



October 21, 2018
1 Samuel 18-24
Pastor Phil Ward

The Rise of the King's Leadership

Hi Everyone. My name is Larry Adams and I want to take a moment to thank you for reading this message. At Golden Hills we are committed to exalting Jesus and preaching the Word. Your downloading of this message is a great encouragement to us, as we know that our ministry is going out to spread God's Word all over the world.

We want you to know, too, that in no way do we intend these messages to be a replacement for your involvement in a good local church, where, sitting under the authority of pastors and other teachers, you can learn to worship, grow and serve and be engaged with a body of believers where you can grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We realize also, that some of you may be in areas of the world where there is no local church. Therefore, we hope these messages you are using, to gather with your family or other believers, or people from the community that it will be a great encouragement to you, as you hear God speak into your life, helping you to become disciples who are true, reproducing followers of Jesus Christ.

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We're going to be in 1 Samuel 18. If you are new at our church, welcome! We're going through a series of 1 and 2 Samuel called The Rise of the Kingdom. We'll be focusing today on the relationship between David and Saul. We'll be looking at chapter 18-24. There is no way I can read through all this, so I'm going to give us a 30,000 foot overview of these seven chapters. I'll go chapter by chapter, and pinpoint some of the basic events of what happened. You'll have a feel for how the story is unfolding, and what is happening. Your homework is to go home and read it for yourself. We live in a very biblically-illiterate culture, so don't be counted among those who are illiterate when it comes to the Bible. (Harsh, huh?)

A brief overview. The point of the overview is to give us a feel. Then we'll circle back around and dive into some key texts that will help us understand the narrative of the story, but also do what is most important: we'll see where Jesus is in the Old Testament. Remember in Luke 24, Jesus said that the whole Old Testament is primarily about Me. So we want to see where He is there. Ready?

Overview:

Chapter 18 – it all starts here. We are introduced to the deep friendship between David and Jonathan. Jonathan is King Saul's son. They have a deep connection. They are great friends. However, because of this great friendship, in part, Saul is very jealous of David. In chapter 18, he tries to kill David two different times, out of envy and jealousy. He tries to hurl a spear at David to pin him to the wall, and secondly, Saul finds out that his daughter, Michal, loves David, so he thinks that is a great idea. Not because David is great son-in-law material, but because that would afford him an opportunity to have David killed. He thought, you can marry my daughter, but since you are a poor shepherd boy who has no resources, you can't pay the bride price for a princess. So I'm going to require of you 100 foreskins from the Philistines. He was thinking, if David is going to go kill 100 Philistines and get their foreskins, that's pretty risky behavior. He'll probably die. Bingo! So David goes out and returns home with 200 Philistine foreskins. He wins the girl.

Chapter 19 – Once again, Saul tries to kill David by pinning him to the wall with his spear. However, Jonathan, Saul's son, tries to defend David, but it falls on deaf ears. Saul is not hearing any of it. Instead, Saul sends an envoy of watchmen to David's house at night with the intention of, in the morning when David leaves his house, I want you to strike him and kill him. However, Michal, David's new wife and Saul's daughter, finds out about this and helps David escape through a window. So now David is on the run.

Chapter 20 – Now David comes to Jonathan and asks why his dad is trying to kill him all the time. What's up with that? Jonathan says, "I don't really think he wants to kill you. I just think he is mad at you." So they come up with a plan to find out whether or not David truly is as risk; whether or not Saul truly wants to kill him. So there is this feast coming, a two-day long feast. David and Jonathan decide that David will not participate in the feast. Then Saul will see David's absence, and inquire where he is. At that point, Jonathan will fill in the blanks: David went home to Bethlehem to be with his family. Then, depending on how Saul reacts, he would know whether or not he intended to kill David.

Well, Saul did react. After the two days, he said, "I hate David. I want to kill him. Can you bring him to me?" So Jonathan runs out to the field where David was hiding and said, "It's true, my dad wants to kill you. You have to go." So they embrace one another. Jonathan blesses David and sends him on his way. So David is now a fugitive on the run, wanted by Saul. Not just wanted for arrest, but wanted in order to be killed.

