

Unbelief in those possessing faith (Quality: Poor)

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[0 : 00] We will speak with the Lord's help from the first book of Samuel, chapter 27, and the first verse. The first book of Samuel, chapter 27, the first verse.

David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistine, and Saul shall despair of me to seek me any more on any coast of Israel.

How shall I escape out of his hand? If proof was needed of the terrible power of unbelief, here it is.

The life of one of God's acknowledge people, saints. And yet, to live to himself, we see the tremendous power that dictated to him such a cause as he gives us much advice in his psalms.

We hear his many prayers. We read of him being in a low estate and so on and lifted out of it. You've got to remember that he was really, at times, in a very low estate and was indeed in deep trouble.

[1 : 41] And here is one of them. He says, it can scarcely be thought that he would resort to such treacherous things.

We have in one or two of these saints of God, David in particular and Peter with him, such a view of the carnal nature as makes a shudder.

And shows to us the absolute necessity of God's keeping power. And the sweetness of that promise, that he that hath begun a good work in you will carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ.

That it shall not be left half in it. And it is the reading of such passages as these that bring us to see what we need to see.

And it is abundantly clear from such a scripture as this that we cannot deny the very clear evidence that David was left to himself.

[3 : 10] This anxiety that was in his mind, it is very strange. If you read the previous chapter, and I thought to read it, you will remember that it is the chapter where he was preserved from doing any injury to King Saul.

Where he had him in his hand, so to speak. And yet, though Abner wanted to take King Saul's life, David prevented him.

Because he was God's anointed. You see the fear of God in exercise in this 26th chapter.

How about a period of time passed between the two chapters, we've no nodding. The fact is that in this 26th chapter, he would not lay his hand on the very man that hunted his life.

And for one sole reason, and that was that Saul was God's anointed. So, what principle was this that held him back?

[4 : 28] There was Abner ready to strike King Saul to the ground. But there was something else that is in this chapter.

And that is the remarkable fact that these 3,000 men who were with King Saul and surrounded him, and he was in the center of them, were put into a deep sleep by the Lord.

The word tells us that. The remarkable unseen hand of God of which we were speaking early recently in the affairs of his people.

They think everything is dead against them, working to harm instead of help. Whereas in actual reality, there is the hand of God putting 3,000 men fast asleep.

It were an impossibility for David and Abner to break through such ranks and not disturb one man. Where was the lookout in a century?

[5 : 44] Why was it made possible that these children, the two men, that should break through the ranks, and that they should take both the crews and the spear and the bolster from the head of the king and return safe?

You would think after such a deliverance as this, that David would be strengthened. that he would be really encouraged to think that God had so shown to him that he could put his enemy just where he wanted him.

And that had he broken that principle, that none should lay their hand on God's anointing, he could have easily rid himself of kings.

principle. Now you see how principle works. I mean by principle, the fear of God. Not an ordinary, everyday principle which is to be found in thousands.

A very excellent thing too. But the fear of God that says in a moment of well victory, no.

[7 : 20] And abide by. So that in this we ask ourselves again the question, why did David act as he did?

Now this chapter therefore starts as we have read with the text when David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul, or the margin says be concealed.

The closing words of the previous chapter look as if they parted good friends. Saul certainly seems to be so.

It looks as if here is an opportunity at least for some friendship. but now the inveterate hatred abides and evidently David knew that he couldn't trust Saul.

And of course there was so much behind it. There was the throne behind it. Saul knew that David was anointed. He knew that he would succeed him.

[8 : 44] And with such dreadful nature and Samuel bound and dead and the witch of Endor in the earlier chapter Israel in a very sad place at the same time we're dealing with God's dear child David.

And I trust not critically but as those who realize that that for the grace of God there go I.

Let us keep that in mind. David said in his heart I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul.

Unbelievable. this fearful monster. monster. And it isn't as if it was some Israelite failing.

Something like leprosy that spread over the land in those days that was very prevalent. It isn't as if it were a disease that has now been largely stamped out.

[10 : 00] in fact it's a disease that has never been stamped out and never will be by man.

There's only one thing that can control it and not stamp it out but control it and that is grace. And this dreadful ingwelling evil is something that is to be preached in the gospel.

Oh how my mind has been cast and the enemy has said well that won't be preaching Christ today at any rate.

