations and **transfer** the truth he applied in his past encounter with Saul into his current situation with Nabal.

*vs. 32-33 ... "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from **avenging** myself with my own hands."*

Praise God that David was able to respond to spiritual truth once he heard it - that's just one more indication that he was indeed a "Man after God's own heart"!

From this account then arises ...

Today's Key Recommendation ...

In every new situation ask, "What **SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES** apply here; are there **SIMILARITIES** between this situation and situations I have encountered **BEFORE?**"

And in the process ... be open to the insights of others!

Based upon that recommendation, carry with you this week and into your reflections as we prepare for communion this ...

Final Thot ...

The secret to passing **EXAMS** in the **PRESENT** almost always involves transferring **LESSONS** learned in the **PAST**.

Sonlife **SELF-STUDY**

Life of David

...

Lesson #9

So why is it that godly people sometimes respond in ungodly ways?

List at least three reasons:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What problem did Pastor Mark suggest David ran into in his failure to respond properly to Nabal? (1 Samuel 25)

The Problem of TRANSFERENCE - he didn't make the CONNECTION between the situation with SAUL and the situation with NABAL.

What was the spiritual principle that applied to both of those situations?
"AVENGE not yourself".

Why do you suppose David could see that principle so clearly in the case of Saul but couldn't see it at all in the case of Nabal? Share with the group.

How did David finally "get the message" that the principle he applied with Saul was also to be applied in with Nabal?

God brought the message through ABIGAIL, Nabal's WIFE

What about David's encounter with Abigail demonstrated that he still was that "Man after God's own heart"?

"He immediately RECOGNIZED God's truth when he heard it and he willingly SUBMITTED himself to it."

Point To Ponder ...

PRINCIPLES are transferable - RULES are not.

"THE DANGERS OF DIFFICULTY"

(1 Samuel 27)

Intro ... This morning as we continue our look at the life of David, I want us to consider, as our title states, "***The Dangers of Difficulty***"

Now keep in mind that I could easily teach on "***The Blessings of Difficulty***" ...

Facing the difficulties of life can cause our faith to deepen;
Facing up to the difficulties of life can develop Godly
character within us;
Facing great difficulties can draw us closer to the Lord Himself ...

Based upon these possible "***blessings brought about by difficulty***",
God's Word itself instructs us in the book of James 1:12 to ...
"***Count it all joy when you fall into various trials ...***"

However, and here's the sad other side of the story, not all Christians wind up enjoying those ***blessings*** of difficulty; some believers fall prey to what we are calling this morning the "***dangers of difficulty***" and so we straightforwardly address ***today's key concept*** ...

Key Concept ...

Difficulties in ***LIFE*** present great ***DANGERS***
to ***FOLLOWERS*** of Jesus Christ.

It's imperative that we (as would-be obedient and victorious followers of Jesus Christ) inform and ready ourselves to face and overcome these dangers because "***difficulties come to everyone***".

Some of us are in the midst of serious difficulties ***right now*** ... financial difficulties, physical difficulties, relational difficulties, emotional difficulties, job-related difficulties, family-related difficulties, spiritual difficulties ...

Each one of these various difficulties presents great dangers to us -

It's those dangers about which I would seek to warn you this morning.

We find them dramatically highlighted in this week's look into the Life of David - specifically the actions of David recorded in 1 Samuel chapter 27 ...

Let's set the context once again ...

Difficulty was David's daily agenda ...

He was being relentlessly pursued by King Saul's hand-picked band of assassins - He was running for his life.

He had taken on the responsibility of caring for 600 men and their families - His resources were stretched to the limit.

He had nearly thrown away God's Calling and Blessing by avenging himself against Nabal, the wealthy sheepherder who had insulted him and refused him aid - He had been talked out of his violent plan at the last moment by Abigail, Nabal's beautiful and intelligent wife.

As 1 Samuel chapter 27 opens, we find David, against the backdrop of all this difficulty, falling prey to ***Danger #1*** ...

1. THE DANGER OF DISPAIR

*"One of these days, I will be **DESTROYED** by the hand of Saul."* (vs. 1a)

Isn't that just how our minds frequently work? We think ...

*"One of these days, sooner or later, this situation is just going to do me in ...
It's never going to change - it's never going to get better.
I might as well face facts - I'm doomed."*

*"One of these days, I **will be** destroyed by the hand of Saul!"*

Under the pressure of the on-going situation, David gave in to despair and ***despair is a tremendously destructive thing.***

*** Despair throws all God's Promises out the window ...**

Think of what David had just recently heard from the mouth of Abigail.

*"Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my master will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the Lord your God (and) when the Lord has done for my master every good thing that He **promised** him and has appointed him leader over Israel, my master will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself."*

(1 Samuel 25:29)

Those words made sense and brought comfort to David when he heard them coming out of the mouth of Abigail but now, under the stress of the on-going struggle, David gave in to despair and **despair threw all of God's Promises right out the window.**

*** Despair forgets about God's Previous Acts of Provision ...**

How about the "**lion**" and the "**bear**" ... that's what encouraged David's heart when he went up against Goliath. How about the fact that God had protected him thus far even in exile? Memories of God's provision in the past will always encourage us to trust God in the present but **despair wipes our memories clean!**

*** Despair destroys faith and hope ...**

Don't trust God anymore ... Don't engage in worship anymore ... **Despair disengages us from fellowship** and as a result ...

*** Despair draws ungodly, unbiblical and unwarranted conclusions**

"I will be destroyed ... I will not survive ... I cannot maintain" ...

Despair often phrases itself with the words ... "**I CAN'T**" and those despairing words lead us directly to the **second great danger** that arises from times of difficulty ...

2. THE DANGER OF PERSONAL DESIGN

*"The **BEST** thing I **CAN** do is ..." (vs. 1b)*

*You see ... once we say "**I can't**" to the thing that God would have us do, then in desperation we look for what we "**can do**" in the situation and ... "**we design our own solution to the difficulty**".*

Look what David did ... 1 Samuel 27:1b

*"The best thing I can do is escape to the land of the Philistines.
Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel and
I will slip out of his hand. So David and the six hundred men
with him left and went over to Achish, king of Gath."*

Can you believe that? Could anything be more bizarre? David seeking asylum from his sworn enemies ... David going to seek refuge from the King of Gath, the hometown of Goliath?

That would be like George W. Bush seeking refuge from the American hating Moslem Clerics in Iraq!

And here's an even more incredible thing ... **"IT WORKED! "**

Achish took him in and Saul quit pursuing him (vs. 4)

Isn't it amazing how smart we can be sometimes?

Once we lay aside God's wishes for our lives, once we forget about living godly and pure lives, once we simply follow our own natural instincts and pursue the course that makes the most sense to us, isn't it amazing how much better things often go?

You see, the truth is ... any decision that removes us from a place of tension or difficulty will bring a certain sense of peace and relief ... for a while!

Oftentimes we can do a pretty good job of saving ourselves; we can substitute our plans for God's and seemingly come out ahead ... for a while!

But those decisions have a snowball effect for, once made, they tend to lead us further and further away from the life of God's blessing ... and that snowball effect results in us experiencing the **third great danger** arising from difficulty.

3. THE DANGER OF SPIRITUAL DISGRACE

This too we see illustrated in the life of David ... The rest of chapter 27 is filled with a literal blizzard of bizarre actions on David's part ...

vs. 8-9 ... He becomes a **plunderer** and a **murderer**. From his home base in the town of Ziklag, David raided the neighboring villages; the problem of providing for his men and their families was solved.

vs. 10 ... He became a **deceiver** ... he lied to Achish his sponsor about his activities. He told Achish that he was plundering the towns of Judah, leading Achish to believe that David had indeed "*burned his bridges*" with the Hebrews.

In chapter 29 ... we find David and his men marching out to war with Achish against Saul and the army of Israel.

Did David see this as the road he would take to the Throne of Israel? Saul would be defeated and Israel would then turn to him and then he in turn would defeat the Philistines? How far from God's plan would he have wandered?

Through this incredible period, we see David engaging in the same kind of perverted behavior that we saw in Saul in the message "***Losing Touch With God***".

David had arrived at a place of complete **spiritual disgrace!**

But praise God ... Remarkably and completely unexpectedly and absolutely graciously, God intervened and protected David from this foolish action.

God used the ungodly Philistines to accomplish his purpose. He put serious doubt in the minds of the Philistine commanders regarding David's intentions and they appealed to Achish who reluctantly sent David home. (vs. 1-11)

God wasn't done with David ... but as we will see next week God had to take some drastic measures to bring David back into fellowship.

Our point this week is that the difficulties of life present real dangers to those of us who would be seeking to faithfully follow after Jesus.

We need to prepare ourselves so that we will not allow those difficulties to lead us to feelings of **despair** and then to actions of **personal design** and then ultimately to that place of **spiritual disgrace**.

Perhaps you are in the midst of such a difficulty right now ...

Force yourself to look past the difficulty to Jesus who promises to manage it for you and who promises to grant you grace to endure it;

Talk to one of your fellow travelers in the faith - **seek** their encouragement and perspective and testimony; most of all ...

Stay in the Word of God and in **Daily Communion** with Him.

FINAL THOT ...

Difficulties can either **MAKE** you or **BREAK** you - your connection to the **ALMIGHTY** will surely determine the outcome!

Sonlife

SELF-STUDY

Life of David

...

Lesson #10

This week's lesson provides an additional answer to last week's question:

"So why is it that godly people sometimes respond in an ungodly ways?"

Godly people sometimes act in ungodly ways because they
fall into **DESPAIR!**

Note the four destructive things Pastor Mark suggested **Despair** does in our lives:

1. **Despair** throws all God's **PROMISES** out the **WINDOW**
2. **Despair** **FORGETS** about God's previous acts of **PROVISION**
3. **Despair** destroys **FAITH** and **HOPE**
4. **Despair** draws ungodly, unbiblical, unwarranted **CONCLUSIONS**.

How were all of these illustrated in David's life? (1 Samuel 27, 29)

What did Pastor Mark suggest as ways to **resist** falling into despair when in the midst of difficulties?

1. Force yourself to look **PAST** your difficulty to **JESUS** who promises to **MANAGE** it for you and to grant you **GRACE** to endure it.
2. **CONNECT** with your fellow travelers in the faith; seek their **ENCOURAGEMENT**, **PERSPECTIVE** and **TESTIMONY**.
3. Stay in the **WORD** of God and in **DAILY COMMUNION** with Him!

Have you found these steps to be helpful during times of difficulty that you have faced? Which do you find most natural for you to take?

Point To Ponder ... Difficulties can either **MAKE** you or **BREAK** you -
your connection to the **ALMIGHTY** will surely determine the outcome!

"A FATHER'S WAKE-UP CALL"

(1 Samuel 30:1-5)

Intro ... As I begin this brief Father's Day message, I would draw your attention to one of the most heart-breaking and life-challenging passages in the Scripture.

It's a passage that is absolutely distressing to those of us who are fathers. It's a brief passage that reports an event in the Life of David that I have entitled: "**A Father's Wake-Up Call**".

Let's look at it together ...

Key Scripture ... 1 Samuel 30:3-4

"When David and his men came to Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken CAPTIVE. So David and his men WEPT aloud until they had no more STRENGTH left to weep."

There is no greater fear that any Dad can have than that ... He comes home from work and his family is nowhere to be found! There's a note on the refrigerator from his wife that says ... "***We're gone ... We won't be back***".

There is nothing that will devastate a man more than that ... I have walked with a couple of men over the years through such a moment; I have had dreams (nightmares actually) myself about such a moment. I know of what I speak.

It doesn't matter how macho a man may seem, or even how indifferent he might have acted ... when the moment comes, he is (just like David) ... reduced to emotional rubble.

His world has crashed and that center piece that provided his most immediate reason for living is no longer there - He feels he has been cut adrift and that he might never find mooring again.

This message is for us men ... I would ask you ladies - wives and mothers - present today to become as invisible as possible. I ask you to keep your elbows tight to your sides. I would ask you to refrain from initiating any discussion about this message after the service is over.

I would ask you men to listen as if you were the only one in the room.

Consider with me first of all how it was that David and his men got into this situation in the first place. What were they doing, what was going on when the enemy came in and captured their families?

Well, as you might remember from last week ... they were marching off with the Philistine army to do battle against the army of Israel - their own people!

They had left their homes and their families unguarded while they headed off to fight the wrong battle ... now there's a lesson there!

How many men - Christian men - have been guilty of that?

Oh, they don't plan to neglect their families; they don't intend to be gone all the time; they don't mean to seem preoccupied and self-absorbed when they are home ... it's just that that's what happens.

Here's the tragic irony ... They get so involved in doing things to provide for their families that they fail to provide for their families what they really need!

Two Key Observations ...

1. While it's true that a family needs **MATERIAL** provision and protection, it needs **EMOTIONAL** provision and protection **MORE**.

That can be a hard concept for us men to get our minds wrapped around. It's natural for many men to say ... that's the women's responsibility - to provide for the emotional needs of the family; my job is to provide materially - to put a roof over my family's head and to make sure that it doesn't leak!

And yet there are emotional needs - essential needs - that only a man can meet:

* A wife needs to feel **VALUED** and **APPRECIATED** and she needs to receive those feelings from her husband. She needs to feel that he considers her to be of great worth personally and that he sincerely appreciates all that she does.

If she does not receive those feelings from him, then she will be susceptible to receiving them from someone else. They're never as good and they won't touch the same spot in her heart when they come from someone else but, in lieu of the real thing, they are seen as better than nothing and, as a result, they are frequently welcomed and the capture of her heart by some Amalekite begins.

* Children need to feel **LOVED** and **ESTEEMED** and they need to receive those feelings from their dad (as well as from their mom). Kids need to feel that their father genuinely loves them and that they are special to him because of who they are.

A **daughter** who does not receive those feelings from her dad will be susceptible to receiving them from someone else - in order to get them she will be tempted to involve herself in sexual relationships.

A **son** who does not receive those feelings from his dad will also be susceptible to accepting a substitute ... usually from his peers and usually by engaging in some type of behavior which demonstrates his manhood and wins their admiration.

There are certain basic emotional needs that the family has that God has intended to be met by a "*tuned in dad*" ...

When Dad fails to provide them, the family is put at risk and is vulnerable to capture.

2. While it's true that a family needs **EMOTIONAL** provision and protection, it needs **SPIRITUAL** provision and protection **MORE**.

This can also be a tough concept for us men to grab a hold of.

We say, "I'm no preacher" ... "I panic whenever the preacher (or my wife) tells me that I need to be a spiritual leader - I don't even know what that means."

Let me share a few things with you this morning ... basic things - necessary things. These are some things that will provide spiritual provision and protection for those who make up your family circle.

* A Father needs to provide spiritual **DEFINITION**

"We will serve the Lord" ... Joshua 24:15

This is simply answering the question, "**What kind of family are we?**"
We are a Christian family - we are a church-going family - we are a Bible-believing family - we are a God-honoring family - we are a tithing family.

It takes a tremendous amount of stress off the entire family when dad puts that question to rest once and for all; because, the truth is, until dad puts that question to rest, it creates an on-going sense of uncertainty and insecurity in the home.

* A Father needs to provide spiritual **DYNAMIC**

"Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ" ...

1 Corinthians 11:1

This simply means carrying out the **family definition** in your **daily life** - seeking to build your life around the directions given in God's Word, letting your kids see you attempting to live that god-honoring life.

* A Father needs to provide for spiritual **DISCUSSION**

"... bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" ...
Ephesians 6:4

This passage begins by saying ...

"Fathers, don't exasperate your children but ...

Children get exasperated when they don't understand or when they feel they are not understood or when they are asked to do something they are not capable of doing.

Exasperation is largely eliminated by adequate and sensitive inter-action.

Dads, make time to inter-act with your kids; to listen and to advise; to inform and to discuss.

Watch **Christian video's** with your **little children** ...

It's amazing how much understanding even the youngest of them can gain as they are exposed to the basic Bible stories with you.

Make time for your **older children** to talk with you ...

Do more listening than lecturing. Allow them to raise the questions ... seek answers together.

All of these things take time, but what better use of your time? Know that as you do these things, you build walls of protection around your family.

Final Thot ...

The **EARTHLY** home just like the **HEAVENLY** home
RELIES upon **DAD!**

Sonlife **SELF-STUDY**

Life of David

...

Lesson #11

Sunday's Father's Day Meditation was entitled: "*A Father's Wake-Up Call*".

Here was the *Key Scripture* ...

Key Scripture ... 1 Samuel 30:3-4

"When David and his men came to Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken CAPTIVE. So David and his men WEPT aloud until they had no more STRENGTH left to weep."

Do you recall the situation that led to this terrible state of affairs? David and his men had been off fighting battles of their own making and had left their city and families inadequately guarded. How common is that among American men today?

Here were *two observations* that Pastor Mark made Sunday:

1. While it's true that a family needs MATERIAL provision and protection, it needs EMOTIONAL provision and protection MORE.
2. While it's true that a family needs EMOTIONAL provision and protection, it needs SPIRITUAL provision and protection MORE.

What can a man do to 'protect his family' spiritually? List three or four things that seem to you to be significant ...

Here are *three things* a Dad can do that Pastor Mark shared Sunday. Chose one and comment ...

* A Father needs to provide spiritual DEFINITION

"We will serve the Lord" ... Joshua 24:15

* A Father needs to provide spiritual DYNAMIC

"Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ" ... 1 Corinthians 11:1

* A Father needs to provide for spiritual DISCUSSION

"... bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" ... Ephesians 6:4

Point To Ponder ... The EARTHLY home just like the HEAVENLY home RELIES upon DAD!

"A WINNING STRATEGY"

(1 Samuel 30:1-18)

Intro ... Last week we left David in a horrible situation - a heartbreaking situation - Ziklag, his home of refuge in the midst of the Philistines, had been burned to the ground by a marauding army of Amelikites and all of the women and children and every possession of his 600 men had been taken captive.

The Scripture says that David and his men wept aloud until they had no more strength to weep ... There was a powerful lesson for us as we gazed upon that pitiful sight - the sight of those proud, valiant men, reduced to tears ... Men who had lost their homes and families because they had been left unprotected while they, the men, were off somewhere far from home, expending their energies in battles of their own choosing.

Today we read two verses further in the text and see the situation escalate from pitiful and sorrowful to desperate ... vs. 6

"David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters."

David was on the verge of losing his life ... the very life that he had run into Philistine territory to protect. There would seem to be no way out ... It would seem that the very thing that he had concluded was going to someday, happen at the hands of Saul was about to happen at the hands of his own - formerly loyal - band of followers. ***It was indeed a desperate moment.***

Have you ever been there ... in the midst of a desperate moment? A moment when it seems like the bottom has fallen out - a moment when there seems to be no reason for hope, a moment when there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel of trouble you are in? Perhaps you are facing such a moment right now ...

Know that you are not the first and you will not be the last Child of God to become trapped by seemingly hopeless circumstances.

But know also that with God current circumstances never reveal the whole story and they need never be the end of the story ...

They certainly weren't for David.

Look now at verse 18 and following ...

"David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives. Nothing was missing: young or old, boy or girl, plunder or anything else they had taken. David brought everything back. He took all the flocks and herds, and his men drove them ahead of the other livestock, saying, 'This is David's plunder.'"

What a turn around! David, who had gone from hero to goat in a matter of minutes, was now returned to his former hero status. He went from having lost everything to having increased in everything.

Indeed, his life circumstance had been transformed from one of **desperation** to one of **celebration**! And so we question today ... How did - how can - that happen?

Today's Key Question ..

How can **DESPERATION** be turned into **CELEBRATION**?