Chapter 21 – David goes to a place called Nob, where he meets a priest named Ahimilech. He goes to where the priest is serving and asks for food, since he is on the run. He left in haste and doesn't have any weapons of warfare, nor any supplies or food. So he asks for food. Ahimilech gives him some food, the stale holy bread. (On the Sabbath day they took out the holy bread and replaced it with fresh bread, so David and the people with him got to eat the stale holy bread. Then David asked, "Do you have any weapons of warfare?" Ahimilech says, we don't have anything except for this one thing: we have the sword of Goliath, whom you killed. David says, "Yeah! That will work!" So David straps on the sword of Goliath and heads out, ironically, to the land of the Philistines. He heads to a city called Gath. It is ironic about Gath, because it was the hometown of Goliath! I don't know what David was thinking! But he comes riding in on a horse (maybe, that's how I picture it), with Goliath's sword. Everyone is thinking – hey! That is the dude who killed Goliath! Let's get him! So they apprehended David. When he was in custody with the Philistines, he pretended to be insane, foaming at the mouth, scratching at the doors. The king said, I don't need any more crazy people! We have enough! Let's get rid of this guy. So David leaves.

Chapter 22 – When David left Gath, he called to himself a whole host of people in a place called the Cave of Adullam. There, he called the weak and infirmed and sick to himself. He becomes their leader. Saul finds out that David had visited Ahimilech in Nob, so Saul asked Ahimilech to come to him and give an account of what happened. So Saul figures, I need to question this man. So he questioned him. Saul's paranoia is reaching absolute astronoMichal heights, and he finds out that Ahimilech supported David, so he orders Ahimilech to be killed, and all the priests who served with him. However, the Israelites who were there with Saul, were looking at one another and thinking *I'm not killing any priest! Are you kidding me?* Now, Saul turns to a man named Doeg, an Edomite, which means he is an enemy of Israel. He turned to Doeg and said, "You kill them!" Now Doeg, when David was in the temple with Ahimilech, was lurking in the shadows, watching David when he got the bread and sword. He was the informant who told Saul that David was in Nob. So now, Doeg says, "Gladly!" So he takes out his sword and hacks to pieces, all the priests in the entire city of Nob. Horrible situation.

Then it comes out that one of the sons of Ahimilech had escaped. His name was Abiathar. He comes to David and says, "David, you'll never believe this, but Saul has killed my father and all the priests in

Nob.” David recognizes that it was his fault that the priests were killed. He tells Abiathar, “OK, you’ll be safe with me now.” So he takes the man into his company and keeps him and preserves him.

Chapter 23 – The city of Keilah, in Judah, is attacked by the Philistines. David gets wind of it and enquires of the Lord, “Should I go to Keilah and defend my people and deliver them from the hand of the Philistines?” And God says yes, you should. So David goes there and liberates the city. They people rejoice and repay him by sending messengers to Saul to tell him that David was there! They said to come and get him!

So David sees this and thinks, I just liberated you from the Philistines and now you are selling me out? So he is on the run once again.

He goes into the wilderness of Ziph. As he is hiding there, with no home and no place to go, he is abandoned and being turned over by everybody. He is without any safety. It turns out that the Ziphites, living in the wilderness of Ziph, find out that he is David – so they send messengers to Saul and tell him that David is there, and Saul should come kill him!

So Saul comes with his army, coming (chapter 23) and pursuing David up and down, all around in the wilderness – until they are in close proximity. Like where you can just sense each other’s presence – that close. Then all of a sudden, when you think David is about to be captured and killed by Saul, messengers come to Saul and say, “The Philistines have attacked the land! We need to go back!” So Saul abandons the pursuit of David. He heads back to the land of Israel and defends the country against the Philistines.

Chapter 24 – Saul returns and chases David. David is in a cave, hiding with his men, now 600. Saul goes into a cave to relieve himself – deep in this cave. David is back there, in the shadows. He recognizes Saul. He walks up and cuts off the corner of Saul’s robe. Saul, after finishing his business, heads back to his army and David comes out of the cave and says, “My Lord, my king! I could have killed you today, but I didn’t. I saved you.” Basically David said – I’m a nobody! Why do you keep trying to kill me? I’m not going to lay a hand on you! Then Saul recognizes David’s righteousness and innocence and says, “Now today I realize that you will be the rightful king, and I am the wicked one.”

