



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Samuel 29:1 – 30:20

“Breaking Out of Doubting Castle and Giant Despair”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] One of the disadvantages of preaching on David has been the fact that we are reading lengthy Scripture passages, which take time from the preaching. But, when you think about the alternatives of passing up the Scripture reading and using more time for exposition, I'm sure you'll agree with me it's more important that we read the word of God. So, we're going to read 40 verses, beginning with chapter 29 in verse 1, then 11 verses of chapter 29, did I say 40, and the 20 verses of chapter 30, which gives us 31 verses. They are lengthy verses and we will read them. So will you listen as we read beginning with chapter 29 in verse 1.

“Then the Philistines gathered together all their armies at Aphek, and the Israelites encamped by a fountain which is in Jezreel. And the lords of the Philistines passed in review by hundreds and by thousands, but David and his men passed in review at the rear with Achish. Then the princes of the Philistines said, “What are these Hebrews doing here?” And Achish said to the princes of the Philistines, “Is this not David, the servant of Saul king of Israel, who has been with me these days, or these years? And to this day I have found no fault in him since he defected to me.” But the princes of the Philistines were angry with him; so the princes of the Philistines said to him, “Make this fellow return

that he may go back to the place which you have appointed for him, [That, of course, is Ziklag.] and do not let him go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he become our adversary. For with what could he reconcile himself to his master, [That's Saul.] if not with the heads of these men? Is this not David, of whom they sang to one another in dances, saying: ‘Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands?’” Then Achish called David and said to him, “Surely, as the Lord lives, you have been upright, and your going out and your coming in with me in the army is good in my sight. For to this day I have not found evil in you since the day of your coming to me. Nevertheless the lords do not favor you. Therefore return now, and go in peace, that you may not displease the lords of the Philistines.” So David said to Achish, “But what have I done? [I think this, really, is a show of injured innocence because it's obvious, if you think about it, he must have been glad that he was not allowed to go to fight Israel, Saul, and Jonathan, beloved Jonathan.] And to this day what have you found in your servant as long as I have been with you, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?” Then Achish answered and said to David, “I know that you are as good in my sight as an angel of God; nevertheless the princes of the Philistines have said, ‘He shall not go up with us to the battle.’ Now therefore, rise early in the morning with your master's servants who have come with you. And as soon as you are up early in the morning and have light, depart.” So David and his men rose early to depart in the morning, to return to the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

Now it happened, when David and his men came to Ziklag, on the third day, [Now, I think it's of some minor importance to note that they were only two days in traveling, marching, from Aphek in the North, fifty plus miles. So they had marched rapidly, twenty-five miles a day, at least. In a moment, that will have a point.] that the Amalekites had invaded the South and Ziklag, attacked Ziklag and burned it with fire, and had taken captive the women and those who were there, from small to great; they did not kill anyone, but carried them away and went their way. So David and his men came to

the city, and there it was, burned with fire; and their wives, their sons, and their daughters had been taken captive. Then David and the people who were with him lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep. And David's two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite, had been taken captive. Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God. Then David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, "Please bring the ephod here to me." And Abiathar brought the ephod to David. So David inquired of the Lord, saying, "Shall I pursue this troop? Shall I overtake them?" And He answered him, "Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all."

So David went, he and the six hundred men who were with him, and came to the Brook Besor, where those stayed who were left behind. But David pursued, he and four hundred men; for two hundred stayed behind, who were so weary that they could not cross the Brook Besor. [Having marched fifty miles in the last two days, you can understand why a third of these men were so tired, they could not go on.] Then they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David; and they gave him bread and he ate, and they let him drink water. And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs and two clusters of raisins. So when he had eaten, his strength came back to him; for he had eaten no bread nor drunk water for three days and three nights. Then David said to him, "To whom do you belong, and where are you from?" And he said, "I am a young man from Egypt, servant of an Amalekite; and my master left me behind, because three days ago I fell sick. [A very caring kind of person was the Amalekite. If you get sick, it's too bad.] We made an invasion of the southern area of the Cherethites, in the territory which belongs to Judah, and of the southern area of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire." And David said to him, "Can you take me down to this troop?" So he said, "Swear to me

by God that you will neither kill me nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will take you down to this troop.”