In this passage - in the verses between 6 and 18 we can find **THREE TRANSFORMATIONAL STRATEGIES** that can do just that - turn desperation into celebration!

1. Renew Your Confidence In The PERSON Of God (vs. 6c)

"But David found strength in the Lord his God". (NIV)

"But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God" (KJV)

How different from his response a year and four months earlier (chapter 27)

At that time despair had caused him to run from God and his promises; to forget about God and his previous provisions; but somehow, this time, in the midst of incredible disaster and in the face of impending doom, David found strength - he encouraged himself - in the Lord.

Let's face it ... the Lord was all he had left.

Now here's **a thot** ... one to wrap your mind around ...

"If God is not at the center of our life when we have a lot, he might well allow us to be reduced to the point where he is all we have left."

That's what he allowed to happen to David ... and fortunately, when David was so reduced, he was humble enough to retrace his steps and return to his God and renew his confidence in Him.

What do you suppose David found so encouraging in the person of God?

Here are two truths I would suggest would have renewed David's Confidence in the **Person** of God - two truths that will renew our confidence in our Heavenly Father.

*** His FAITHFULNESS** - (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

"The one who called you is faithful and he will do it"

Time for David to remember the Call that God had placed upon his life when Samuel's anointing oil had been poured on his head. This was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob with whom he was dealing - a God who had kept covenant for centuries. The Truth of God's Faithfulness is a powerful stimulation for confidence.

*** His FORGIVENESS** - (1 John 1:9)

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and will cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

David had to renew his understanding of God's forgiveness for he had been living out of fellowship and pursuing plans of his own devising. He had been behaving in ways that fell far short of godly. He needed to know that God could still use him.

Renewed Confidence in the Person of God ... It's the first step in the process of transforming Desperation into Celebration. It enabled David to dry his eyes and settle his heart and get ready for action.

David's renewed ***Confidence in the Person of God*** then led him to the second strategic step in this transformational process which is ...

2. Renew Your Confidence In The PROMISES Of God (vs. 7-8)

*"Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech,
'Bring me the ephod.' Abiathar brought it to him and David inquired of the Lord,
'Shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them?
'Pursue them', he answered. 'You will certainly overtake them
and succeed in the rescue.' "*

Notice that David was taking nothing for granted ... He didn't just assume that pursuit was the right thing to do ... Perhaps this loss was the natural consequence of his thoughtless, godless behavior and he would just have to accept that.

But God was gracious to him and to his men ... an exciting ***promise*** was given ...

*"You will certainly overtake them
and succeed in the rescue".*

At this point, that was all that David needed to hear ... He had renewed his ***Confidence*** in the ***Person*** of God and now he put his confidence in a fresh ***Promise*** from God given in the context of a clear directive from God.

In our moments of desperation there are certain promises from God that can be very helpful to remember ... Here are three to which David would have said "***Amen***" had he known them.

**** The Promise of Your SUPERIORITY - (1 John 4:4)***

"Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world."

That's a promise that can come into play in a thousand different ways, for everything that is in this world - every person, every situation, every action of men - is in some way affected by the presence of the Evil One himself who has been identified, in the Scripture itself, as the god of this world.

His desire is to destroy that which belongs to God; his device is deception and doubt; his determination is to fight to the very end.

Feelings of despair and desperation are consistent with his agenda and reveal the true nature of our struggle.

It's vitally important that we know that his powers are inferior to the one who has taken up residence in our hearts and that victory over all of his attacks and over all of his influence in this world can be experienced.

*** *The Promise of Your SUFFICIENCY* - (Philippians 4:13)**

"I can do everything through him who gives me strength." (NIV)

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (KJV)

Not only is the One who is in me greater than the one who is in the world but I myself am transformed into a powerful person by the working of that One who is in me.

Basically, that verse is saying that ...

*"Whatever the situation calls for - whatever it is God's will for me to do,
God's power will enable me to pull off."*

David had asked ... ***"Shall I pursue them ... will I overtake them?"***

God had responded *"Yes, you should and yes, you will ... and you will also be successful in your efforts to re-capture that which has been taken from you."*

You will be ***sufficient*** for the task that lies before you!

God has given to you and to me the Promise of ***Superiority*** and the Promise of ***Sufficiency*** and now in addition to those, you can put your confidence in ...

***The Promise of Your SECURITY - (Romans 8:37-39)**

"In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

There is the ultimate source of confidence - there's the ultimate promise - nothing can ever separate you from the love of God that has been expressed to you in the person of Jesus Christ. Once you have responded to it, it binds you to the heart of God with an unbreakable bond.

And it's as you renew yourselves in the confidence of your unbreakable bond with the love of God that you can ...

3. Renew Your Confidence In The PROVISION Of God (vs. 11)

Turning times of desperation into times of celebration will always require some definite **provision** from God ... It's the tangible **provision** that allows the **promises** to come to fruition.

When we head out on the path of God's choosing there will always be more required than what we ourselves bring to the table.

Consider the situation that David was facing ...

"He was heading out on a three day old trail pursuing a band of raiders that had long since disappeared. He had no idea how many of them there were or where they were heading."

But, believing the Lord's **Promise**, he rallied his men and they headed out at their fastest pace ... So fast in fact that 200 of them couldn't continue. (vs. 9)

That's faith ... that's like Abraham trudging up the mountain to worship God saying to his son Isaac, "God will provide" when Isaac asks "Where is the sacrifice?"

David's faith was rewarded ... the missing piece was provided ...

Verse 11-15 ... How unlikely!

They found an Egyptian slave who had been left behind due to illness. God had preserved him for three days in the desert without food or water. He led David and his men right into the Amalekite encampment.

What a perfect provision from God ... God always provides when we step out to live obediently to his directives for our lives.

We can be confident of our God's **Provision** when we seek to live obediently to him even in the midst of what others might consider desperate times because of ...

*** The Nature of Our REALITY** - Romans 8:31-32; 2 Peter 1:3
(The reality in which we live as children of God.)

*"What then shall we say in response to this?
If God is for us, who can be against us?
He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all -
how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us **all** things?"*

*"His divine power has given us everything we need for life
and godliness through our knowledge of him who has
called us by his own glory and goodness."*

Renew your confidence in the **Provision** of God ...
Renew your confidence in the **Promises** of God ...
Renew your confidence in the **Person** of God.

It's the one foolproof way to turn times of desperation into times of celebration! It works every time ...

It's also the way to avoid those feelings of desperation even when we experience circumstances that might look pretty desperate to those who are on the outside looking in!

Final Thot ...	DESPERATION that's transformed into CELEBRATION becomes an INVITATION!
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Sonlife **SELF-STUDY**

Life of David

...

Lesson #12

Can you imagine a more stunning turn-around than the one David experienced in 1 Samuel chapter 30 ...

He went from DESPERATION to CELEBRATION!

What impressed you about that whole experience of David's?

How about these other Biblical Examples:

1. HEZEKIAH when he was delivered from DEATH. (Isaiah 38: 1-5,10)
2. The DISCIPLES during the STORM on the Sea of Galilee. (Lk. 8:22-25)
3. The two men on the ROAD to EMMAUS. (Luke 24:13-32)
4. The disciples from GOOD FRIDAY to EASTER. (John 20:19-20)
5. The apostle Paul and his THORN in the FLESH. (2 Cor. 12:7-9)

Here's a quote from Sunday's message. Give your response ...

*"If God is not the center of our life when we have a lot,
He might allow us to be reduced to the point where He is all we have left."*

Here's another ...

Turning times of desperation into times of celebration will always require some definite provision from God ... When we head out on the path of God's choosing, there will always be more required than what we ourselves bring to the table.

Point To Ponder ...

Is constant CELEBRATION a way to
avoid DESPERATION? What do you think?

"TRANSITION TECHNIQUES"

(2 Samuel 1-5)

Intro ... Today, in our continuing study of the Life of David, we come to a tremendous turning point moment - the moment that David has been waiting for - the moment that will transition him from renegade to King!

Here's how the situation lays out ... David has just won a great victory over the Amalekites and recaptured all that had been stolen from him and his men as well as much plunder.

Word comes to him that the Philistines (with whom he had until recently been allied) have routed the army of Israel. Saul the King and Jonathan, the King's son and David's dearest friend, have fallen in battle.

The Throne of Israel is vacant ... the **first part** of the word the prophet Samuel had spoken to Saul has been fulfilled:

*1 Samuel 13:14 "But now your kingdom will not endure;
the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart,
and appointed him leader of his people ..."*

*1 Samuel 15:28 "The Lord has torn the kingdom from you today
and has given it to one of your neighbors - to one better than you."*

The second part of that word pointed out that God would give the Kingdom to one of Saul's neighbors - to a better man - to a man after God's own heart.

That man was **David**. Samuel had already anointed him and thus identified him but the transition was yet to be made.

Saul was no longer King of Israel but neither was David ...
What should David do?

It would seem to be a no-brainer ...

David should take his 600 loyal troops and march to Gilgal or some other spiritually significant location and have himself sworn in!

That's what David's men would certainly say! Strike while the iron is hot!

However, they were the same men who twice advised David to take Saul's life when those twin opportunities presented themselves ... They had been wrong then and they would have been wrong now had they expressed themselves.

The voice of the multitude seldom speaks for God!

Also, it's true that, in spiritual matters, the obvious and most expedient thing frequently is the wrong thing!

It's those two observations that bring us to our **Key Concept** of the morning ...

Key Concept ...

Transitions are **TRICKY** - Success or failure is often determined by how we **HANDLE** them!

Notice how David handled his time of transition ...

1. HE TIED - UP LOOSE ENDS.

* He **Mourned** for Saul and Jonathan (2 Samuel 1:11-12)

Fascinating ... how many of us would have cheered the news?

How many of us would have gotten all caught up in feeling vindicated?

How many of us would have felt the need to express some judgmental statement regarding this former pursuer of ours i.e.

"He finally got what was coming to him" or
"Justice has been served".

David never lost sight of the bigger picture ...

Saul had been God's anointed King; Jonathan had been his dearest friend; the people of Israel were God's chosen people ... God's name had been blasphemed throughout the land because of these great losses. There was much to mourn - ***His heart was broken!***

* He ***dealt*** with the man who claimed to have ***Killed*** Saul (2 Sam.1:13-16)

Interesting ... this man, who had no doubt come upon Saul's body before the Philistines had gotten there and had taken Saul's crown and arm band, believed that he would be richly rewarded when he took credit for Saul's death. Unfortunately for him, David believed his lying story and condemned him to death for daring to lift his hand against the Lord's anointed. It was David's way of upholding and re-affirming God's honor!

* He ***Eulogized*** Saul and Jonathan (2 Samuel 1: 17-27)

Stirring ... these words uttered by David have been repeated in works of literature through all the centuries since. These words describe Saul and Jonathan at their very best ... as seen through godly eyes. Those words stirred in the hearts of all who heard them a recognition of just what had been lost in that final battle. Those words reveal the depth of feeling that can exist between men who are bound to each other by covenant bond.

Based upon these ***three actions of David*** I would suggest to you this morning ...

<p><i>Key Principle #1</i> ... Don't push on into the <u>FUTURE</u> when there remains <u>UNFINISHED</u> business in the <u>PRESENT</u>.</p>
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Tie up as many loose ends as you can before you pick up that new ball of twine.

Notice now the second thing that David did as he faced this time of transition in his life ... an action with which he was becoming quite familiar ...

2. HE SOUGHT GUIDANCE FROM THE LORD.

I love the way 2 Samuel chapter two begins ...

"In the course of time ..."

When those ***"loose ends"*** were all tied up ... When the things that were obvious were all taken care of ... ***"In the course of time - when David was ready for new direction - he inquired of the Lord, 'Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?' "***

You see, David was still living outside the nation - He was still living in Ziklag - a city under Philistine control.

Was it now time for him to re-enter the land of Israel - should he just step across the border, as it were, into the territory of the tribe of Judah?

Seeking guidance from the Lord is an incredibly important step in any transition process ... Is this the time for me to take action?
What particular action should I take?

The Lord said to David ... ***"Go up"***.

David asks then ... ***"Where shall I go?"***

The Lord says. ***"To Hebron"***

It was an interesting choice ... Hebron was on the fringe of things - not a hotbed of activity but it did have a significant history ... Abraham had buried Sarah there and Caleb had driven giants from there when he took possession of it when the people first entered the promised land. Hebron was the Lord's choice and it would turn out to be a fine place to start.

David moved himself and his men and families to Hebron and the men of Judah met him there and anointed him as their king. As it turned out, David reigned as king in Hebron for seven years. No doubt he learned much during those years that further prepared him for the day when he would be recognized as King over the entire nation.

From David's experience comes ...

Key Principle #2 ... Don't push on into the future without a **CLEAR** sense of the Lord's **AUTHORIZATION**.

Notice now the third thing David did as he faced this time of transition - an action that is particularly crucial when the transition has actually begun ...

3. HE REFUSED TO ENDORSE UNGODLY MEANS TO ACHIEVE GODLY ENDS.

David knew that Hebron was not his final destination - Kingship over the single tribe of Judah was not his ultimate calling.

Unique temptations come to those who are half-way home - to those who recognize that, though God has begun to work in their circumstances to bring about a larger plan, He hasn't completed his work. The temptation is always there to "help God out" and to "use whatever means will get the job done".

There were those who aligned themselves with David who took that approach.

There was an influential man by the name of Abner who placed Ish-bosheth - one of Saul's sons on the throne and declared him King over all of Israel with the exception of Judah. Abner then instigated hostilities between the men of Ish-bosheth and the men of David.

Years of conflict are recorded in these early chapters of the book of 2 Samuel - years of intrigue and betrayal and even murder but David did not involve himself in any of it. Whenever evil was done in the name of good ... he denounced it!

When one of David's men murdered Abner, David denounced the deed and fasted and mourned the death of one he called "a prince and great man".

When Ish-bosheth, his rival for the throne, was mercilessly murdered in his own bed, David denounced the deed and put to death the men who had done it.

David hands were not sullied by the shedding of innocent blood.

From these examples arises ...

Key Principle #3 ... Don't push on into the future by means that will **COMPROMISE** your **CONSCIENCE**.

And now finally, David's fourth and final action as he proceeded through this time of transition ...

4. HE RESPONDED APPROPRIATELY WHEN THE RIGHT MOMENT FINALLY CAME.

The moment is recorded in the first five verse of 2 Samuel chapter five ...

"All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, 'We are your own flesh and blood. In the past, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on the military campaigns. And the Lord said to you, "You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will be their ruler.'"

When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the King made a compact with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David King over Israel.

The time certainly seemed right ... David had patiently served in Hebron for seven years; David had avoided the excesses of those around him; David had faithfully honored the people and the precepts of God. The throne of Israel was again vacant. **And then one day** ... the elders from Israel sought him out.

And so we come to our final **Key Principle** of the morning ...

Key Principle #4 ...

When the time comes to push on into the future,
let God **ORCHESTRATE** the **CIRCUMSTANCES**.

Final Thot ...

There is nothing more **SATISFYING** than knowing that God is **DIRECTING** and **COORDINATING** your life. Yield yourself to His **TOUCH!**

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Life of David

...

Lesson #13

What's your reaction to Sunday's **Key Concept**?

*"Transitions are **TRICKY** - Success or failure is often determined by how we **HANDLE** them!"*

In Sunday's message we identified **four principles** to follow when facing a time of transition in your life ... (2 Samuel 1-5)

1. Don't push on into the future when there remains **UNFINISHED** business in the **PRESENT**. (What did David have to deal with?)
2. Don't push on into the future without a **CLEAR** sense of the Lord's **AUTHORIZATION**. (What did David ask the Lord?)
3. Don't push on into the future by means that will **COMPROMISE** your **CONSCIENCE**. (How did David show his faithfulness?)
4. When the time comes to push on into the future, let God **ORCHESTRATE** the **CIRCUMSTANCES**. (How did God do it?)

Pick one (or more) of these principles and share some specific challenge it presents to someone who is facing a time of transition.

Here are a couple of statements from Sunday's message ...
What's your take?

"The voice of the multitude seldom speaks for God"

"In spiritual matters, the most obvious and expedient thing frequently is the wrong thing."

Unique temptations come to those who are half-way home - to those who recognize that, though God has begun to work in their circumstances to bring about a larger plan, He hasn't yet completed his work.

Point To Ponder ...

How many of the 365 days of the year are "**days of transition**"?
Can these principles be applied on an almost daily basis?

"IN THE PRESENCE OF THE KING"

(2 Samuel 5:1-25)

Intro ... This morning's message might well be one of the most important that I have ever preached and if it is, it's because it touches on one of the most important subjects that we could ever discuss ...

"The Lordship of Jesus Christ".

Key Concept ... While salvation is a one-time **GIFT**, (John 1:12; Romans 6:23) **LORDSHIP** involves a life-long process - a process that moves us from the merely **THEOLOGICAL** to the **ACTUAL**.

That process is illustrated beautifully in the events surrounding the coronation of David as King over all Israel.

Just last week we looked at those events and identified ourselves with David as we noted the **four key principles** he followed as he passed through this major transition time in his life.

This week I want us to change perspective and identify ourselves with the elders of Israel ... the leaders of the nation who came to officially crown David King.

As we see them come to place the crown on David's head, they represent every born-again child of God who would place Jesus on the throne of his heart; as they make David King, they point the way for every believer who would make Jesus Lord!

Let's review the account together ... 2 Samuel 5:1-5 (read)

Here's the point ... Those elders had known for quite a while that David was God's choice for them. They were aware of David's exploits on their behalf. They were aware that David had been serving as King of Judah for some time. But though David was a King, he was not yet their King and that's why they had come. They had come to make the theological **actual** - to make what they knew to be true in theory, true in their own personal reality. They had come to identify with David's leadership and to surrender themselves to his cause!

And that's exactly what vast numbers of born-again children of God need to do - to make Jesus Christ their Lord ... not just in their theology but in their day to day reality!

Isn't it amazing that, though these elders of Israel had known that David was God's choice for them, they had chosen to throw their support behind Ish-bosheth, one of Saul's sons?

Isn't it perplexing that though they knew David had been declared King over the tribe of Judah, they waited seven years before they were ready to declare him King over the rest of the country?

Is this any less amazing ... that believers, who understand the incredible work Christ has performed for them on Calvary and the freedom from the penalty of sin that their faith in his work has brought them, will throw their support behind ideas and schemes of their own making when it comes to running the affairs of their lives?

Is this any less perplexing ... that believers, who have tasted of the goodness of the Lord and have seen certain benefits of his presence in their lives, will consciously limit the scope of his Lordship - they will let him be Lord of their spiritual life but not of their business life; they will let him be Lord of their Cell life but not of their home life; they might even let him be Lord of their tithe but not of the rest of their income.

My dear friends ... though it's obviously possible to draw such careful distinctions and describe such a partial Lordship, the truth is either Jesus is Lord of All or He is not really Lord at all! And ***until*** he is Lord of all ... the benefits of his Lordship will go un-experienced!

It wasn't until the elders of Israel surrendered the whole of the nation to David's control that they began to enjoy the benefits of his leadership and likewise it isn't until we surrender the whole of our lives to Jesus that we begin to enjoy the benefits of his Lordship!

And those benefits are incredible ... those benefits are the supernatural affects brought about by the power of God that is being released in our lives.

Note what happened when David became king - what happens when Jesus becomes Lord ...

1. LONG ESTABLISHED STRONGHOLDS FALL! (vs. 6-7)

The king and his men marched to Jerusalem to attack the Jebusites, who lived there.

The Jebusites said to David, *"You will not get in here; even the blind and the lame can ward you off."* They thought, *"David cannot get in here."* Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion, the City of David.

