

PROPHETS & JUDGES

IN THE PROMISED LAND

“Very many are content with a supposition in regard to the truth. They are content with a surface work, taking for granted that they have all that is essential. They take the sayings of others for truth, being too indolent to put themselves to diligent, earnest labor, represented in the word as digging for hidden treasure. But man’s inventions are not only unreliable, they are dangerous; for they place man where God should be. They place the sayings of men where a ‘Thus saith the Lord’ should be.” (Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 109)

WEEK 22 - THE CAVE OF ADULLAM

I. In the Cave of Adullam

1. While Saul appeared to be trying to kill David, what was he doing in reality? What was the result of this?

2. Suppose someone does not want to follow one or more of God's requirements. What happens when Satan is thus permitted to control the mind that will not be ruled by God?

3. How did David feel as he was fleeing for his life? In contrast, what was the unseen reality?

4. Why did God allow this to happen to David?

5. How important is obedience to all of God's counsels and commandments?

II. The Council at Gibeah

1. How were Saul's words to his men like the temptation of Christ in the wilderness?

2. How should we respond when we are faced with this temptation?

3. The men could see only an exasperated king sitting under a tree railing in his disappointment. But what was really going on?

4. What steps did Saul take in evil surmising and judging?

5. Jesus says, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." What was the result of Saul's violation of this principle?

In the Cave of Adullam**September 7, 1888**

David sought refuge in the strongholds of the mountains from the determined pursuit of Saul. He made good his escape to the cave of Adullam, a place that could be defended against a large army by a small force. "And when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him." The family of David could not feel secure, knowing that at any time the unreasonable suspicions of Saul might be directed against them on account of their relation to David. They concluded that they would be safer with him whom the prophet Samuel had anointed to be king of Israel, even though he was a fugitive in a lonely cave, than exposed to the insane madness of a jealous king. They believed the Lord would protect David from the persecuting enmity of Saul, and they determined to leave their unguarded home, and unite their fortunes with their kinsman in his lonely retreat. It was a sad leave-taking of home and flocks, as the family procession moved on toward the valley of Judah. {1.1}

In the cave of Adullam, the family were at last united in sympathy and affection. The son of Jesse could make melody with voice and harp as he sang, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" He had tasted the bitterness of suspicion and distrust from his brethren; and the harmony that had taken the place of discord, brought joy and comfort to the exile's heart. It was here that David composed the fifty-seventh psalm. {1.2}

It was not long before they were joined by others who desired to escape the exactions of the king. There were many who had lost their confidence in the ruler of Israel, for he no longer seemed to be guided by the Spirit of the Lord. "And everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them; and there were with them about four hundred men." Here David had a little kingdom of his own, over which he ruled, and he enforced perfect order and discipline. But even in his retreat in the mountains, he was far from feeling secure; for he received continual evidence that the king had not relinquished his murderous purpose. The spirit of evil was upon Saul. He felt that his doom had been sealed by the solemn message of his rejection from the throne of Israel. His departure from the plain requirements of God was bringing its sure results. He did not turn, and repent, and humble his heart before God, but opened it to receive every suggestion of the enemy. He listened to every false witness, eagerly receiving anything that was detrimental to the character of David, hoping that he might find an excuse for manifesting his increasing envy and hatred of him who had been anointed to the throne of Israel. Every rumor was credited, no matter how inconsistent and irreconcilable it was with the former character and custom of David. {1.3}

Every evidence that the protecting care of God was over David seemed to embitter and deepen his one engrossing and determined purpose. The failure to accomplish his own designs appeared in marked contrast to the success of the fugitive in eluding his search, but it only made the determination of the king the more unrelenting and firm. He was not careful to conceal his designs toward

David, nor scrupulous as to what means should be employed in accomplishing his purpose. ^[1.4]

It was not the man David, who had done him no harm, against whom the king was contending. He was in controversy with the King of Heaven; for when Satan is permitted to control the mind that will not be ruled by Jehovah, he will lead it according to his will, until the man who is thus in his power becomes an efficient agent to carry out his designs. So bitter is the enmity of the great originator of sin against the purposes of God, so terrible is his power for evil, that when men disconnect from God, Satan influences them, and their minds are brought more and more into subjection, until they cast off the fear of God, and the respect of men, and become bold and avowed enemies of God and of his people. ^[1.5]