And when he had brought him down, there they were, spread out over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing, because of all the great spoil which they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah. Then David attacked them from twilight until the evening of the next day. Not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men who rode on camels and fled. So David recovered all [You notice the emphasis on “all”. Back in verse 8, God had said “Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all. Verse 18.] So David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away, and David rescued his two wives. And nothing of theirs was lacking, either small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything which they had taken from them; David recovered all. Then David took all the flocks and herds they had driven before those other livestock, and said, “This is David’s spoil.”

The remainder of this chapter is a very interesting chapter, but we are not going to seek to do anything about it in this particular message. I would like for you to notice the 23rd verse, where we read, “But David said, “My brethren, you shall not do so with what the Lord has given us, who has preserved us and delivered into our hand the troop that came against us.” Isn’t it interesting that even in Old Testament times, reasons from theology are given by King David-to-be. God has given everything and everything is traceable to Him.

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

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful to Thee for the lessons that are ours through the reading of the word of God. And we thank Thee for these ancient accounts, which are so full of spiritual blessing for us, so full of lessons, so full of guidance from Thee that pertains to the everyday life of each one of us in nineteen hundred and ninety. We pray Thy

blessing upon the whole Church of Christ today, and upon Believers Chapel and other assemblies where Christ is proclaimed. And we ask, Lord, that there may be responsiveness to the word of God and responsiveness to the lessons, which Thou hast so marvelously given to us in the permanent form of the Holy Scriptures.

We pray for those who have requested our prayers for the sick, and especially for the bereaving, and for others who have special needs, who've asked that we pray regarding them, we bring them before Thee Lord and thank Thee that Thou dost hear our petitions, and answer according to Thy own will. Answer affirmatively if it be pleasing to Thee but, nevertheless, not our will but Thine be done. We thank Thee for this country of which we are a part, and pray for our President and ask, Lord, that Thou will give guidance and direction to him and others in these very critical days. As we sing, may we sing as unto Thee and as we hear the word, give us, Lord, responsive hearts. We pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] I'm sure you recognize from the title that it is taken from John Bunyan's "Pilgrims Progress" and the experience of Christian and Hopeful when in the grace of God they were unable to break out of Doubting Castle and from the control of Giant Despair. There is a likeness to that event in the experience of David in 1 Samuel chapters 29 and 30. And so we are basing what we are saying upon the similarity between them.

There is another great word that the Apostle Paul has spoken in one of his Epistles. In the 2nd of his letters to Timothy in chapter 2 in verse 13, in a famous passage, the Apostle has said, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself." That's a great word. "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself."

Many Christians down through the years, including me, and I'm sure many of you in this audience have taken great comfort from the fact that Paul wrote that word by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny

Himself.” Be confident of this very thing that He, which hath begun a good work in you, will complete it to the day of Jesus Christ.

Now, that great truth finds illustration, I think, in these chapters. As Paul also wrote to the Romans, “God’s goodness leads us to repentance.” And in this case, God’s goodness led David to repentance.

I was reading a chapter in F. B. Meyer’s little book on David and at the top of it he had some lines written by a Mr. Cluff. And the lines are stanzas, evidently, of a poem are these, “Prostrate your soul in penitential prayer. Humble your heart beneath the mighty hand of God whose gracious guidance oft shall lead through sin and crime, the changed and melted heart, to sweet repentance and the sense of Him.” That, surely, was the experience of David as he came back into the relationship to the Lord that he should have been enjoying, by repentance. How marvelously God kept David from the pit of final departure and death. His move into Philistia was a faithless move. We commented upon the fact that he was in difficulties and trials, day after day, became tired of the problems that were facing him and said, according to the first verse of chapter 27, “He said in his heart, now I shall perish some day by the hand of Saul, so I shall escape out of his hand and into Philestia.” Not God’s country, he went. And in that departure from the land that was the first step in some difficult times for him. And, it’s so interesting to discover that God does not abandon him when he’s in the place where he should not be. The Psalmist says, “He preserves all who love him, and the unrighteous, well, he will judge them.”