Here's the rest of the story ... the city of Jerusalem had never been conquered. Though it fell into the territory allotted to the tribe of Judah, the Jebusites had maintained control of it.

In Joshua 15:63 we read ...

"Judah could not dislodge the Jebusites who were living in Jerusalem; to this day the Jebusites live there with the people of Judah."

And so Jerusalem - this would-be "city of God" - this city where so much subsequent history was to be written - had been kept distinct all those years. It was not identified with any particular tribe; it could wonderfully serve as the capitol city for the entire nation. It just needed to be captured and under the leadership of the nation's newly anointed King, it was!

A long-established stronghold fell ...

And that's what happens when Jesus Christ is declared to be Lord of our lives and every aspect of our lives is placed under his authority ... long-standing bondages, well-entrenched habits, self-destructive personality quirks, negative life patterns all fall before his kingly authority as he moves into our life and puts His Name on the place!

Here's how the Apostle Paul expressed his experience with that power of Christ operating within him ... 2 Corinthians 10:4 ...

"For though we live in the world; we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds."

The presence of the King results in the falling of long-established strongholds.

Here's a second thing that happens when the King is set free in our lives ...

2. SUBSTANTIAL OPPOSITION ARISES! (vs.17, 22)

"When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed King over Israel, they went up in full force to search for him ..."

"Once more the Philistines came up and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim"

You see the real enemy was not the Jebusites ... The Jebusites were just an irritant in the path of progress that had to be removed; they were a formidable irritant but they were more or less a passive enemy. They just holed up in Jerusalem and dared David to dislodge them.

However, the real rival power of the day was the Philistines. It was their stated intention to destroy David and to establish their own dominance.

Interesting, they had not been too concerned about David being King in Hebron but once he was declared King over all of Israel they showed up in full force.

So it is with the Devil himself ... He does not concern himself too much with us as long as we are living a lackadaisical Christian life.

Lackadaisical, semi-committed Christians serve his purposes well - they demonstrate little of the benefits of the Christian life and may actually hinder others from coming to Christ.

But let a Christian truly make Christ Lord and let him begin to experience the results of Christ's Lordship in his life and he can expect the Devil to turn out in full force against him ...

The devil will throw everything at him he's got ... just like he did to Jesus during those 40 days of temptation in the wilderness.

You name it and he will try it ... he will do anything to confuse or discourage us; he will bring pressures of all kinds against us.

This too is a tremendous benefit to the believer who has made Christ Lord ...

Listen to these words from some **early believers** whose lives the devil had messed with ... Acts 5:41

"The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name."

The **Apostle Paul** would say that that was one of the over-all **goals** of his life ... Philippians 3:10

"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection (his Lordship) and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings."

Jesus himself had said to his followers early in his ministry ...

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven ..."
(Matthew 5:11-12)

When Christ is made Lord of our lives substantial opposition arises but that opposition itself becomes a source of blessing - it demonstrates that we are really "in the game".

And now just one **final observation** ...

When David became King, when Christ becomes Lord ...

3. UNEXPECTED RESOURCES APPEAR! (vs.11-12)

Now Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, along with cedar logs and carpenters and stonemasons, and they built a palace for David. And David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel and had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.

What a wonderful response from the neighboring monarch ... sent to David the materials to build his personal palace. Actually David would pay for these materials but the point is ... God gave David favor in Hiram's eyes!

When we make our lives fully available to the Lord, he will bring resources into our lives from the most unexpected sources. He knows that he can trust us to use them for his purposes because he knows that we have yielded all that we have to him!

Final Thot ...

Life lived in the **PRESENCE** of the **KING** is like no other **LIFE** on earth - Don't **MISS** it!

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Life of David

...

Lesson #14

It's an awesome thing to see "a king in action" ... that is, to see a duly authorized, fully energized agent of good doing his thing!

That's what we see in 2 Samuel Chapter 5 ...

DAVID the newly anointed **KING** of **ISRAEL**
initiating his job **SUCCESSFULLY!**

1. He captures a long-established **STRONGHOLD**
2. He experiences and overcomes substantial **OPPOSITION**
3. He is the recipient of unexpected **RESOURCES**.

Sunday we observed that the things that happened when David became king of all Israel are the same type of things that happen when Jesus becomes Lord of all of our life. What did/do you think?

Here are **three statements** from Sunday's message. Pick and comment.

*"And that's what happens when Jesus Christ is declared to be Lord of our lives and every aspect of our lives is placed under his authority ... long-standing **bondages**, well-entrenched **habits**, self-destructive **personality quirks**, negative life **patterns** all fall before his kingly authority as he moves into our lives and puts His Name on the place!"*

*"So it is with the **Devil** himself ... He does not concern himself too much with us as long as we are living a **lackadaisical** Christian life. Lackadaisical, semi-committed Christians serve his purposes well. But let a Christian truly make Christ **Lord** and ... he can expect the Devil to turn out in **full force** against him ..."*

*"When we make our lives fully available to the Lord, he will bring resources into our lives from the most **unexpected** sources. He knows that he can **trust us** to use them for his purposes because he knows we have **yielded** all that we have to him!"*

Point To Ponder ...

Lordship is the **DOORWAY** to abundance!

"BUT HE MEANT WELL"

(2 Samuel 6:1-11)

Intro ...

"But he meant well" ... How often have we used those words?

We look at the broken pieces of the cookie jar on the floor where it crashed when our 5 year old, acting upon a desire to get a cookie for his baby sister, lost his balance and slipped ...

He broke the rule about climbing;

He broke the rule about getting cookies without permission;

He could have broken his neck ...

"But he meant well" ... so we are tempted to overlook his behavior.

Deep in our psyche, there is a seemingly inborn view of life that says, *"Judge behavior in light of what was intended rather than strictly on its own merits."*

That view of life tends to lead to the conclusion that there are no or at least few actions that are wrong in and of themselves ... there are merely wrong goals.

If your goals are good, then the means you use to reach them don't matter.

The **politician** who misrepresents himself in order to get elected;

The **terrorist** who kills the innocent in order to highlight some greater

injustice; The **young person** who agrees to have sex in order to strengthen a relationship; The **desperate woman** who has an abortion in order to lessen family tension ...

All these have bought into that philosophy and by embracing that philosophy they hope to sleep peacefully even though they have taken some action that would cause most people to toss and turn.

Today, in contrast to that philosophy, we declare a fundamental truth -

we re-affirm a fundamental principle. It's our ...

Key Concept #1 ...

Having great **INTENTIONS** is not **SUFFICIENT**;
meaning well is never **ENOUGH!**

God calls us consistently to **do** well not just to **mean** well ... the methods we use to achieve our goals (our good intentions) are just as important to God as the goals themselves ...

Again I would turn your attention to David as our flesh and blood illustration.
Read 2 Samuel 6:1-11 ...

What an incredible story! What a terrible humiliation for Israel's new King! How could something that started out so good end up so bad? Let me fill in a few of the missing details ...

FIRST ... A Word About The ARK

This was not **Noah's** ark ... this was **Moses'** ark ... this was the **Ark of the Covenant** - a beautifully carved gold-covered box (45" long by 27" wide by 27" high) with figures of two golden angels on top.

The story of its design and purpose is told in **Exodus chapter 25** ...
The Ark was the place where God's presence would be manifested.

The Ark was to be carried by the priests in front of the people when they traveled; it would be placed in the Holiest place in the tabernacle when they made camp. The tablets containing the Ten Commandments were kept inside the Ark. It was the nation's most holy and sacred object.

Some 60 years prior to this moment in David's life ... some over-zealous Israelites, viewing the Ark in an Indiana Jones kind of way, carried it into battle against the Philistines. They believed that the Ark would protect them and that its power would annihilate their enemy.

Quite the contrary ... the army of Israel was routed and the Ark itself was captured by the Philistines ... they took it home as a trophy of war and put it in the temple of their pagan God Dagon. They placed the Ark right beside the statue of Dagon. Poor Dagon did not fare so well ...

The next morning they found Dagon lying face down on the ground before the Ark. They put him back on his stand and the next morning they found him lying on the ground with his head and hands broken off. If he was impotent before, he was totally impotent now! In addition, all the people in the vicinity were afflicted with tumors.

The Philistines tried two other locations for the Ark - both times the inhabitants were afflicted with physical and emotional distress. The people cried out to their leaders and the Ark was sent on a cart back to the land of Israel.

For some 60 years the Ark remained on the outskirts of the land of Israel in the home of Abinadab - most likely in an area that was still under Philistine control.

During the ministry of Samuel there was no ***means*** of bringing the Ark back to Shiloh and during the 40 years of Saul's reign there seemed to be no ***desire*** to bring it back.

But David had just routed the Philistines and driven them out of the region where the Ark had been kept ... an opportunity had presented itself.

SECOND ... A Word About David's INTENTIONS

Got to give David great credit here ... you get the impression that the Ark had almost fallen out of people's memory. Getting it back had not been a priority to Saul and for nearly 6 decades the Ark had played no part in the nation's life.

But something stirred in David's heart. He knew the history of the Ark ... He knew the significance of the Ark ... He desired to bring the Ark back ... ***It was a great desire!***

It also was great timing ... for the first time in years, the nation was united and was at peace ... the nation had a new King and a new secure capitol city.

This effort also possessed ***great spiritual significance*** ...

Bring the symbol of God's Presence right into the heart of the nation.

David could not have had better or more godly intentions ... He meant well!

THIRD ... A Word About David's METHODS

He gathered together a great assemblage of people and organized a great procession ... much music and celebration ... this was a scene that would make the Disneyland Electrical Parade seem like an afterthought.

But here's where he made a mistake ... He adopted the Philistine method for transporting the Ark rather than the one God had prescribed.

He put the Ark on an ox driven cart - probably the fanciest one in town. Probably seemed to be the easiest way ... after all that's the way the Philistines had transported it.

However ... that was not the prescribed way to transport the Ark of the Covenant.

(Exodus 25) ... the ark had gold rings on its sides and wooden rods were to be run through those gold rings and those rods were to be used to carry the Ark wherever it was to be taken.

Also David gave the two men (Uzzah and Ahio) who had been the guardians of the Ark the honor of guiding the cart as it was transporting the Ark. That was a great honor - they no doubt deserved it. They had faithfully watched over the Ark for years; no doubt, it was their cart. Good reasons that they should be the ones chosen for this honored task.

However ... they were not the prescribed ones to transport the Ark.

(Numbers 4) ... One of the clans of the Levites was given that responsibility.

But nevertheless as this massive celebration headed down the road everything seemed to be going just fine ... the Ark was being transported wrongly but effectively ...

David's intentions could not have been better and it would seem that God was being understanding about these small alterations in his prescriptions.

FOURTH ... A Word About God's INTERVENTION

You see, it seemed that God was being understanding about these small but reasonable alterations in his prescriptions *until* the oxen stumbled and the Ark tipped precariously and Uzzah put out his hand to steady it.

And at that moment what *seemed* to be the case was seen to *not* be the case at all ... God struck Uzzah dead on the spot! Obviously David's good intentions were not enough!

All of a sudden, celebration turned into catastrophe ...

What a shocking turn of events ... the songs ceased and the balloon popped and what had seemed to be so good turned into something ugly.

FIFTH ... A Look At David's REACTION

ANGER (vs. 8)

His sense of joy and celebration was gone in an instant ...
How dare God do such a thing?

FEAR (vs. 9)

He panicked and began to imagine even greater disasters.
How can the Ark ever come to me?
He couldn't imagine any other way of doing the thing than the way he had attempted it. His methods made sense to him and there were no other methods that he was willing to try.

DISCOURAGEMENT (vs. 10-11)

He gave up on his vision ... he picked the nearest home and simply dumped off the Ark there.

What a tragic result ...

David the King headed home like a pup with his tail between his legs ...
He had meant so well and yet ...

He had been humiliated in front of 30,000 people;
He had lost a valued man; and
He had been forced to forsake a wonderful godly enterprise.

That was a bitter way to learn the truth of our ...

Key Concept #2 ...

God cares about the **MEANS** we use as well as
about the **DREAMS** we pursue!

David needed to put his methods to the test ...

Was there a better way to do this thing?

Had God expressed himself on the subject?

We need to do the same ...

Having the desire to achieve Godly goals is a wonderful thing but it is just
the first step ...

Applying Godly methods to the achieving of those goals is the even more
important next step. Only then can God shower our efforts with his blessing!

And so we come to the ***Final Thot*** of this morning's lesson ...

Final Thot ...

The **WAY** we go about seeking to do a thing is as important to God
as the **THING** we are seeking to do - So, do your **HOMEWORK!**

Sonlife

SELF-STUDY

Life of David

...

Lesson #15

Sunday's message focused upon King David's attempt to bring the ARK of the COVENANT to the new Capitol city of Jerusalem.

How familiar had you been with that story (prior to Sunday)? If you have read it in the past, what has been your reaction to the death of Uzzah? Has it seemed fair - has it made sense?

If you had been David, would you have reacted just like he did - with ANGER and FEAR and DISCOURAGEMENT?

What are some other reactions that David might have had?

SHOCK - I can't believe what just happened!

SORROW - I'm so saddened by what just happened!

STUDY - I've got to find out why this thing has happened!

What was the only thing David could do to be sure he didn't waste time just trying to perfect an improper method ... like building a more stable cart? Check out GOD'S WORD!

What did God's word say about the way to transport the Ark ...

Exodus 25:12-15 "CARRY it using long wooden POLES."

What did God's word say about who was to carry the Ark ...

Num. 4:1-8, 15 "The KOHATHITE branch of the tribe of LEVI."

Name **three key areas of life** where "knowing God's methods" would be helpful ...

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Point To Ponder ... How much time do you spend matching your METHODS to your GOALS?

"GOD'S FORMULA FOR SUCCESS"

(2 Samuel 6:12-19)

Intro ... Last week ago we left David in a horrible spot ... he was angry and scared and frustrated and disillusioned. His attempt to bring the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem had blown up in his face.

In spite of all of his personal preparation ... in spite of his wonderful intentions ... a good man lay dead on the ground and David was humiliated in front of the 30,000 men who had accompanied him. What had gone wrong? What was David's problem?

His "problem" was simply this ...

"Though he had meant well, he had not done well".

He had not wedded his good intentions to good methods; and as a result improper methods had led to unacceptable actions which had led to divine discipline which had turned a potential triumph into a terrible tragedy.

And like an unexpected blow to the mid-section, God's act of judgment had left David gasping for air ... disoriented and discouraged.

And that's where we left him last week ago ... that was the situation recorded in the 9th and 10th verses of 2 Samuel chapter 6.

"David was afraid of the Lord that day and said, 'How can the ark of the Lord ever come to me?' He was not willing to take the ark of the Lord to be with him in the City of David. Instead he took it aside to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite."

Now consider what is recorded just two verses later ...

"So David went down and brought up the Ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing."

So what made the difference?

What turned tragedy back into triumph?

Simple answer ...

***"David discovered Godly Methods to match
his Godly Intentions"***

David discovered God's simple ***"Formula For Success"*** ...
"DO IT MY WAY!"

Notice how verse 13 begins ...

"When those who were carrying the Ark ..."

No more ox carts ... David had done his homework ... He had uncovered the prescribed method for transporting the Ark of the Covenant ... It was to be carried by special poles that were to be placed in the gold rings built into the sides of the Ark ... David had also identified the specific ones who were to carry the Ark ... the Levites.

Check out the parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 15:1-2 ...

"After David had constructed buildings for himself in the City of David, he prepared a place for the Ark of God and pitched a tent for it. Then David said , 'No one but the Levites may carry the Ark of God, because the Lord chose them to carry the Ark of God and to minister before him forever."

And then verses 11-15 ...

*"Then David summoned Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab the Levites. He said to them, "You are the heads of the Levitical families; you and your fellow Levites are to consecrate yourselves and bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to the place I have prepared for it. It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the LORD our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the **prescribed** way."*

So the priests and Levites consecrated themselves in order to bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel. And the Levites carried the ark of God with the poles on their shoulders, as Moses had commanded in accordance with the word of the LORD."

David re-discovered God's Way and as a result experienced success.

That discovery made a profound impression upon David ...

Listen to just these few statements from Psalm 119 – that great ode to the significance of God's Word.

vs. 93 ...

"I will never forget your precepts for by them you have renewed my life"

vs. 105 ... *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"*

vs. 9 ... *"How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your Word."*

And so after this lengthy introduction, we come to ...

Today's Key Concept ...

God's Word tells us not only **WHAT** God would have us do
but also **HOW** he would have us do it!

The Apostle Paul echoed David's passion when he wrote these words to Timothy ...

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

God's Word enables us to match our Godly Desires (our good intentions) with the **Godly Methods** necessary to bring us success.

Let me share several quick examples ...

1. Most Christians Possess A Godly Desire To See People *WON* to *CHRIST* Through Their *WITNESS*.

Sad to say ... few are successful ... Frequently they try to debate people into accepting Jesus – debates that can easily turn into arguments!

They are forever looking for openings in conversations where they can slip in some spiritual tidbit; they become manipulators of conversations and spiritual opportunists; their *"salesman approach"* generally drives people away.

In contrast to such "worldly approaches" there's what we could call **God's Way** ...

LIVE and ANSWER!
(Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 3:15)

Matthew 5:16 ...

"Let your light shine before men so they may see your good deeds and praise your father in heaven."

Simply put ... *"Live in such a way as to make good people glad they are associated with you."*

1 Peter 3:15 ...

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have."

In other words ... **"Live and Answer"** ...

Draw attention by your life; Give an explanation by your lips!

Here's another example ...

2. Most Christians Possess A Godly Desire To See Their CHILDREN Grow Toward SPIRITUAL MATURITY.

First we need to get them saved - then we need to get them fully committed - then we need to get them faithful. There's nothing we want that more than that! So how do we go about getting that done?

Some parents badger their kids ... some parents threaten them ... other parents simply force them. Sometimes in spite of ourselves these methods actually work because the Spirit of God simply overcomes them but usually they don't.

In contrast to such "heavy-handed" methods, here once again is ... **God's Way!**

IMMERSE them in a godly **ENVIRONMENT**
in which you are the **MAIN EXAMPLE!**
(Ephesians 6:4; Deuteronomy 6:7)

Ephesians 6:4 ... "Fathers (and mothers), do not exasperate your children.
Instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Deuteronomy 6:7 ... Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

In other words ...

**"Immerse them in a godly environment
in which you are the main example!"**

You are the first "Jesus" they will ever meet - don't spoil them for the real one!

Here's a third example of Godly methods matching Godly desires ...

**3. Most Christian Parents Possess A Godly Desire To Provide MATERIALLY
For Their FAMILY.**

Sometimes they will work two or three jobs ... they might find it necessary to work on Sunday ... they might go deeply into debt - they spend more than they make. And in the process of filling their house with stuff, they fill their homes with stress.

In contrast to such a "gut-wrenching - body exhausting" way to live, consider ... **God's Way!**

<p>TITHE and PRIORITIZE! (Malachi 3:10; Mathew 6:33; 1 Timothy 6:6,8)</p>
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Malachi 3:10 ...

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse so there may be food in my house.
Test me in this, says the Lord Almighty ... and see if I don't throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room for it."

Matthew 6:33 ...

*"Seek first His kingdom and his righteousness and all these things
will be given to you as well."*

1 Timothy 6:6, 8 ...

*"But godliness with contentment is great gain ...
If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that."*

Put most concisely ... *TITHE AND PRIORITIZE!*

Find contentment in Christ and place all material concerns under his authority.

