



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Samuel 21:1-15

“Declension of David”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for another opportunity to study the word of God, and we especially thank Thee for the privilege of reading of David’s life. We thank Thee for the testimony that David gave in his own generation, as the word of God puts it. And we thank Thee for the message that his life contains for us today. We are encouraged, Lord, to realize that the saints of God were not men who were perfect, but at the same time, they were men who passed through experiences, and learned through those experiences, trust in Thee, the things that we need to learn as we pass through the experiences of our lives. And so as we continue our study of the life of David, will Thou Lord, ministry to us through the word? We pray for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] Now tonight we are turning to 1 Samuel chapter 21, and our subject is the “Declension of David,” 1 Samuel chapter 21. Now, may I begin by just saying a few words as an introduction to the topic tonight? We often talk of what salvation has done for us or what it does for us. But sometimes we ought to talk of what it does not do for us. And one of the things that our salvation does not do for us is the guarantee that we shall never stumble in the Christian life or that we shall not have periods of declension.

In the epistle that Jude writes, he speaks of stumbling in the last few verses of his epistle. These are the words that Jude writes, “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy.” Now, that’s a wonderful promise. He is able to keep you from stumbling, but the very fact that this promise is given as an ability that rests with God does mean, as the Scriptures set forth very plainly, that it is possible for the saints of God after they have been saved to stumble. The Apostle Paul says something of the same thing in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 12 when he writes, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” So it is possible for a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to fall.

Our salvation does some wonderful things for us. It gives us the assurance of the forgiveness of sins. We know that we do not have to ever deal again with the penalty of our sin. We have a substitute who has substituted in our place, and because he has born the judgment of heaven, we do not have to bare that judgment. There is no way in which a believer will ever suffer the judgment of God because Christ has born our judgment, and he has paid that penalty to the full for those he came to save. And consequently we are sure that we have everlasting life. So we have the forgiveness of sins. We have everlasting life. We have a high priest, who ever lives to make intercession for us. We have the right of access through our great high priest. We have an advocate who advocates for us when we do sin.

And even before we realize that we have sinned, he already has acted as our advocate. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father. Not if any man sin and then recognizes his sin, or confesses his sin, then we have an advocate, but if any man sins we have an advocate with the Father. So we have an advocate. We have a high priest. We have the forgiveness of sins. We have justification. We have eternal life. There are many things that our salvation brings for us, but it does not make it impossible

for us to stumble in the Christian life. It is possible for us to, as the apostle says, “fall” in the Christian life.

Compare these two stanzas, which we sometimes sing. “Jesus sought me when a stranger, wondering from the fold of God, he to rescue me from danger, interposed his precious blood.” Now, that stresses the thing that Christ has done in giving himself for us on the cross and the salvation that we possess. But listen also to this stanza, which we often sing from, “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing.” “Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love; Yet Thy Lord has deign to seal it, With Thy spirit from above.”

Now, David’s difficulty in 1 Samuel chapter 21 is very instructive because he failed to do what we as believers must do also. He failed to cleave unto the Lord, having a relationship with the Lord does not mean that we therefore do not need to cleave to the Lord. As a matter of fact, coming into the possession of salvation we come to the beginning of a life of cleaving to the Lord. Someone has said facetiously, obviously a grammarian who knows that conjugation means to join together certain ending with a verb, says, “David’s trouble was when he should have conjugated, he declined.” Well he did decline, and the story of his declension is found here in 1 Samuel chapter 21. It’s not the only time that David fell. But it illustrates for us what we’ve been seeing in the Book of Genesis, and that is that the saints of God are very human individuals. And they do have difficulties that are similar to ours, and so consequently, we look at them not only to gloat over their failures, but to learn how they have been restored.

Now, let’s look at the 15 verses of this chapter. And will you let me read it? And then I want to speak about the historical situation just briefly, and then we’ll talk about the steps in David’s downfall. And if we have time we will conclude with a reference to two Psalms that David wrote at this time in his life because they give us some of David’s inner thoughts which he was thinking while he was going through these experiences.