These chapters also indicate that God is no local deity. In the ancient world of the King David and Saul and Jonathan, it was the common belief of the people of the Near East that there were many different gods. For example, there was not simply one Baal, but ever local community had its own Baal. So there would be, and this I don’t know is historically true specifically, but it’s true in the sense that the same thing is true. There was a god of Shechem, there was a Baal of Shechem, there was a Baal of Gath, there was

a Baal of each of the places of the Near East, and so, in that world of polytheism, there were many, many gods. And the common feeling was that a god only controlled a certain territory. But in the case of Yahweh, the God of Israel, there is no limit to the territory that he controls. And so, consequently, when Jacob, for example, is on his way out of the land, fleeing from Esau, God in Genesis chapter 28 comes to him and makes that great promise in which he says, “Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back into the land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.” In other words, the power of Israel’s Yahweh, or Israel’s God, is a universal power.

Now, we live in the United States and in the West generally, people believe in one god, if they believe in a god at all. It’s difficult for us to appreciate the attractiveness of the vast number of gods; gods who control particular territories. As a matter of fact, when we think about it, we do not get any comfort from that at all because if we get out of our god’s territory, we therefore come into the power of another god who is not a friendly god. That’s one of the problems with polytheism. Israel was odd-man-out, in the ancient world, in the sense that they believed in one god. But, if you were a believer in one god, then you were different, much different. And the reason that it is so important to recognize that there is only one god is that if you have polytheism and multitudinous gods, then there is no overall pattern or purpose in life, or history to which you can come in understanding. Because, if there is a vast number of gods who have their own individual purposes, where is the overall purpose of life.

And so, we are grateful for the fact that God is One and there is one God and how marvelous it must have been to David and others to realize that if they got out of the land and in Philistia, Yahweh was still the power there. And in the earlier part of this book, you’ll remember when the Philistines capture the Ark of God, they discover that God is still the true God in Philistia. For when they put Dagon, the god of the Philistines in the same temple with the Lord God, the next morning Dagon is on the ground. And so

they put him back. And the next morning he's there and he's all broken up. God intending to teach this same truth that God, the God of Israel, is the one true god.

Well, the story is picked up here from 1 Samuel chapter 28 and there, remember, Israel and the Philistines were gathering in the northern part of the land. The Philistines ready to attack the Children of Israel near Gilboa. They were at Jezreel and Achish and his men and others were coming to Aphek and, ultimately, to another place, Shunem, I believe, where they would have their great battle.

But as David and his men went north with the Philistines, the lords of the Philistines became disturbed about it, because they were fearful of David's treachery. And, they didn't have to think very long to realize that David had a very nice way to get back in favor with Saul. And so they came to Achish and said, "What are these Hebrews doing here?" And Achish has been duped by David and thinks of him as a faithful man. And David, perhaps, even himself thought of himself as being somewhat faithful. But, no doubt, there were questions within his own heart. And the result is that the Philistine lords finally prevail and Achish has to go to David and say, the lords will not let you come with us.

Now, David had gathered his men together. There'd been a spirit of discontent over the land. Loyal hearts had gathered to David. And if you turn over to 1 Chronicles chapter 12 you'll see that there was constant accession to the forces of David because people were disturbed about King Saul. The big question in the land came to be, "Who is willing to join David's men?" The outcast. The big question today, of course, is who is willing to join the men of the Greater Son of David.

At any rate, Achish makes it necessary for David to go back to Ziklag. It's very interesting that in the 6th verse, we read, "Achish called David and said to him, "Surely, as the Yahweh lives," that's most interesting that he should use the term that marked the Israelite God. Whether that indicates that he is a converted man or not is not specifically stated in

Scripture, but it was characteristic of Achish’s language to be courteous and the chances are he uses that term only in that sense.