End of story! It’s so good! (applause) (Yes, I practiced that!)

Now, having had the overview, I want to circle back and highlight a couple of significant things in this story. They will not only help us understand the narrative of the story, but it will give us a beautiful glimpse of Jesus. Let’s pray and ask the Lord to bless us:

God, would You do exactly what we ask, in that You would bless us with Yourself. We know that this book that we’re reading is no mere book. It is Your revealed word. By it we know that we are refreshed and revived and restored. By it we have a revelation of all that You are and all that You have done for us. So God, I pray that our time together as a church will be fruitful because we have met with You, and that we have encountered You, and You have been pleased to reveal Yourself to us through this book. So God, grant us all we need to see You and Your majesty, glory and beauty. Grant us the Holy Spirit and prepare our hearts, eyes and minds to see and hear and believe everything we have laid before us in Your word. Would You do that for us, we pray. To You belongs the glory forever and ever, in Jesus’ name, Amen.

Let’s come back, circle back. Starting in Chapter 18. We understand that the relationship between Saul and David is tense. Saul wants to kill David. The question is why. Why does Saul want to kill David so badly? The answer is because Saul is insanely jealous. He is insanely jealous. Why in the world is Saul so jealous?

We'll start in Chapter 18. You have to remember that Jonathan, who is the son of Saul, is the rightful heir of the king. He will one day, naturally speaking, take over. The Kingdom of Israel will become his kingdom. So he is the prince, the crown prince. Keep that in mind as we read this (1 Samuel 18:1-5):

As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. ² And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. ³ Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. ⁴ And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt.

Understand the significance of what is happening here. Basically this: Jonathan, the rightful heir of the throne, who is naturally speaking, the one to inherit the kingdom, this crown prince is now disrobing, removing his belt, giving his armor and sword to another man. In other words, he is relinquishing all of the regalia that outwardly signifies that he is the prince and will one day be the king. He is relinquishing it and giving it to David because Jonathan recognizes that the kingdom is going to be stripped from his dad, and therefore from him, and it is going to be given to a better man. That better man is David. So, Jonathan says, I am this day asserting my allegiance to you, David, by giving you all of the crown prince regalia. I am for you. You are God's chosen man. Beautiful!

⁵ And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him, so that Saul set him over the men of war. And this was good in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

Right from the beginning (v 1) we see that Jonathan loved David. Jonathan was for David. Jonathan recognized that David was God's man to lead as king. We also see that the people of Israel loved David. (18:6-9):

⁶ As they were coming home, when David returned from striking down the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments. ⁷ And the women sang to one another as they celebrated,

"Saul has struck down his thousands,
and David his ten thousands."

⁸ And Saul was very angry, and this saying displeased him. He said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands, and what more can he have but the kingdom?" ⁹ And Saul eyed David from that day on.

I love that phrase, he "eyed David." In our family, whenever we say ludicrous things that are ridiculous ... for instance, I hate the Dodgers and I don't like the Red Sox. So when the Dodgers won last night. I have no reason to watch the World Series. So I turn to my kids and go, "I am not watching the World Series this year! I protest!" My kids fish-eyed me! In our family we call that (looking out at the side of your head) – yeah, sure. Right.

So Saul is fish-eyeing David. He is looking at David, everywhere, out of the corner of his eye. He's keeping an eye on him. I don't trust you.

Jump down to verse 16: ¹⁶ But all Israel and Judah loved David, for he went out and came in before them."

So put yourself in Saul's shoes. Your own son, the crown prince of Israel loves David. You come home and all the women are dancing and singing because they love David. Then Michal, your own daughter (v 20) loves David. ¹⁶ "But all Israel and Judah loved David, for he went out and came in before them."

All right. What's going on here? If you are Saul, do you see what has happened? Not only in chapter 15, did God say that you were no longer going to be the king. But now, all of a sudden, your crowned prince, your very own flesh and blood son – loves David, who is the one who is going to take your throne. Not only that, but the people love David. Your own daughter loves David!

So why is Saul so jealous? Because everyone loves the other guy and not him.