What an example was Saul giving to the subjects of his kingdom in his desperate, unprovoked persecution of David! What a record he was making to be placed upon the pages of history for future generations! He sought to turn the full tide of the power of his kingdom into the channel of his own hatred in hunting down an innocent man. All this had a demoralizing influence upon Israel. And while Saul was giving loose reign to his passion, Satan was weaving a snare to compass his ruin, and the ruin of his kingdom. While the king and his councilors were planning for the capture of David, the affairs of the nation were being mismanaged and neglected. While imaginary foes were constantly presented before the minds of the people, the real enemies were strengthening themselves without arousing suspicion or alarm. By following the dictates of Satan, Saul was himself hastening the very result which, with unsanctified ability, he was endeavoring to avert. ^[1.6]

The counsel of the Lord has been disregarded again and again by the rebellious king, and the Lord had given him up to the folly of his own wisdom. The influences of the Spirit of God would have restrained him from the course of evil which he had chosen, that eventually worked out his ruin. God hates all sin, and when man persistently refuses all the counsel of Heaven, he is left to the deceptions of the enemy, to be drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed. ^[1.7]

The Lord had brought his servant David to the court of the king, that Saul might be benefited by association with the sweet singer of Israel. The king was a lover of music, and an opportunity was granted to him of becoming impressed and subdued by the same spirit that was the life and inspiration of David's melodies. But the subtle suggestions of Satan were insinuated into his mind, until David became an object of suspicion and jealousy. On two occasions, as David ministered before the king, he had only escaped with his life by gliding away from before the javelin that the king had hurled at him with murderous purpose. But Saul was not moved to relent because of the evidences of God's protection of the son of Jesse. ^[1.8]

David and his friends were far from feeling secure in the cave where they had sought refuge. The determined pursuit of Saul assured David that the king would not relinquish his plans, until he had accomplished his destruction. As far as appearances were concerned, the struggle on the part of David seemed to be

hopeless; for the armies of Israel were urged on by the enmity of Saul to hunt the fugitive, nor give up the pursuit until he should become their captive. {1.9}

David's anxiety was not all for himself, although he realized his peril. He thought of his father and mother, and he concluded that he must seek another refuge for them. He went to the king of Moab, and the Lord put it into the heart of the monarch to courteously grant to the beloved parents of David an asylum in Mizpeh, and they were not disturbed, even in the midst of the enemies of Israel. From this history, we may all learn precious lessons of filial love. The Bible plainly condemns the unfaithfulness of parents to their children, and the disobedience of children to their parents. Religion in the home is of priceless value. {1.10}

Almost as soon as the safety of his parents was assured, a prophet of the Lord came to David, saying, "Abide not in the hold; depart, and get thee into the land of Judah." Pursued from place to place, and persecuted without cause, David's soul at times was full of bitterness and discouragement. It seemed certain to him that he must, at last, fall into the hands of his pursuer and persecutor. But could his eyes have been opened, he would have seen the angels of the Lord encamped round about him and his followers. The sentinels of Heaven were waiting to warn them of impending danger, and to conduct them to a place of refuge when their peril demanded it. God could protect David and his followers; for they were not a band in rebellion against Saul. David had repeatedly proved his allegiance to the king. {1.11}

The experience through which he was passing was not unnecessary and vain. God was giving him a course of discipline to fit him to become a wise general, as well as a just and merciful king. This little band of fugitives were being qualified to take up the work that Saul was becoming wholly unfitted to do, because of his murderous passion and blind indiscretion. Men cannot depart from the counsel of God, and retain their peace and restfulness of soul. There is no insanity so dreadful, so hopeless, as that of following human wisdom, unguided by the wisdom of God. {1.12}

David and Saul stand before us in this history as men widely different in character. The course of David makes manifest the fact that he regarded the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom. But Saul was shorn of his strength, because he failed to make obedience to God's commandments the rule of his life. It is a fearful thing for a man to set his will against the will of God, as revealed in his specified requirements. All the honor that a man could receive on the throne of a kingdom, would be a poor compensation for the loss of the favor of God through an act of disloyalty to Heaven. Disobedience to the commandments of God can only bring disaster and dishonor, at last. God has given to every man his work, just as truly as he appointed to Saul the government of Israel; and the practical and important lesson to us is to accomplish our appointed work in such a manner that we may meet our life-records with joy, and not with grief. {1.13}

