



October 28, 2018
1 Samuel 25-2 Samuel 1
Pastor Phil Ward

The Rise of the King's Character

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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Here we go. 8 Chapters. Last week was 7. Before that, 5. So I'm pressed for time. So I'll do an overview, a 30,000 foot overview like last week. I'll cover the major things going on in these chapters. It is reminiscent of, if you've ever flown, and you're fortunate enough to have the window seat and you look out as you're flying cross-country. You notice there is nothing to look at – must be Kansas. So, we're going to do that exact thing. We'll get a 30,000 foot over view of these eight chapters. Ready?

We start actually in chapter 24, where we left off last week. If you remember, David and his men are in the bowels of this cave. They are hiding out, trying to run from King Saul, who was out to kill them. While they were hiding in the darkness, the dark recesses of this cave, Saul enters the very same cave where David and his men are gathered. He enters the cave to relieve himself. So David's men say, "Look David! You have to take advantage of this opportunity. You have to kill Saul. This is your moment. He is in your hands." But David says no way. I'm not going to lay my hands on the Lord's anointed. Instead, stealthily, David crawls over to where Saul is relieving himself, cuts off a corner of his robe. He waits until Saul finishes his business, and then Saul leaves. David then emerges from the cave, holding the corner of the robe and calls out to Saul, who has now gathered with his men. "Saul! I could have killed you today! See? But I didn't. So leave me alone! I'm not trying to kill you; why are you trying to kill me?" Eventually, Saul realizes – oh, man! I'm really a sinner and you're really innocent. I'm sorry. I won't do it again. I apologize.

Chapter 25. David and his men are out in the wilderness of Paran. They catch wind that there is a rich man named Nabal, in a place called Carmel. David hears about this man, thinking that, being so wealthy and having so much stuff at his house, that he might be able to go there with his men and potentially get some provisions. So David sends some of his men to Nabal and makes a simple request, "Is there any way my men and I can get some provisions, basic things like food and water?" Nabal is not a nice man. He replies to David, "There is no way I'm going to give you that stuff. Who do you think you are? I'm not giving you everything I worked hard for!" So, the men return to David and report, here is what Nabal said. David said, "Really? That's what he said? ... Get your swords. Let's go."

So he is going to go defend his honor. They mount up on their horses, but somehow Abigail, Nabal's wife, catches wind of what's going on. Abigail looks in the kitchen and realizes they have stuff, so she collects as many provisions as she can and she runs out to head off David, to make sure he doesn't come with his sword and destroy them. She approaches David and says, "My Lord, do not do the thing you're about to do! Here are the provisions you asked for. You have to realize, my husband is a fool." No, literally his name, Nabal, means "fool". So she says, he is a fool; he is acting his part! So you can't hold it against him. By the way, David, you will one day be king of Israel. You do not want to approach the throne with a guilty conscience and with blood on your hands. Don't do this. It isn't good.

So David listens to Abigail. He decides not to destroy Nabal. Instead, he recognizes that Abigail was sent from the Lord. She has discretion. So he relents from the calamity that awaited.

Chapter 26. Unfortunately, David is out once again in the wilderness. The Ziphites ratted on David again. They told Saul exactly where David was. So Saul musters up 3,000 troops to find David and capture him and kill him. Now, David gets wind of this, so he sends out some spies to see what Saul is up to. They come back and report everything they find. So David understands where Saul and his men are camping. They decide to, in the cover of night, go down and do something about it. So David takes a man named Abishai and in the cover of darkness, they go down to the camp where Saul and his men are. They find Saul's tent. They creep in there. There is Saul, lying next to his body guard, Abner. Abishai looks at David and says, "Let's do it! I'll take that spear and plunge it through him and pin him to the ground. It will only take one blow; I don't need two. I'll do it." David says no, no, no, we're not going to do that. So David instead steals the spear and takes a water jug out of the tent. He goes up to a hillside, a safe distance away, and begins to call out to Abner. "Abner, wake up! What you have done is wicked and evil. You deserve to die for it! Because you are tasked to protect the life of the king, and you failed." Abner gasps! Saul wakes up and comes out of the tent and says, "Is that you, David?" David says, "Yes, why are you trying to kill me again!? You said you wouldn't but now you are doing it again!" So he holds up the spear and water jug and says, "Behold my Lord, I could have killed you tonight, again, but I didn't. So stop trying to kill me!" So once again, Saul promises, "You're right. I am a sinner. You're innocent. I won't do it again." We've heard that before.

