



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Lessons from the Life of David

2 Samuel 15:1-37

“The Fiery Trial of a Submissive Soul”

TRANSCRIPT

Well, we're turning to 2 Samuel chapter 15 and, again, we have a long chapter, but I want to read through the entire chapter. So 2 Samuel chapter 15. And you may remember that Absalom has just had a measure of reconciliation with King David and is now back in Jerusalem. And we read.

“After this it happened that Absalom provided himself with chariots and horses and fifty men to run before him. Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate. So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, ‘What city are you from?’ And he would say, ‘Your servant is from such and such a tribe of Israel.’ Then Absalom would say to him, ‘Look, your case is good and right; but there is no deputy of the king to hear you.’ Moreover Absalom would say, ‘Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice.’ And so it was, whenever anyone came near to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him. In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who

came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. Now it came to pass after.”

My text has forty years and actually the Hebrew text, what is called the Masoretic Text has forty also. But it's clearly not correct and a number of the versions have four instead of forty and almost all scholars feel that that's the number. There's a very slight difference between four and forty in the Hebrew text. And so we're going to read this as four years.

“Now it came to pass after four years that Absalom said to the king, ‘Please, let me go to Hebron and pay the vow which I made to the Lord. For your servants took a vow while I dwelt at Geshur in Syria, saying, ‘If the Lord indeed brings me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the Lord.’ And the king said to him, ‘Go in peace.’ So he arose and went to Hebron. Then Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, ‘As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, ‘Absalom reigns in Hebron!’ And with Absalom went two hundred men invited from Jerusalem, and they went along innocently and did not know anything. [They were something like hostages to the plans of Absalom.] Then Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city from Giloh while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy grew strong, for the people with Absalom continually increased in number. Now the messenger came to David, saying, ‘The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom.’ So David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, ‘Arise, and let us flee, or we shall not escape from Absalom. Make haste to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly and bring disaster upon us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword.’ And the king's servants said to the king, ‘We are your servants, ready to do whatever my lord the king commands.’ Then the king went out with all his household after him. But the king left ten women, concubines, to keep the house. And the king went out with all the people after him, and stopped at

the outskirts. Then all his servants passed before him; and all the Cherethites, all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men who had followed him from Gath, passed before the king. Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, ‘Why are you also going with us? Return and remain with the king. For you are a foreigner and also an exile from your own place. [As you’ll notice, he was from Gath which was the Philistine city.] In fact, you came only yesterday. Should I make you wander up and down with us today, since I go I know not where? Return, and take your brethren back. Mercy and truth be with you.’ But Ittai answered the king and said, “As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely in whatever place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will your servant be.’ So David said to Ittai, ‘Go, and cross over.’ Then Ittai the Gittite and all his men and all the little ones who were with him crossed over. And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people crossed over. The king himself also crossed over the Brook Kidron, and all the people crossed over toward the way of the wilderness. There was Zadok also, and all the Levites with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God, and Abiathar went up until all the people had finished crossing over from the city. Then the king said to Zadok, ‘Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me back and show me both it and His dwelling place. But if He says thus, ‘I have no delight in you,’ here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him.’ The king also said to Zadok the priest, ‘Are you not a seer?’”

That expression, students of the text of 2 Samuel have puzzled over. For example, the New International Version reads, “Aren’t you a seer?” The Revised Standard Version, following the Greek translation at this point has, “Look?” The new Revised Standard Version has “Look?” It can mean, “Do you see?” “Are you seeing?” And that would be true to the Greek text of the Old Testament. So we’re not exactly sure what this means. “Are you not a seer?” Well, that doesn’t really make too much sense unless we answer it,

“No,” because he was a priest. So perhaps, it means nothing more than, “Look” or “Aren’t you a seer?” In which case the negative would be expected somewhat strangely.