The Council at Gibeah

September 14, 1888

Saul was greatly disappointed and enraged when it was discovered that David had left his place of refuge in the cave of Adullam. The king had made all pos-

sible preparation to come upon him as a vulture would come upon its prey, when lo! the intelligence was received that the object of his search had escaped from under his hand. His well-laid plans had been in vain, and he had again failed to accomplish his purpose of capturing David. {2.1}

The flight of David was a matter of mystery to the king. He could account for it only by the belief that there had been traitors in the camp, who had informed the son of Jesse of his proximity and design. But the all-seeing eye was upon Saul; God, who was acquainted with all his thoughts and purposes, sent his prophet to warn his servant to escape from the hold, and flee into the land of Judah. David had heeded the message, and had found refuge in the forest of Hareth before Saul could come upon him. The fact that David was preserved, and that he escaped from time to time from his hand, while his own plottings had never met with success at anytime, was a mystery to the king. {2.2}

The monarch determined to take some decided action that would insure the ruin of David, and a royal council was held under a favorite tree on a hill-side of Gibeah. Saul held his spear and scepter in hand, while around him were gathered his councilors, among whom was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's herds-men. With his mind filled with jealous suspicions, Saul addressed his officers of State, saying, "Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds; that all of you have conspired against me, and there is none that showeth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you that is sorry for me, or showeth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?" {2.3}

Saul appealed to the selfish nature of his men. He presented before them the advantages to be gained by serving him, in contrast with the disadvantages of the service of the poverty-stricken David, who was obliged to find his home in the caves and dens of the mountains. Satan and his evil angels were in that assembly, prepared to act a prominent part, and the power of these evil influences was working upon the mind of the willful and disobedient king. He had so long yielded himself to the control of evil angels that he did not discern that he was following their leading when he eagerly took advantage of circumstances to hold up to contempt the condition of David and his servants. How much this appeal to the selfish desires of his men, savors of the temptation of Christ in the wilderness. "And the devil, taking him up into a high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will, I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." {2.4}

Jesus repulsed the tempter with, "It is written;" but the evil one has better success when he approaches man with his bribes and inducements. The question that each one of us will have to answer in his individual life is, Shall right triumph over wrong, no matter what shall be the cost? Every soul will have to

venture much, as Satan plies his specious temptations; but the voice of duty must be obeyed, if you would be an overcomer. Many other voices will urge a course in harmony with the selfish desires and inclinations of the carnal heart. To every soul will come the time of trial, and it will need divine wisdom to distinguish the voice of the adversary from the voice of God. It is impossible to tell how much may be lost by once neglecting to comply with the requirements of the word of God. It points out the path of obedience as the only safe path for man to walk in. Nothing will help us more in these strait places than to consider that we are standing in the presence of God, and that we do not want to do anything that will offend him. {2.5}

The Benjamites and those in the council of Saul, when they heard the words of the king, accusing them of sympathizing with those whom he regarded as his enemies, only saw before them an exasperated, human monarch, who had it in his power to enrich and advance them or to punish and degrade them, as their course should be approved or disapproved before him. But could the veil have been swept aside, they would have beheld the Sovereign whose empire is the universe, and who holds in his hands the destinies of time and of eternity. If they had felt that they were the servants of God, that they were to be obedient to the King of kings, how different would have been the result and record of that day which was filled with deeds of darkness and atrocity. The presence of the Infinite One was not felt; but he who is not only an accuser of the brethren, but a liar and a murderer from the beginning, manifested his presence and power through his human agents, Saul the king of Israel, and Doeg the chief of his herdsmen.