This is easy for us to understand because you and I can often relate to Saul. Big time. Saul's reputation is being threatened. He once was so handsome and powerful and liked by everyone. Now, David is that guy. This is a really deadly combination for Saul's soul. Saul's idolatry, the idolatry of control (this is MY kingdom!), the idolatry of reputation (his ten thousands and only my thousands?). (You're the king! Grow up!) Also the idolatry of being liked by everyone. I just want people to like me. All of a sudden, Saul is facing the reality that all the idols he set up in his life: control, reputation, being liked by others, - are now crumbling. Now, where will he find his identity and self-worth? To whom will he turn now, for appreciation and self-esteem?

Well, Saul decides that if David is the reason I feel this way, then I should do something about David, namely, kill him. So you and I can relate to this because when people accuse us, or make false accusations about us, or say things about us which might question our character or reputation, or you come to find out that people don't like us as much as we thought – what is our response? A lot of times it is: *I'm going to get even! I'm going to prove myself! I'm going to uphold my reputation by destroying their reputation!* We can relate to Saul, can't we?

Here is what he decided to do. David was playing his harp, trying to soothe Saul's mind. Saul with a spear in his hand goes, I'm going to get him, and whoosh! He tries to pin David to the wall! David is elusive, like the Matrix. So he gets out of the way. Saul does that a second time (18:11 and 19:10).

Saul knows that David is destined to be king. He knows that because Samuel told him in 15:28 that "the Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day, and has given it to a neighbor of yours who is better than you." So Saul knows. He is losing control. He is losing the affection, the reputation. He is losing his likability. Therefore, he must kill David.

For many of us, we understand exactly how Saul feels. When we are threatened, especially our idols of control, or of our reputation, or the idolatry of being liked by others and having a good opinion in other people's minds about us – we respond just like Saul. We are demanding. If we are attacked, we attack back. If we are accused of something, we defend ourselves. We get revenge. We get even. If others around us receive the praise that we think is due to us, we do not rejoice with them; we resent them. When someone at work gets the recognition you think you deserve, how do you feel in that moment? *Why them and not me?*

How do we respond? I know when we read the Bible we often love to put ourselves as the hero. So when you read David and Goliath, we're like – oh, I'm David! I'm David, clearly. I just need to find my enemy, my giant and over come him. Fear of heights? I'll over come it. Fear of whatever? I'll over come it. There are whole movies in the Christian subculture built on this stuff. The reality is, you're not David! You don't have the power, authority or ability to overcome evil, and to overcome Satan himself, or to stand against the enemies of God.

So where do we fit into the story of David and Goliath? Easy: we are the trembling crowd, standing off to the side, going, Yikes! I don't know what to do! That's you and I!

Do you know who David is? Jesus! Don't ever put yourself in place of Jesus. Let Jesus rule and reign and have all authority and let us be honest about who we really are: we are weak and trembling and fearful people who are powerless to overcome what is against us in this life.

So when we look at this, we go "clearly, I'm David. I'm the one who is getting hurt." NO! You are probably Saul! You're the one trying to kill your neighbor, at least his reputation, in order to defend yourself! (Are you tracking with me here, church?) Yeah, it stinks. I

hate when God shows me my sin, but I love it at the same time, because I know whenever I see my sin, I know grace is not far behind.

So now we'll look at David's life and ask ourselves, what happens to David from this point forward, when Saul is out to get him? In fact, Saul wants to kill David by sending the watchman to his house late at night, so in the morning when he wakes up, he will be killed. What's going to happen? Well, Michal his wife saves him. She sends him out through a window, making sure he doesn't die.

From that point forward (19:11), when David escapes, the next six chapters are about David's suffering. Why does David suffer? Because God is preparing him to lead His people. That reminds us, brothers and sisters that, whether or not you want to acknowledge it, we live in a fallen and broken world in which we will suffer. But we ought never to waste our suffering. But let us suffer well.

How do we do that? This section is to teach us how to suffer well. So what do you think David was experiencing when he went to bed that night and his wife goes, "Um, some people are outside to kill you. So you need to leave." He is thinking, *are you kidding me? I just got into bed!* "We have to get you out the window. You can't stay here, you have to go." What do you think in going through David's mind and heart? His father-in-law wants him dead!