Chapter 27. So, David is not really trusting Saul at this point. For good reason. He decides he will leave the land of Israel and head to the land of the Philistines. So he goes to the land of the Philistines. He befriends king Achish, who lives in a city called Gath. David then asks the king, "Why should I live with you? Why don't you let me have my own little spot? That way I won't bother you." So king Achish gives him a place called Ziklag. So David and his men, and his family, and all they possess, live in this little town of Ziklag.

Chapter 28. Meanwhile, the Philistines decide, "we have a great idea. Let's go attack Israel. Let's go conquer Saul once and for all." So the people of the Philistines gather together. They have a huge army.

Now, here's the thing. Chapter 27 through 2 Samuel chapter 1, it goes back and forth. Like one side to the next. Here is what David is doing. Here's what Saul is doing. Here is what David is doing. Then back and forth. So it is all at the same time, we're just seeing what the two different men are doing.

So meanwhile, David is in Ziklag. The Philistine army is gathering to attack Saul and Israel. Saul is freaking out. What do I do? David, who usually fights the Philistines for me, is gone. I kicked him out. I don't have Samuel anymore; he is dead. I don't have any priests around me to ask God what I should do, because I killed them all. So he does the unthinkable: he actually asks his men to find for him a medium, someone who can call up the dead. So they find one, and Saul goes down there disguised and under the cover of darkness. He finds the medium in a place called En Dor. He asks her to contact Samuel, who is dead. Somehow, some way – it happens. The lady sees Samuel. She recognizes who

Samuel is. Therefore, she recognizes who Saul is. She is fearful of her life. Saul reassures her, don't worry, you won't die. Just let me talk to Samuel. So Saul asks Samuel, "What is going to happen to me?" Samuel simply says, "You know what's going to happen. God already told you. Whenever God speaks, you need to listen because His word is true. What He says is final." That is not reassuring to Saul, since God had said he would die and his kingdom will be taken from him and given to David.

Flashback to David, chapter 29. The Philistines are lining up, preparing for battle. King Achish expects David to fight alongside of him. King Achish says, "David, you have to join me." David says, "I understand that." However, in David's mind – that is a huge dilemma. How in the world is he going to fight against his own people and fight on the side of the Philistines? What is he going to do? Well, the other kings of the Philistines are there, saying, "King Achish – hold it! Who is that?" "That's David!" They say, "No, no, no. This isn't going to work. Remember how they sang about David, that he killed 10,000 Philistines? Those were our brothers. Do you actually want to bring this man, who killed so many of our people, to fight alongside of us? That isn't going to work!" So the dilemma is resolved. King Achish tells David he can't fight with them. David is relieved. So King Achish sends him back to Ziklag.

Chapter 30. David leaves the Philistine army behind, thinking that a huge dilemma has been resolved. However, they see smoke off in the distance as they are riding toward their town. Sure enough, the town has been attacked by the Amalekites. They burned the town to the ground. They took captive all of the belongings and possessions, including the families of David and his men. The men see what's going on. They fall on their faces and begin to weep until they could weep no more. David says, all right. He inquires of the Lord and asks, "Lord, shall I pursue the Amalekites and get what is mine back?" God said, "Go get 'em!" David mounts up with 400 guys. They go and get what's theirs. They fight the Amalekites. They retrieve their families, their children, their wives, and all their stuff. Scripture says that not a single thing was lost. He captured it all back.

Chapter 31. Flash back to Saul. The Philistines are attacking the Israelites. Saul is in a huge battle. The war is waging all over the place. Bloodshed everywhere. The three sons of Saul die in battle, including Jonathan, David's best friend. Not only that, but some archers badly wound Saul to the point where he knows he will die eventually. So he calls out to his armor-bearer, "Don't let these uncircumcised Philistines kill me! You run me through!" The armor-bearer said no, I'm not touching you. So Saul falls on his own sword. The armor-bearer, seeing what happened, seeing the Philistines approaching – he also falls on his sword. They both die. The Philistines find the body of Saul. They cut off his head. They take his body and hang it up in the temple – payback for what David did to Goliath. However, some brave men from Judah, from Jabesh-Gilead, heard about it and bravely went to retrieve Saul's body and return it to the land of Israel. They give it a proper burial.