**4. Most Christian Possess A Godly Desire to Be *FRUITFUL* For *CHRIST* -
To Accomplish Something *SIGNIFICANT* For His Glory.**

They wait for a *significant* opportunity - they compete with others for it when it comes - some position or ministry of note.

They desire to do something significant enough to generate the words "well done" when they enter Christ's presence.

In contrast to such a "big moment" approach to fruitfulness ... consider ***God's Way!***

<p><i>RESPOND</i> to what's <i>RIGHT</i> in <i>FRONT</i> of you! (Luke 10:25-37)</p>

vs. 33 *"But a Samaritan came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him."*

vs. 36 *Jesus asked ... "Which of these was do you think was the neighbor?"*

<p><i>Final Thot ...</i></p>

<p>God's "<i>WELL DONE</i>" will come to those who have <i>DONE</i> things <i>WELL!</i></p>
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Sonlife SELF-STUDY

Life of David

...

Lesson #16

This past Sunday we talked about God's FORMULA for SUCCESS
which was "DO IT MY WAY!"

Generally speaking, how hard is that for you to do? What are some of the factors that make "Doing It God's Way" difficult?

Rate the following life responsibilities according to how much you know about God's teaching on the subject from 1 (low) to 5 (high). Then rank those same life responsibilities according to how difficult they are for you to handle "**God's Way**"

(10 being easiest for you and 1 being hardest for you).

Knowledge
(rate 1-5)

Difficulty
(rank 1-10)

_____	Living A Healthy Lifestyle	_____
_____	Confronting A Christian Brother	_____
_____	Functioning On The Job	_____
_____	Relating To The Government	_____
_____	Handling My Finances	_____
_____	Rearing My Children	_____
_____	Sharing/Explaining My Faith	_____
_____	Relating To My Family	_____
_____	Developing A Ministry	_____
_____	Dealing With Disappointment	_____

Check for correlations ... Does there seem to be a correlation between the degree of difficulty you experience in doing a thing and the amount of knowledge you possess about how to do that thing? Are there some areas where that correlation does not hold true i.e. you know a lot and it's still hard to do?

Point To Ponder ... God's **WELL DONE** will come to those who have **DONE** things **WELL**.

"WHEN GOD HAS A BETTER IDEA"

(2 Samuel 7:1-29)

Intro ... Have you ever had a great idea, even a godly idea, shot down? Have you ever had a carefully laid out plan, even a good ministry plan, fail to come to fruition? Or maybe even worse, have you ever seen circumstances beyond your control enter in and drastically alter the idea you had and the plan you carefully conceived? Maybe you have even seen the blessings of your great idea fall into someone else's lap.

Did it make you mad? Did it exasperate you? Did it tempt you to doubt God's faithfulness - His goodness?

And did some trusted Christian friend say to you at the time ...

*"I guess God just had a **better** idea"*? How did that make you feel?

How did you respond?

And so this series of questions brings us to ...

Today's Key Question ...

How should we **RESPOND** when God has a **BETTER IDEA**?

For our answer to that question, let's look once again at the man whose life we have been examining for these past weeks ... our biblical case study ...

"David - the Man after God's own heart".

For this week's examination we turn to **2 Samuel chapter 7**.

Here's the situation ... His Kingship has been firmly established - The nation is secure ... His enemies have all been overcome.

In the midst of this wondrous moment, David conceived a brilliant idea - a godly idea - a wonderful ministry idea - his passion for the things of God stirs in him a wonderful plan.

He would build a magnificent house for God ... a temple ... a place where the Ark of the Covenant could be permanently located.

It would be a glorious place where the prescribed sacrifices could be offered and God's Presence sensed and the people's worship directed.

It would be hard to top that idea ... It would be hard to veto that idea.

But God did!

God sent the prophet Nathan to tell David "**NO**" ... God had a better idea ... David's son would be the one to build this magnificent temple. (vs. 12-13)

Basically God was saying that David idea was fine - it's just that David would not be the one to implement it ... David would never get to see the fulfillment of his idea. Though David possessed the resources, he would not be given the opportunity.

Now, you and I don't usually receive God's "*better ideas*" though such direct communication ... usually we get them indirectly through circumstances.

Sometimes we sense God's leading through the inner promptings of the Spirit but usually when our plans get vetoed, they get vetoed by circumstances over which we have no control and the new plan is frequently brought into being in that same way.

Now when that happens how should we as Christians respond?

1. RESPOND IN FAITH ... 2 Samuel 7:18a

"THEN David went in and sat before the Lord ..."

"Then" ... when? After receiving the word from Nathan the prophet. David accepted and believed every word spoken by the prophet as the "*gospel truth*" ... **that's faith**. He didn't question - he didn't doubt. He expressed his conviction on the subject in verse 28 ...

"O Sovereign Lord, You are God! Your words are trustworthy ..."

The point I would make this morning is this ...

*"When our lives are committed to God through Jesus Christ and when our desires are focused upon serving the Lord, then **"living by faith"** means believing that God is in complete control of the circumstances of our life; and whether those circumstances are perceived as good or bad, faith says that they are part of "God's better idea" for us."*

Faith means "embracing those circumstances" and believing that God is at work in them.

That's not always easy to do, is it? That's why God is so impressed with faith ... That's why faith is the thing - more than anything else - that pleases God.

Solomon, David's son, might have been thinking of his father's experience when he wrote these Proverbs ...

*16:9 "In his heart a man plans his course,
but the Lord determines his steps"*

*19:21 "Many are the plans in a man's heart,
but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."*

Sometimes our plans match up perfectly with God's and they receive his blessing and we see them through to a satisfying completion. But other times they don't and at those times we would **want** God to veto them or to alter them so as to make them match up with His. And when that veto or alteration comes, God would have us exercise faith and accept that alteration or veto as coming from his hand. God would have us respond in faith to his "better idea".

But there's more here ... there's more that God would have us experience at such a moment in our lives ... there's more than just accepting by faith that this turn of events is part of some "better idea" that God has for our lives ... God would have this moment be more than just a "grit your teeth and bear it" moment ... God would desire to use this potentially discouraging moment to draw us close to him and to stir our hearts in ways that perhaps no other moment in our lives could.

But to experience these further benefits, we must continue to follow in David's steps ...

In addition to responding in faith, God would have us ...

2. RESPOND IN REFLECTION ... 2 Samuel 7:18

*"Then David went in and sat before the Lord and he **SAID**:"*

Sitting is a reflective posture ...

"Be still and know that I am God" - Ps. 46:10

At one of these moments in our lives when it has become apparent that "God has a better idea" and that our own idea is not going to happen, it's important to ...

*** Reflect upon the GOODNESS of God**

That's what David began to do ...

*"Who am I, O Sovereign Lord, and what is my family,
that you have brought me this far?"*

God had just reminded David through Nathan of that entire incredible journey!

God chose him though he was the least of eight sons of Jesse.

God re-assigned him from his father's pasture to the King's palace.

God had enabled him to win some incredible victories.

God had watched over him and protected him during years of exile.

God had finally honored him as King over the people of Israel.

God and then established his Kingdom and given him rest from all his enemies.

There was honest amazement in David's voice when he questioned,

"Who am I that you have brought me this far?"

How far has God brought you? How long has it been since you have reflected upon the journey?

Times when "God has a better idea for your life" are great times for that kind of reflection ...

Such reflection strengthens your faith and restores your confidence because it simply follows that if God has *"brought you this far through all He's brought you through"* then you can trust what He's doing in your life right now!

Reflect on the Goodness and Grace of God as it has been expressed in your life!

*** Reflect upon the *PROMISES* of God**

The promises of God are the things that are yet to be ...

The promises of God reveal the *"end of the journey"* even though they don't reveal the *"course of the journey"*.

The promises of God are what lift our eyes from the discouragement of the present circumstance and cause us to cast our gaze to the future.

God gave David through Nathan the prophet a very special promise to hang on to. God would establish a *"house"* for David ... that is, the line of David would never be broken and the name of David would never be extinguished like Saul's had been.

vs. 9 ... "I will make your name great"

vs. 11 ... "I will establish a house (of rulers) for you"

vs. 12-13 ... "I will raise up your offspring to succeed you and he shall build a house for my Name"

vs. 16 ... "your throne will be established forever."

You and I, as subjects of the Lord Jesus Christ-the Son of David - are part of the fulfillment of that promise given to David centuries ago. We make up what Paul calls *"Spiritual Israel"* ... We ourselves are *"sons of David"* as we have been *"born by faith"* into the family of Christ.

As Jesus himself lives forevermore so the *"house of David"* is indeed established forever!

As we have been linked to Christ by faith and through the miracle of the new birth, so we are recipients of the same promise - we are heirs of God - joint heirs of grace with Christ himself. Our names are forever linked with His Glorious Name!

And now a final observation from David's exemplary behavior ...

In those times when circumstances force us to say, "*It appears that God has a better idea*", God would have us respond not only in **faith** and in **reflection** but God would also have us ...

3. RESPOND IN ADORATION ... 2 Samuel 7:22

*"How **GREAT** you are, O Sovereign Lord!
There is no one like you, and there is no God but you ..."*

When you think about it, that's the desired end result of every action of God in our lives ... that's the desired end result of every time of reflection we engage in ... that we would be once again overwhelmed with the **Greatness** of God ... that we would be caught up in wonder and worship.

So what do we do when it becomes apparent that "*God has a better idea*" with regard to some area of our life ...

We **receive** it by faith as being from Him

We allow it to stimulate a time of **reflection** upon His past Goodness to us and

We **rejoice** in the outcome that is yet to be!

Final Thot ...

Just remember ...
God's better ideas are not just **BETTER**, they're **BEST!**

Sonlife

SELF-STUDY

Life of David

...

Lesson #17

The title of Sunday's message (2 Samuel 7:1-29) was ...

"When God has a BETTER IDEA".

What was David's great idea? *"He would build a HOUSE for GOD"*

What was God's better idea? *"He would build a HOUSE for DAVID and David's SON would BUILD the House for God."*

How did God's "better idea" get communicated to David?

"God revealed it to the prophet NATHAN."

How did Pastor Mark say God's "better ideas" usually get communicated to us today?

"Through CIRCUMSTANCES beyond our CONTROL."

Has God ever communicated one of His "better ideas" to you? What "idea" of yours did it alter or veto? Did you think it was "better" at the time? Did He communicate it somewhat directly or did He communicate it through circumstances? Share ...

How did David respond to this "better idea" from God?

In FAITH ... I accept this as being from God.

In REFLECTION ... Who am I that God has been so good to me?

In ADORATION ... There is no one like You, O Lord!

Here's Pastor Mark's closing comment from Sunday's Message ...

"So what do we do when it becomes apparent that "God has a better idea" with regard to some area of our life ... We RECEIVE it by FAITH as being from Him; we allow it to stimulate a time of REFLECTION upon His past goodness to us; and we REJOICE (by faith) in the OUTCOME that is yet to be!"

How tough is that to do? ... Which of these three is toughest?

Point To Ponder ... Do you have to see HOW God's idea is better BEFORE you can ACCEPT it as better?

"MORE THAN CONQUERORS"

(2 Samuel 8:1-15)

Intro ... This morning I'd like to chat with you a bit about a New Testament Concept that we find illustrated in the life of King David.

The **concept** is that of "*Being More Than A Conqueror*" ... It comes from the book of Romans chapter eight verse 37 when Paul says "*in all these things - all the really tough stuff of life - we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us*".

Now the smallest margin of victory is all it takes to make one a conqueror. However, God's Word says that we are "*more than conquerors*".

Someone who is "*more than a conqueror*" wins victories routinely ... wins victories decisively ... wins victories seemingly effortlessly - even unconsciously!

As our **Key Concept #1** declares ...

Key Concept #1...

Someone who is **MORE** than a **CONQUEROR**
is victory **PERSONIFIED!**

That's what Jesus was ... That's what God would have us be ...
That's what God allowed David to become.

Check it out ...

2 Samuel 8:6 ...

"The Lord gave David victory everywhere he went."

2 Samuel 8:14 ...

"The Lord gave David victory everywhere he went."

David defeated the Philistines; David defeated the Moabites; David defeated the Edomites; David defeated the Arameans of Syria ... He did what no other

Israeli leader before him had been able to do ... Not Joshua, not the judges, not Saul.

David pushed back the boundaries of the nation until he held sway over all the land that God had promised Abraham centuries before.

And having extended the boundaries to their fullest extent, he exhibited the final evidence that he was "*more than a conqueror*" ... he ruled the land well.

vs. 15 ... "*David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people.*"

What an incredible state of affairs!

Victories were won in every direction ... the Kingdom was expanded to its maximum extent ... all enemies were driven into retirement and righteousness prevailed throughout the land!

That's being "*more than a conqueror*" ... that's being victory personified!

That recognition brings us to ...

Key Concept #2 ...

Though our **ENEMIES** are different,
our **VICTORIES** come the same way David's did.

Paul explained in Ephesians that "*our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against ... the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*" (Ephesians 6:12)

Put another way ... our enemies are three fold - the **world** with its godless values; the **flesh** with its perverted desires and the **devil** with his destructive schemes.

But regardless of the face or name of our enemy, David's great victories point the way to victories of our own.

Two observations based upon this passage ...

1. DAVID RELIED CONTINUALLY AND COMPLETELY UPON GOD

2 Samuel 8:4 records an interesting action ... "*David hamstringed (made completely useless) all but a hundred of the chariot horses*".

Why would he do that?

Consider what he wrote in *Psalm 20 verse 7* ...

*"Some trust in chariots and some in horses
but we trust in the name of the Lord our God."*

So easy to place our confidence in material, physical things ... so easy to trust in the same things that the unbelievers around us trust in!

David knew that it was the Lord who was giving him the victory just like it had always been ...

Now that's just what the Apostle Paul said... in all the tough stuff of life, we are more than conquerors ***through him that loved us***.

It's our personal relationship with Christ that gives us the drive and the ability to put to death the ***desires*** of our fleshly nature ...

It's our personal relationship with Christ that transforms our minds with godly truths and counteracts the ***values*** of the world around us ...

It's our personal relationship with Christ that gives us the insight to recognize and then the courage to stand against the devil's ***schemes*** ...

And it's our personal relationship with Christ that will keep us from putting our hope and confidence in anything or anyone other than him!

But it, at times, can be extremely hard to keep our personal relationship with Christ at the heart of what we are doing ...

That's why a **daily quiet time** is so important - that why a time of personal communion with Christ each day is so vital. Whenever we forsake that daily connection, we will almost inevitably connect with something lesser than Christ ...

We will take comfort in the things that are familiar; we will rely upon things that have worked in the past; we will find our closest companionship with those who surround us and we will run the risk of fighting today's battles with outmoded weapons.

Second thing ...

2. DAVID GAVE ALL THE GLORY TO GOD

2 Samuel 8:11 records another interesting action ...

"David dedicated these articles to the Lord, as he had done with the silver and gold from all the nations he had subdued ..."

Great plunder had been taken from the nations David had defeated. In addition, great amounts of tribute had been brought by nations who had no intention of being added to David's hit list.

David dedicated it all to the Lord and eventually these vast resources found their way into the construction and the storehouses of the great temple of Solomon!

Verse 12 tells us that "**David became famous**" ... that usually happens to a victorious person ... sooner or later the word gets out and people take notice but David never forgot that "*It was the Lord who provided each and every victory*". And that recognition allowed the Lord to provide more and more of them!

Now that's exactly what the Lord wants to do for you and me ... He wants to provide for us more and more victory ... He wants others to recognize us as being "*more than conquerors*" in the midst of this fallen, sin-twisted world.

And so we come to ...

Key Question #1 ...
How's your **VICTORY** level?

How successfully are you putting to death the desires of the flesh; how successfully are you refusing to buy into the ungodly values of the world; and how successfully are you resisting the devious advances of the devil against you?

The answer to each of these questions is found in the answer to

Key Question #2 ...
How much like **JESUS** are you becoming?

You see that's the one tell-tale sign - the undeniable characteristic - of one who is living as "*more than a conqueror*" ...

CHRISTLIKENESS!

That's the dynamic that explained it all to the Apostle Paul ...

*"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory,
are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing
glory, which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

2 Corinthians 3:18

Christ-likeness is the ultimate expression of victory for a believer today ...

Confronted with **Christ-likeness**, the flesh cannot stand;

Confronted with **Christ-likeness**, the values of the world cannot hold sway;

Confronted with **Christ-likeness**, the devil himself has no chance.

Key Concept #3 ...

Christ-likeness comes as the **SPIRIT** of Christ is given free **REIGN** in our **HEARTS**; He is the ultimate conqueror.

Those who are yielded to him ...

Demonstrate His **FRUIT** ... Galatians 5:22-23

"Now the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

Exercise His **GIFTS** ... Romans 12:6; I Corinthians 12:7

"We all have different gifts, according to the grace given to us."

"Now the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the common good."

Enjoy His **COMMUNION** ... Revelation 3:20

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me."

Final Thot ...

Being "More Than A Conqueror" is more of a **CONDITION** than it is an **ACTION** - a condition in which God would have each of us live.

As we **COMMUNE** with Christ through his Spirit on a daily basis, we take on that condition naturally and effortlessly. We will not necessarily even **RECOGNIZE** it, but those **AROUND** us will!

Sonlife

SELF-STUDY

Life of David

...

Lesson #18

Sunday Morning message was titled "**MORE** than **CONQUERORS**".

That title was suggested by David's experience "And the Lord gave David victory everywhere he went" and by Paul's observation in Romans 8:37 "In all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us".

Finish this sentence - "Being more than a conqueror means ...

Now it's interesting that the passage in Romans would indicate that being "more than conquerors" is what we already are - that the enemies we face are already defeated and heading toward "retirement". Let's check it out.

1. How about the godless values of the WORLD - how have they been defeated by the one who is "more than a conqueror"?

Galatians 6:14 ... "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through which the world has been crucified to me."

Romans 12:2 ... "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

2. How about the perverted desires of the FLESH - how have they been defeated by the one who is "more than a conqueror"?

Romans 6:6 ... "For we know that our old self (our flesh) was crucified with him, so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin."

Galatians 5:16 ... "live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature (the flesh)."

3. How about the destructive schemes of the DEVIL - how have they been defeated by the one who is "more than a conqueror"?

Colossians 2:15 ... "And having disarmed the principalities and powers, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

James 4:7 ... "Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

Point To Ponder ... Being "more than a conqueror" in reality depends upon how closely we are linked to the **CONQUEROR** himself!

"AN EXHIBITION OF GRACE"

(2 Samuel 9:1-13; Ephesians 2:1-20)

Intro ... This morning I want to talk to you about **Grace** for as our **Key Concept** expresses it ...

Key Concept ...

In all the world, there is nothing so **AMAZING**, so **MARVELOUS**,
so absolutely **TRANSFORMING** as **GRACE** - completely
UNDESERVED FAVOR.

One of the most popular hymns of all time says ...

*"Amazing Grace (how sweet the sound)
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found -
Was blind but now I see!"*

Another says ...

*"Marvelous grace of our Loving Lord,
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt.
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured -
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.*

And then there's that exuberant chorus to yet another
old song of grace that says:

*"Wonderful the matchless grace of Jesus,
Deeper than the mighty rolling sea;
Higher than the mountain, flowing like a fountain;
All sufficient grace for even me!
Broader than the scope of my transgressions,
Greater far than all my sin and shame
O magnify the precious name of Jesus,
Praise His Name!"*

Indeed the song writers have known for years that ...

In all the world, there is nothing so **AMAZING**, so **MARVELOUS**,
so absolutely **TRANSFORMING** as **GRACE** - completely
UNDESERVED FAVOR.