We don't have to guess because David wrote a psalm about it, Psalm 59:1-4 – (David writes)

Deliver me from my enemies, O my God;
protect me from those who rise up against me;
² deliver me from those who work evil,
and save me from bloodthirsty men.

³ For behold, they lie in wait for my life;
fierce men stir up strife against me.
For no transgression or sin of mine, O LORD,
⁴ for no fault of mine, they run and make ready.
Awake, come to meet me, and see!

David's heart is crying out, Lord! I'm innocent! I have no idea why these people want to kill me! I didn't do anything! But there they are, outside my house, waiting to destroy me. God! Come and see what is happening to me!

I love that. David does not hide how life is so painful. Then (Ps 59:16-17) –

¹⁶ But I will sing of your strength;
I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning.
For you have been to me a fortress
and a refuge in the day of my distress.
¹⁷ O my Strength, I will sing praises to you,
for you, O God, are my fortress,
the God who shows me steadfast love.

See what David does? He does not minimize his pain and emotional and psychological suffering. He deals with it, not by turning inwardly. Some would say, "My life is hard, I just have to turn inwardly and I need to muster the power and strength to overcome this! I am an overcomer!" No, that's not what he does! Instead, David turns his gaze from inward to outward, he says, "God! This pain is strong but You are stronger. Because of Your steadfast love, You will sustain me! You are my fortress! You are my refuge! You are my stronghold. You are my everything."

That's why we don't suffer well today. We are always told to look inwardly. But the forces of evil and darkness and death are too strong for you, but you know what? God in Christ Jesus is stronger than they are!

So he turns and proclaims God is our fortress, God is our strength, God is our steadfast love, God is our refuge.

Brothers and sisters, this means that this momentary pain that David is experiencing is also an opportunity for him to revel in the steadfast love of God. Do you think of that when you suffer? Oh, what love I'm about to experience because of this suffering! Do you approach life like that?

There is a promise for us as Christians today. The promise is – because of Jesus, a day is coming when there will be no more pain, no more suffering and no more tears, for there will be no more death. In that day, we will be finally and fully delivered from all pain and suffering, free to experience the fullness of God's love for us in Christ Jesus. That's called the New Creation.

But brothers and sisters – the Bible nowhere promises that life in this one. We cannot demand of this life what only the next life promises.

David suffers because he has no home. He has no one to turn to. In fact, when he finds out that Saul truly wants to kill him, we read in verse 42 that Jonathan prays with him, blesses him, then it says, Jonathan returned to his house but David was forced to depart. He is on the run. He is a fugitive. Nowhere to lay his head.

This reminds us of what Jesus said in Matthew 8:20 ²⁰ And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.'

As Christians, we need to realize the Bible clearly demonstrates for us the reality that this world is not our home. We are sojourners and exiles and aliens in this world because our citizenship is in another place. Our citizenship is in heaven, and from heaven we await our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ who will transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body, by the power in which He subjects all things to Himself (Philippians 3:20-21)

We have to realize that this is not our home, so therefore, we cannot demand that this world be comfortable, as the next world is going to be.

What do we learn from this? If David is a type of Christ, which means he foreshadows Jesus, then Saul is a type of the anti-Christ. He foreshadows the world. So as Saul seeks to kill and destroy David, so too the world, Satan and his minions seek to kill and destroy Jesus and all who follow Him. This is not our home! If the world hates Jesus, it will hate us too. Why? Because we are not greater than our master. If He suffers, we will too. So you have to get a new master if you don't want to suffer. If you get a new master, you will suffer in torment forever.

So David flees to Gath by the way of Nob. He goes to Ahimilech, and gets the sword of Goliath. He goes to the city of Gath. He pretends to be insane because he knows he is now in bondage. So he suffers once again, on the run.

How does he feel and think? David wrote a psalm about it, Psalm 56:1-4. The title of this psalm is *"It is when the Philistines seized him in Gath."* David writes:

Be gracious to me, O God, for man tramples on me;
all day long an attacker oppresses me;
² my enemies trample on me all day long,
for many attack me proudly.

Many of us as Christians can feel that way. We ought to never demand, even though we live in America, you can't ever demand that America be the New Creation. It is not! So David is pleading with God. *God – these people are against me! They hate me!* How does he respond? Verse 3-4:

³ When I am afraid,
I put my trust in you.
⁴ In God, whose word I praise,
in God I trust; I shall not be afraid.
What can flesh do to me?

