

Dear Pathway Family,

As I prepared the devotional today, I was paying close attention to the countries that we pray for, and it resonated with me the vast number of non-believers there are in the world. Honestly, I cannot imagine how empty I would feel without my relationship with Jesus Christ.

I know that my Redeemer lives;  
what comfort this sweet sentence gives!  
He lives, He lives, who once was dead;  
He lives, my everliving Head.  
He lives triumphant from the grave,  
He lives eternally to save,  
He lives all-glorious in the sky,  
He lives exalted there on high.  
He lives to bless me with His love,  
He lives to plead for me above,  
He lives my hungry soul to feed,  
He lives to help in time of need.  
He lives to grant me rich supply,  
He lives to guide me with His eye,  
He lives to comfort me when faint,  
He lives to hear my soul's complaint.  
He lives to silence all my fears,  
He lives to wipe away my tears,  
He lives to calm my troubled heart,  
He lives all blessings to impart  
He lives, my kind, wise, heav'nly friend,  
He lives and loves me to the end;  
He lives, and while He lives, I'll sing;  
He lives, my Prophet, Priest, and King.  
He lives and grants me daily breath;  
He lives and I shall conquer death;  
He lives my mansion to prepare;  
He lives to bring me safely there.  
He lives, all glory to His name!  
He lives, my Jesus, still the same.  
Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives,  
"I know that my Redeemer lives!"

In His Love,

*Jennifer*

***And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head (I Sam. 1:11). And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the LORD establish His word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him (I Sam. 1:23).***

Hannah, the beloved wife of Elkanah (I Sam. 1:5), was barren, much to the malicious delight of Elkanah's second wife, Peninnah (1:6). The belief that she was failing her husband, coupled with Peninnah's relentless mocking, caused Hannah much spiritual and emotional pain. Hannah was a faithful servant of the Lord, but as the years passed and her barrenness appeared permanent, her distress and shame deepened. ***And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore (1:10).*** It was while she was at her lowest emotional ebb that she attempted to strike a bargain with God. ***If thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid...then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life.***

Hannah's prayer was desperate and heartfelt, and God both heard and answered her plea. ***Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the LORD (1:20).*** After many years of desperate longing, God had given her the deepest desire of her heart. But that gift carried with it a terrible price. Hannah had born a son, but that son was not to be hers. She had promised him to God in exchange for allowing him to be born.

Exactly one year after Hannah revealed her heart's desire to God, Elkanah and his household made ready to return to the Tabernacle (1:21). Hannah's emotions must have been a tangled mess as she sat there holding her nursing son, knowing that her time with him was already drawing to a close. There likely was more than a touch of desperation and fear in

her voice when she informed Elkanah that neither she nor the babe would be accompanying the family to the Tabernacle at that time (1:22). Elkanah knew what she had promised God, as her husband he had allowed the vow to stand, unchallenged (Num. 30:10-14). He knew what they soon must do. With tenderness and understanding he faced his beloved wife, giving her his blessing to stay behind and tend to their son, while at the same time reminding her to turn to God for the strength that she would need to ultimately fulfill her vow. ***Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the LORD establish His word.***

God's favor cannot be bought, and, contrary to how it might seem, He cannot be bargained with. He will always answer our prayers in line with His Will; nothing we say or do can change that. Yet that does not negate the power of our vows to Him. If we make a promise to God, then he fully expects us to keep our word. Although keeping our promise to God may prove difficult, if we have made such a vow, God Himself will give us the strength to accomplish the task.

***I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*** (Phil. 4:13).

**Thought for the Day:** *We tie our own noose when we presume to bargain with God, hanging ourselves with our own thoughtless promises while God only calls on us to be true to our words.*

**Christ Portrayed:** By Samuel, who grew in favor with God and men (1 Sam. 2:26). ***Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man*** (Luke 2:52).

**Word Studies:** 1:6 **sore** = without mercy; 1:16 **daughter of Belial** = sinful woman; 2:1 **horn** = strength; **is enlarged** = rejoices greatly; 2:8 **the pillars of the earth are the Lord's** = God alone sustains and upholds the earth; 2:10 **His King . . . His Anointed** = Messiah; this is the first reference to Jesus' coming by the title Messiah; 2:13 **in seething** = being cooked; 2:15 **sodden** = boiled.