One realizes that they're facing a terrible foe and a foe that can stand also at your right hand in the pulpit and down.

But nevertheless the amazing power of unbelief has to be disclosed by gospel truth. We need not confine ourselves to David to discuss and declare unbelief.

[11 : 25] You can see ample scope in the New but at the Old Testament. Read a few verses and chapters in John's gospel for example where Jesus enters into considerable discussion with the Pharisees and the doctors about their unbelief.

And where he and they in turn bring this matter well to the front. And you know well enough that it was their absolute hatred to the Lord Jesus that they would not under any circumstances acknowledge them.

And they went as far we lead from John's gospel to turn any man or woman out of the synagogue if they admitted Christ.

You can see that from the story of the blind man and his parents very unwilling to stand at their son's side because they feared to be turned out, ostracized and cut off.

So that this needs no great lengthy argument as regards a fact. But it needs much grace and help to preach it and listen to it as a principle to be denounced hip and thigh and exposed.

[13 : 18] But the wonder of it is this that if we were to speak about some other characters here you wouldn't be surprised. Achan for example Cora don't have to buy a guy in the Old Testament.

If we were to speak of Ananias and Sapphira you wouldn't be surprised. You would see that and expect to hear about unbelief them they were cut off in God's solemn judgment.

They were not given what men call an opportunity to repent. No, they were cut off in their sins.

But when you come to such a character as David you may very well say well is this really true?

And this is where God is glorified in unraveling and exposing the secrets of the heart of his own people. I believe that not only do I believe I'm positive God's honor glory is magnified in laying bare the carnal nature of his dear people.

[14 : 55] So that we are not under any misapprehension about this. We're not shy at it. We don't turn away from it and say well we mustn't preach about this.

We mustn't declare the awful nature of unbelief in the sight because that would encourage them in it would it?

The very opposite is true and this is one of the divine reasons we are told so much about it. To make you tremble and me too and anyone who realizes the sinister nature of unbelief to tremble and the very thought of it not being something like a disease that we're likely to catch or contract that we haven't got it and we may get it.

Oh no something that we've got no matter how young we are and certainly how old we are it's something that we've got done and here it comes to the surface though I say there's no known reason why David should drop into such despair if these two chapters follow in reasonable sequence in his life and I say if because we do not know the sure but if they do whether if or not here they are given to us flowing on separate introduce in his life and suddenly plunged down for no known reason not in the scripture to say such a grateful thing as this but God has done so much for us and God whose knowledge

God who he has testified publicly to wasn't afraid to mention even as a lad the effect that God delivered him from the poor the lion and the bear this and these proofs that he had and what God had done for him where are they gone why are they swept away why can't he lay hold of one of them why can't he say now here God who delivered me from Goliath will deliver me from Saul why can't he say that now and this brings us to the other side of the matter and that is faith had David never possessed faith he would never have known what this was as regards unbelief in the extreme opposite all men are unbelievers by nature but all men have not faith but it is the fact that faith is such a divine and healthy thing and grace that makes unbelief so terrible in their sight love of David had in the days past the proof as he ventures forth that another cases the sling and the stone in complete confidence so here is the riddle the mystery alive when wounded dead when whole says the hymn writer here he goes and says in his heart this is a dreadful place to be attacked you know in your heart and this is where unbelief attacks in the very center of one's being you can't define it you can't give an outline of it you can't say when it's coming you certainly cannot detect it in it's working but if it attacks as it does the heart it's personal to you as it was personal to

[20 : 06] David wasn't a question of collaboration and asking his faithful 600 whether they thought it would be a good thing if they went down into the land of the Philistines you see we sink into unbelief alone your heart sinks into unbelief in the things of God I mean alone you may be favored today with him on the mount today thou shalt be in all by thy lord his glory to sin there he may caress thee and call thee his bride but grace though he bless thee shall surely be try down into the gulf of unbelief he said in his heart now this is where deceit is this is the most unsightly this is where there is no security he that trusteth in his own heart he that puts his trust in himself trusts in a broken wreath there is nothing worthy of trust in your deceit for heart this is where he made a mistake and you and