“Return to the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. See, I will wait in the plains of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me.’ Therefore, Zadok and Abiathar carried the ark of God back to Jerusalem. And they remained there. So David went up by the Ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered and went barefoot. And all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went up. Then someone told David, saying, ‘Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.’ And David said, ‘O Lord, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!’ Now it happened when David had come to the top of the mountain, where he worshiped God, there was Hushai the Archite coming to meet him with his robe torn and dust on his head. David said to him, ‘If you go on with me, then you will become a burden to me. But if you return to the city, and say to Absalom, ‘I will be your servant, O king; as I was your father’s servant previously, so I will now also be your servant,’ then you may defeat the counsel of Ahithophel for me. And do you not have Zadok and Abiathar the priests with you there? Therefore, it will be that whatever you hear from the king’s house, you shall tell to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. Indeed they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz, Zadok’s son, and Jonathan, Abiathar’s son; and by them you shall send me everything you hear.’ So Hushai, David’s friend, went into the city. And Absalom came into Jerusalem.”

It’s a very interesting chapter and one might even ask the question, and I’m not trying to deal with it in the message this morning of, is it right for David to send back individuals into Jerusalem who would lie if they were asked why they were there? Some of those questions come to one’s mind as he thinks about these things, but we need to

remember that the individuals of Scripture were individuals and not angels. And so David, who shows remarkable insight into what has happened and remarkable penitence as he leaves the city of Jerusalem, nevertheless, is still within the company of us who make up sinners.

Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the Scriptures given to us for our admonition and instruction, to us upon whom the ends of the ages have come. And we pray, Lord, that Thou wilt give us responsiveness to the Scriptures. On this day, the work of the cross at Calvary upon which is grounded our salvation in the blood that was shed there. We thank Thee for the gift of the Holy Spirit who has come to teach us the things of the word of God and to guide us as the sons of God who believe in Christ along the way that Thou wouldst have us to go. We thank Thee for the day in which we live and for the opportunities of it; to give testimony to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Enable us, Lord, to be faithful.

We pray for Believers Chapel. We ask Thy blessing upon it and upon its ministries, and we pray for each individual member, friend, visitor, each of them, we ask, Lord, that Thou will be with them and strengthen and build up and edify each in the faith.

We pray for our country again today and ask Thy blessing upon it. And especially, Lord, do we pray for those who have requested our prayers, those who are ill, some bereaving, others with other very difficult problems. We ask for each one of them. We thank Thee for Thy blessing upon several who have been operated upon recently and for the way in which Thou hast blessed physically.

Above all, we ask, Lord, that Thou wilt enable us, by Thy grace, to be more submissive to the Scriptures and responsive to the ministry of the spirit within our hearts and lives. And we commit our service today to Thee and the services that follow.

In Jesus Name. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for today in the continuation of our series of studies in the Life of David is “The Fiery Trial of a Submissive Soul.” O the depths of deceit often lying undetected in the human soul, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” Jeremiah says, “Who can know it?” And one certainly sees illustrations of it in these accounts of events in David’s life.

Absalom, the beloved son, rebels against his father, in bitter criticism, in pride, ingratitude, filial disobedience, and religious hypocrisy. If one looks at Absalom and thinks of the sins that are possible for men, Absalom has it all. Satan must have been very proud of him because he not only commits all of the kinds of sins that young men do, but he does it under the show of being religious, under the show of being a worshiper of the Lord God.

What Paul says about Satan in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 in verse 13 through verse 15 could surely be applied to Absalom. You may remember that section in which Paul speaks about the religious nature of Satan himself, talking about false apostles. “Such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ and, no wonder, for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, it’s no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.” As far as Absalom is concerned, there is not one relieving feature.

Bob Stokes once said, “The world is proof that God is a committee.” Well, in once sense, I guess that finds illustration here. Al Maguire said, “I think the world is run by C-students.” Well, we may not know about the world, but we know about DISD that that may be true of the DISD. It’s run by C-students as well.

But the point is that the world is characterized by the kinds of sins that one sees in Absalom’s life. David, the father, however, the one who committed the great sin that we read about back in chapter 11, David, the father, appears in a very touching light here.