This morning as we resume our study of the Life of David, we are going to observe an **EXHIBITION OF GRACE** recorded in 2 Samuel Chapter 9; we also going to expose ourselves to an **EXPOSITION OF GRACE** found in Ephesians chapter 2.

Let's read the story together ... 2 Samuel chapter 9 verses 1-13 ...

Note first of all ...

1. THE RECIPIENT OF GRACE - Mephibosheth

* He was a man **SEPARATED** from the King's **PRESENCE**
Mephibosheth - son of David's greatest friend Jonathan but grandson of David's great adversary Saul - was living in exile in a place call Lo Debar. The King had to take the initiative to search him out.

* He was a man **AFRAID** of the King's **JUDGMENT**
That fear had been put in him as a little boy. The day King Saul and Jonathan had died at the hands of their enemies, Mephibosheth was only five years old. His nurse and guardian had snatched him up and fled with him in fear that whoever would follow Saul on the throne would seek to kill all possible rivals. In the process of fleeing, Mephibosheth fell and became a cripple for the rest of his life.

Now he was a grown man with a child of his own ... still living in Lo Debar, still living as much as possible - "*under the radar*".

Mephibosheth is a prime example of all who would be recipients of God's Grace ...

Listen to these words from **Ephesians chapter 2 verses 12-13**

*"... at that time (before you were saved) you were **separate** from Christ, **excluded** from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without **hope** and without **God** in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were **far away** have been brought near through the blood of Christ."*

Those words describe all men in their natural, fallen condition!

Separate from Christ ... Complete outsiders when it comes to the blessings of the covenant God has made with His People ... therefore, men are without hope and without God in the world.

Totally on their own - living with fears of various kinds and ultimately living in face of the greatest fear of all ... death itself and what it brings!

Can you remember those days? Living with no sense of connection to God - living with no assurance that your life was going anywhere - living with a uneasiness about your future?

The Bible says that "*The wages of sin is death*" and that "**death**" takes a thousand forms before it takes its final eternal form in hell itself.

Men in and of themselves are desperately in need of Grace - undeserved favor from God - for in and of themselves they deserve nothing more than what they naturally experience in this fallen world.

It would take a great **exhibition** of grace for Mephibosheth to be restored to the life he once knew as a privileged member of the royal family. He had no claim upon David and no inherent right to be included around the King's Table.

And that exhibition of grace is exactly what he was privileged to observe. Now notice secondly this morning ...

2. THE ACTIONS OF GRACE

* David **SOUGHT** him out (vs. 1)

"Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

* David **BROUGHT** him back (vs. 5)

*"So King David had him brought from Lo Debar,
from the house of Makir, son of Ammiel"*

* David **SHOWERED** him with **BLESSINGS** (vs. 7)

*"Don't be afraid", David said to him, for I will surely show you
kindness for the sake of your father, Jonathan. I will restore
to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul,
and you will always eat at my table."*

What wonderfully gracious actions were those ... None of them were required - none of them were deserved but all of them were grace-stirred!

A gracious heart cannot go unexpressed. These actions of Grace demonstrate one more time that David was indeed a man after God's own heart.

Consider how God has acted on our behalf even while we were "separated from him" and completely "without hope" in this fallen world. (Eph. 2:13-19)

*"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. **Consequently**, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord."*

Consider this incredible statement from Ephesians 1:1-10 ...

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."

*In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- to the praise of his glorious **grace**, which he has freely given us **in the One he loves**. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's **grace** that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.*

And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment - to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ."

Not a bit of that was deserved - not a bit of that was merited ... All of that has been graciously provided by the initiative of God the Father because of his desire to honor His Son - the Lord Jesus.

Even as Mephibosheth was blessed for Jonathan's sake, so the Father has blessed us for Jesus' sake!

And now all that remains this morning is for us to consider ...

3. THE RESPONSE TO GRACE

* Mephibosheth **RECOGNIZED** it for what it was (vs. 8)

"What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?"

It's essential that grace be recognized as grace - as unmerited favor - as something that I do not deserve but that I am incredibly blessed to have received.

Grace properly recognized stirs continual awe and gratitude in its recipient.

Grace properly understood protects us from ever daring to make demands upon God.

Grace regularly remembered keeps us humble before our Father in heaven.

* Mephibosheth **ALLOWED** it to **TRANSFORM** his life (vs. 13)

*"And Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, because
he always ate at the King's table ..."*

Grace has a way of working its way all the way through us.

Grace doesn't just provide for our salvation from the penalty of our sin;

Grace also provides for our salvation from any bondage to sin.

Grace results in life - a vastly different life - a blessed life - an abundant life. **Grace** radically changes us ... We ourselves become **people** of grace!

Here's how Paul expressed it in Ephesians 2:1-10

"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

*But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by **grace** you have been saved.*

*And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his **grace**, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

*For it is by **grace** you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus to do good works**, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*

Final Thot ...

Those who truly **EXPERIENCE** grace inevitably **EXPRESS** grace - they become living **EXTENSIONS** of their **GRACIOUS** God in this needy world.

Sonlife

SELF-STUDY

Life of David

...

Lesson #19

Sunday Morning message was titled ... "An EXHIBITION Of GRACE".

Reflect upon Sunday's **Key Concept** ...

"In all the world, there is nothing so AMAZING, so MARVELOUS, so absolutely TRANSFORMING as GRACE - God's completely UNMERITED FAVOR."

Here are some key **Biblical Texts** concerning **Grace** - notice the various ways in which the word "**grace**" is used ...

1. Grace can refer to the general CONDITION of Salvation

*"...we have gained access by FAITH into this **grace** in which we now STAND." (Romans 5:1-2)*

2. Grace can refer to our freedom from LEGALISTIC requirements

*"For sin shall not be your MASTER, because you are not under LAW but under **grace**." (Romans 6:14)*

3. Grace can refer to GIFTINGS for Ministry

*"We all have DIFFERENT gifts according to the **grace** given to us." (Romans 12:6)*

4. Grace can refer specifically to DONATIONS to the NEEDY -

*"Just as you EXCEL in everything - see to it that you also excel in this **grace** of GIVING." (2 Corinthians 8:7)*

5. Grace can refer to STRENGTH for the Struggle

*"My **grace** is SUFFICIENT for you ..." (2 Corinthians 12:9)*

*"Approach the throne of GRACE so we may ... find **grace** to HELP us"*

*"See to it that no one MISSES the **grace** of God and that no ROOT of bitterness grows up ..." (Hebrews 4:16;12:15)*

Point To Ponder ... Those who truly EXPERIENCE **grace** inevitably EXPRESS **grace** - they become living EXTENSIONS of their gracious God in this fallen, needy world.

"JOURNEY TO JUDGMENT"

(2 Samuel 11)

Intro ... This morning we come to perhaps the darkest moment in David's life - his grievous sin with Bathsheba. From the heights of God's blessing, David now falls to the depths of God's judgment. The story begins in 2 Samuel chapter 11 and concludes in chapter 12 ... I'm calling the combined story "*Journey to Judgment*".

This morning I want us to look extremely closely at each aspect of David's fateful journey - I want us to clearly recognize each step along the way and learn from David's tragic mistake.

David's "*Journey to Judgment*" began in

1. THE PLACE OF LEISURE (vs.1- 2a)

(The army was in the field; David was home in bed.)

Some leisure is good - some leisure is absolutely necessary ... too much leisure is not good ...

There's an old saying with which my mother was very familiar ...

"Idle hands are the devil's workshop."

David got up from his bed ... it's not hard to project here a "*restlessness born of inactivity and lack of challenge*". His spirit was searching for direction and involvement ... for something to do.

Ask yourself ... "*Is my life filled with useful, purposeful activity or do I have too much time on my hands?*"

In the middle of warm spring night, spurred on by a sense of restlessness born of inactivity, David got out of bed and started on his "*journey to judgment*". His walk on the roof of his palace brought him to...

2. THE MOMENT OF SINFUL DESIRE (vs. 2b)

(He saw a beautiful woman bathing.)

He knew this woman ... this was Bathsheba the wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of his mighty men. The very proximity of her home to the palace indicates the standing she and her husband held in the community. From his rooftop vantage point David could look right into her home and see what was going on. And what he saw that night was Bathsheba bathing.

He chose to continue to stare ... He could have turned his eyes away but he didn't.

The scripture says that she was beautiful but the truth is it wouldn't have made any difference if she wasn't. She was a woman - she was naked - and she was there.

At this point let me make an observation ... women hardly ever understand the affect their bodies have upon men; women generally just don't relate to their bodies the way that men do to theirs.

A sloppy, overweight man passing a mirror will suck in his gut, flex his biceps and think "*I still got it*". A Miss America contestant passing a mirror will notice every miniscule flaw in her makeup and most likely think "*I'll never get it*".

A woman, when her husband runs off with or has an affair with some woman at work, might say "*But she's not even attractive*" ... here's the point, she doesn't have to be - she just has to be there and he just has to be properly prepared.

Men look at women differently than women look at themselves. That's why there can be so much tension in the home over what a young girl wears to school.

The dad says "*No daughter of mine is going out dressed like that*" and the mother says, "*But she looks so cute*" or "*It's the way they all dress*".

Every additional square inch of skin that is exposed on the female body increases the attention that she will generate in the males around her - particularly in young males ...

Modesty matters ... it matters more than the typical female understands.

However, there's nothing to suggest that Bathsheba was doing anything that was immodest - there is nothing to suggest that she was not bathing in the proper bathing place.

It was David who was out of place and it was David who failed to exercise control over his stirred passions. Those passions formed in him a sinful desire ... a desire to take Bathsheba into his own bed. He could have squelched that desire but he didn't.

That passion-fueled sinful desire then led David to take

3. THE STEP OF INDULGENCE (vs. 4)

(He sent messengers to get her.)

David sent an entourage of his servants to escort Bathsheba to his home - he slept with her that very night and sent her home in the morning. No harm had been done. No one would ever know ... he had exercised his kingly prerogative ... he had satisfied himself and that was that.

But "*that is never that*" when it comes to sin ...

David's self-indulgent sin with Bathsheba placed him irreversibly on

4. THE HIGHWAY OF COMPLICATION (vs. 5-27) ... now the journey to judgment increasingly sped up until David was careening along like some out of control chariot ...

*** Milepost #1** ... The fear of **DETECTION** (vs. 5)

Bathsheba announces that she is pregnant and David realizes that his deed will be discovered by her husband and his loyal warrior-friend Uriah ...

There's no way that Bathsheba will lie to protect him (adultery was punishable by death) - her only defense to her husband will be that the King sent men who forced her to go with them; she had no choice in the matter!

Uriah's beef would be with the King - an embarrassing and potentially ruinous turn of events!

David's mind sprang into gear ... restlessness was no longer the problem ... He was in full blown damage control mode ... His fear of detection moved him along his journey to ...

*** Milepost #2 ... An attempt at *DECEPTION* (vs. 6-13)**

This was a brilliantly simple solution ... just get Uriah to come home. Bathsheba's pregnancy was still too early for others to detect and she could easily convince Uriah that the child was his when it was born ... They would always identify that child as their "*furlough baby*".

But Uriah blew the whole plan ... Uriah turned out to be more "*godly*" than David. Uriah saw the inconsistency of enjoying the comforts of his home and bed when his fellow soldiers were out in the fields ... He was still "*on duty*" and he would not resume the pleasures of "*off-duty life*" until it was appropriate. He didn't go home at all ... he probably didn't even tell his wife that he was in town ... he slept that night with David's servants on the porch of the palace.

Uriah's godly passion could have shocked David into reality ... It could have caused David to say "*What have I done?*" It could have caused him to confess his sin to Uriah and seek his forgiveness. But it didn't ...

The following night David tried to overcome Uriah's conviction and to blur his judgment by getting him drunk but even then his inner resolve held and he spent a second night on the palace porch.

Simple deception was obviously not going to work ... Uriah was too principled a man and David couldn't just command him to go home and sleep with his wife so David proceeded on to ...

*** Milepost #3 ... A cold-blooded *EXECUTION* (vs. 14-25)**

Just how far would David go? Just as far as he had to! He had planned an easy way out for the unsuspecting Uriah but Uriah hadn't cooperated so far more drastic measures would be called for. Uriah must be removed from the picture but it must happen in a way as to eliminate any possible suspicion.

Solution: Send Uriah back to the field - Have him carry a letter that instructs the army commander to place him in an extremely vulnerable position. Pull back from him and let him be killed. It was brilliant ... it could work.

Of course, others would be killed too ... and Joab, the commander, would wonder what in the world was going on ... and the troops themselves would perhaps question their commander's actions and perhaps the morale of the entire army would suffer and of course, one of their mightiest men would be lost but basically it was a foolproof plan - a plan conceived by a desperate man!

David's plan worked to perfection ... Uriah **was** killed ... Joab sent a messenger to David with the news. And with the coming of that messenger David finally arrived at what he thought was the end of his journey ...

*** Milepost #4 ... The perfect *RESOLUTION* (vs. 26)**

Bathsheba mourned the loss of her husband - but a soldier's wife knows that such things are always a possibility and after her time of mourning was completed, she agreed to be David's wife and some months later a baby boy was born.

Whether the child was viewed in the community as Uriah's or David's the Scripture doesn't say ... the point was that everything worked out and David's reputation as a godly man was preserved.

David might have thought that he had taken his final step on the "*Highway of Complication*" but he had not ... there was one more mile to travel for as chapter 11 comes to a close David arrives at ...

*** Milepost #5 ... An ominous *OBSERVATION* (vs. 27)**

"The thing that David did displeased the Lord."

Did David think that all of this was happening without the Lord's awareness? Or had he so deceived himself that he thought he was justified in what he had done? Perhaps he was just so relieved when it was "over" that he made no attempt to analyze the whole terrible ordeal. Perhaps like many of us who seemingly escape the full consequences of some sinful behavior, he said to himself and probably to Bathsheba ... *"Let's just move on from here."*

Isn't it amazing how willing we can be to *"lay our sins behind us"* and move on?

David was going to move on alright ...

He was going to move farther on his *"Journey to Judgment"* for *"the thing that he had done had displeased the Lord"*.

Since the beginning years in this fellowship I have declared that there is no greater feeling in all the world than to feel the smile of God's pleasure upon you - *"Guided by God's Smile"* ... it's the most wonderful way to live!

But this morning - as we come to the conclusion of the first part of this two part message, let me also point out the truth contained in today's ...

Final Thot ...

There is nothing so ominous - so unnerving - as having the Lord's ***DISPLEASURE*** hanging over your ***HEAD***.

Let this message this morning serve as a ***warning*** ... perhaps for some as a *"wake-up call"* ... ***Examine your life*** ... Make sure you are not yourself involved in such a *"Journey to Judgment"* - from *leisure* to *desire* to *indulgence* to *deception* to various forms of *complication* and ultimately to *judgment*.

Come back next week and see if there indeed can be *"life after sin"*.

Sonlife

SELF - STUDY

Life of David

...

Lesson #20

In Sunday's message we took a pretty close look at ...

"David's SIN with BATHSHEBA."

What did Pastor Mark say was the most likely contributing factor in David's life at the time ... IDLENESS - too much SPARE TIME on his hands.

Has "*idleness*" ever been/is a problem in your life? What kinds of problems does "*idleness*" generate? *How about these possible problems that arise from idleness* ...

BOREDOM - "There's nothing for me to do."

Feelings of WORTHLESSNESS - "I'm not accomplishing anything of value."

FATIGUE - "I'm tired; I don't seem to have any energy."

DEPRESSION - "My life isn't even worth living; why even get out of bed?"

Here's a key reality... Since all of these "problems" are UNDESIRABLE, we will generally seek out something (anything) to overcome them.

Here's the problem ... The WORLD, the FLESH and the DEVIL seem to be especially good at suggesting ways to do just that.

With regard to the particular "opportunity" presented to David, consider how these three enemies worked together to "get him involved".

"You and your needs are the most important thing" ... that's the point of view called PERSONALISM that is part of the thinking pattern of the WORLD.

"You have needs and the opportunity is here to meet them - go for it." ... that's the action of the FLESH called INDULGENCE.

"Surely God's normal rules for behavior don't apply to you - you're King" ... that's some DECEPTIVE reasoning provided by the DEVIL.

How familiar/logical do these "suggestions" sound to you?

Point To Ponder ... There is nothing so ominous - so unnerving - as having the Lord's DISPLEASURE hanging over your HEAD -sensing every day His FROWN of DISAPPROVAL!

"JOURNEY TO JUDGMENT - Part Two"

(2 Samuel 12)

Intro ... This morning we come to the meat of the message of which last week's message was but an extended introduction ... The context of the message this morning as of last week's is David's adulterous one night stand with Bathsheba, the wife of one of his most trusted warriors.

Our message ended last week with us noting the **ominous observation** recorded in 2 Samuel chapter 11 verse 27 ...

"But the thing David did displeased the Lord".

There's a couple in our church that uses the following earthy expression to explain a key dynamic in the home. It goes like this:

"If momma ain't happy, ain't nobody happy".

In the family of God it goes like this ...

"If the Lord ain't happy, ain't nobody happy".

And the Lord certainly wasn't happy with David ... the Lord isn't happy with any of his children who sin deliberately and willfully. Alluding to that fact, I said last week that this week we would face the question ...

"Is there life after sin"?

That is, can a believer who commits willful, deliberate sin - a believer who has displeased the Lord - regain favor with God and regain as well God's blessing upon his life?

Now before you give a quick knee-jerk reaction to that question, let me point out that there are two very distinct thoughts on the subject ... two different perspectives found within the Christian Community.

There are those in the greater Christian Community who would answer that question with a resounding **"NO"**.

They would say that there is no joyful, abundant, productive Christian Life available to one who has deliberately and willfully and perhaps even blatantly sinned; such a person has intentionally stepped away from the path of blessing and, therefore, though he may repent and receive forgiveness, he can never regain God's best for his life. Sin has permanently altered his relationship with God and has permanently affected God's ability to work in his life. The most he can hope for is some sort of "*second best*" that God might have for him.

On the other hand, there are those in the greater Christian Community who would answer that question with a fervent "**YES**".

They would say that sin, even deliberate and willful sin, will be part of our lives until we arrive in heaven. Since Jesus paid for all of our sins on Calvary and since God's grace is more than sufficient to overcome the effects of our sins and to restore us to full fellowship then we can confidently expect that he will do so. Therefore, sin, even willful sin, does not and will not permanently alter our relationship with God.

"**Yes**", they would answer ... there certainly is life after sin ... full life, abundant life, purposeful and joyful life.

There are potential dangers, severe dangers in both of those perspectives as I have outlined them this morning ...

The ***first position*** can cause us to take sin way too ***seriously*** ... as though our sin has caught God by surprise and will keep him from accomplishing His Will in our lives. This position also tends to identify God's will for us with regard to some ***thing*** that we are to ***do*** for God rather than some ***person*** that we are to ***be*** for God.

Now the ***second position*** can cause us to take sin far too ***casually*** ... as though our sin is no big deal and can be easily brushed aside as just a momentary inconvenience or even disappointment in our life.

And so we come to ***Today's Key Question*** ...

How then are we to UNDERSTAND and deal with the
PRESENCE of WILLFUL SIN in a believer's life?

For our answer to that question we turn back to our study of the Life of David - the man of God who sinned so deliberately and willfully.

And as we answer *Today's Key Question* we will answer as well two secondary but extremely relevant questions:

1. Why does God HATE sin so GREATLY -

(Why can't he just overlook it)? and

2. Why did God LOVE David so DEEPLY

(Why didn't he just set him aside)?