I can't pick up many stones can we you look at the trouble you brought on yourself by listening to your own heart yonder leave in your own heart and what your own heart has said to you and how it has said it was said in his heart got every comfort from his wicked heart to live how true was this supposition surmise call it what you like would he one day Perry supposing he did what does that mean it means that every covenant blessing every promise that God has bestowed upon him every intimation of divine favor where he says that

God took him from the sheepfold you know nobody else not Jesse no God took me from the sheepfold means that he never did it means that God has never had a hand in his life there's been nothing that's got anything durable in it if what he says in his heart is true I shall now perish one day with the hand of thought what will happen then David if you do what will happen to God's purpose why were you anointed king why did Samuel receive that clear intimation when he came to see all your brethren that the anointing oil was not for one of them and that you had to be sent poor from the flock why

David what is this David listen we might say to him you say it for yourself you may be in this place this morning I was going to say I hope you are but I don't really only in this sense that this word will come pretty seasonable to you if you are if you planted some gulf of unbelief this morning your heart has been so disturbed as to say well God has forgotten to be great all is in vain I shall one day perish by the hand of these enemies of mine I say if you were para ascended this scripture will be very much suited to your needs but be that as it may the heart is the phrase that we reckoned is the most vulnerable and it is here that

David spoke in his heart how different is some of the communing and musings of his heart in some of the psalm psalm for that psalm while I was musing he said the fire birth a different spirit he was in how close he was to divine things there and his tongue was the pen of a red writer time when he said teach me to number my days that I may apply my heart under wisdom those times of height in exercise very very different now isn't it so that here we have the two armies which are found in every believer the old man of sin and the new man of grace and the one conflicted with the other and by no means reconciled now and they never will be our house cried that

[26 : 40] God should tell us about this but what a great mercy oh if you didn't know the worst you see some doctors never tell you the worst if they are a practice they will never tell the patient the worst they will go on and on and on as they do with patients for example that have quite clearly to them got cancer they won't tell them and they don't tell them if a partner their etiquette not to tell them they are afraid if they tell them as I heard over their friend once the doctor admitted he said I didn't tell him when he was accosted after this dear man's death he said

I didn't tell him because I was afraid he committed suicide and I didn't tell him because I was afraid he discharged himself from hospital those were the two excuses this doctor gave when he was asked why he didn't tell him but the great condition tells you what's wrong with you and me you know oh yes he having full knowledge of this dreading disease in your heart tells you plainly you may not like it and if you fear not God you won't like it it really will sting you and you say well this is dismal tidying yes so it will be one day if you're laid upon a dying bed and suddenly faced with this when the midnight hour strikes and it's too late it will be dismal tidying today when you say

Lord Lord open to us and when the voice says I never knew you it will be dismal tidying but this side of that solemn hour it is well to know the truth and well to see it exemplified not merely doctrinally but practically here you have a living example of it here you see the thing in real life which after all is God's wise profound way of teaching us so what are the thoughts of your heart today tonight I shall one day by the hand of the sword are there swords in your life enemies that aim your overthrow

I don't mean those that come to you armed with spears and surround you and seek your life but I do mean the enemies of a spiritual nature and an unbelieving heart you can enclose everything in there you can leave it all there and say this is enough I no other enemy than this is the all powerful firm John Bunyan speaks of quite a few enemies doesn't he giant despair one of them in Doubty Castle wasn't it let us confine ourselves to this one unbelief a denial of what God has done and a denial of what he's able to do and let us see what it does there is nothing better for me than that

I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines now a thousand scriptures will condemn this as they commit thy way unto the Lord trust also in him and he shall bring it to power is this what David's doing here would think boy if he had me here unbelief devises its own way of escape and you can see through it it's absolutely transparent but don't you look at it critically and say yes it is very poor way but it may well be that you tried to shine past yourself it may well be that you saw to why of escape and found it and said well the best thing for me to do is to do so and so

[32 : 31] I'll take the wings of the morning and fly to the uppermost parts of the earth I'll get out of this oh beware of this you who are younger in life let me affectionately warn you about her seeking a way that you can't pray about David couldn't pray about this if you can't ask God's guidance and direction don't you go now if this is absolutely something confined to your flesh mind purpose scheme in life if you say yes this looks right but take it to the Lord commit it to the Lord if you can't there's something wrong with it and you may be sure that