At any rate, now David is forced to return. If you’ll put yourself in David’s place, and if you had thought about David moving north with the armies of the Philistines, with these 600 or so men, you must have come to the conviction that as he moved north, facing the possibility of fighting Israel, of fighting Saul, of fighting Jonathan, beloved Jonathan, you must have realized that it would be with sinking heart that he made that journey of fifty or sixty miles to the north. Every mile was a mile filled with an aching heart on the part of David. He might have sought to keep it from controlling him but, nevertheless, when he thought about himself deep down in his heart, he must have been very, very disturbed over the position in which he found himself. I think that’s so illustrative of our experiences when we step out of the will of God, what a net our sins weave for us to be imprisoned by. What a trap we build for ourselves when we sin. For one sin leads to another sin and makes necessary still another. And for David his whole life, since he said in his heart, not as guidance from God, said in his heart he must leave the land. In other words, he’s not willing to trust God’s care over him, having promised him that he is the anointed king, steps out of the will of God, moves into Philistia and every step after that is a step downward; and, also, a step that must have disturbed him in his inmost being.

But now, as a result of God’s providential care, the Philistine lords say, we don’t want this fellow around. It’s too easy for him to, in an act of treachery, attack us from the rear, or in our midst, in order to gain favor with Saul. They say David must go back. And I can imagine, David who had perhaps at this point, offered a petition to the Lord, something like, “O God, save me from this terrible situation in which I find myself?” And now he sings, in the truths of some of the marvelous psalms that he wrote.

I like that statement of Psalm 124, I believe it is, where we read these words with reference to David. He speaks and says, [if I can find this, yes] “Our soul has escaped as

a bird from the snare of the fowlers; The snare is broken, and we have escaped.” And I can imagine, all the way back down as they hastily return to their families in Ziklag that his heart was leaping with joy over the fact that he is not going to have to fight against Saul, against Jonathan and against the Israelites. There are so many things that are lessons here. Hosea once said, “Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help.” He also said to the children of Israel, “Take words and return to me and I will give repentance to you.”

Now, there are so many practical applications from this that pertain to us in our individual lives. I like what one commentator has said, with reference to it, “Many a one has been held from that business success on which he had finally set his heart and discovers months, perhaps years, afterwards that it was God who delivered him from those material riches, which would surely have ruined his soul.”

Many a person has been disappointed in their relationships with individuals. You young people and, of course, some of you older ones, disappointed in relationship with a loved one. And after it's over and the hurt and the sense of loneliness and then as the years past, you discover that it was God who delivered you from an ungodly partner for life, who would have been a constant hindrance to you. Every day, being a problem, so far as spiritual progress was concerned. “Many a one,” Mr. Pink goes on to say, “Was cruelly treated by trusted and cherished friends. It was God breaking what would have been an unequal yoke. And many a parent has been plunged into grief by the loss of a child, a loved child, and then discovered later that it was God in his mercy taking away what might have proved to be an idol and hindering ultimate spiritual development and growth.”

Now, of course, we don't know the answers to many of the problems of life. We see through a glass darkly. But the facts are that putting our lives in the hands of God is always the best way. It's God preserving us by his gracious hand in dealing with us day by day. The things that happen to us are things that happen within the sovereign will of

God. And true happiness, both now and later, comes through submission to the will of God.

Well, David is back. And so now, you would think that perhaps everything is going to be marvelous and wonderful for him but it wasn't. He hastened to Ziklag, as he got back in the southern part of the land. Everything was not light and smiles, traveling and wearily traveling, he finally reached Ziklag and discovered there that the Amalekites had invaded the land and had destroyed Ziklag, and had taken their wives and their children and all of their possessions away. It was surely with a sinking heart that he looked out over the destruction that had happened at Ziklag.

Well, we read of this invasion here and as we read it we also remember some of the things that have been said about the Amalekites in Scripture, way back in the law of God given to Moses, we read of the way in which the Amalekites attacked the Children of Israel and then God saying to the Children of Israel that you are to destroy the Amalekites, wipe them off the face of the earth. And then when Saul is given the word in a specific situation to destroy Agag and the Amalekites, he refused to do it. And Samuel wept over that decision of Saul, because it meant that God had rejected him and had torn the kingdom from him and had given it to David.