2 Samuel 1. David is just returned from defeating the Amalekites. He returns home. A messenger comes to tell David that the sons of Saul are dead, including Jonathan. Also, Saul is dead. Upon hearing the news, David mourns. He laments. He weeps. He writes a psalm (which is typical of David). The beginning and end of that psalm reads, "Oh, how the mighty have fallen!"

That's such a good story, is it not? I want to encourage you to read it on your own. There are so many more details there, so much more coloring that the author gives us. I really encourage you to read more of it.

Let's take some time now and circle back. There are a few things we're going to talk about. Let's pray and ask the Lord to help us as we approach His word and to hear it read and taught.

God, would You do the very thing that we know only You can do. Would You speak with us and meet with us in this place. Grant us the mind and help us to understand this story. More than that, Lord, help

us in all that we read and hear, to actually believe it. Lord everything in this world is diametrically opposed to Your word and Your work in the world. Everything is against us. So I pray Lord, that You would help us by overcoming the obstacles to hearing Your word today. God, You would grant us faith and according to Your grace, Lord, that You would enable us to meet with You through Your word. Lord, we read in this story how fallen the world is, how broken it is. So much lying and deception and death. Lord, it's not just the world of the Bible where that happens, it's in our very own world too. So even in the last couple weeks, we've heard some outlandish, crazy things, evidence of the brokenness of this world. So Lord, there are probably some folks who are scared, fearful, and are mindful of things like threatening people through pipe bombs, and bursting into synagogues and shooting people to death. Lord, this world is broken. There is so much injustice and death and chaos and distortion. I pray that You would help us in the midst of all of this, to stand strong, to know that as seemingly crazy as this world is, ultimately, one day, the curse of the Fall will come undone. Everything which is ungodly, all the hatred, all the injustice, all the death – will one day be no more. Lord, that is our hope. I pray somehow Lord, You will give us a glimpse of that hope and You would reassure us in Christ, and You would grant us what we need to persevere well in this world. God that You would do it because we have asked it in Jesus' name, for His glory and for our joy, we pray. Amen.

We will circle back and see three things about David that teach us about his character. The title of this sermon is The Rise of the King's Character. We'll see through David's escapades and experiences, how his character is revealed. The three things we'll see are: David was tempted, and through his temptation and how he responded to it, he was enabled to build his character. We see more about his character. Secondly, he is in exile. He has been removed from the people of God and been removed from the presence of God in the Promised Land. He did so voluntarily. We'll see how that builds his character and reveals it. Third, we see how David is a conqueror.

In each of these things, what we actually see is a foreshadowing of what is to come in the person of Jesus. So as we read about David, we anticipate – what do these things teach us about the person of Jesus? In fact, we see Jesus experiences temptation. How did He deal with it and what does that teach us? Jesus experienced exile. What was that like? What does that teach us? And lastly, Jesus is a conqueror. What does that mean? What does that teach us?

So we'll start with the temptation. David was tempted in three ways: first was (chapter 24) when Saul came into the cave. He had an opportunity to kill Saul. He has an opportunity, according to the pressures of the men in the cave with him, to take hold of the circumstances and the situation he is in, and to take for himself action. To kill Saul. Now this is an important thing to realize. Sometimes the circumstances turn in such a way that we feel as though we have opportunity to act. But we have to remember that David was told that he would one day be king. But he must be patient. He must faithfully wait until God orchestrates when that day will come. So David is not allowed to take matters into his own hands, or to take hold of the circumstances he is in, and to fast-forward God's will impatiently. That's not what is happening in David's life. He is tempted to fast-forward God's will, but he restrains himself. He doesn't do it, even though his men tell him to.

The second temptation is this: David almost avenged his honor. Remember when his men were out in the wilderness, needing provisions. They sent forth the request of Nabal, asking for provisions. Of course, Nabal is a jerky dude, so here is what happened. We see this in Chapter 25:6-13 David says:

⁶ And thus you shall greet him: 'Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. ⁷ I hear that you have shearers. Now your shepherds have been with us, and we did them no harm, and they missed nothing all the time they were in Carmel. ⁸ Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we come on a feast day. Please give whatever you have at hand to your servants and to your son David.'"