Now, you'll remember that in 1 Samuel chapter 16 through chapter 20, the chapters that we have looked at so far in our studies in the life of David, that David was called by God. And then in the contest with Goliath he demonstrated the ability to lead and guide in Israel, to be their king. The remaining chapters of that section recall the conflict that David had with King Saul, a man who he sought to serve because he recognized that God had put Saul in office and therefore he was the Lord's anointed. David had a great and high regard for the offices of the Lord. Incidentally, it's something that we should have too in the church of Jesus Christ. When God has, through the Holy Spirit, appointed a deacon or appointed an elder in the local church, we should remember that that is God's work and therefore we should render to such men the respect that God has said in his word they should have as men appointed by the Holy Spirit to spiritual office. And so David wanted to serve Saul, but Saul, of course, would not let him.

Now, he's running from Saul at the present time because Saul wants to kill him. And we read in verse 1 of 1 Samuel chapter 21,

“Then David came to Nob to Ahimelech the priest; and Ahimelech came trembling to meet David and said to him, ‘Why are you alone and no one with you?’ David said to Ahimelech the priest, ‘The king has commissioned me with a matter and has said to me, Let no one know anything about the matter on which I am sending you and with which I have commissioned you; and I have directed the young men to a certain place.’ (Now, of course, this was a lie, there is no record of this, David was not telling the truth) Now therefore, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever can be found.’ The priest answered David and said, ‘There is no ordinary bread on hand, (that is no bread that is not used in the service of the tabernacle) ‘There is no ordinary bread on hand, but there is consecrated bread; if only the young men have kept themselves from women.’ (That is if they are not defiled according to the Law of Moses, having touched a

woman or having touched a dead body and things like this) David answered the priest and said to him, ‘Surely women have been kept from us as previously when I set out and the vessels of the young men were holy, (that is they too were not touched by anything that defiled) though it was an ordinary journey; how much more then today will their vessels be holy?’”

There is some question about what the word “vessels” means. It must mean either their garments or their weapons or other things that they were carrying with them. Sometimes the word is used of a body, and thus it would make sense with that sense too. “So the priest gave him consecrated bread; for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence.” That is the bread used in the tabernacle, the table of show bread. You remember that the bread was placed on the table, and the priests carried out their ministry with the table of show bread in the holy place. So that was called the bread of the Presence. “Which was removed from before the LORD, in order to put hot bread in its place when it was taken away. So the bread would be constantly put in the tabernacle’s holy place and then taken out and afterwards when it was taken out it was the perquisite of the priests. They were allowed to eat that bread after it was taken from the tabernacle. “Now one of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's shepherds.” Now whether he was an Israelite who came from Edom and thus called Doeg the Edomite, or whether he was an Edomite who is a Proselyte to the Israelitish faith, the text does not say.

“David said to Ahimelech, ‘Now is there not a spear or a sword on hand? For I brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's matter was urgent.’ (He’s still lying you see) Then the priest said, ‘The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah, behold, it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod; if you would take it for yourself, take it. For there is no other except it here.’ And David said,

‘There is none like it; give it to me.’ (It was the sword that he had used to cut off the head of Goliath after he had won the battle with his sling shot) Then David arose and fled that day from Saul, and went to Achish king of Gath. But the servants of Achish said to him, (that is to the king) ‘Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of this one as they danced, saying, ‘Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands?’ David took these words to heart and greatly feared Achish king of Gath. (He did not want them to recognize him) So he disguised his sanity before them, and acted insanely in their hands, and scribbled on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva run down into his beard. Then Achish said to his servants, ‘Behold, you see the man behaving as a madman. Why do you bring him to me? Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this one to act the madman in my presence? Shall this one come into my house?’”