You know, David, when he arrives and finds the destruction there and the suffering that, so far as he could tell, he must undergo, he learned that sometimes we have to suffer for the things that we have done, even though we may have been forgiven for doing them. Sins involve guilt and they often involve issues of a physical nature. It's helpful to remember that because it helps us to explain some of the experiences of life. We confess our sins and our sins guilt is forgiven, but it's necessary for us to suffer the consequences in the physical realm of the things that we have done. The alcoholic, for example, who finally comes to the Lord or returns to the Lord, may have his sins forgiven but it's not easy to escape the physical results of alcoholism.

So, David comes. The children of Israel despair. David, himself, we read here in verse 6 of chapter 30, “Was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him.” That’s very interesting isn’t it. It really tells us a whole lot about people. But you can see from this that Godly sorry produces repentance. And David, now, is at the place where there will be a return to fellowship with the Lord God. His deceit had led to alienation from God. It had led to a burning conscience. It had led to the threatening of the Philistine armies and the Amalekites as well. It had led to the going of his family. What now? Well, you know, the Children of Israel, in David’s army, they do what we do in situations like this. Blame the command. And so they blame David. It’s like blaming the J.J. Boys, when something happens to the Cowboys today to bring it down to the level on which some of us may be living, unfortunately. Blame the J.J. Boys. And so, stone David. David’s responsible for this. How fickle is human nature!

In their initial distress at the losing of their entire families, David’s soldiers, devoted to him, come near to murdering him on the spot. Then when David is the means by which they are delivered, they are so delighted that they are happy for David to have everything. That sure tells us something about people, doesn’t it?

It reminds us of the attitudes of individuals in the New Testament as well. It’s interesting how a crowd can become prisoners of the passions of the moment. As we look out over the affairs of our society and we think about the problems that face the United States, we need to remember these things as well. I’m glad I’m not in George Bush’s place, for example, because if anything goes wrong, blame the command; whereas, Mr. Bush may or may not be the cause for the difficulty.

You know, incidentally, if I may say just a word here, I’m astonished at the American people. Why is the United States in the Near East? It’s astonishing to me that intelligent people continually say, ‘We don’t know why we’re in the Near East.’ And why someone with a banner, ‘Don’t go to war over oil’ can gain the attention and support of so many people. Look, this is only one person’s viewpoint. We’re not in the Near East

over oil. We’re not in the Near East over restoring the Kuwaiti Royal Family to power. We’re not in the Near East over the fact that controlling the pathway to oil is so important to us. That’s not why we’re in the Near East. We’re not in the Near East to meet aggression. There’s aggression all over the world in which we are not involved. Why in the Near East? It’s a very simple matter and it’s hardly ever mentioned. We’re in the Near East because Saddam Hussein is a murderer, that’s why. Because his history is the history of murdering. Because his history is the history of murdering his own people. His history is the history of gassing his own people with chemical warfare and with executing people around him. He’s already been responsible for the murder of many. The reason we are in the Near East, very simply, in my opinion, I’m no politician. But if I were standing in the front of the American people, this is what I would say. We’re in the Near East to prevent a murderer from murdering millions more of people. That’s why we’re there. And if that’s not reason enough to be there, then we should not be there. The rest of the things are not that important.

But all of that reminds me of how fickle human beings are. We can be so supportive and the very next moment we turn around and have all kinds of problems and part of that problem may be that our President has not sought my advice. [Laughter] But, nevertheless, that to my mind is really the question and I leave those decisions to people who know more about those things than I do.