So secondary question #1 ... Why does God hate sin so deeply - why can he not just overlook it or take it lightly?

God's agent of revelation on the subject was the Prophet Nathan ... the revelation is given in 2 Samuel chapter 12 ...

Verse 1 ... Nathan comes to David

Verses 2-4 ... Nathan tells David the King a touching little story

Verse 5 ... Nathan's 'story' causes the King to respond in "*righteous anger*".

Verse 6 ... Nathan declares "***You are the man***".

The deed is known ... David's sin has been discovered! How will he respond?

If he adopted ***perspective #1*** ... He would probably just ***resign*** ...

"I've sinned - sinned badly - I can no longer be of any use to the Lord".

If he adopted ***perspective #2*** ... He would most likely ***rationalize*** ...

"Well, we all make mistakes; Uriah might have been killed in battle anyway. I'm relieved the truth is out - Let's just move on from here."

Well, before he had a chance to reveal his choice, Nathan pushed on with a powerful **theology** lesson ... a **theology** lesson that answers the question that we have raised this morning:

"Why does God hate sin so greatly?"

Reason #1 ... Deliberate Sin DESPISES The WORD Of GOD

"Why did you despise the Word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes." (vs. 9)

At least four of the **Ten Commandments** had been violated by David in his torrent of sin ...

Thou shalt not **covet**; Thou shalt not commit **adultery**;
Thou shalt not bear **false witness**; Thou shalt not **murder**.

Deliberate sin is a personal affront to God ... it's like a literal 'slap in his face'. **Deliberate sin** is an act of rebellion toward God ... it's an expression of self-worship. **Deliberate sin** demonstrates our disregard for the will and ways of God!

Deliberate sin despises the Word of God - it tramples the Word of God underfoot. Might as well actually burn the Bible as to commit deliberate, willful sin. Reason enough for God to hate sin so greatly!

But there's another reason tucked in this passage ... **Reason #2 ... Deliberate Sin Provides An OPENING For God's ENEMIES**

"... by doing this you have made the enemies of the Lord show utter contempt." (vs. 14)

The words "hypocrite" and "phony" are used frequently when Christians engage in willful, deliberate sin. "You Christians are no different than anyone else!" they say.

The **Apostle Paul** told the Jews in Romans chapter two ...

"God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

Open obvious deliberate failures provide people an opportunity to speak badly of Christ ... Might as well join the crowd on Calvary who accused Jesus of being nothing more than a powerless pretender.

Deliberate sin undermines the very things God is seeking to build ...

God presents ***His Word*** as man's most precious treasure ...

A lamp, a light, a guide, a delight (Psalm 119)

God presents ***His People*** as his most significant accomplishment

A royal priesthood - a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9)

His personal masterpiece (Ephesians 2:10)

Deliberate willful sin shows ***Contempt*** for God's Word and ***Disregard*** for God's People ...

And that's what's going on when a Christian: ***cheats*** in his business; ***yells*** at his wife or children; lets ***filthy talk*** come out of his mouth; commits ***adultery*** or ***fornication***; ***gossips*** or slanders another person or engages in any of thousand other deliberate sinful actions.

Is it any wonder that God ***hates*** those things; is it any wonder that God must deal with them when they occur?

Note how he dealt with David ... some pretty harsh discipline

vs. 10 ... there would be trouble and distress within his own family

vs. 11 ... shame and disgrace will come upon him

vs. 14 ... and the baby to be born would die.

Here's the point ... we cannot deliberately sin and escape God's discipline; sin cannot be casually dealt with - God sees it as serious stuff in our lives.

But how about David the sinner - How did he respond? What can we learn? What should we do if we have already committed our deliberate sin?

By observing David's response I believe that we can see one more reason why God loved David so deeply - why he would not just set him aside.

God loved David so deeply because ...

1. When CONFRONTED ... David REPENTED (vs. 13)

"I have sinned against the Lord"

No denial - no rationalization - no self-defense

2. When STRICKEN ... David PLEADED for MERCY (vs. 15-17)

"David pleaded with God for the child."

No bitterness or rebellion - recognized God's right to discipline -

He simply petitioned God *"for the child"*

3. When JUDGED ... David WORSHIPPED (vs. 18-20)

*"David got up from the ground ... went into the house
of the Lord and worshipped."*

He accepted God's final judgment - He entered into the house of the Lord -
no doubt, he presented a sin offering before the Lord and he then
resumed his personal walk with the Lord.

In addition to the responses recorded in 2 Samuel Chapter 12, David himself
recorded the substance of his worship in ***Psalms 51***.

vs. 24-25 ... God blessed David and Bathsheba with another son ... Solomon.
God loved him and asked him to be called Jedidiah (loved by the Lord).

So is there "Life After Sin"? ... Yes, there is ... there certainly was for
David but the pathway to it was one of pain and heartache - one of discipline
and correction - one that demanded genuine humility and repentance.

However, properly followed, that pathway leads to a full restoration of
fellowship! What love ... What grace!

So what have we learned?

If you have committed a willful, deliberate sin ...

Recognize the seriousness of it-let God break your heart over it.

Accept God's Discipline that comes because of it and

Renew yourself in a life of worship and obedience.

Final Thought ...

God will still smile upon those who **DEAL** with **SIN** properly!

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SELF - STUDY

Life of David

...

Lesson #21

In Sunday's message, Pastor Mark mentioned that David wrote **Psalm 51** in response to Nathan's confrontation concerning his sin with Bathsheba. Pastor Mark also mentioned Sunday that one of the reasons God loved David so deeply was that David "knew how to deal with sin".

Notice in this Psalm the **four crucial steps** David took in dealing with sin:

1. The Step of EXAMINATION (face it fully) (vs. 3-6)

* CONFESS it ... vs. 3 ... "My sin is ever before me."

* SEE the **BIG** Picture ... vs. 4 ... "All sin is against God and God has the Right to judge".

* UNDERSTAND the DEEPER Cause ... vs. 5 ... "I sin because I am a sinner" ... (Rom. 7:18-20)

2. The Step of ANTICIPATION (vs. 7-8)

"I will be CLEAN ... I will be WHITER than snow."

"Let me hear (again) JOY and GLADNESS"

3. The Step of SUPPLICATION (vs. 9-12)

"Hide your FACE from my sins" - "BLOT out my iniquity"

CREATE in me a pure HEART and renew a Steadfast SPIRIT within me."

Restore the JOY of your salvation and grant me a WILLING spirit."

4. The Step of CONSECRATION (vs.13, 15)

"I will TEACH transgressors your ways"

"My tongue will SING of your righteousness"

"My mouth will declare your PRAISES"

Points To Ponder ...

1. Does "penance" fit into this equation? What did David discover God desired more than anything else? (vs. 17) A BROKEN spirit and a CONTRITE Heart. How hard is it to bring these to God?

2. Though he responded "perfectly" to his sin, once it was uncovered, did David "get off" scot-free? (Read 2 Samuel 12:13-14) ... Do we?

"A HANDFUL OF ASHES"

(2 Samuel 13:1-20)

Intro ... This morning in this brief communion meditation I want us to consider together a **key concept** ... a **key illustration** ... and a **key principle**.

First of all consider with me today's **Key Concept** ...

Key Concept ... Powerful, overwhelming **PASSION** for anything less than **GOD** leads to major **DISILLUSIONMENT** because nothing less than **GOD** can ever fully **SATISFY**.

Man has been created by God with the capacity for passion ... the ability to experience strong desire ... we human beings can be completely overwhelmed by the feelings stirred by such passion. We have many expressions to describe what we feel when we are caught in the throes such intense desire.

We say ... "I'd give my right arm for ..."
 "I'd sell my soul for ..."
 I'd give a million dollars to ..."
 "He wants it so badly, he'll stop at nothing."
 "He'd run over his own mother if she stood in the way ..."

The focus of such statements is always some possession or position or privilege that we believe will bring us to a high level of pleasure or satisfaction.

The first part of our **Key Concept** says that such endeavors always lead to disillusionment ... the things we so strongly desire never turn out to satisfy the way we thought they would.

Consider now our **Key Illustration** of the morning ... a most dramatic and shocking example of today's key concept ...

Key Illustration ...

Amnon's overwhelming **DESIRE** for his half-sister **TAMAR**.
(2 Samuel 13:1-20)

Let's just read the story ...

Tamar was Amnon's half sister ... David was their father, but they had different mothers. Tamar was beautiful and Amnon was mesmerized by her. He desired her and that desire over-whelmed him.

His desire for her turned into intense, mind-numbing, conscience-stifling, consequence-ignoring passion. He desired her so strongly he became ill ...

He desired her so intensely he forgot everything else ... His upbringing - his reputation - his responsibility to his father and to the Lord. He could think of nothing but her ...

And when the opportunity came - he took her and forced her to have sex with him - he raped her.

He didn't even hear her protests ... He didn't even consider the alternative that she presented ... the custom of the day would have permitted them to marry.

Completely overwhelmed by passion - absolutely sure that he had at last obtained the object of his affection, he acted.

And here's the brutal point ... vs. 15 ...

*"Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred.
In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her."*

Her beauty turned to ashes in a moment ... He got exactly what he wanted and he found out it wasn't what he thought it would be. He built his entire life around something that in the end turned out to be ugly and unsatisfying.

Have you been there? Do you know what it's like to get exactly what you want and then discover that it doesn't satisfy ... that it doesn't do for you what you thought it would?

The degree ... the job ... the promotion ... the fabulous possession ... the desired relationship.

You make tremendous investments of time and energy and maybe even money; you sacrifice a lot of things that you could have enjoyed and when you finally possess the thing that you have set your heart on ... ***it fails to satisfy*** and you find yourself holding ***"a handful of ashes"***.

According to our ***Key Concept*** this morning that's what we can expect every time we set the desire of our heart on something less than God.

And that recognition leads us to a ***Key Principle*** ...

Key Principle ...

Until ***SATISFACTION*** is found in ***CHRIST***, it will not be found at all!
(Philippians 1:21a; John 4:13; John 6:51, 56)

The ***Apostle Paul*** said ***"For to me to live is Christ ..."***

Jesus said to the women at the well ...

"Whoever drinks the water that I give will never thirst again."

Jesus said to the multitude on the hillside ...

***"I am the living bread that came down from heaven;
if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever."***

***"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood
remains in me and I in him."***

Final Thot ...

COMMUNION prompted by sincere ***PASSION***
provides great ***SATISFACTION***.

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SELF - STUDY

Life of David

...

Lesson #22

Sunday's Meditation focused upon the following **Key Concept** ...

Powerful, overwhelming PASSION for anything less than GOD leads to major DISILLUSIONMENT because nothing less than GOD can ever fully SATISFY.

What's your reaction to that statement?

What are some of those "lesser things" that people get passionate about?

HOW IS PASSION FOR GOD EXPRESSED IN THE BIBLE?

1. Passion for God PERSONALLY - Mark 12:30

"LOVE the Lord your God with all your HEART and with all your SOUL and with all your MIND and with all your STRENGTH."

2. Passion for the HOUSE (things) of God ... John 2:15-17

"ZEAL for your HOUSE consumed me."

3. Passion for the WORD of God ... Deuteronomy 6:6-7a

"These COMMANDMENTS I give you today are to be upon your HEART. Impress them upon your CHILDREN ..."

HOW IS "SOUL-SATISFACTION" EXPRESSED IN THE BIBLE?

1. God's LOVE Satisfies ... Psalm 90:14

"SATISFY us in the morning with your UNFAILING LOVE."

2. PRAISING God Satisfies ... Psalm 63:4-5

"I will PRAISE you as long as I live ... (and)
My SOUL will be satisfied as with the richest of food."

3. The WORD of God Satisfies ... Psalm 119:103

"How SWEET are your words ... sweeter than HONEY to my mouth."

Point To Ponder ... Would God have made us capable of PASSION if He did not intend for us to be PASSIONATE? What do you think?

"DANGER - FAMILY UNDER DESTRUCTION!"

(2 Samuel 13-15)

Intro ... It's a foolish man who doesn't heed warning signs ... a man with chest pains better head for the hospital; a man driving a car better slow down when he sees a sign that says "Rough Road Ahead".

Today's message is intended as a **warning sign** for families from God's Word ...

Key Concept ...

Families are **FRAGILE** things;
they must be **HANDLED** with **CARE!**

The last thing we would ever want to experience is the destruction of our family.

However that's exactly what David experienced ...

His daughter Tamar was raped by his son Amnon;

His son Amnon was then murdered by his son Absalom;

His son Absalom subsequently led a rebellion against David and Absalom, whom David deeply loved, died a terrible death.

David's heart was broken ... wouldn't yours be? His family had become a **"Family Under Destruction"** ...

The truth is that David went through a period where he failed miserably as a father!

As we look into the circumstances laid out in 2 Samuel chapters 13 and 14 we can identify **three specific things** that led to His family's demise ... **three things** that will destroy any family ... or any human relationship for that matter.

And here they are ...

1. **SIN THAT REMAINS UNCORRECTED** (2 Samuel 13:21)

*"When David heard all this, he was **FURIOUS**."*

Here in chapter 13 is told the horrible story of Tamar's rape by her half - brother Amnon ... It was a terrible sin ... Amnon was completely possessed by passion and acted in complete selfish disregard for anyone else. He raped his beautiful half-sister Tamar and then tossed her aside to live her life as a violated and desolate woman ... never to marry or to have a family of her own ... he ruined her life!

And that's what David eventually heard and when he heard it ... he was furious!

He should have been furious He should have been filled with righteous indignation ... righteous anger towards sin ... He accurately recognized the terribleness of the deed!

He should have been angry ... as a **man** - as a **father** and as the **King** over all the land!

But here's the point ... though he was furious, ***He did nothing!***

There is no record that he confronted Amnon - there is no indication that he even tried to comfort Tamar ... ***HE DID NOTHING!***

And sin in a family (or in any social setting) that is not corrected begins to fester ...

It becomes inflamed like a boil building up resentment and anger, hatred and revenge ... it overpowers reason and moral judgment until it erupts in some incredibly harmful way.

And that's exactly what happened in David's family ...

Absalom - David's handsome son - took matters into his own hands.

vs. 20 ...

He took Tamar (his sister) into his own home - he provided for her.

vs. 22 ...

He said nothing to his brother Amnon about it but he hated Amnon for what he had done - the boil of hatred festered for two years.

vs. 23 ...

He set up a celebration feast and invited Amnon and all his other brothers.

vs. 28 ...

He plotted to kill Amnon and succeeded.

Amnon was brutally murdered and Absalom fled into exile as a murderer - the family was systematically being destroyed and the blame lay with David ...

For known sin that remains uncorrected (by the one responsible to provide correction) will destroy a family.

Now I'm sure that we can figure out some of David's rationale for not getting involved with Amnon ...

"What if I confront him about what he has done and he brings up my sin with Bathsheba - who am I to talk?"

The point is ... None of us is perfect but our imperfections do not change the standards of God.

Sin must be confronted and dealt with ... in the home, in the church, in every relationship that we value ... and the person in authority must shoulder the responsibility for that confrontation.

And if he or she doesn't ... destruction is sure to follow!

Here's **a second thing** that will destroy a family ...

2. LOVE THAT REMAINS UNCOMMUNICATED (2 Sam. 13:39)

"The spirit of the King LONGED to go to ABSALOM ..."

Absalom had fled into exile. I'm sure he felt justified in what he had done but he still had broken the law and had killed the King's eldest son - the rightful heir to the Throne of Israel. It might have even been seen as him taken advantage of the situation to improve his own chances of some day being King. David somehow came to terms with what Absalom had done. Absalom had always had a special place in David's heart and ...

"David's heart longed to go to Absalom'.

The point here is ... ***He didn't!***

He didn't go to Absalom ... He didn't communicate his love for Absalom ... He didn't convey to Absalom in any way the fact that he had come to terms with what Absalom had done.

He allowed Absalom to live in exile for three years perhaps fearing for his life, not knowing or even suspecting that his father had reconciled himself to Amnon's death.

For all Absalom knew ... His father despised him - or at least could care less about him!

And here's the ***principle*** that comes into play ...

"Love or compassion that is not communicated does not exist."

Men ... it doesn't matter how you "***feel***" about your children (or your wife for that matter) ... if you don't communicate those feelings to them in ways that they can understand, those feelings don't even exist for them ... you might as well hate them for all the good those good feelings do.

How easy is it to be satisfied with the inward analysis "***How do I really feel?***" When the answer is positive - our conscience is eased.

***"Sure I love my kids, sure I love my wife (husband) -
I'd do anything for them."***

But we can't stop with a positive answer to that inward analysis ... We must find ways to communicate our love if our family is to avoid destruction!

Now here's a **third and final thing** that led to the destruction of David's family ...

3. RESTORATION THAT REMAINS UNCOMPLETED

*"He must go to his own HOUSE; he must not SEE my face."
(2 Samuel 14:24)*

After three years ... David was finally motivated to take some action to rectify the situation with Absalom. Absalom's exile had become something of a national disgrace and Joab, the Commander of the Army, involved himself in the matter.

Once again David's heart and passion was stirred by a touching story ... a story beautifully acted out by a "would-be grieving widow" ... verses 5-7

"I am indeed a widow; my husband is dead. I your servant had two sons. They got into a fight with each other in the field, and no one was there to separate them. One struck the other and killed him. Now the whole clan has risen up against your servant; they say, 'Hand over the one who struck his brother down, so that we may put him to death for the life of his brother whom he killed; then we will get rid of the heir as well.' They would put out the only burning coal I have left, leaving my husband neither name nor descendant on the face of the earth."

David responds just as Joab anticipated and then the woman says (much like Nathan had said previously) ... **"You are the man"**.

*"Why then have you devised this thing like this against the people of God?
When the king says this, does he not convict himself, for the king
has not brought back his banished son?"*

The tables have been turned ... David himself is now the focus of the enquiry. David's conscience is stirred (vs. 21) ...

"Very well, I will do it. Go bring back the young man Absalom."

A necessary restoration was underway ... but there was a problem. The restoration would remain uncompleted!

vs. 24 ... *"He must go to his own house - he must not see my face."*
vs. 28 ... *"Absalom lived two years in Jerusalem without seeing the king's face."*

David had restored Absalom to physical proximity but not to personal fellowship - It actually was no real restoration at all!

Those two years in Jerusalem were probably more painful to Absalom than the three years in exile in his Grandfather's house had been.

David's action was demeaning and humiliating.

David probably rationalized his actions by saying that to restore Absalom to fellowship would look like he was condoning Absalom's action in murdering Amnon.

Whatever the reason the tragic truth is ...

"A half-way effort toward restoration or reconciliation is generally worse than no effort at all".

It certainly was in this case ... Absalom became rebellious. Absalom led the people in a revolt against his father David ... Family harmony had been destroyed.

What can we learn from such a series of tragic events in David's family?

In a family ... in an extended family ... in the church family

1. ***Always correct sin*** ... failing to address it will only worsen matters.
2. ***Always communicate compassion*** ... otherwise correction will be misinterpreted.
3. ***Always complete the process of restoration*** ... let love find a way.

Summary verse ... one of the greatest in the Scripture ...

*"God does not take away life; instead he **devises ways** so that a banished person may not remain estranged from him."*

2 Samuel 14:14

"He deals with our sin ... He communicates his love ... He restores our fellowship."

Final Thot ...

Handle your **FAMILY** the way your **HEAVENLY FATHER** handles His!

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SELF - STUDY

Life of David

...

Lesson #23

Sunday's message was entitled:

"DANGER - FAMILY UNDER DESTRUCTION!"

In that message based on **2 Samuel 13-14**, Pastor Mark identified three incredibly destructive circumstances David allowed that will do in any family.