I can imagine the President of our country saying, “Do I lack madmen, that you should bring another one to me?” [Laughter] He’s got enough of them already in his cabinet, [Laughter] and serving him. Now, let me say just a word or two about the historical situation and then we want to, as I say, look at some of the steps in the declension of David.

Now, you’ll notice that he has been called of God. He has had the great contest with Goliath, the Philistine. He has won that in a remarkable display of faith in God and also in the super human use of a sling shot against this giant of a man with a sword. He has said that he has done this in the name of the Lord God of Israel. And he has openly flaunted the faith that he had in coming to Goliath with nothing but the stones and the sling. But now having done that, having won that great victory, he is running from Saul. You see how the life of faith of the man of faith has its ups and its downs, its ups and its downs. And I think that’s very revealing of the spiritual life because I think that there is hardly a Christian that I know who is not failed to confess the fact that there are days in

which we seem by the grace of God to believe and enjoy victory in the Christian life, but then shortly thereafter something arises, and we fail miserably.

Now, look at the steps in David’s declension. And the first thing you notice is the growing fear of Saul. Now if you’ll turn back to chapter 20, verses 1 through 3, you will see it expressed very clearly.

“Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said to Jonathan, ‘What have I done? What is my iniquity? And what is my sin before your father, that he is seeking my life?’ (And Jonathan) said to him, ‘Far from it, you shall not die. Behold, my father does nothing either great or small without disclosing it to me. So why should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so!’ Yet David vowed again, saying, ‘Your father knows well that I have found favor in your sight, and he has said, ‘Do not let Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved’ But truly as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, there is hardly a step between me and death.’”

Now this is the same man who stood in front of that giant Goliath and won that great victory, but now he flees from Saul and expresses the fact that there’s just a step between him and death. Of course, it was true that there was humanly speaking just a step between him and death, but it was not true in the sense that God had already anointed him the king of Israel, had given him the assurance that the hand of God was upon him. Now this is the same David who said in chapter 17 and verse 45, is it not, these famous words, “You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted.” Now here is the same David standing in the courage of that little speech that he gave to Goliath, but now running and complaining that there’s just a step between him and death. The conqueror of Goliath is now fearful of demented Saul, the king of Israel. But isn't that true of the saints of God.

Now, take Elijah, he stood on Mount Carmel, there won the great victory over the prophets of Baal. And then after winning the great victory, Jezebel, a woman mind you, a woman said, “I’m going to have Elijah’s life.” And so he immediately runs, runs from the weaker vessel. Here is a man who has won this great outstanding victory on Mount Carmel, and the next thing we see, he’s running for his life before a woman. Now there are some men who say, “Yes, but it is worse to stand against a woman than it is all those four hundred prophets of Baal.” [Laughter] But that’s not really true, in spite of what they say. It’s much harder to stand on Mount Carmel and fight four hundred prophets of Baal than it is to stand against even a Jezebel.

Or take Peter, Peter one of the greatest of the saints of the word of God, one of the outstanding apostles, the one that most feel was “primus inter pares,” that is “the first among equals” of the twelve. In the Book of Acts, Peter is bold, courageous. He wins great victories. He stands up on the Day of Pentecost in the midst of an unfriendly crowd and preaches Jesus Christ, and him crucified. But then he is in Antioch, he’s having fellowship with the Gentiles, and when some men come down from Jerusalem, from James, thinking, “If these men see me sitting down with Gentiles, they’ll not invite me to the annual apostle’s Bible conference in Jerusalem.” And so the result is that he began to withdraw himself fearing, the text of Scripture says, “Those of the circumcision.” And the Apostle Paul had to stand up in the midst of the church, in the presence of everybody and rebuke the great apostle who stood up on the Day of Pentecost in one of the greatest exhibitions of faith and preached there the cross of Jesus Christ.