I want to mention this. We read here in verse 6 of the remarkable change now that has taken place in David. “But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.” That noble spirit that God gave to David, the noble spirit not on which God’s goodness to him is grounded, for no noble spirit except our Lord Jesus Christ ever has existed among human beings, but that noble spirit implanted by God of seeking God, returns to its home, in the Lord, his refuge. He has confessed his sins, it’s very plain. Now he strengthens himself in the Lord his God, and the first thing he does as he has settled his relationship to the Lord is to call for Abiathar. Now, we don’t read any call for Abiathar

up to this point. Abiathar has charge of the ephod, upon which through the priesthood information is to be given. So Abiathar is called for. We read, “David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech’s son, “Please bring the ephod here to me.” And after he brought it, David inquired of the Lord, saying, “Shall I pursue this troop? Shall I overtake them?” And God answered him, “Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all.” After months of disuse, the ephod is used.

I do not know about you, but I must confess there are days and hours and sometimes weeks that go by, when I do not really in the sense that I ought to, seek the face of the Lord God. So after months of disuse, the ephod and the Lord is put to use for guidance for King David. And so he pursues the Amalekites and all of this is providence. You can just notice here, he arrives. No one has been slain because he forgot to keep a guard there when he went north. So there was no fighting. The Amalekites didn’t have anyone to disturb them in any way. They just came in and took everybody. No need to fight and maybe lose some men. That, itself, was the providential working of the Lord God. And then, as David returned and realized what had happened, and started looking for the Amalekites to try to find someone in the desert. Well, that would have been a very difficult thing. It was rare to find anyone in the desert who was able to give directions to a specific group of people. But it just so happened, they chanced upon an Egyptian who got sick. Well, he got sick. Yes, he got sick. Did he bring it about? I don’t know. He may have eaten something that disturbed him. But it was God who gave him a little sickness. And it was God who put it in the heart of his master to let him go. And there he was, in the desert. And they quote, “chanced” unquote, upon him, who had the key to the place that the Amalekites were.

This whole event is just the story of God’s providential care. And so David discovers the Amalekites. Does he discover them in battle array? No. He discovers them right out on the plain, all eating, drinking, and dancing and probably under the influence of liquor. And it was a simple matter for his fighting warriors, who were mad as they

possibly could be, to come in and destroy every one of them, except four hundred of them who managed to go over to where the camels were held and get on them and escape. And that, too, was the providence of God. And the fact that he destroyed every one of the Amalekites, what a cruel thing you might say. No, no. It's like destroying Saddam Hussein. They were all murderers. And the more of them that were slain, the less murdering and pillaging there would be. And so that's why we read that they destroyed all of them and took everything that they had, including what they had and including what the Amalekites had. And, thus, David by destroying the Amalekites and exercising no pity nor mercy toward them, gave indication that he would be the kind of king that Saul was not, a man who would follow the will of God. If you go back and read Deuteronomy chapter 25 and you will find that had been God's directions a long time ago. And now, he begins to devise statutes, because it's evident that the sense of the coming kingship has come upon his spirit.

Now, I intended to say some things more here and it's twelve o'clock and Merle Weaver says the clock is wrong, but the facts are Merle's watch is wrong. [Laughter] The clock is one minute wrong but Merle you need to check your watch again. Now, if you did that out of mercy and kindness, I thank you. But, I don't think these people will be fooled. So I'll take my customary five minutes over and leave it at that.

Let me just say this. Let all saints rejoice in God's providential care and perseverance in their behalf. If we believe not, he abides faithful, he cannot deny himself. Whatsoever he determines, he will carry out. He will be sure in his power to bring us to likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ. Being confident of this very thing, he that hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

God's providential care and his perseverance in accomplishing his aim and goal in our lives is something that we can give him constant thanks for. The protests of the lords of the Philistines over David being there, the lack of the guards at Ziklag, the finding of the Egyptian slave, even the unkindness of his master to him, the Amalekite's drunken

feastings, all of these things are God’s providential care to accomplish his purposes.

Thank God there is one God, one sovereign God who has one overall purpose in life, to glorify himself through the Lord Jesus Christ and his ministry.