The world is against me, but I fear not the world because I fear God. That's a right disposition. That's what Matthew 10:28 says, when Jesus said, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." The reality is, many people, including probably many who are here today – fear more the opinion of man than they do the holiness of God. So they fear what man could do to them in their bodies without giving proper recognition to what God can do in heaven and hell. So Jesus says, "You ought never to fear man above the fear of God." God is holy and just. We have been paralyzed at times by the fear of other people and their opinions of us, have we not?

So dear Christians – here is what I exhort you: do not fear this world, nor the death and ridicule and slander that it seeks to intimidate with. Instead, put your trust in God and they promise of His word. For the same grace that will save you from the wrath of God is the same grace that will deliver you from the fear of man. God's grace is sufficient. God will do it. Trust Him. His grace is enough.

Remember Doeg, the Edomite who slayed all the priests, who was lurking in the shadows and ratted David out? What would you do in that instance, if you found out it was Doeg who ratted you out and killed all those people?

We don't have to guess what David did. He wrote a psalm about it, Psalm 52. The title is "When Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, 'David has come to the house of Ahimilech.'" (52:1-3, 8-9)

Why do you boast of evil, O mighty man?
The steadfast love of God endures all the day.

In other words, “you boast as though you are mighty, yet it is God’s steadfast love which is mightier.”

²Your tongue plots destruction,
like a sharp razor, you worker of deceit.
³You love evil more than good,
and lying more than speaking what is right.

⁸But I am like a green olive tree
in the house of God.
I trust in the steadfast love of God
forever and ever.
⁹I will thank you forever,
because you have done it.
I will wait for your name, for it is good,
in the presence of the godly.

David does not seek revenge. Instead, in the midst of his suffering, at the hands of this individual, David acknowledges his pain, and then turns to trust God and His unfailing love. *You will not abandon me in the midst of my pain and suffering, God. You love me.*

He says, “I am like a green olive shoot.” In other words, I am bendable, but I won’t break. You’ve seen that before with the “tender shoot.” If you take it and bend it, it bends back. We are bent, but not broken.

So the people of Keilah tell Saul about the whereabouts of David. So he has to go into the wilderness of Ziph. He finds out the Ziphites sell him out to Saul. So where is he going to go? He can’t go home. He can’t go to the Philistines. He can’t go to Judah. Can’t go to Keilah. Can’t go to the wilderness. Where can he go? What is he thinking? What is he feeling? David wrote a psalm about it, Psalm 54. The title reads, “When the Ziphites went and told Saul, ‘Is not David hiding among us?’” (Psalm 54:1-4) -

O God, save me by your name,
and vindicate me by your might.
²O God, hear my prayer;
give ear to the words of my mouth.

³For strangers have risen against me;
ruthless men seek my life;
they do not set God before themselves. Selah

⁴Behold, God is my helper;
the Lord is the upholder of my life.

I think in pictures, so when I picture David writing this as he is wandering, fearing for his life. I picture this cloud of darkness, surrounding David. It’s the doom and gloom of his life. Then all of a sudden it seems as if the clouds and the fog begin to part. As they part and separate, the darkness begins to be vanquished. The bright light of the sun now penetrates, and as he looks up, he begins to see clearly.

Can you see it? Then he says, “Behold, God is my helper; the lord is the upholder of my life.” And in that moment, the clouds and the gloomy darkness are totally vanquished in the light of the truth that God is our helper. He is the one who upholds my life!

Brothers and sisters, when ruthless people seek to take our lives, and maybe it’s not physically, but our reputations, we have to realize it is God who upholds our life. David simply entrusts himself to a holy and faithful God. He says he will trust His word in the midst of this. God will not abandon me.

We learn a lot about Jesus from this. If you have ever learned that Christianity is about being comfortable, easy, blessed, prosperous, pain-free and without suffering – somebody has lied to you. We have never been promised in this life, the things that only the next life can provide. There is coming a day when we will be blessed beyond words. We will be prosperous beyond measure. We will be joyously pain-free, without suffering, without death. We will be perpetually at rest. But that day is when Jesus returns and ushers in the New Creation. That day is not today. Nor tomorrow, more than likely. But it is when Jesus returns.