⁹ When David's young men came, they said all this to Nabal in the name of David, and then they waited. ¹⁰ And Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants these days who are breaking away from their masters. ¹¹ Shall I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers and give it to men who come from I do not know where?" ¹² So David's young men turned away and came back and told him all this. ¹³ And David said to his men, "Every man strap on his sword!" And every man of them strapped on his sword. David also strapped on his sword. And about four hundred men went up after David, while two hundred remained with the baggage.

So David wants to go and avenge his honor. How dare somebody talk to me like that! He wants to get even. That's the temptation.

Then the third temptation. David is once again alerted to the fact that Saul is trying to kill him. He has 3000 men trying to take him out. So David sends the spies and finds out where Saul is. They come into the tent and Abishai, standing right next to David, who is a friend, says to David, *now is the moment. Make your life easier by simply taking advantage of this moment, and kill this man! Now, become king! God said you're going to become king! Today is the day!* But if you notice the temptation is to experience what God has promised, but in order to experience it, take the situation into your own hands and make your own destiny. See that?

Those three temptations are the same ones you and I face every day. Take into your own hands, your circumstances and your situation, and act on it in such a way that you fast-forward God's will. If people get in the way and they dishonor you, then get even with them! But one thing you need to make sure of is to, at all cost, figure out how to make your life easy. As though following God's will is like water; you have to follow the path of least resistance. Sometimes we interpret God's will for our lives in terms of how easy it is. Do we not? (sarcastically:) Because God would never ask us to do hard things, like "take up your cross daily and follow him." Or "Die to yourself." He would never ask that! (I'm totally joking. God obviously DOES ask us to do hard things. In fact one of the hard things he asks you to do is impossible apart from His grace.)

So that's David's temptation. What do we learn about this? Two things: it points us backwards to Adam and Even in the Garden of Eden. But David's temptations also point us forward to the person and work of Jesus.

So how do these temptations point us backwards? One way is this: (This is something you need to hear. This is incredible.) One third of all of the references in the Old Testament to the concept of good and evil – one third of all those references – are found in these three chapters. Do you notice how disproportionate that is? Three chapters out of the entire Old Testament contain one third of all of the references to good and evil! Somebody is trying to get our attention. If we think back to – when is the first time we heard about good and evil? In the Garden of Eden. When we go to the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3, what do we read there? We read the temptation of Adam and Eve. Here is what we read:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" ² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

So do you know what the temptation was? The temptation was, by disobeying God, you will know more than you know now. By disobeying God, you will be more than you are now. By disobeying God, you will have more authority. You will have more power. You will have more honor. The temptation is to question the goodness of God by questioning God's word itself. Is God really good? Then why is He so stingy about the trees in the garden, if He is all that good? If you just disobey Him, then you'll experience the really good life. That's the temptation we all face. Is God's word really true? If God was so good, why does He tell us not to do so much stuff? Think about it. If you just did it, how cool would that be?

So Adam and Eve's temptation is to take their situation into their own hands, to not trust the goodness of God and the truth of God's word – but to take initiative in such a way that in their ambition, they take hold of their circumstances and turn it toward their own selfish ambition. That is exactly what Eve did. She saw the fruit of the tree and she took it. Isn't that all sin? Seeing something and then deciding – I'm not waiting; I'm taking it.

But in the midst of this sin and chaos and temptation, God offers hope. In fact, God is addressing Satan himself and pouring out curses upon Satan when He says this (Genesis 3:15) --

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.”

In other words, Moses is writing for us how God promised the people that one day there will come someone who is a serpent-crusher. One who will defeat Satan, who is born of a woman, which means He is truly a human being, who will one day defeat Satan, conquer evil, and undo the effects of the curse of the Fall.

At this point in history, because Moses is the writer, people are thinking *it has to be Moses! Think about all the miracles he did in Egypt! He is the guy!* Well, he is not, because he died.