George Whitefield once said, so it is said, I always thought that John Wesley said this, but I read not long ago someone said that George Whitfield said this, George Whitfield never said a truer thing, this person said, than when in the thick of persecution he said, “I am immortal until my work is done.” Now I still think Wesley said it in spite of the fact that Whitfield is a Calvinist and Wesley is an Arminian. I really think that Wesley said that statement, and it’s not important who said it. It’s a great statement and it’s true

that we are immortal as long as our work is not done, and so why should we be fearful? Why should we be fearful in the midst of the experiences of life? If God intends for us to stay here, there is no reason for us to be fearful? And if he wants us to be in his presence, of course, that’s the best thing for us. But David, the man anointed of the Lord to be the great king of Israel is running from demented Saul. There is a root of fear in the old nature, a root of fear in the principle of sin which dwells in the midst of every one of us.

Think of Peter again. He was with the apostles in the boat, and the great storm came up. And suddenly, they looked out over the waters, and there was the Lord Jesus walking on the water. They thought it was a ghost, and they were very much afraid the text of Scripture said. And finally he said, “It is I. Be not afraid.” And so, Peter said, “Lord if it is you bid me come unto you.” And the Lord said, “Come.” And Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water. As I was saying just the other day, that’s a greater miracle than our Lord walking on the water. It’s no miracle for Jesus Christ to walk on the water, but for Peter, he got out, and he actually did walk on the water. But then he took his eyes off the Lord Jesus, and he looked at those waves which were boisterous, and he became fearful, and he began to sink.

And he didn't pray like preachers pray on Sunday morning. You know, “O Thou great God, great triune God, Thou that dwellest in the midst of the cherubim,” etcetera, etcetera. Someone said, I think it was Carl Armerding when I was going through seminary said, “If he’d prayed like we pray on Sunday morning, he would have been six feet under water before he got out his petition, [Laughter] which was, “Save Lord.” And so the Lord Jesus reached out and took Peter, and here is a man who has walked on water, and sinking because of fear of the waves. It is characteristic of human nature, and it’s the same Peter who after this experience, some years later, wrote his first epistle. And there he speaks about being, “Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to

be revealed at the last time.” He did finally learn his lesson, no doubt. Well, that’s the first step in David’s declension, the growing fear of Saul.

Now the second step is set forth right here in this chapter because it’s the deceit that he practiced before Ahimelech. Men out of fellowship with God are always fearful. And it’s not surprising that he should be fearful. And it’s not surprising too that his fear then should lead to deceit. Sir Walter Scott, who was a Scot and whose home, all who visit Scotland see by the River Tweed, in *Marmion* wrote this stanza, “Thus oft it haps, that when within they shrink at sense of secret sin, a feather daunts the brave; a fool’s wild speech confounds the wise, and proudest princes veil their eyes before their meanest slave.” Scott was right. When a man is out of fellowship with God, it doesn't take anything to make a man jump. And even a feather will scare a brave man if he’s hiding secret sin. And David is a man who is hiding secret sin. He’s fearful. He’s not trusting in the Lord. It’s not surprising then that he should engage in further deceit before the priest Ahimelech. He tells a lie. There is no indication from the life of David at this point that he sought the Lord directly. Now in the next chapter it says that Ahimelech sought the Lord for David, but David is out of fellowship with the Lord. He’s not on speaking terms with the Lord so far as the practice of prayer is concerned.

So the deceit that he practices, he tells Ahimelech that the king has commissioned him with a matter and has said let no one know anything about it. And that was nothing but a lie. And then he’s also lied concerning the haste with which he should carry out this. For we read in the 8th verse, “David said to Ahimelech, ‘Now is there not a spear or a sword on hand? For I brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's matter was urgent.’” That was another lie. Not only was he on a mission that did not really exist, but he’s now lying further saying that he had to come out without a weapon because of haste.