{2.6}

Saul had received as truth every lying report concerning the motives and movements of David, and, in his disappointment at the escape of his supposed enemy, Saul began to suspect everyone around him of being a conspirator and traitor. He declared, "All of you have conspired against me, and there is none that showeth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse." "There he appealed for their sympathy." "There is none of you that is sorry for me, or showeth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day." {2.7}

Saul represented David as one who was his deadly enemy, and accused Jonathan, his dutiful, and God-fearing son, of urging on the rebellion, because he would not join in the pursuit of his friend. This was an entirely false accusation. It was not David and Jonathan only who were accused, but the king's own tribe, and the people of his realm were all included in this suspicions as traitors and conspirators. He declared that they were all blind to their own best interests, and were destitute of compassion for him, the king of Israel. He had been informed by spies of the interview between David and Jonathan, of how they had entered into a covenant of eternal friendship; and, as Saul knew nothing of the particulars, he was filled with evil surmising as to their loyalty, and deemed that they were plotting against himself and his kingdom. At one time when Saul had furiously condemned David to death, and Jonathan had asked, "Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?" the king, in a moment of intense anger, had hurled

a javelin at his own son, as he had previously thrown one at David. Jonathan had lost all confidence in his father. He was afraid of him, and could not be free and confidential with him; for he saw with sorrow that God had departed from him, and that another spirit had taken possession of him. {2.8}

That a conspiracy had been formed against him, Saul affirmed to his counselors as a settled fact, and he had arrived at the conclusion that it must be one that was thoroughly organized, or the chief conspirator would not have been so successful in eluding his search. From this he argued that the people must be involved in it, or its success would not be so evident. He put darkness for light, and light for darkness. His reasoning and its conclusions were all erroneous. The plotting was all on the side of Saul himself. Because he had changed his position from time to time, and had thought to have secured his prey long before, and had been defeated time and again, he could understand his failure only by attributing evil motives and actions to his people. Those who had been in communication with him, and had known of his plans, must, he thought, have informed David of his movements. {2.9}

Saul had become so blinded through the deceitfulness of sin, that he could not discern spiritual things. He did not recognize the fact that God was present at all his councils, and that he was in communication with his servant David. God did not intend that the murderous designs of Saul should prove successful to accomplish their ends. The evil of the king's heart was to be manifested before Israel, that they might see to what terrible lengths a soul would go, after breaking away from the restraining influence of the Spirit of God. The king had had sufficient evidence to prove to him, beyond a doubt, that David had no evil intention toward him. He had had opportunity to take the life of his enemy, if he had desired to do so, but the son of Jesse would not lift up his hand against the Lord's anointed. But all this went for nothing, for it was in the heart of Saul to accredit evil purposes to David, and he did according to all that was in his heart.

{2.10}

There was a Watcher who was marking the motives, the words, and the actions of King Saul. The Lord was an unseen witness to every secret design, every open plan, and every murderous movement. When Nebuchadnezzar took his proud survey of the works of his hands, and boasted of his power and glory, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty"? the Watcher's voice came to the king, saying, "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken: The kingdom is departed from thee." When Belshazzar lifted himself up against the God of Heaven, and made a great feast, and, in his intoxication and pleasure, deemed nothing too sacred for his use, making merriment against the living and the true God, a bloodless hand traced upon the wall in living characters, "Thou are weighed in the balances and art found wanting." At the sacrilegious feast of Belshazzar, there was a Watcher whom he had not invited, and whose presence he had not discerned or welcomed. The doom of his kingdom was written in an unchangeable decree, "God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it." {2.11}

The eye of the Lord is upon every scene. His eye beholds every transaction in business. He hears every word that is spoken. He is a silent witness to every slanderous statement, and every falsehood is faithfully recorded in the books of Heaven. We have an attendant in public and private life. We have a companion in our private chamber. To every word and action of our lives, the holy, sin-hating God stands as a witness. We cannot escape our accountability to him, for God is everywhere. Why should we not live in such a manner that we may render up our account with joy, and not with grief. God has given us our appointed work, and we are to do it under his direction. If we place our powers under the control of Satan, we are rebels against God, and there will be found in our life-records, as there was found in Belshazzar's, a fatal deficiency when the accounts are balanced. {2.12}

Answer Hints

Section 1: | 1) 1.5 | 2) 1.5, 1.7 | 3) 1.11 | 4) 1.12 | 5) 1.12, 1.13 |

Section 2: | 1) 2.4 | 2) 2.5 | 3) 2.6 | 4) 2.7-2.9 | 5) 2.10 |

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