We flash forward to 1 Samuel. They had this promise in their minds that there was coming someone who would do all these great things, who will have authority and dominion and all of a sudden you have this powerful, warrior king who has lopped off the head of Goliath, and who has defeated the Amalite king (whose name means “serpent”). It's David! So they're thinking *David is the guy! David was born of a woman. He is truly a human being. He is king. He is royal. He is powerful. He is a warrior. He defeated all these peoples. It has to be him!* So that's what the author is trying to get through our minds: for the nation of Israel, everything is pointing toward David. David is your guy! He is going to redeem you. He is the one who will rescue you.

But also, David's temptation points us forward to Jesus. Remember Jesus' temptation in Matthew 4? He is tempted by Satan three times. Each time he is tempted, he recites a quotation from the Old Testament. Generally when we hear this section taught, we interpret it as - when you are in the midst of temptation, one of the best things to do is recite scripture. As you recite scripture, you will be empowered and strengthened and you will be able to resist temptation. To that I say, “Praise God! Amen! That's awesome!” But there is a lot more going on. Because every one of Jesus' quotations comes from chapter 6-8 of Deuteronomy. That's the only place He quotes from. It's interesting. When you go there and read it, you realize it is actually the record of Moses teaching the second generation of Israelites who came out of Egypt. Why is he addressing the second generation? It's because the first generation that crossed the Red Sea, then tempted God, then they were cursed for their sin and

idolatry by wandering in the desert for 40 years, until they all died and the next generation came. So in effect, what Jesus is doing, is quoting Moses when he is reminding the people – *Don't mess this up! Your fathers messed it up. Don't you do the same!* But also what Jesus is doing is experiencing temptation and quoting Moses because He is signifying that where Adam and Moses and Israel failed, I will not fail. Remember Adam was tempted in the Garden and he failed. Moses was tempted to impatience when he beat the rock (and other ways) – he failed. Israel as a people, supposed to be a light unto the nations to draw them to Yahweh God – they failed. But in Matthew 4, Jesus doesn't fail. Because Jesus doesn't fail, we know Jesus to be the new and better Adam. Jesus is the new and better Moses. Jesus is the new and better Israel. When He is tempted, and because He does not fail, He completes God's mission for the world. He fulfills that promises of God and He secures for sinners everything they need to be made right with God. In fact, when we go to Matthew 4:8-11, we see the last and third temptation of Jesus. We see something significant. Here is how Satan tempted Jesus the third time:

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written,

"You shall worship the Lord your God
and him only shall you serve."

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

See the temptation? The temptation is: Jesus, if You bow down and worship me, You don't have to go to the cross. You don't have to experience pain. You don't have to faithfully serve people who hate You. You never have to experience sorrow. You don't have to suffer. You don't have to be rejected. You can just take the glory and run. You can be powerful. You can have all authority. You can be wealthy. You can have it all! And You don't even have to suffer while You get it! It's a win-win!

But Jesus refuses the temptation, which means Jesus chooses to suffer. Jesus chooses the sorrow. Jesus chooses the pain. Jesus chooses the cross. Because He knows that, by the cross, through the pain, in the midst of the sorrows, and despite the suffering, what will happen in the end is Jesus, by His shed blood on the cross, will purchase people and He will rescue them from their sin. Aren't you glad He said no to temptation?

When we talk about temptation, there is a tendency for some people to think the only people who really know how bad temptation is, are sinful people. (Laugh) Here is what I mean. Let me read this from C.S. Lewis, in *Mere Christianity*: (one of my favorite books and one of my favorite authors. I love what he writes here)

No man knows how bad he is until he tries very hard to be good. A silly idea is current (He is writing in the 1940s, WWII England) that good people do not know what temptation means. This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. After all, you find out the strength of the German army by fighting against it, not by giving in to it. You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down. A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes, simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. This is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about their own badness, because they have lived a sheltered life, by always giving in. We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside of us until we try to fight against it. And Christ, because He was the only man who never

yielded to temptation is also the only man who knows to the fullest extent what temptation really means. He is therefore, the only complete realist.

That's amazing because it is just insightful and flat-out true. None of us know how hard temptation really is because all of us usually give in to it. The only person on the face of the earth, the only human being who has ever lived, who fully understands the weightiness of temptation, is He who always said NO in the midst of His temptation. That person is Jesus.