He’s a penitent soul; he’s under the Father’s discipline. His sin has found him out but David has accepted the consequences submissively. And he’s accepted them as his just desserts. Notice again verse 25 and verse 26, when he’s speaking to Zadok and to Abiathar. He says in verse 25 to Zadok, “Carry the Ark back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me back and show me both it and His dwelling place. But if He says thus, ‘I have no delight in you, here I am, let Him do to me as it seems good to Him.’”

So David, the sin entangled soul with guilt burdening his conscience, the man who knows himself to be, if I may use the term figuratively, knows himself unquestionably lost, that is, from communion from the Lord God, as a result of his own goodness. He knows that he does not have that any longer. Nevertheless, as a penitent soul, he knows the guilt-bowed individual will not survive if he does not bow to the Lord God.

Job said, “Who hath hardened himself against God and hath prospered?” And David knows that great truth and he is not hardening himself against the Lord God. He’s waiting for God’s sovereign pleasure to demonstrate in his life just precisely what God will do with him. He knows that he has no right, whatsoever, to lay hold of God for goodness and blessing. But, nevertheless, he waits on the Lord God in penitent submission to the Lord God. I think this chapter is a remarkable indication of the heart of David at this point.

Well, now, the first twelve verses of the 15th chapter give some of the details of the conspiracy of Absalom. Absalom has been restored now to Jerusalem, but he’s very resentful, evidently, and the deceitfulness of it particularly is set forth. Pretentious, self-advertisement, describes Absalom. And he does it out of guile. He does it out of arrogance. He does it out of disparagement against his father. The unpunished murder insolently play-acts as one who defends justice. Can you imagine it? Absalom? The great administer of justice? Well, Absalom had some things that may have made him think that

way because, after all, he was of royal descent, not only on his father’s side but also on his mother’s side, because his mother was the daughter of a king and, consequently, he evidently thought of himself in those minds. In fact, someone has said, “In his mind he was already king.”

And so we read in verse 1 that he provided himself with chariots and horses and fifty men to run before him. So the chariots and the horses, he probably learned all of this when he was up in Geshur with his grandfather, and thought that this is the way a king should comport himself and so he will live that way too. And he engages in the process of stealing the hearts of the people in order that they might make him king and remove the kingdom from David. So he would stand out at the gate, where people came for their lawsuits or problems that they had with the king, and he would call to them and ask them from what city were they. And they would tell him from the city and the tribe from which they had come. And he would say to them, “Look, your case is good and right,” he’s not judged the case at all, he’s not able to judge the case, but it’s good and right, “But there’s no deputy of the king to hear you.” In other words, the facilities for hearing your case are inadequate.

“Oh, if I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice.” Here is the unpunished murderer parading as the pure judge. And the author of the account says, “In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.”

Now, you know, this tells you a whole lot about the people. It tells you a whole lot about how the people fall for those who make a show and have the words to go along with it. In fact, when I read something like this, I think of the liberal ministers of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, who have in many cases stolen the hearts of the evangelicals and professing evangelicals and have set themselves up as Absalom’s, in effect, in the religious world. The church, which is supposed to believe a certain creed,

and I'm speaking of creedal churches. And if we talk about those that are non-creedal, those who are supposed to believe the Bible, as a result of the stealing of the hearts of the people, we have vast numbers of people who attend churches on Sunday morning, not too many percentage wise so far as the population is concerned, but nevertheless, vast numbers of people attend. They have a specific doctrinal position that is set forth in the creed but as a result of the stealing of the hearts of the people by liberal and anti-Christian ministers of the Gospel, the creed is no longer known and believed. And, instead, the pronouncements of individuals are known and believed.

What we have is an evidence as in David in Absalom's day, of the ease with which so much of the historic faith that we think that we are believing or that we stand for. The hypocrisy of Absalom follows in verses 7 through 9.