1. **SIN** that remains **UNCORRECTED** (2 Samuel 13:21)
2. **LOVE** that remains **UNCOMMUNICATED** (2 Samuel 13:39) and
3. **RESTORATION** that remains **UNCOMPLETED** (2 Samuel 14:24)

Why do you suppose David allowed Amnon's sin to go uncorrected?

Why do you think he let his love for Absalom to go uncommunicated?

And why do you imagine he allowed Absalom's restoration to remain uncompleted?

Do you agree that these circumstances will "do in" any family - even the family of God?

Pastor Mark also identified in this passage what he called "one of the greatest verses in the Scripture" ... 2 Samuel 14:14

*"God does not take away life; instead he **DEVICES** WAYS so that a **BANISHED** person may not remain estranged from him."*

What does that verse say to you? What were some of the "ways" God "devised" to bring you back into his fellowship (salvation or restoration)?

Point To Ponder ...

HANDLE your earthly family the same way
Your Heavenly Father **HANDLES** His!

"BURGLARIZED BY SIN"

(2 Samuel 15-18)

Intro ... As we open the Scripture today we recognize that we have come to the final years of David's life ... He has come a long way from where we first met him on that fateful day when Samuel the prophet came to Bethlehem to offer sacrifice - that ruddy faced boy Samuel had to call from the pasture.

As a young boy he had possessed such a pure heart and such an absolute confidence in the power and purposes of God that he shrunk back from no challenge. He had courageously defended his father's flock from the wild beasts of the field. He moved into the palace of King Saul and played for the King soothing music when the King became distressed. Without a second thought he volunteered to face the giant Goliath. He became a valiant leader of Saul's army - a hero against the enemies of Israel. He won the heart and gained the loyalty of the King's son Jonathan.

He was an Old Testament fore-runner of Jesus himself ... a man after God's own heart ... a man who could easily say as Jesus himself would later say, *"I have come to do thy will, O God"*.

We have watched David fall into disfavor with Saul ... we have seen him survive exile in the wilderness ... we have seen him become the leader of and receive incredible loyalty from the band of misfits that gathered around him in those wilderness years ... we have seen him demonstrate unbelievable respect and exercise remarkable restraint when it seemed God had delivered Saul into his hand.

We have seen the days come when David would be crowned King over Israel - first in Hebron and then in Jerusalem itself. We have seen David at the pinnacle of success with the Lord granting him victory *"everywhere that they went"*.

Here too he was a forerunner of Christ himself who someday will rule over all the earth and every knee shall bow to him and acknowledge him as **"Lord"**.

But in these past few weeks as we have come to the final years of David's life, we have seen some significant slippage ... We have seen him commit that terrible series of sins involving Bathsheba ... Adultery, Deception, Conspiracy and Murder.

We have seen him judged by God ... we have seen him seemingly recover from that Judgment and re-commit himself to God's Ways once again.

But something had changed within him ... Following that series of sins involving Bathsheba - David was not the same man he had been before.

He ignores a significant sin committed by one of his sons, Amnon ... He fails to fully communicate his love for his son, Absalom ... And when he finally is forced to reach out to Absalom he does so in an incomplete, ineffectual way. He allows Absalom's heart to fester with resentment until it finally erupts in open insurrection.

Something indeed had happened to David ... He was not the same man that he had been before!

And though God doesn't give us the direct cause and effect answer as he tells this story of David's life, I would suggest to you this morning, as the title of this message states, that David had been "*burglarized by sin*" and by a whole host of things that sin brings with it - things like guilt and regret, and re-assessment of our standing with God.

And that suggestion leads to our **Key Concept** of the morning ...

Key Concept ...

Sin is a **THIEF**; Sin is a **ROBBER**;
Sin would steal our most **TREASURED POSSESSIONS!**

Now here's the point I want to make this morning ... Even *forgiven* sin can have this affect upon us!

David was surely forgiven - David was surely returned to God's favor following his sin with Bathsheba ... the fact that God would give Bathsheba's second child by David the name "*Jedidiah*" which means "*Loved of God*" makes that completely clear.

However, this series of sins nevertheless had a devastating effect upon David - an effect that came from within David himself ...

To use my phrase of the day, David **allowed** his sin to **burglarize** his life. It's something that anyone of us could easily do.

In the extended passage before us this morning we can see **three precious possessions** that David could have reported as "**missing**" as a result of sin burglarizing his life ...

If I were filling out David's burglary report, I would first of all note that ...

1. DAVID HAD LOST HIS AGGRESSIVENESS - the ability to respond decisively and productively in the face of danger.

"We must **FLEE**" (2 Samuel 15:14)

Is this the David who had faced up to the lion and the bear in his father's pasture? Is this the same David who had gone "*toe to toe*" with Goliath? Is this the mighty David of whom it had been sung ...

"*Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands*"?

Aggressiveness - the ability to respond decisively and productively in the face of danger - had always been one of David's most attractive qualities.

How unattractive - how out of character - it must have seemed to "*all his officials*" who surrounded him to see him basically "*bail out*".

We must "run for our lives" before Absalom gets here ...

Abandon the capitol? Simply capitulate? No rallying of the troops? No inquiring of the Lord? Just run in the face of some perceived threat?

Sin, even forgiven sin, can do that to the best of us ... Sin can rob us of our strength - sin can make us feel powerless to stand against the tide; we think more of escape than we do of attack and ... ***there's a reason for that!***

I believe that David lost his aggressiveness because secondly ...

2. DAVID HAD LOST HIS CONFIDENCE - the settled assurance that his life was being lived in the center of God's will.

No longer was he completely sure where he stood with God - no longer was he completely sure of the part he was to play in the plan of God.

Maybe Absalom's rebellion was a further judgment upon him for his failures; perhaps Absalom was God new man for the nation, replacing him even as he had replaced Saul.

And so David did what most of us would do in that situation ... he just "got out of the way". He had no indication what God was doing and he perhaps felt like he had no "right" to inquire.

Sin - even forgiven sin - can put the "IF" (the uncertainty) back into life ...

Note David's response when Zadok the priest and the Levites brought out the Ark of the Covenant as a sign of the Lord's presence and favor upon the King and upon all the people who were with him ...

*"Take the ark of God back into the city. **If I find favor** in the Lord's eyes, he will bring me back and let me see it and his dwelling place again. But if he says, 'I am not pleased with you', then I am ready; let him do to me whatever seems good to him."*

"If I find FAVOR ..." (2 Samuel 15:25)

That's the whole point ... David didn't know whether the favor of the Lord was back upon his life or not ... And when you have had your confidence in the Lord stolen away, you can become unsure about a lot of things, you can even begin to doubt things that you were once very sure about!

Consider this incredible passage ... 2 Samuel 16: 5-10 ...

As King David approached Bahurim, a man from the same clan as Saul's family came out from there. His name was Shimei son of Gera, and he cursed as he came out. He pelted David and all the king's officials with stones, though all the troops and the special guard were on David's right and left. As he cursed, Shimei said, "Get out, get out, you man of blood, you scoundrel! The LORD has repaid you for all the blood you shed in the household of Saul, in whose place you have reigned. The LORD has handed the kingdom over to your son Absalom. You have come to ruin because you are a man of blood!" Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and cut off his head." But the king said, "What do you and I have in common, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the LORD said to him, 'Curse David,' who can ask, 'Why do you do this?' "

Here's the point ... David **had not** usurped Saul's Throne - David **had not** treated Saul badly in any way ... David **had** consistently honored Saul and sought reconciliation with Saul ... David **had** shown incredible kindness to Mephibosheth, the grandson of Saul.

But now, at this critical point in David's life ... his mind is open to the possibility that God might be judging him for the way he had treated Saul ... he was allowing Shemei to re-write history.

David was even losing confidence in things in the past that he knew were true!

Under the pressures of life, sin can work on a person in that way ...

Sin, if given access, will steal our **confidence** and thus undermine our **aggressiveness**. Sin will create "**paralysis by analysis**" ... it will get our minds spinning so fast as we replay things that should never be replayed that we find ourselves unable to function.

And that's really what happened to David ...

As he lost his **confidence** - his assurance that he was functioning in the center of God's Will - he, of course, lost his **aggressiveness** - his ability to take decisive and productive action in the face of danger - and then he suffered a third devastating loss as a direct result of the first two ...

Thirdly and finally in this extended passage, we see that

3. DAVID HAD LOST HIS PERSPECTIVE - the ability to stay focused on God's "bigger picture".

Lots of action recorded in chapters 17 and 18 ... David's troops rallied around him; God frustrated the good counsel Absalom received and led Absalom to adopt an unsuccessful plan of attack. The armies of Absalom and Saul clashed and Absalom was slain and his army and insurrection defeated. Through direct evidence, God communicated to David that he was still God's man and that the kingdom was still his to rule.

But as we like to say ... David couldn't see the forest (the big picture) for the trees (the details) ... the Kingdom had been saved - his Throne had been preserved but his son had rebelled against him and had suffered a humiliating death. And David responds not like a mighty King but as a heartbroken father, a father who would have preferred to have died himself.
(2 Samuel 18:33)

And as a result ...

"Victory was turned into **MOURNING** ..." (2 Samuel 19:2)

The men of David didn't know if they had done a good thing or a bad thing - were they in the good graces of their King or not?

Finally Joab came and confronted David with these words ...

"You have **HUMILIATED** all your men" (2 Samuel 19:5)

David was treating their sacrifice for him and the Kingdom as if it were nothing - as if he would have preferred their deaths to Absalom's. He was disrespecting his men by his actions.

He had lost ***perspective*** ... He focused on the lesser things rather than on the greater ... He had a son who rebelled against him but he had thousands of men who had remained loyal to him. He had lost a son but he had saved a nation.

He had questioned whether or not the Lord's favor was still upon his life and he had had that question emphatically answered.

And yet sin had robbed him of that larger perspective so he was left stewing in a solitary, individualized stupor until God sent Joab to snap him out of it.

David's sin - even his forgiven sin - had robbed him of his ***aggressiveness*** in the face of danger - of his ***confidence*** in his standing with God and of his ***perspective*** concerning the things that are of ultimate importance.

And here's the point ... Sin - even forgiven sin - will attempt to work that way upon any one of us!

Satan knows that we know that willful, blatant sin is completely foreign and absolutely abhorrent to our new nature. He knows that we can be completely emotionally de-railed by it; he knows that even though we have received forgiveness, we are still vulnerable to regret and remorse and doubt and even disgust. He knows that we are vulnerable to being "*burglarized by such sin*" and he will test every "*window and door*" of our heart and soul to see if he can gain entry for just such a purpose.

We need to be aware of this further complication of sin in our lives and be sure that we deal properly and completely with any sin into which we have fallen.

The ***ultimate lesson*** that God would have us learn is simply this ...

Final Thot ...

Don't **MESS** with sin for even **FORGIVEN** sin will seek to play with your **MIND** and confuse your **HEART**.

Sonlife

SELF - STUDY

Life of David

...

Lesson #24

In Sunday's message (2 Samuel 15-19) we identified another one of those painfully important **Realities** of the Christian Life. We could express it as follows ...

"Sin - even FORGIVEN sin - will seek to BURGLARIZE our lives."

We noted in Sunday's message that David had allowed his sin to rob him of **three precious possessions**:

1. **AGGRESSIVENESS** - his ability to respond decisively and productively in the face of **DANGER**. (2 Samuel 15:14)
2. **CONFIDENCE** - his assurance that his life was being lived in the **CENTER** of the Lord's will. (2 Samuel 15:25; 16:10)
3. **PERSPECTIVE** - his ability to focus in on God's **BIGGER PICTURE**. (2 Samuel 19:1-5)

Can you relate to any of these three "losses" ... Have you ever been "burglarized by sin"? How did you get these "precious possessions" back?

Choose one of these statements from Sunday's message and comment ...

Sin-even forgiven sin - can put the "IF" (the uncertainty) back into life.

Sin, if given access, will steal our confidence and thus undermine our aggressiveness. Sin will create "paralysis by analysis" ... it will get our minds spinning so fast as we replay things that should never be replayed that we find ourselves unable to function.

Satan knows that we know that willful, blatant sin is completely foreign and absolutely abhorrent to our new nature. He knows that we can be completely emotionally de-railed by it; he knows that even though we have received forgiveness, we are still vulnerable to regret and remorse and doubt and even disgust.

Point To Ponder ... The way to avoid this kind of "burglary" is the same way the Apostle Paul did ... **ACCEPT GRACE** and **PRACTICE FORGETFULNESS!**
(1 Timothy 2:12-16 and Philippians 3:13-14)

"STANDING BY THE KING"

(2 Samuel 15)

Intro ... There's an incredible moment tucked inside the dismal events we examined last week. Last week we exposed ourselves to the feeble behavior of one who has been burglarized by sin. Last week we saw David, whose throne had been usurped by his son Absalom, fleeing the capitol city of Jerusalem in disgrace.

We saw David, devoid of spiritual aggressiveness, diminished in spiritual confidence and completely lacking in any true spiritual perspective, heading almost aimlessly into a most uncertain future.

It was perhaps the lowest point in David's rather roller-coaster life. He didn't know if God was for him or against him; he didn't know if his usefulness to God was over or not. He was merely rolling with the punches and waiting to see the outcome. He was feeling spiritually and politically impotent. There was much weeping and wailing as David and his entourage worked their way down the hill from Jerusalem.

In the midst of that scene comes marching a man whose demeanor is entirely opposite to the King's - He is Ittai the Gittite and in close formation behind him are the 600 men of Gath who are under his immediate command. His stride is confident and authoritative. He pauses in the King's presence and brings his men to attention.

The difference in the two men could not be more striking ... the King almost seems embarrassed by Ittai's confident demeanor.

King David addresses Ittai (vs.19) ...

"Why should you come along with us? Go back and stay with King Absalom. You are a foreigner, an exile from your homeland. You came only yesterday. And today shall I make you wander about with us, when I do not know where I am going? Go back, and take your countrymen. May kindness and faithfulness be with you."

Basically, David was saying ... You have no reason or cause to come with me. All the rest of these people are fleeing with me because they are either related to me or their lives are in danger because they are identified with me. That's not the case with you. You can easily link up with the new King - there is no need for you to risk your life. I release you from any obligation that you might feel.

When you think about it, that was a pretty generous statement to make - after all, David could certainly use 600 additional well trained troops. But that too is the kind of statement that a man makes when he doesn't have a clue what is going on and when he doesn't know whether God is blessing or punishing him.

"I don't deserve such support and I certainly am in no position to either ask for it or require it."

It's interesting ... Ittai didn't get offended - he didn't feel unappreciated or disrespected. He just basically blew off what David said and announced in no uncertain terms his own position and conviction ... And in his response to David he acknowledged several things that clearly communicated the unique relationship he felt with David.

What I want us to see this morning is that in this response to David, Ittai models for us this kind of response Christ would have us make to him. Let's look at it together ...

In His Response to David, Ittai

1. Acknowledged David As His True (and only) KING

"As surely as the Lord lives, and as my Lord the King lives ..."

Ittai possessed an allegiance to the reigning king of Israel ...

We aren't told how that allegiance came to be ... He could have simply been a hired mercenary but then that wouldn't account for his loyalty ... a pure mercenary would simply offer himself to the highest bidder and it would seem that at this point that highest bidder would certainly be Absalom ...

David gave him that option. "Stay with King Absalom", David says ... but Ittai refused.

*"As long as the Lord lives in heaven and you draw
breath on earth, you are my king."*

What an incredible statement from this uncircumcised Philistine ... what an impact David and David's Lord had obviously made upon his life!

Ittai and his men were from the Philistine town of Gath and Gath was the hometown of the giant Goliath ... Do you suppose that Ittai was present the day a much younger David had defeated Goliath on the field of battle? Do you suppose he heard the stirring words of faith David spoke on that day? Do you suppose something stirred in Ittai's heart that day? Do you suppose Ittai was living in Gath when a somewhat older David sought refuge there for a time when he was fleeing from the hit men of Saul? There were numerous opportunities for these men to meet and for Ittai to form an opinion concerning this amazing Hebrew man.

However many their encounters ... whatever had been the stimulating reasons Ittai had allied himself with not only David himself but with David's Lord.

It was a work of grace on God's part and as a result we have preserved here in the Scriptures a marvelous picture of the believer in his relationship with his Savior!

I hear foreshadowed in Ittai's words the response of Peter to Jesus when Jesus questioned whether the disciples would desert him as so many others had done.

*"Lord, to whom shall we go ... You have the words of eternal life.
We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."
(John 6:68-69)*

Like in David's day, there are today many who would usurp the **Throne of Christ** in the hearts of his people. There are many who would promise much if we simply surrender ourselves to them.

It could be a boss ... it could be a professor ... it could be a potential life-partner ... it could be a seemingly desirable friend ... it could be a sense of significance ... it could be any of a thousand things ... ultimately it's a ***test of allegiance***.

Christ wants to know and he wants us to know that He is the only rightful "*King of our Lives*" ...

It's so easy to allow that knowledge to fall into the category of the merely theoretical or the simply theological ... we know that Jesus is the "*King of our Lives*" in theory but we don't actually experience it on a daily basis.

That's why daily time with him - regular fellowship with his people is so important. Start every day with a fresh acknowledgement that Jesus Christ is not only your Savior from sin but is the reigning Lord and King of your life!

But there's more in this incredible Old Testament affirmation. In addition to acknowledging David as His True (and only) King, Ittai ...

2. Acknowledged Himself As David's Faithful SERVANT

"there will your servant be."

He identified himself as a "servant" even though he commanded 600 men. These don't seem to be the words of a "*hired gun*" - they seem to be the words of one who has willingly yielded his life to another. David certainly treated him as a voluntary participant when he counseled him to "*play the odds*" and attach himself to the new regime of King Absalom.

Ittai would have none of that ... I am ***your*** servant - no one else's! How those words must have encouraged David's heart ... perhaps even stirring a flicker of hope in the midst of that most discouraging moment.

Oh, that we would be just as unshakeable in our identification as servants of Christ! Let us not be dismayed if it seems that His Cause is being over-run ... or that those who bear his name might be outnumbered or even overmatched.

We are his servants - we are looking for no new master. Christians by definition are "*Christ's men*" ... Paul's favorite term for himself was "*doulos*" ... bond slave ... one under the employ and ownership of the master.

It's easy to lose sight of that identification ... It's actually far easier to think of Jesus as Lord than it is to think of ourselves as *servants*".

To use a sports analogy ... it easy to picture Jesus as the star player of the team and ourselves as the merely ordinary players. We admire his play and we hope someday to make a significant contribution ourselves.

But that's not how it is ...

He is the owner of the team and we are under iron-clad contract to him! He holds our entire future in his hands and we are completely dependent upon him for how things will turn out ... He owns us and there is no collective bargaining agreement!

He is the King of our lives and we are his servants - we have voluntarily surrendered every vestige of our independence to him.

That's what Ittai was communicated to his downcast King ...

"You are my true (and only) King and I am your faithful servant."

Having acknowledged those first two realities to David, Ittai then ...

3. Acknowledged That He Understood The IMPLICATIONS

*"wherever my lord the king may be,
whether it means life or death, there will your servant be ..."*

Ittai understood that as servant his life's destiny - his life's outcome - was completely linked with his King ... he would live, he would die, he would prosper, he would suffer ... linked with - in fellowship with - His King.

He no longer possessed an independent destiny ... His destiny would be determined by and experienced with that of his King.

And that's how it is to be with those of us who confess Jesus Christ as Lord ... with those of us who have thrown in our lot with him and who have decided to "*follow Jesus*" and allow him to determine the outcome of our lives.