Therefore, if we are ever, ever thinking to ourselves – man! I'm tempted and I want to endure and hold up underneath this – where are you going to go to get the resources you need to be strengthened enough to say NO to temptation? You can't go to other people who give in all the time. You have to go to the One who never gave in. That is why Jesus says, "Come to Me you who are weary and burdened! Come to Me who are heavy laden. Come to Me who are thirsty and hungry. I will give you rest. I will give you drink. I will give you food. I will give you forgiveness. I will give you the strength you need to be all you need to be, and I have commanded you to be. You can't do it any other way. No other person. I am all you have! (applause)

What is crazy to me is, in our world, people interpret what I just said as being narrow-minded. But it is the most loving and freeing, truthful statement any person can ever hear! Nothing in this world will satisfy you. Nothing in this world can save you. Nothing in this world will ever, ever, EVER provide what it promises – with one exception: whoever puts his trust in the Lord Jesus will never be put to shame.

So it is narrow because it is just one thing. But it isn't narrow because it applies to all. Anyone can come to Jesus, so you may be set free.

All right. Exile. We're on to the second one. Once David has encountered Saul, he decides that he can't trust Saul so he voluntarily goes into the land of the Philistines. He voluntarily exiled himself. Exile, remember, means to be removed from the presence of God, from the people of God. So David didn't deserve to go into exile. Exile is a consequence for sin and not keeping the covenant. So we ask – who rightly deserved to be exiled in this situation? Saul did. But Saul stayed in the land and David left. So David intentionally and voluntarily took upon himself the punishment for sins he did not commit.

This points us directly to Jesus. Jesus did not deserve to be crucified as a criminal. He did not deserve to be cursed for breaking the covenant. He did not deserve to be spiked, naked and bleeding to a cross. But He did it anyway. And the reason He did it was so that He would experience death. That He would take upon Himself the curse of sin, the consequences of sin, the breaking of the covenant, the just punishment of God – voluntarily He did so in order that those whom He purchased by His blood would never have to face what He faced. There are some of us in this room who have put our trust in Jesus and we will never, ever have to experience what Jesus experienced. We will never be put out from the presence of God. We will never face the penalty of our sin. We will never suffer death like Jesus suffered, because He did all of that in our place. Voluntarily, because He loved us. (Are you kidding me?! It's amazing!)

But there is a different kind of exile. There is the horrific, sinful kind of exile where we, by our life choices and the way we live, where we are removed from God. God is so good, and He is gracious. If you really don't want God, He will give that to you. It's just a place called hell. But if you really do want God, He will give that to you. That's a place called heaven. So what do you want? Do you just want God to butt out of your life? Ok. Then you will reap what you sow. I want God to be my ever-present help in my time of need. Great. You will reap what you sow.

We see in Saul, someone who is reaping what he is sowing. Saul is experiencing spiritual exile. Remember the nation of the Philistines. They are coming against Saul. He doesn't know what to do. He is freaked out. David is gone. Samuel is dead. He killed all the priests. He doesn't know what to do. So he does the unthinkable. He actually goes to a medium and asks her to help him. Why is this so bad? It's bad because it explicitly goes against God's law. Deuteronomy 18:10-11, 15, 18. Listen to this:

¹⁰ There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer ¹¹ or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer (those who cast spells) or one who inquires of the dead

There shouldn't be any of that in the land. That is evil. What God says next (v 15) through Moses is:

¹⁵ "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen

¹⁸ I will raise up for them (Israel) a prophet like you (Moses) from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

So God says there is going to be prophets, but there is going to be one single prophet that will come in the future. You need to listen to the prophets, especially to this one prophet in whom God's word will be placed and the commands of God will come forth. You have to listen to Him!

Now, you see the contrast. Let's get rid of the sorcery and mediums and idolatry. You don't need that stuff because you have a sure word from God. That's the contrast.

So why is Saul seeking out mediums and necromancers? Because he wants a different word than the word he got. God spoke, but he didn't like what he heard. Saul knew better. It actually says (28:3) that Saul put out of the land all of the necromancers and mediums. So Saul knew better. He knew the good he ought to do, but he did not do it. In the New Testament – that's called sin.