Now you know it’s very interesting to me that there should just happen to be here Doeg the Edomite. Did you notice that 7th verse? “Now one of the servants of Saul was

there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's shepherds.” That’s very striking because here is David, he is not in the relationship with the Lord that he should be. He’s fearful of Saul, sinned in that. He’s practicing deceit before Ahimelech. He’s lying regarding the haste with which he is supposed to have come. And you know he thought, perhaps, that he might get away with this until he saw Doeg the Edomite there. And when he saw Doeg the Edomite there and knew that he was the chief of Saul’s shepherds, he was fearful that Doeg might find out about this and report the matter to Saul because Saul was seeking his life. So illustrates this wonderful little truth that we need to bear in mind, and that is, we cannot get away with it. We cannot get away with it. You see the providence of God is such that when we as Christians lie and cheat and sin against our brethren, there is always some way by which that sin is known. “Be sure your sin will find you out,” Scriptures say.

There is a text in Ecclesiastes. Now, I’m going to read it because I don't want to embarrass some of you. You wouldn't know exactly where Ecclesiastes is would you? Yes, you would. I know you would, but I’m going to read it anyway. It’s Ecclesiastes 10:12. Listen to this verse, “Words from the mouth,” I’m looking at the wrong verse, and here I am talking about you. [Laughter] “Be sure your sin will find you out.” [Laughter] It’s verse 20. [Laughter] It’s verse 20, Ecclesiastes 10:20. Listen to this, “Furthermore, in your bedchamber do not curse a king, and in your sleeping rooms do not curse a rich man, for a bird of the heavens will carry the sound and the winged creature will make the matter known.” So, all those things you say about Jimmy, you think nobody is listening, [Laughter] well “A bird of the air shall carry the voice.” So there is Doeg the Edomite standing off to the side as David comes in and tells his lies, and of course, the words going to go right back to Saul. David’s down there, and Saul’s going to come and get him. David recognizes that.

Now the second, or the fourth, we have three steps in his declension so far. His fear, his deceit, then his lie concerning haste, and now in verse 9 it seems that there is the man who had his sling shot and his stones, but now he needs a sword.

“Then the priest said, ‘The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah, behold, it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod; if you would take it for yourself, take it. For there is no other except it here.’ And David said, ‘There is none like it; give it to me.’”

Here is the man who said, “The Lord saveth not with sword and with spear.” Those are exact words that David used. “The Lord saveth not with sword and spear.” But here he needs his weapons.

It’s one of the facts of the Christian life is that when God does his great victories he does them through the word of God. He does not do them through our intelligence. He does not do them through our training. He does not do them because we are unusually cultured individuals who have great gifts, natural gifts given to us. He accomplishes his work by his word, through the Holy Spirit. That’s why God uses the foolish and the weak. You would think, “Well if God is going to have a great spiritual movement transpire upon the earth, what would he do?” Well he would reach into one of the theological seminaries and put his hand upon the most intelligent on the faculty of one of the finest institutions, and he would use that man, but instead he uses a Billy Graham who has never seen the inside of a seminary except to lecture there to seminary students after God has already made him something more than those students and also those faculty members because he does things by his own power and through the Holy Spirit in order that men may glorify God rather than divide the glory and give some to the men and some to the Lord God. That’s why in preaching, preaching is the preaching of the word of God. We have entirely too much trust in our intelligence, in our training and

in other things today, in the Lord’s work. We need a great deal more stress upon the preaching of the word of God and reliance upon the word and the spirit for the accomplishment of the word of God.

Now the next step in David’s declension is the flight to Achish. We read in the 10th verse,

“Then David arose and fled that day from Saul, and went to Achish king of Gath. (This is in Philistia) But the servants of Achish said to him, ‘Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of this one as they danced, saying, ‘Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands?’”

So the failure of David’s worldly policy is becoming more evident in blunder after blunder. He not only has made all these blunders but now he makes another one. He runs down to Philistia. “The fear of man bringith a snare,” the writer of the Proverbs says, “But he that puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe.” So as long as we are fearful, as long as we are not trusting in the Lord, it’s true. Just the rustling of a little leaf will terrify us. And so when Doeg the Edomite is there David must feel it necessary to flee again.