"Wherever our lord, the king may be ... whether it means life or death ... there will his servants be" ...

Those words sound a lot like the words the Apostle Paul would write nearly a thousand years later as he awaited trial before the Imperial Court in Rome ...

"I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death." (Philippians 1:20)

And so we proceed through this life **proclaiming** his truth, **performing** his works, **living** his life, **experiencing** his joy and **feeling** his pain ... "**Walking** (as Peter once said) **in His Steps**" or as our text this morning suggests "**Standing By His Side**".

Ittai didn't know whether he was consigning himself to a death sentence or not but because of his commitment to his King it didn't really matter.

Communicating his allegiance was the most important thing - He wanted his King to know that not all who could had deserted him ...

"Me and my men are sticking with you no matter what!"

Things turned out well for Ittai ...

David elevated him to third in command and placed one third of the army under him in the subsequent successful battle against the forces of Absalom.

Things turn out well for all of us when we place ourselves solidly on the side of Christ in this world. His life flows through us - his smile of pleasure is upon us and his ultimate reward awaits us!

Final Thot ...

There is no more rewarding decision in all the world then the decision to **STAND BY THE KING**. Make it every day!

Sonlife

SELF - STUDY

Life of David

...

Lesson #25

In Sunday's message, "***Standing By The King***", we uncovered a most inspiring example of **LOYALTY**. How encouraging it must have been for David to hear Ittai say ...

*"As surely as the LORD lives, and as my lord the **KING** lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether it means **LIFE** or **DEATH**, there will your **SERVANT** be." (2 Samuel 15:21)*

What comes to mind as you picture that moment and hear Ittai declare himself in those words to David? Share with the group ...

How highly do you value loyalty? Has anyone ever encouraged your heart by speaking words of loyalty at a time when others were turning away?

Who expressed these words of loyalty recorded in the Scripture ... to whom were they expressed?

1. "Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" **THE LORD TO JOSHUA** (Joshua 1:9)
2. "Wherever you go, I will go. And wherever you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God." **RUTH TO NAOMI** (Ruth 1:16)
3. "Even if all fall away on account of you, I will never will." **PETER TO JESUS**
(Matthew 26:33)
4. "Let us also go, that we may die with him" **THOMAS ABOUT JESUS** (John 11:16)
5. "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
JESUS TO HIS DISCIPLES (Matthew 28:20)

Point To Ponder ...

How important is it that Christians be "loyal" to one another?
How might such "loyalty" be expressed?

"BRINGING BACK THE KING"

(2 Samuel 19:8b-15)

Intro ... The past several weeks we have immersed ourselves in one of the bleakest periods of David's life. We have seen David replaced in the hearts of many in Israel by the usurper Absalom whose insurrection has led many to declare him King; we have seen David abandon his secure capitol city in panic, no longer sure of God's protective presence; we have seen David humiliated and cursed by Shimei as he fled; we have seen David rebuked by his own General Joab after the insurrection was squelched. It was a most difficult time in David's life. It's been hard to read ... hard to see this wondrous "man after God's own heart" unravel so completely.

But, to his credit, David **responded** to Joab's rebuke (just as he had to previous rebukes brought to him by the prophet Nathan and the wise woman of Tekoa) ... David **regained** his composure and his perspective - made himself available once again to his men; and **reassumed** the mantle and the responsibility of his kingship.

That's where we left the story two weeks ago - we got as far as the first half of 2 Samuel chapter nineteen verse 8 ...

*"So the king got up and took his seat in the gateway.
When the men were told, 'The king is sitting in the gateway (of the city)',
they all came before him."*

The blackness over David's soul seems to have lifted and a renewed perspective on his calling and responsibilities as King seems to have been re-discovered. Things seemed well on their way back to normal.

But as we read on into this nineteenth chapter we quickly discover that a new dilemma is developing. Verses 8b-15 ...

*Meanwhile, the Israelites had fled to their homes. Throughout the tribes of Israel, the people were all arguing with each other, saying, "The king delivered us from the hand of our enemies; he is the one who rescued us from the hand of the Philistines.
But now he has fled the country because of Absalom; and Absalom, whom we anointed to rule over us, has died in battle. So why do you say nothing about bringing the king back?"*

King David sent this message to Zadok and Abiathar, the priests:

"Ask the elders of Judah, 'Why should you be the last to bring the king back to his palace, since what is being said throughout Israel has reached the king at his quarters? You are my brothers, my own flesh and blood. So why should you be the last to bring back the king?' And say to Amasa, 'Are you not my own flesh and blood? May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if from now on you are not the commander of my army in place of Joab.' "

He won over the hearts of all the men of Judah as though they were one man. They sent word to the king, "Return, you and all your men." Then the king returned and went as far as the Jordan. Now the men of Judah had come to Gilgal to go out and meet the king and bring him across the Jordan.

So here's the situation ... the insurrection had been squelched - the usurper had been slain but the King had not returned to the Throne. The nation, for all practical purposes was leaderless.

The people begin to murmur (paraphrase) ...

"Absalom is dead but he never actually did anything for us anyway. David is the one who years ago rescued us from the Philistines - he's the one who has brought us peace and prosperity. Why aren't we reconnecting with him; why aren't we bringing him back where he belongs?"

Finally, after some direct inquiry by David himself, the elders of the Tribe of Judah step up and officially invite David back to the Throne. They come to personally escort him across the Jordan and back to Jerusalem. David accepts their offer and returns to the Capitol City.

Now the story was actually somewhat more complicated than that ...

The other tribes of Israel got angry with the tribe of Judah because they contended that Judah acted impulsively and inappropriately and perhaps even provocatively in unilaterally bringing back the King but ***the bottom line*** for our lesson today is ...

The King came back to the Throne!

Here's the point for us this morning ...

***"This entire story serves as an amazing parable
of the Christian Life."***

In fact, out of this story, I would draw two incredibly important ***Spiritual Principles*** - principles that will explain why so many Christians fail to experience the benefits of Christ's Lordship on a day after day basis.

Or put another way ... why it is that your Christian Experience can be so very good at one point of your life and yet so absolutely lousy at another.

These are principles that you might need to think about for a while; they are principles that have caused me to take a fresh look at some things in my own life!

So here we go with ... ***SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE #1*** ...

***"Any USURPER - any INSURRECTION - will drive
JESUS from the THRONE of your HEART".***

Any ***usurper*** (a substitute, a replacement characterized by the term "***I want***") ... Any ***insurrection*** (a willful resistance or rebellion characterized by the term "***I won't***") will drive Jesus from the Throne of your heart!

This has been the position of the Lord from the beginning of his dealings with men.

Exodus 20: 3 ... "Thou shall have no other gods before me."

Isaiah 42:8 ... "I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols"

Romans 1:25 ...

***"They worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator,
who is blessed forever."***

Now lest we think that we are just talking Old Testament here listen to these words from Jesus himself ...

Matthew 10:37 ... "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me"

Revelation 2:4 ... "Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen."

How about this one ... **John 14:23** ... "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him."

Paul then summarizes the point by directing in **Ephesians 4:30** ...

"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit".

Nothing grieves the Holy Spirit - nothing grieves our Triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) like us yielding our hearts - setting our affections - upon something or someone other than God.

And the point this morning is ... When someone else or something else comes in and takes the throne, Jesus heads out - just like David did - most certainly with tears, for it's a sad day.

Consider now this **Corollary Principle** ...

"When JESUS is REMOVED from the THRONE of your HEART all HELL can break loose in your LIFE."

*** THE URSURPER IS ALWAYS A POOR SUBSTITUTE FOR THE REAL THING!**

Just like Absalom was a poor substitute for King David, so the things we throw ourselves into - the things that distract us from Christ - never satisfy the way that He can. We get the thing that we set our hearts on - and its beauty turns to ashes in our hands ... the results that come from these things that we invest ourselves in never live up to their advanced billings.

*** OUR OWN WORST SELF FREQUENTLY RE-EMERGES!**

The sins of the flesh re-appear ... anger, rage, bitterness, greed, ambition, envy, jealousy, self-absorption ... We can feel like everything has gotten out of control and that we have lost touch with God and the truth is ... ***we have!***

And usually it's when our life hits some kind of bottom - when our discomfort level approaches the intolerable - when we finally realize that something is going terribly wrong that we finally admit that we have thrown in our lot with the losing side.

And when that happens we generally confess our sins - admit that we have blown things badly; we repent of and make restitution for any misbehavior that we have engaged in; we stir ourselves spiritually and we squelch the rebellion ... We throw the usurper off the throne of our heart and we withdraw from the insurrection.

Now that's great but there's more that must be done if we would resume and even improve upon the life with Christ we once knew because (as it states in) ...

SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE #2 ...

"Putting down the **INSURRECTION** and driving out the **USURPER** does not automatically **BRING** Jesus **BACK**."

That's a potent statement ... that's the part that I believe we seldom think about. I believe that the image that most of us carry in our minds is that in a time of "rebellion" or "insurrection" - in those times when we allow ourselves to become mesmerized by some usurper whose offer seems too good to pass up - that (in times like that) Jesus just slides over on the Throne and grudgingly shares our hearts with this "other thing".

And so it's easy to picture that once we remove the "other thing" that Jesus just "slides back" and has the entire Throne to himself again.

However, that's not how it works ... it didn't work that way with King David and it doesn't work that way with King Jesus!

Consider now this ... ***Corollary Principle*** ...

"It requires **CONSCIOUS ACTION** (intentional action)
to return **JESUS** to the **THRONE**."

I base this corollary principle not only upon the parable-like passage involving David but upon the very words of Jesus ... some of the most poignant words in the Scripture... They are found in Revelation chapter 3 verse 20 ...

Jesus says to one of his churches:

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."

You see ... when some usurper is placed on the Throne of our Heart, Jesus doesn't just "*slide over*" and "*share the seat*" until we come to our senses, he vacates the place entirely.

And once he has vacated the place ... He re-assumes his seat only as a result of conscious deliberate action on our part.

We must open the door and welcome him back to the Throne.

Otherwise he remains outside and we remain leaderless - vulnerable to the appeal of the next usurper who comes along!

In this age of grace ... Jesus is an "***Invited Sovereign***" ... all the blessings of His Lordship come to those who have installed him as King of Their Lives.

Final Thot ...

Keeping **JESUS** on the **THRONE** of your **HEART** is every day's primary **TASK** - So start every day with a **CORONATION!**

Sonlife

SELF - STUDY

Life of David

...

Lesson #26

Sunday's message centered around a poignant image ...

"Jesus driven from our Heart's THRONE by either a USURPER or an INSURRECTION."

How did/does that image affect you? Can it actually happen? Does Jesus voluntarily vacate our heart's throne whenever his rule is challenged?

What do you think?

Pastor Mark said that a "**Usurper**" is to be understood as a SUBSTITUTE or replacement and is characterized by the expression "**I WANT**" i.e. something other than JESUS that we set our hearts upon. Pastor Mark said that an "**Insurrection**" is to be understood as some sort of RESISTANCE or rebellion and is characterized by the expression "**I WON'T**" i.e. some desire (directive) of Christ that we refuse to follow.

How do these expressions threaten Christ's position on our heart's throne?

The expression "**I want**" challenges his PROVISION (communicates our discontent) and the expression "**I won't**" challenges his SOVEREIGNTY (communicates our lack of submission).

Respond to the following observation ...

When we allow "**wants**" and "**won'ts**" to take control of our hearts, Jesus "**vacates the place**" and allows us to "**enjoy**" the "**blessings**" of the usurper and the "**benefits**" of the insurrection.

How long do you think it takes for us to realize that Jesus is no longer on the throne of our heart but has moved himself to the "porch"?

Point To Ponder ... "Keeping JESUS on the throne of our heart is every day's primary TASK ... Start every day with a CORONATION."

Lord Jesus, as I begin this new day, I crown you Lord of my heart. By the grace you have given to me, I remove from my heart all "wants" that would undermine my sense of contentment in your provisions and all "won'ts" that would undermine my sense of submission to your will. I desire to live this entire day with you firmly in control of my life ... guiding my every thought and emotion and action. Amen.

"LESSONS ON LEADERSHIP"

(2 Samuel 23:1-4)

Intro ... Today, as we conclude our 6 month look at the life of David, the man after God's own heart, I would direct your attention to the **Key Concept** with which we begin today's discussion.

Today's Key Concept ...

All of us are **LEADERS** - we all have responsibility for **SOMETHING** or **SOMEONE**.

All of us are **leaders** in some capacity ... mothers, fathers, husbands, employers, teachers, lead workers, older brothers and sisters, teammates, friends, pet owners, members of the human race ... And who of us does not want to be identified as a "good leader" - a "respected leader" - an "effective leader" ...

Through one of his greatest leaders, David, God himself revealed some incredible "lessons on leadership" ... they were given at the end of David's life and were intended to stimulate those who would come after him. In the Scripture these "lessons" are called "the last words of David". They are found in 2 Samuel chapter 23 verses 1-4 and form today's **Key Scripture**. Let's look at them together and allow them to become David's "**Last Words to Us**".

Today's Key Scripture ...

These are the **last words** of David: "*The oracle of David son of Jesse, the oracle of the man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, Israel's singer of songs:*

"The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue. The God of Israel spoke, the Rock of Israel said to me: 'When one rules over men in righteousness, when he rules in the fear of God, he is like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, like the brightness after rain that brings the grass from the earth.'"

Notice that these are "*lessons given by revelation*" ... these "*lessons*" are not the result of David's reflection upon his own experience or upon the experience of others.

*"The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue.
The God of Israel spoke, the Rock of Israel said to me ..."*

These "*lessons*" reflect God's view and expectation of those who would exercise any leadership function.

Consider now, first of all ...

1. THE DESCRIPTION OF AN EFFECTIVE LEADER (verse 4)

An effective leader is ...

- * One Who Is A Totally **KNOWABLE, TRUSTWORTHY** Person
"He is like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning,

How's that for an impressive "*word picture*"? He is like morning here on the high desert not like morning at the beach. No deception ... no "*clouded*" obscure speech designed to mislead if not actually misinform ... no hidden agenda ... no wondering what he means by what he says.

In the presence of such a person you feel honestly dealt with ... you feel that you "*know him*" after spending time with him ... and as a result you "*trust him*" and know that your trust will not be violated.

An effective leader also is ...

- * One Who Is A **REFRESHING - INVIGORATING** Person
*"(He is) like the brightness after rain
that brings the grass from the earth."*

Is there anything more refreshing than the smell of the air after a spring rain; is there anything so soul-satisfying as a beautiful rainbow in the sky? ... And isn't it amazing how growing things like grass respond to the rain. There's something in the rain that the water from the sprinklers just doesn't provide.

An effective leader is like that ... being in his presence refreshes us and invigorates us. He is the type of person that you love being around. You submit eagerly to his leadership because you sense the benefits of doing so. He is someone who is going to bless your life - you just know it.

Leaders like that do not have to browbeat people into following them; leaders like that do not have to spend time strategizing ways to improve their ratings. Leaders like that are eagerly and gratefully embraced.

But what does it take to become such an effective leader? What prescription does God lay out for us would-be effective leaders to follow?

We find it in verse three ...

2. THE PRESCRIPTION FOR AN EFFECTIVE LEADER

*"When one rules over men in righteousness,
when he rules in the fear of God" (3)*

Key word ... **"When"** ... what follows in that third verse are the **two conditions** under which effective leadership will be developed ... the prescription that must be followed if one would become a knowable, trustworthy, refreshing, invigorating leader ...

To become an effective leader you must be ...

* One Who Leads In **RIGHTEOUSNESS**

In every decision that he makes, the ultimate concern is not **"Will this work?"** but **"Is this right?"** Is it legally right - Is it philosophically right - Is it ethically right - Is it spiritually right? **Ultimately** ... Is it pleasing to God? Issues of justice and fairness ... Issues of equality and opportunity all have to be weighed.

Doing the **"right thing"** is the most important thing! To fail at this point will severely undermine our ability to lead and will seriously weaken the people's support for our actions.

To be effective leaders in our given arenas, we must lead righteously; we must be absolutely committed to doing the right thing (the God-pleasing thing) once we have discovered what that **"right thing"** is.

And yet the pressures to back off can be enormous for ...

"Doing the right thing" is frequently a "**courageous thing**" ...

"Doing the right thing" can often become an "**exhausting thing**" ...

"Doing the right thing" is frequently initially an "**unpopular**"
or at least "**misunderstood thing**" ...

"Doing the right thing" might even be an "**expensive thing**".

And so "doing the right thing" can create **emotional** pressure and **physical** pressure and **social** pressure and maybe even **financial** pressure.

And pressure creates **concern** and concern can easily escalate into **fear** ... **fear of failure** ... and our fear of failure can override our commitment to lead righteously and cause us to compromise in one way or another and as a result we cease to lead righteously and we cease as well to experience God's blessing and people's favor.

We become just one more leader who has sold-out to the system ... one more reason for people to doubt all leaders.

Providing leadership ... being an effective leader in a fallen world ... is no small task; for the pressures against leaders are enormous.

And yet there is a way - there is a way to stand firmly against all these pressures - a way to continue to lead righteously even in the midst of all those pressures.

It too is revealed in these "**last words**" of David ...

To become an effective leader - to stand against the pressures - you must be ...

* One Who Leads In The FEAR Of GOD

There it is ... when our fear of God - when our fear of displeasing Him; when our reverence for Him - outweighs our fear of failure, we will continue to live and lead righteously no matter what!

God says to us through David ... The way to lead successfully, the way to be the fullest possible blessing to others that you can be, the way to be a sought-after and beloved leader in your home, in your church, in your community, on your job is to lead righteously in the fear of God. May God help us to do so!

Final Thot ...

The very best LEADERS are those who
willingly put themselves under GOD'S LEADERSHIP.

Epilogue ...

It's a grand adventure we have taken - a noble investigation that we have conducted.

We have walked in the footsteps of David and have peered into His very soul. We have seen David in times of exuberant innocence as well as in times of despairing guilt. We have seen him scale the heights of praise and sink into the depths of sin. God has permitted this exercise for a reason ...

God wants us to know that "*being a man after God's own heart*" has nothing to do with perfection and that it has everything to do with passion and persistence.

"*Keeping after God*" is what David consistently and persistently did and so can we. Keep his story close; review it often! **PM**

Sonlife

SELF - STUDY

Life of David

...

Lesson #27

Sunday's message began with this **Key Concept** ...

All of us are LEADERS - we all have responsibility
for SOMEONE or SOMETHING.

Name five people or things within your realm of immediate responsibility:

Within whose realm of immediate responsibility are you?

Sunday we look at these "**Last Words of David**" ...

*"When one rules over men in righteousness, when he rules in the fear of God,
he is like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, like the brightness
after rain that brings the grass from the earth." (2 Samuel 23:3-4)*

What does that statement say to you?

Here are **several quotes** from Sunday's message - pick one and comment.

*"Doing the right thing" is frequently a "courageous thing" ... "Doing the right
thing" can often become an "exhausting thing" ... "Doing the right thing" is
frequently initially an "unpopular" or at least a "misunderstood thing" ...
"Doing the right thing" might even be an "expensive thing".*

*"Our fear of failure can override our commitment to lead righteously
and cause us to compromise in one way or another; and as a result,
we cease to lead righteously and we cease to experience
God's blessing and people's favor."*

*"When our fear of God - when our fear of displeasing Him -
when our reverence for him - outweighs our fear of failure,
we will continue to live and lead righteously no matter what!"*

Point To Ponder ... The first and most important subject any man is
responsible to rule over is ... **HIS OWN SPIRIT!**