David couldn't take this to the Lord nothing better for me oh unbelief you wretched wretched indwelling evil nothing better David where's your sight where's your love where's your affection what's happened to you David nothing better is this the best remedy that unbelief can suggest David nothing better for me the poverty of it is apparent isn't it but the lesson in it is what we want to come to could we but as the hymn writer says divide the fancy from the real how much would stand on fancy's side how few from the real and look at the hollowness of this suggestion and yet this is what unbelief decides what does it decide to do why to go into the very lap of its enemy yes the very place where at one time and not many years before he had been the man to destroy their champion goodnight it's like going into a bee's nest into a den of lions surely

David isn't it what makes you have recourse to this unbelief doesn't mind you know what the ultimate issue is he can't see Jonah couldn't see where his unbelief was going to lead him could he and I'm sure we can't see where our unbelief is going to lead us no indeed we can't you can't plan it out in stage one and stage two and stage three like that no you don't know one false step and you may be plunged over the prejudice one false step and you might be kept by the grace of God you cannot tell unbelief will devise its own existence nothing better for him or we poor sinners could suggest something better for him couldn't we the gospel suggests something better for us doesn't it get that on your knees

David unbelief won't have it do you know what that is when you can't pray about a thing because you're so determined to have it you set your mind on it and you're not going to be thwarted and nothing's going to stop you and you're not going to see counsel of God and you're not going to listen to anybody sober advice you're going headlong down into the land of the Philistine are these just a few imaginations and cunningly devised preaching on my part or are they true which for you to decide and me in my conscience before a holy God but beware beware of the path that you cannot commit to

God you may be sure it will be a path that will lead you downhill but nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistine I now what is the motive behind all this and Saul shall despair of me to seek me anymore in any coast of Israel so shall I escape as we have as is the way of escape then was it there is a beautiful scripture from the Corinthians that God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted about that you're able but will with the temptation make a way to escape that you may be able to bear and this is the way to escape

[38 : 55] God never made this way he permitted it solemnly permitted it but he did not indict this in David's heart it was David's own wicked heart and the devil which made this prospect look so rosy but what's the idea behind it why freedom take away that dread of death from the hand of sword but why seek to find refuge in the land of your enemies how do you know that you're going to meet with a reception as I just said you take one wrong step and the Lord may permit you to take another he did

David did Atax the king and the Philistines or one of the minor kings of them as they had several did he say no David I don't want you but he said will you go back I can't touch you now oh it's dreadful it makes me tremble to have to warn you of such fallen things beside the grave of the nature of unbelief and what it will do is let you let yourself and me too I'm not excluding myself on this it is so comfortable to think that if I do this I should get out of trouble I should miss everything

I should be free I don't want a lot of pass I can leave everything else I can't receive them he's right unbelief is right unbelief has suggested this and here he is with acres and he finds favor in his sight in verse 5 and he says let them give me a place in some town in the country that I may dwell there for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with it oh plunged into an equality with a wicked a calling him thy servant subjecting himself to the level and beneath the level of this ungodly man in all his clattering in an endeavor to get this comfortable position where he will be away from

Saul but not away from God but this doesn't strike him at all this was one of those dark periods in the life of David when I believe he was without God as regards communion and prayer I believe they were dark times it seems a veritable impossibility that David could have had any close communion with his God here so he is given a place where he may dwell as he desires and he stays there a year and four months it's a long time and hours to be in underneath or four months would be long enough but a year and four months and there they settled down in that remote ziklah and God gave him his request and I persuaded that it was like the children of Israel he sent leaveness into his soul yes a solemn scripture that just what he did to his people gold he gave them their meat furnished their table in the wilderness he gave them flesh to eat he said leaveness into their soul so

David a year and four months and those days were days of blind unbelief sure to earth and can it work in life and what lesson therefore is there in this for us today this happened centuries ago didn't it well there are two things that are common and by that I mean the same one is Jehovah he is the same God and the other is the devil he is the same devil and I could have said three things that are common the third is your heart is common it's the same today as was

[45 : 06] David's heart it has not changed one which is not likely to this terrible nature of unbelief that dwells within us it must make too much all it must I don't know why but there it is the Lord make some use of it to one of your souls if not today perhaps tomorrow and you come one day to this solemn account of David and find yourself just where he was and then you will understand it more fully than ever but the issue is more better Lord help us to look at it it's fair to see amen