“Now, it came to pass after four years that Absalom said to the king.” It's rather startling, of course, that David did not realize what was going on but David, remember, is a man up in his sixties now, and when you get there, you don't really know much. [Laughter] And so, evidently, at this point, this is beyond David. And Absalom, speaking in the language, I want to say, in the language of the creed, but he doesn't really believe it, he's speaking in the language of religion. He says, “Let's go to Hebron and father let me pay the vow which I have made to” notice “to the Lord. For your servant took a vow while I dwelt at Geshur in Syria saying, ‘If the Lord indeed brings me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the Lord.’” Three times he uses the term Yahweh, the covenant keeping God, and David, unfortunately, is taken in by that. “And the king said to him, “Go in peace.” So he arose and went to Hebron.” This, incidentally, is an inferential testimony to David's piety because Absalom knows that if he appeals to Yahweh and the truth about Yahweh, David will be responsive to that. So even in the treachery, there is an acknowledgement of David's own spiritual belief and views.

This was really an insult to the all-seeing God because what, in effect, he is saying is that, “If I say to David what he wants to hear, and if I say these things with reference to

the Lord God, then, of course, the Lord God will pay attention to those things.” So it’s a kind of an insult to God. He offers what’s worthless as if it were precious. And he treats David as if he was unable to distinguish between what is the real and the unreal and did not care so long as his creatures paid homage to him whether it be with the heart or not.

In fact, no clearer proof of a Satanic spirit is there when men dare to lay hold of the most sacred things and use them for vial and selfish purposes. “So how abominable,” someone has said, “such persons must appear in the sight of an all-searching God, who use the terms of God in order to influence others but do not have any faith in the things of which they are talking at all.”

So Absalom will be a critic when he speaks to the people, but he’ll be very religious and self-righteous when he talks to the king. And it’s surprising, isn’t it, that it’s all successful? Because, that’s what we read about in verse 10 through verse 12. “Then Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, “As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, ‘Absalom reigns in Hebron!’” Oh, the fickleness and gullibility of the people; dazzled by pomp, dazzled by splendor, confused by criticism of the king, hypnotized by the promises of this young and handsome man with his marvelous head of hair, marvelous head of hair, remember, and the unreasoning masses because they don’t think, they are duped. And, let me tell you, my Christian friend that often happens within our evangelical circles as well. It’s remarkable.

Let me read you just a little paragraph. The mass of people do not think, they feel and are led by the clever orator who can stir up their feelings. It’s not always a credit to go with the multitude and fall in with an order of things because it’s popular, the vox populi. You’ll remember, the vox populi, vox dei, “The voice of the people is the voice of God,” is often false. Of one, it was once true. Of the people, there was none with him. He was despised and rejected of men. So the fickleness and gullibility of the Israelites is manifested in the way in which they take up with Absalom. They do not ask the question, “Is Absalom’s life in harmony with what we know of the revelation of God?

Is what he’s saying true? Is the position that he gives to himself according to the revelation that we know?” They don’t ask the things that would indicate that they think.

Oh, my evangelical friends, you must learn yourself to think. Look, had they thought for just a moment or two, they would have remembered. Who made David king? Why? David was made king by the anointing of the Lord God. That was well known. In chapter 7 of this book, God has unfolded to him the Davidic Covenant in which he is told that he is unconditionally the king of Israel and God stands behind him. He’s king by the grace of God, he’s king by an unconditional covenant. And not only that, but his ultimate seed who will rule over the face of the earth is from his own loins. So he was king by the grace of God. And for an individual to seek to take the throne from him while he’s still living! Think of the heresy of it! Think of the apostasy of it! But the masses often don’t think. It’s true. They feel, but they don’t think. The parallel with our Lord is so obvious one cannot read this without reflecting upon it.

Well, David, when he finds out that Absalom has had himself ordained and appointed the king of Hebron, it’s interesting because that’s where David’s kingdom began, remember, in Hebron and then he moved to Jerusalem his capital there. So Absalom, evidently, thinking that that might have some force since David was made king or recognized king by Judah in Hebron and if he pronounces himself king there people will respond.