What are we promised in the meantime? Hardships, tribulations and suffering. Why? Because the world hates us. Because it hates Jesus. If He suffered, so will we.

There is a great comfort, however, and solace and grace that is offered to us in the midst of our pain and suffering and tribulations. David foreshadows Jesus, and in David’s suffering, we see Jesus’ suffering. But we can also recognize our own suffering.

Here is what I want to do: I know that people here, are either suffering or know someone who is suffering. I’m not defining what I mean by suffering because I mean it to mean the experience of life, the way it is not supposed to be. Read Genesis 1 and 2. Whatever that is, no shame, no guilt, no pain, no suffering, no tears, no violence, no exploitation, no rape, no genocide – none of that. That’s what I mean. If you experience whatever is NOT Genesis 1 and 2, you’re suffering.

How do we suffer well? We look to Jesus. He, as our king, knows what it is like to be weak and to suffer. So let’s cast our gaze upon Jesus. Hear these words, church: Hebrews 2:10 –

¹⁰ For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

You see what he is saying? It is fitting that the Son of God suffers. Why? (Hebrews 2:14-15) –

¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

Jesus came, the Son of God, God in human flesh, intentionally to die for sinners so that sinners would be free from the bondage and the power of Satan and the fear of death. So that you can face death and say, “I don’t care if my body wastes away and dies. I’m getting a new one! There is an upgrade coming!” So, because Jesus suffered, we are free to not live in fear of what the world may do to us because we know that even though the world may take our body, we’re getting a new one. The world cannot take our soul.

Jesus, when He was tempted, was without sin. When He suffered, He was also tempted. But in the midst of His suffering and temptation, He did not sin. You and I are prone to sin through temptation, when we suffer.

What do I mean by that? One thing we notice about David is, in the midst of his suffering, he never once blamed God. Nor do we ever read that David felt entitled to an easy, comfortable life because he was the God-ordained anointed heir to the throne of Israel. Notice that? You never once see David shake his fist into the sky and ask, “Why are You doing this to me? I’m supposed to be the king!”

Yet, what you hear on the lips of the false teachers and prosperity-gospel-preaching heretical, nonsensical teachers that you see on TV and their multitude of books being promulgated – all this nonsense – online, is this. They say: *You have a birthright. You have a birthright. You are a son and daughter. You need to claim your birthright. Be prosperous.* NO.

To them I would say, what in the world are you saying? Are you telling me that what we need to do in the midst of our suffering, is to shake our fist at God and demand our birthright? Demand that He give us in this life, what He promised for the next? Have you not read the parable of the Prodigal Son? That was the younger son who did that.

So what do we do? We have to remember, brothers and sisters, we live in an unjust and unfair world. That’s not God’s fault, it’s our fault. We forget that this world is fallen. It’s broken. It is full of sin. We also forget that many of the contributors to this sin and brokenness and fallen-ness – are sitting in these pews! WE are the problem.

So in the midst of the suffering, we often sin because we shake our fist at God and say, God, You owe me! I deserve better than this! I have rights! I’m entitled to a better life!

No, church. May we never fall into the temptation to speak such blasphemous nonsense. Because if we take inventory of our lives, we will conclude without a shadow of a doubt, what we deserve is precisely nothing but death. For we have rebelled against God. We have hated God. We live in selfishness. We abuse and manipulate and extort the people around us, even our loved ones in our own home – do we not? In light of that, how could we shake our fist at God and say, You owe me. You owe me a better life. No, we don’t deserve anything but death. We claim we are innocent, but we are guilty.

But – (do you feel the bad news right now? no one is moving right now. Don’t ignore that. Don’t check your phone right now. That’s what we’re tempted to do. Distract myself. I feel uncomfortable. I am having to talk to myself right now, and I don’t like it. Distract me.) But – here is the reality, brothers and sisters: we have Jesus. Though we are guilty, and we are not innocent, Jesus came to earth to be the innocent person that we could not be. So, through His death and resurrection, He did all that was necessary to grant us, to give us and to offer us the very life we are demanding of God, but that we cannot receive it through demands, no, we receive it through humble repentance. I can’t do this myself. I need You, God. Do this for me.