But, second, not only should the saints rejoice in God’s providential care but let all backsliders take hope and comfort. God perseveres. Lot may go down to Sodom, but he cannot escape the Lord God. Jonah may flee to Tarsus, but he cannot escape the Lord God. Peter may go into the palace of the High Priest and deny the Lord, but he cannot escape the persevering power of the Lord God. In every one of the cases where the saints get out of the will of God, there’s something in the spirit of the word that was given to Elijah. “What doest thou here, Elijah?” And, consequently, we can be sure that God works in the hearts of the saints to bring them, ultimately, to likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ. And thank God that the sick are, and the faint are not drummed out of the army as that poor Egyptian was out of the Amalekite army.

Now, my title had to do with Christian and Hopeful and Doubting Castle and Giant Despair. I know you know the story of how Christian and Hopeful were on their way to the Celestial City and Christian looked out and he saw a path on the other side of the rode to the Celestial City, over a little stile, and he said, that road looks good. I’m not using Bunyan’s precise words, of course. That road looks good, let’s travel that way. And what happens, of course, is that way is not the way that God intended for them and they immediately come into storms and lightening and thundering and finally, are almost drowned. And discover themselves the next day on the grounds of Giant Despair, who lived in Doubting Castle. And Giant Despair takes them home, puts them in a dungeon, persecutes them, and even asks his wife, whose name was Diffidence, what shall we do about them? She said, punish them even more. He does his best to do away with them, suggesting they kill themselves. They have a little discussion over that. And decide that self-destruction is contrary to the will of God, until finally, to make it quick, finally, Christian discovers that he has a key in his bosom, and it’s called, the Key of Promise.

And it unlocks all the doors in Doubting Castle, the Key of Promise, the word of God. So he takes the key out and sure enough the door to the dungeon is opened. He goes to the outside door of the castle, puts the key in, it's open, he goes to the castle grounds and puts it in. Has a little tough time getting it in there but nevertheless, he gets out and he's free. And Giant Despair chases after him, but he's lost Christian and he's lost Hopeful.

Mr. Spurgeon's last sermon that he ever preached was on 1 Samuel chapter 30 in verse 21 through verse 24. In the course of it, he mentions the fact that David's army was a curious crew, that there were people there who were discontented. There were those that were in debt. There were those that were in other words are used to describe them. And Mr. Spurgeon said, “He was the captain of ragamuffins.” But our Lord had not a better following. He talks about how he was a poor wretch before he came to the Lord God. He said, “The Lord Jesus, when he looks out at his army, perhaps he might say, No, I've not come to this to march at the head of such vagrant beggars as these.” But he does. That's what you are. That's what I am. That's what we really are. We're just a crowd of ragamuffins, to use his word. But we are those who by God's grace have been brought to him. “For him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” And, then a few moments later, Mr. Spurgeon closes his message with, “Brethren, let us exalt the name of our Captain. There is none like him.”

Now, David's men were similar. In 1 Chronicles chapter 12, in and among the Benjamites and the Judahites, there were individuals who were coming to him as the days go by. And one of them was a man by the name of Amasai. And I like this man, because we read, “Then the Spirit of God came upon Amasai, the chief of the captains, and he said, “We are yours, O David; We are on your side, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace to you, And peace to your helpers! For your God helps you.”

So my Christian friends, we may say to our Greater David, “We're yours, O Son of David. We're on your side, O son of Jesse!” Brethren, let us exalt the name of our Captain, for there is truly none like him.

“Breaking Out of Doubting Castle and Giant Despair” by S. Lewis Johnson
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If you are here today and you have never believed in Christ, there is salvation in no other. None other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved. And for backsliders in our midst, there's always an open arm for those who come confessing their sins and their desire to be restored to spiritual health. Come to him, if that's your condition. And if you do not know him, come to him and receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Let's stand for the Benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these magnificent incidents, which reveal so much of our great God in Heaven, the one true God; the one Triune God, who has staked his name upon the salvation, the ultimate salvation, of all of his chosen ones. And we thank Thee, Lord, for the sense of the persevering, providential hand of God that guides our steps. O God, help us to be faithful and submissive to Thy word. Enable us to be useful to Thee and the purposes of the one true God.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.