He’s had himself now made king and he’s invited two hundred, evidently, important people to be there. They don’t know what’s going on because we read “they did not know anything.” And, evidently, the people thought with these two hundred important people there, when Absalom is anointing himself king, that the masses must be with him and so they follow also. It’s a very sad picture.

And so we look at the flight of David, now, in the light of it. One thing you can say for David, he recognized that he was in a bad spot and it was necessary for him to leave. And so with his body guard, the members of his personal body guard, and then

with his six hundred men, the famous six hundred warriors, he flees. And he leaves the concubines, notice the statement of Scripture in verse 16, “to keep the house;” ten of them and that’s very important because you’ll remember that when David committed his sin, Nathan came to him with the message from the Lord God. And the Lord said to David that he was going to have to discipline David. And he specifically set forth some of the ways in which David would be discipline.

Now, therefore, we read in 2 Samuel 12:10, “The sword shall never depart from your house because you’ve despised Me and you’ve taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house.’ Absalom! “And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor. And he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun, out in front of everyone. “For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.”

Now, that’s very interesting because, you see, what is recognized here is the fact that God, in the midst of the things that are happening, is carrying out his purpose. And so the ten concubines David thought were simply left there, as he said, to keep the house. Looking at it from the standpoint of the text here, you would say David’s object is that they should, quote “Keep the house.” Keep it in some kind of running order while everybody was gone. But there is a higher purpose than David’s purpose. And the higher purpose is God’s purpose. The Lord God’s purpose was that they should be publicly insulted and raped, which itself would be part of God’s disciplinary judgment upon David himself.

Now, if you’re think evangelicals, it doesn’t take much for you to think, does it? David did that so far as he was concerned with the intent of keeping the house. But there is a higher purpose behind David’s actions, which he doesn’t realize at the moment. God is working. And God is even working in the disciplinary judgment and the permission of the insulting of David and the raping of these women. His hand is working

sovereignly to carry out his purpose, which he has already determined was going to take place. You know, when you read the word of God and you really read it, you will see, that all of the affairs of men are, ultimately, directed by the Lord God.

We are responsible, God tells us that. David's responsible! He's responsible for his sin, he's responsible for the insulting and the raping of those women. But, at the same time, God is the person who carries out his disciplinary judgment and even he is the one who is the sovereign worker behind the evil of men. Someone might say, “Are you suggesting that God is the author of sin?” No, he's not the author of sin. But he is the one who purposes that sin exists and that sin be the means for the revelation of his marvelous character as a gracious God. We'd never know it, were it not for sin.

So here, we see in the instances that are taking place, the evidence of the hand of God in the affairs of David, still suffering from the sin of Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah the Hittite. In verse 19 through verse 23, he says to Ittai the Gittite, who wanted to go along with him, “Why are you going with us? Return and remain with the king.” He meant the king, now, Absalom. “For you are a foreigner and an exile from your own place.” And he urges him to go back. But the small and the loyal still cling to David.

It reminds me of so many of these incidents in this particular chapter remind me of our Lord. We have the Brook Kidron. We have our Lord crossing the Brook Kidron. We have our Lord in Gethsemane. We have also the incident in which our Lord comes up on the top of the Mount of Olives and weeps over the city. And here we have David and his men leaving the city, going over the Brook Kidron, weeping over the city, going out barefooted with his head covered, in mourning over what has taken place. And here too, we have something that reminds us of the incidents of our Lord's life. And when David says to Ittai, “Return, and take your brethren back. Mercy and truth be with you.” Ittai answers the king and says, “As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely in whatever place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also your

servant shall be.” Was it not Peter who said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” And one senses a similar kind of thing here.

And David’s thoughtfulness, incidentally, when he urges Ittai not to come with him because of the danger of being with him, his thoughtfulness reminds us also of our Lord in his trials, too. For when Judas and the men came out to take him in the garden, remember, the Lord Jesus said, “So far as I am concerned, take me, but don’t take them.” in other words, thoughtful of others all of the time.

And one can sense, I think, from this that David does have something of the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. And, ultimately, John chapter 17.