So why does Saul seek a medium? It's because he did not like what God had already said. 1 Samuel 15:28, the Lord had already told Saul that the kingdom is going to be ripped from you and given to David. Saul said – I don't know about that. I don't like that. So he goes to a medium and says – is there another word I can hear that will be better? So he goes to the medium. 1 Samuel 28:15-19 - somehow the medium contacts Samuel from the dead. Saul says, "What should I do?" And Samuel says, "Are you kidding me?" Samuel repeats what God had already said. Saul says, "That stinks. That's not encouraging. That's not positive. Like you would never hear that on KLOVE! So I'm going to die? The Kingdom is going to be stripped from me? My children are going to die? My enemy is going to inherit everything I've worked for?" – Yes.

We have to realize – this is a dangerous theme that runs throughout scripture. The theme of "*God speaks, the people hear, and then they go – Ehh, I don't know. I don't think so. I don't feel right about that. It feels kinda icky.*"

We see this in Isaiah 30:9-10, the nation of Israel. God says:

⁹ For they are a rebellious people,
lying children,
children unwilling to hear

the instruction of the LORD;
¹⁰ who say to the seers, "Do not see,"
and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us what is right;
speak to us smooth things,
prophesy illusions

Don't tell me true things, I only want to hear fluffy things that make me feel awesome about myself. Tell me how great I am, how wealthy I will be, how healthy, how I'll get that vacation home in the Bahamas! Tell me how I'll get the new Cadillac. Tell me good things!

Unfortunately, that is not only in the Old Testament. It is also in the New Testament. Here's what Paul writes to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:1-4)

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² **preach the word**; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

The question is why. Why is Timothy charged, encouraged, commanded to preach the word of God? Why?

³ For the time is coming when people* will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

The *people he is referring to is not the people in the world who do not go to church. They already don't believe. No, he is talking about people in the church, filling up the pews, who claim to be Christians.

He says there will be people who will not endure sound teaching, but they have "itching ears" and they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. See – there are so-called Christians in the church, who say "Sin? AUGH! I don't like hearing that! They don't like judgment, justice, obedience, love my neighbor – AUGH! I don't know about all that! No, give me some positive encouragement! Tell me how awesome I am! Tell me how I am an overcomer. Tell me how I can do all things through Christ and come to Him for what I want (not for Him).

But remember, brothers and sisters, whatever you come to Christ for, that thing you come to Him for – that is your god, not Him. If you don't come to Christ for Christ, then something else is your God. Whoo!

So what do we do about that? We realize – God has spoken. That's the whole thing about Saul. He asked, "Did God really say --?" Satan said to Adam and Eve, "Did God really say --?" Satan quotes scripture to Jesus, "God said ... See?" And now in the church, many people are asking, "Did God really say --?"

What is happening in the church is, many people are abandoning the word of God. Instead they are looking for more revelations, more dreams, more prophets. They must not have read Hebrews 1:1-4 –

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but (don't miss that "but") in these last days (which is now) he has spoken (past tense, irrevocable) to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the

world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Brothers and sisters, in the Old Testament, undoubtedly, God spoke by the prophets, but we are living in the last days, in which God has spoken, finally and fully - end of discussion, through His Son, who is the Word of God, become incarnate. (applause)

At this point, we can go – we're done! Let's go home! Decisively, definitively – God has spoken. That should reassure us, more than anything else, that the word of God, which in the Old Testament is about Jesus, concealed, but in the New Testament is about Jesus, revealed. It is authored by the Holy Spirit and therefore everything we have in the word of God, in the Bible, is the product of the Spirit. So we don't need to go to the Spirit to ask Him to give us more revelation than He has already given. Nor can we ask the Holy Spirit to give us a revelation, which is contrary to the revelation He already gave. God is not a God of confusion. God is a God of order and truth. This is truth! And in Jesus, we have all that we could ever dream or imagine. If we abandon Jesus, we abandon all hope.

So brothers and sisters, you don't need to ask God for a special revelation. You don't need to ask God to speak to you in a way He has never spoken to anyone before. You don't need all that stuff because you have the Holy Spirit (if you are a Christian), you have Jesus Christ – God, come in the flesh, and you have His revealed word for you. These things are sufficient.

Last one is this: Jesus is a conqueror. David shows us that he too is a conqueror. We read that when David is dismissed from the armies of the Philistines, he is raided by the Amalekites. The Amalekites take his family and all his possessions into captivity. So David asked God, "Should I follow them?" And God said, "Absolutely, go get what is yours." We read in 30:16-19 that David indeed goes and finds the Amalekites, singing and dancing and rejoicing that they had taken captive all that belonged to David and his men. David came upon them and he works it. He retrieves everything which is rightfully his.