So we read this in Hebrews 4:14-18

¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Did you hear it? We as Christians have full confidence to approach the throne of grace, because in that moment of our desperate, deep need, we have a sympathetic high priest who relates to us because He knows exactly what it is like to suffer and be tempted. Yet, He never gave in when we do. So we can confidently draw near to God and receive the supply of grace and mercy because of the finished work of Jesus. So brothers and sisters, this is quite amazing. In the midst of your suffering, God has not abandoned you; God is showing you His steadfast love to you and allowing you to experience what it is like to live like Jesus. Man! That's why we should never pray to ask for no suffering. Because the more we pray away our suffering, the more we reject the blessing of God's love.

So, when you are in the midst of suffering (cancer, death, lost job, whatever) are you looking at your suffering and thinking – *oh, my goodness! God, this is going to be a moment when You will sustain me by Your steadfast love! Do it!*

We of all people on the face of the earth, as Christians, are the only people that can do that in the face of suffering. It's because Jesus is enough for us. Phew! Jesus learned obedience through what He suffered (Hebrews 5:7-8).

We do not want to waste our suffering. Because Jesus learned obedience through what He suffered, we too can learn through suffering. Here is what it says (Hebrews 5:7-8):

⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.

⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.

Let me say it like this: in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed and cried and sweat drops of blood in anguish for His death. In this verse it says that the Father heard Him. But when we read the story, we realize that Jesus still got spiked to a cross. How exactly did the Father hear Him? The Father heard the prayers of Jesus and did not deliver Him by removing Him from suffering. But the Father heard His prayers and delivered Him by supplying Him with the strength and grace and mercy that He needed to endure the suffering. So Hebrews 12:1 says: "For the joy that was set before Him, Jesus endured the cross."

Brothers and sisters, I don't know what your cross is, or what your suffering is, but if you will cry and pray and beg God in the midst of your suffering like David did – speak those truths of God's unfailing love – God probably won't deliver you from your suffering, but He will (according to His word) sustain you by His grace and mercy, so that you can endure the suffering well.

To me that is a great encouragement. I have to finish with these not-so-encouraging words. Then it gets encouraging again. It ebbs and flows.

All who desire to live a godly life will suffer. 2 Timothy 10:12 says, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." If you want to live like Jesus, you'll probably be treated like Jesus. The world hated Jesus, therefore the world hates you. Expect that. In fact, in verses 10 and 11 in that passage, Paul was talking about his persecutions in Antioch, Lystra and Iconium. We read about it in Acts 14. Paul talks about how God delivered and rescued him from that suffering. Yet when we read Acts 14, we don't see anything about him escaping suffering. We read of him being stoned and beaten and left for dead! So Paul circles back around to those very same cities where he was beaten and stoned and left for dead. It says they were strengthening the souls of the disciples and encouraging them to continue in the faith, saying that "through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of God." See that? He is encouraging the Christians! I'm encouraging you! Be happy! Tribulations await!

You don't see that on Thomas Kincaid paintings, do you? Yet that is what is encouraging to us, somehow.

John 16:33, Jesus said, “³³ I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

So we read in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 –

¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

We are going to suffer. Quit lying to yourself if you think you're not. Jesus promised it. It is going to be an encouragement because in the midst of our suffering, God will demonstrate His love and He will supply you with grace and mercy in order to be strengthened, to sustain and to persevere the suffering so you can suffer well, and not blaspheme God by claiming that it is God's fault that we suffer.

So as Christians, listen to these words as we close (1 Peter 5:10-11)

¹⁰ And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. ¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Whatever you are experiencing by way of suffering, do not lose heart. Don't lose your confidence. God has not abandoned you. He is with you in your suffering and He has demonstrated it in the person of Jesus. So let us pray and cry out for the mercy and grace that God promised He would provide.

God – would You do that for us? Thank You for Your word. Thank You for how it sustains us. I pray God, as we go, that You would help us to suffer well. We know that this world hates us. We know that our enemy roams around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. So God, preserve us, I pray. Watch over us. Deliver us by granting us strength, grace and mercy in our time of need. God, thank You for Your word and the sustaining power it has for us. Bless us now, we pray, in Jesus' name, amen.