“I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your Name. Those whom You gave e I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.”

Now, in verse 24 through verse 30, the Ark, which had been conveyed outside the city by Zadok and the Levites and Abiathar, David again urges Zadok to take the Ark back into the city. You might think that David would take the Ark with him because the Ark was the sign of the presence of God. And the fact that he had the Ark and there was a history also of God blessing where the Ark was, remember. You might think that David would want the Ark with him. But no, the Ark must go back to the city of Jerusalem, the religious institutions, that is, the divine worship and the things that went along with it, the priestly activity, the offerings, the sacrifices, the feasts, those things must remain in tact and available for Jerusalem. It was an act of faith and surrender to the will of God to do that

on David’s part. And when one thinks also about the tears of David throughout all of this, one thinks of the tears of the true suffering Servant of Jehovah but David, himself, illustrates that fact.

Now, in verse 31 through verse 37, we have the conflict with Ahithophel. Now, Ahithophel, we’ll talk more about him later on because he will be in the story in the next chapter, or so. Ahithophel was the trusted counselor. Someone has said, “He was the wisest man in the land outside of David.” Yet, David’s, let me go back and say this he was the wisest man in the land as a counselor. But David is God’s appointed king. And so, when Ahithophel betrays David, then we have something in the history of the Old Testament that, again, reflects on the New Testament.

This is, in one sense, an epitome of the history of the world because what we have is Ahithophel, who represents wisdom in the land, for he was a wise man, has been called the wisest man in the land, and, on the other hand, we have the wisdom of God, God having anointed David to be the king. But Ahithophel, his trusted advisor, has now betrayed him and has gone over to the side of Absalom, perhaps an indication of the fact that he thought the Absalom side would win. Well, when we look at the Bible, this too, illustrates so beautifully what the Bible speaks about because, actually, the story of the Bible is the story of the struggle between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of men.

Let me read you Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 18 and following. Paul says to the Corinthians.

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God: For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? But since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save

those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

And so what we have here is the old struggle between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of men, human wisdom versus divine wisdom. The wisdom of God had determined that David would be king over Israel to the end of his days, that the wisest man of the land, Ahithophel and others, associated with the conspiracy, would seek to frustrate this purpose, at least practically, whether they understood what they were doing or not. This is the epitome of the history of mankind, the wisdom of men seeking to frustrate the wisdom of God, God's purpose cannot be frustrated. The story of the Bible is the story of that. Adam and Eve went out of the garden, having rebelled against the wisdom of God and the exercise of their privileges. Pharaoh contrived to prevent what the wisdom of God had determined to take place. The wisdom of the Scribes and the Pharisees arrayed against our Lord Jesus, who was the wisdom of God, himself, sought to fight against what God had ordained. Down through the history of the world, we have had the struggle of the wisdom of men against the wisdom of God.

Men who live in sin, who try to dispense with Jesus Christ, really set their wisdom against the wisdom of our Great God in heaven, the Great and Blessed order which is founded on His eternal wisdom. The attitude of the world to the church may be expressed in the terms of the Apostle Paul. “Oh, that men were wise.”

You know, I think about Deuteronomy when I think about that because in Deuteronomy in chapter 32, verse 28 and 29, a long time ago, after telling something of the future of Israel, Moses goes on to say in verse 28, “For they are a nation void of counsel,” he's talking about their unbelief to come, “Nor is there any understanding in

them. Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!”

My Christian friends, Oh, that you and I were wise, to realize that we cannot fight against the purpose of God. We cannot order our lives in such a way that they go contrary to the Holy Scriptures. We shall sooner or later suffer as a result of it. And David, the great king, illustrates it in the chapters that we are studying.

Well, when David finds out that Ahithophel is on the other side, he offers a word of prayer. “O Lord, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!” May God frustrate the intentions of Ahithophel! He had good reason to think that that was possible.