The sixth step is the feigning of madness, acting like an idiot. Verse 13, “So, he disguised his sanity before them, and acted insanelly in their hands, and scribbled on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva run down into his beard.” The Authorized Version said he “scrabbled.” They should never have taken that word out. I like that word. He “scrabbled.” It really means to make the mark of a “tau” in Hebrew. It’s a form of a cross in early writing. So he started making these crosses. He learned this little trick from Saul. Additionally effective, according to the ancients, because they thought that people who made little marks like that were possessed of the spirit. And so, he knew that Saul had been demented, and Saul had acted that way, and he learned these

little tricks from Saul, and now he’s practicing them himself in order to cover up and protect himself from the Philistines. He wants them to think that he’s of no cause of concern to them, otherwise they might attack him.

And the final step is not stated here. The final step is given us in Psalm 34. And so I’d like for you, if you will, to turn to Psalm 34 because we do have facts about David’s life in the Psalms that we do not have in the historical books. But in the Psalms, Psalm 34 it is stated that Achish drove him away. So Psalm 34, and notice the superscription, Psalm 34, “A Psalm of David when he feigned madness before Abimelech (or Ahimelech), who drove him away and he departed.” What a ridiculous thing for the servant of God, the anointed king of Israel being driven away by the heathen king. What a downward path there is from chapter 18 and verse 7 where they were singing these wonderful things about David slaying his “ten thousands and Saul his thousands,” to acting like an idiot in front of the Philistines.

Now I’d like in the few moments that we have to just notice a few things about this Psalm 34 because notice when it was written. “A Psalm of David when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him away and he departed.” Now I want you to notice what’s going on in David’s mind because we learn from this Psalm how to recover one’s self when we are out of the proper relationship with the Lord. Notice verse 13 through 18. Here we read,

“Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it. (He’s under conviction for the sin) The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and His ears are open to their cry. The face of the LORD is against evildoers, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the LORD hears And delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

Those who are of a contrite heart, it is when we reach that stage that we are eligible for the delivering power of the Lord God. Now notice the 4th verse. Here he says, “I sought the LORD, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces will never be ashamed. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.” Sometimes we have to reach the stage where we are so out of touch with the Lord that there is no one to whom we can go but him. But when we do turn, then he does save us out of all of our troubles. That Psalm tells us how to recover ourselves when we’re in declension, as David was.

Now turn over to Psalm 56 because this one was also written during this time. It’s entitled in the version that I’m reading from, “Supplication for Deliverance and Grateful Trust in God. For the choir director; according to Jonath elem rehokim. (Now notice) A Mikhtam of David, when the Philistines seized him in Gath.” That is, before Achish, so it’s the same time. Now this Psalm tells you how to remain in fellowship with the Lord. There are three movements, and I’ll just read through it. We have time. Verses 1 through 4,

“Be gracious to me, O God, for man has trampled upon me; (incidentally the word for man there is the word that speaks of man as a mere mortal, “enosh”) for man has trampled upon me; Fighting all day long he oppresses me. My foes have trampled upon me all day long, for they are many who fight proudly against me. (This is Doeg, Achish, Saul) When I am afraid, I will put my trust in Thee. In God, whose word I praise, In God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid what can mere (and the word translated man here is the word flesh, “basar”) what can mere flesh do unto me?”

So, David has moved from fear to faith. And the logic is clear, man is a mere mortal. Man is a weak man. He is flesh. But when we belong to the Lord we have the

eternal almighty God standing for us. Why should we be fearful? Now the second refrain follows in verses 5 through 11. I’ll just read a few verses and then notice verses 9 and 10.