What does that teach us about Jesus? It teaches us that Jesus came to seek and save the lost. There are so many people in this world – billions upon billions of people who are deceived by Satan, and who can have their eyes opened and their hearts renewed, if they would hear the gospel preached to them. That's a call to missions, is it not? That's a call to be faithful to preach the gospel. Because in preaching the gospel, the lost will be found. The blind will see. Those who have been help captive by Satan and sin will be set free.

Let's read John 8. What does Jesus think about His life and ministry? (8:31-36) --

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word (it's a conditional statement), you are truly my disciples,

This begs the question: am I a disciple if I abandon Jesus' word? I'll let you answer that. You're smart people.

³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

What freedom is He talking about? See --

³³ They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’”

³⁴ Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.

³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Jesus says everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. You’re not captured by some worldly standard; you are captured by Satan and sin itself. I don’t give a rip whether or not you are Jewish or not. I don’t give a rip whether you have an MBA. I don’t care what your zip code is, what car you drive, how many obedient kids you have or how great at the piano you are. Regardless of your accolades and attributes and skills – or anything you’ve ever accumulated, the reality is: apart from Jesus, you are a slave to your sin.

The question is: do you want to be free? Do you want to be free from the bondage of sin, evidenced by the shame and guilt that you constantly fear day by day by day? Do you want the liberating experience of being set free from a guilty conscience and having your sins washed? Do you want to be free, in order to love your neighbor and your family the way you ought to – but seem unable to? Do you want to be the kind of neighbor, son or daughter, father or mother – that you know God calls you to, but it seems like you constantly fail? Do you want the power that is provided to you in the person of the Holy Spirit, to enable you and equip you to be all that God commands of you?

If you want that, then you need freedom from sin. How do we get freedom from sin? See verse 36: “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

Irrevocably, you will be liberated.

I love this in Revelation. We see what is God doing in the church, how is God accomplishing victory through Jesus? We come to a scene in Revelation 5, where the apostle John sees into the heavenly places, a scroll which is wrapped with seven seals. It cannot be opened to unleash what God plans to do, because there is no one who has the credentials to open it. There is no human being who has never said no to temptation. So John is weeping. One of the elders says, (Rev 5:5, 9-10) –

⁵ And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

Where every other human being has failed to keep obedience perfectly, Jesus succeeded. So He is qualified. He has the credentials. So the people sing --

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying,

“Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,

for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people (from captivity) for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,

¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth.”

When you think about that, here is what happens. The rise of the kingdom of Israel is a foretaste to the rise of the kingdom of God, in the person of Christ. The rise of the King David is really a foreshadowing

of the rise of King Jesus. And Jesus has begun. He has inaugurated His kingdom. He has, once and for all, delivered us from the present evil age, by the shedding of His blood on the cross. Not only that, He has risen from the dead so He gives life to all who come to Him and trust Him. And the Spirit is given to us as our deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. So that, when Jesus returns, He will consummate His kingdom. Death will be vanquished. No more tears, no more pain, no more sorrows, no more injustice, no more pipe bombs, no more people gunning people down. Do you feel that, brothers and sisters? That is hope! (applause)

Because of the shed blood of Jesus, the captives are liberated. (Sigh) Jesus conquered.

Where does that leave us? We too are conquerors, but not because we possess the power to conquer anything. It seems more like every day we are being conquered. Instead, we read: (Revelation 12:10-11)

¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. ¹¹ And they (that's you and me) have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they (we) loved not their (our) lives even unto death.

You and I are conquerors by the shed blood of Jesus. Not because we possess innate power. How we conquer Satan is to continually claim, "Jesus is mine! You have no claim on me, Satan! I am His and He is mine!"

Romans 8:37 – this is our prayer. Let's close with this, with scripture. Let's leave with this melody on our hearts:

In all these things – in our sufferings and temptations and feeling distant from God, and exiles and feeling conquered by sin – in all of these things, we are more than conquerors through Jesus, who loves us! For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, no powers, no heights, no depths, nor anything else is all creation – will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Amen.