Do you remember, back in 1 Samuel chapter 23, when Saul is seeking to destroy David, and David has escaped to the wilderness of Maon in verse 26 of chapter 23 of 1 Samuel. “Then Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain. So David made haste to get away from Saul, for Saul and his men were encircling David and his men to take them. But, now notice, he has David and his men all surrounded, remember, but then we read, “But a messenger came to Saul, saying, “Hurry and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land!” Therefore, Saul returned from pursuing David, and went against the Philistines; so they called that place the Rock of Escape.”

You cannot fight against God. You cannot defeat his purposes! You young people, you older people; you cannot defeat God. If you set out on a course of life that is contrary to Holy Scripture, you’ll be defeated. You’ll ultimately be defeated. Every one of you will be defeated. And you may even think that you have finally won. But then, like Saul, there’ll be a messenger come and just when you have just about won, you have your enemy encircled and you’re going to get him, the messenger will come, the Philistines are going to destroy everything while you’re here. You cannot defeat the Lord God. The wisdom of God is wiser and stronger than the wisdom of men.

Arthur Kessler once said with reference to prayer, “God seems to have left the receiver off the hook.” Well, I want you to know, that is not true. The receiver is never off the hook so far as the Lord God is concerned. And when David prays, “O Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!” That prayer was answered. And you know the end of Ahithophel, when finally even his wisdom was rejected; he went back home and hung himself or hanged himself. So the opportune assistance of Hushai is received in the latter part of the chapter. The question is, was it right?

And let me conclude because our time is up with just a couple of comments. The contrast between David and his rebellious son Absalom, is striking; submission on the part of David; arrogant pride on the part of Absalom. Filial worship on the part of David, I wish it were possible for us to turn to the psalms that David wrote at this time, Psalm 3, Psalm 4, Psalm 41, probably also, Psalm 55, remarkable expressions of his trust.

Perhaps we have time to look at one verse in Psalm 3. In the 3rd psalm and in verse 8, this is what David said in the midst of these trials. Verse 8.

“Salvation belongs to the Lord. Arise, O Lord; Save me, O my God! For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone; You have broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongs to the Lord. Your blessing is upon Your people.”

The receiver is still on the hook. So the contrast is remarkable, filial worship, David’s worship as a son of his father; filial disobedience, Absalom who disobeys his father, has disrespect for him, as a result from it.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul says, “In the last days, children shall be characterized by disobedience to their parents.” In other words, the spirit of Absalom lives on. And it lives on, often, in evangelical parent’s children as well.

May God deliver us from that.

The fiery trial, then, reveals the better side of David's being. It leads, incidentally, to what Peter says that the trial of his faith leads to. It leads to praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. You puzzle over the statement that David is a man after God's own heart. I think it's true. He is! David is a man after God's own heart. He's a man, and so he's a sinner. But he's a man after God's own heart because he recognizes his sin, he repents of his sin, confesses his sin, and then recognizes he has no claim on the Lord whatsoever, except a claim upon his sovereign good pleasure. And so, in submission, he waits. “Here I am let him do to me as seems good to Him.”

If you are here today and you've never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, I remind you, he is the wisdom of God. The Cross upon which he died represents God's wisdom in the salvation of men. May God touch your heart; may you recognize your need of our Lord Jesus Christ. May you respond to the wisdom of God that says that we need a redeemer because we are sinners. And may you, in God's marvelous grace, turn to our Lord Jesus and receive as a free gift, eternal life.

If you are here and you've never believed in Christ, we urge you to turn to him. And then, I think, it's proper to say, we thank you that you managed to get up and arrive on time to hear the ministry of the word.

Let's stand for the Benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these marvelous accounts in the word of God. We thank Thee for David. We thank Thee for all that Thou hast revealed through this great man; human, it's true, a sinner, it's true. But also, a true man of God; a man after Thine own heart. Lord, in the experiences of life may we remember the experiences of David. And, by Thy grace, through the power of the Spirit be able to please Thee, in measure at least, as this great king did. If there are some who have not believed in Christ, touch their hearts now.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

“The Fiery Trial of a Submissive Soul” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2008 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.