“All day long they distort my words; all their thoughts are against me for evil. They attack, they lurk, they watch my steps, (He’s talking about Saul and these men) as they have waited to take my life. Because of wickedness cast them forth, in anger put down the peoples, O God! Thou hast taken account of my wanderings; Put my tears in Thy bottle Are they not in Thy book? Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call; this I know, that God is for me. In God, whose word I praise, In the LORD, whose word I praise, In God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid. What can man (and here another word for man, this is the word “Adam” which means “earthy.” He’s just earthy. He’s made of dust) what can man do to me?”

“This I know, that God is for me.” “What can man do to me?” Now you can see the logic is very plain. God is for me, and poor earthy man is against me. It’s obvious who is going to win that battle.

And then finally the third note in verse 12 and 13, if the first two might be from fear to faith, and then the logic of God is for me therefore man cannot do anything against me, he says, “Thou vows are binding upon me, O God; I will render thank offerings to Thee. For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, indeed my feet from stumbling, So that I may walk before God In the light of the living.” And the logic, of course is that faith shall surely triumph because “Greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world.” It’s a marvelous picture of the ease of decay among the greatest of the saints. “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

Hudson Taylor came to the church of F.B. Meyer. And Mr. Meyer, writing in a little book called *The Christ Life for the Self Life*, said that he remembered very well when Hudson Taylor came to his church, that he stood upon the platform, opened his Bible,

and in case some of you have forgotten, Hudson Taylor was one of the greatest of the missionaries to china, he went out, lived by faith, labored there for many, many years and was really the founder of the great China Inland Mission. He was a tremendous man of faith. Well he stood up and he said, “Friends, I’ll give you the motto of my life.” And he turned to Mark chapter 11, verse 22 and the text that says, “Have faith in God.” And the margin at that point in some Bibles says, “Reckon on,” or rather, “have the faith of God.” But Hudson Taylor went on to say, “I think this means reckon on God’s faith to you.” Then he went on to explain. “All my life has been so fickle. Sometimes I could trust. Sometimes I could not. But when I could not trust, then I reckoned that God would be faithful. There is a text that says, ‘If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful. He cannot deny himself.’” Mr. Meyer went on to say, “And when you cease to think about your faith and like Sarah reckon him faithful, your faith comes without knowing it, and you are strong.”

Have faith in God. That is, reckon on God’s faithfulness to us in the experiences of life. And if we reckon on God’s faithfulness to us, then we don’t have anything to worry about. We don’t have to worry about men. We don’t have to worry about the trials of life that come our way. They are difficult. They’re hard to go through, but we do not have to ultimately worry about them. And if you’re worrying about what you should reckon on God for, well reckon on him for the forgiveness of sin because he’s accomplished it through the saving work of Christ. Reckon on him for the forgiveness of sins that you confess to him in your Christian life. Reckon on him for constant guidance for he promises it to all of the saints.

The thing that characterizes the saints is that they’re led of God. If a man is not led of God, he’s not one of the saints. All the saints are constantly led of God. We don’t have to say, “O God give me guidance,” because he is giving guidance. We may pray, “O God help me to recognize the guidance that you’re giving.” That’s different. And reckon on him for the provision of all of our needs. “The soul that to Jesus has fled for repose,

He will not, He will not, desert to its foes, that soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, I'll never, no never, no never forsake!”

So if God be for us, we don't have to worry about Saul. We don't have to worry about Doeg the Edomite, or any of the other enemies of the Lord God. May God help us to learn from David's experience. And may God deliver us from declension which so plagues the saints of God. And you know declension can happen to a church as well, as a body. And may God deliver Believers Chapel from spiritual declension. It's easy to rest in the things that God has done in the past and to think that because we are what we are, he will surely be with us constantly even though we do not cleave unto him as we should. May God help us to cleave continually. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the lessons of life that come to us. We thank Thee for David for the things that he learned. Help us to learn after him, Lord. Deliver us from declension. For Jesus' sake. Amen.