**Pray for Staff:** Jennifer Palafox • **Government Official:** Justice Samuel Anthony Alito, Jr., Rep. Jamaal Bowman (NY) • **Country:** Iraq (31,858,481) in Southern Asia • **Major Languages:** Arabic, Kurdish, Turkmen, Assyrian, Armenian • **Fierce harassment of non-Muslims** • 97% Muslim; 3% Christian/Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask the Lord for ways to share His love with others (Heb. 6:10).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 2

***And when the people were come into the camp, the Elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies*** (I Sam. 4:3).

The nation of Israel was born of a Godly promise and was crafted by His law. Joshua led them triumphantly into their inheritance and proudly stood before them as every man amongst them openly pledged their allegiance to God. ***And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and His voice will we obey*** (Josh. 24:24). Yet over the next 450 years (Acts 13:20), the people willfully turned their hearts from the Lord time and time again. They pulled further away with each withdrawal, and with every step back, more and more of His commands and decrees were compromised or forgotten entirely. Their sporadic attempts to return themselves to His service were imperfect and irreverent, the actions of men who had forgotten the true nature of the God they were supposed to serve. Under the leadership of Eli and his thoroughly corrupted sons (I Sam. 2:12-17), they fell even further away from the teachings of Moses, which is probably why, when defeated in battle by the Palestinians, they had what they thought to be a brilliant idea. ***Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies*** (I Sam. 4:3).

On the surface, it sounded like a good plan. The nation was in trouble, so naturally, they should turn to God for their salvation. If indeed this had happened, they would have found the help they sought, but that is not what occurred. They did not cry out to God, nor did they fall to their knees in prayer. Instead, they brought out the Ark as a protective talisman, a representative idol of the power of God. They believed that having control of the Ark meant that they also had control over God's power. They placed it at the head of their armies as a sign that they were preparing to use that power to defeat their enemies. In their quest for victory, they

turned a blind eye to one of God's most basic commandments: ***Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the LORD your God*** (Lev. 26:1).

The sin of idol worship is not limited to the act of lusting after an image of a manmade deity. It occurs in much more subtle forms on a daily basis in self-identified Christian homes the world over. Anytime we place our faith in objects that we deem to represent God instead of in God Himself, we are guilty of idol worship. The power is contained in the living Word of God; it cannot be printed, bound, and placed on a shelf. God's protection comes from the Spirit He has infused us with; it cannot be fastened to a chain and hung around our necks. There is nothing on earth that can contain or invoke God's power. Only by placing our faith in Him, and Him alone, will we be assured of His constant presence in our lives.

***Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device*** (Acts. 17:29).

**Thought for the Day:** *We cannot push God in front of us and expect to coast through the difficulties in our lives; rather, we must walk behind Him with humility and trust.*

**Christ Revealed:** Through the rock called ***Ebenezer***, which means the stone of help (I Sam. 7:12). Jesus is our Rock of salvation; our help comes from Him (Ps. 18:2; 121:2). ***I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*** (Phil. 4:13).

**Word Studies:** 4:1 **pitched** = encamped; 4:9 **quit yourselves like men** = be courageous and exercise all the strength you have; 4:12 **his clothes rent . . . his head** = signs of great sorrow; 4:19 **travailed** = gave birth.

**Pray for Staff:** Tiffany Parisi • **Government Officials:** Rep. Chellie Pingree (ME) • **Country:** Ireland (4,775,982) Off the coast of Western Europe • Major Languages: English, Irish • Religious Freedom • 87.4% Catholic; 2.9% Church of Ireland; 1.9% Other Protestant; 2.1% Other; 4.2% None; 1.5% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Remember that it is by the blood of Christ that we have access to God in prayer (Heb. 10:19).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 3

**N**evertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles (I Sam. 8:19-20).

The people had spoken. Despite the dire warnings of Samuel, their fervent cry had not changed: ***we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.*** In His permissive will, God acquiesced to their desire. ***And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city*** (I Sam. 8:22).

The anointing of Saul was met with fierce rejoicing by the people. ***And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king*** (10:24). At last, they had a human leader in whom they could place their trust. Saul was tall and handsome (9:2). His kingly looks reassured the people that he was indeed the right choice, and this belief was reinforced when he successfully led them in battle against the Ammonites. Morale in the nation of Israel had reached an all-time high. With Saul to lead them, they were finally on the path to becoming a mighty nation!

At least, this was what the people believed. The reality was quite the opposite. ***And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them*** (8:7). By demanding human leadership, they had rejected the sovereignty of God, deliberately placing Saul as a barrier between themselves and their Creator. They were now bound by oath to serve the king (8:11-18), whether or not he acted in line with the will of the Lord. By placing their lives in the hands of a man instead of entrusting them directly to God, they had opened themselves up to tremendous risks. ***Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help*** (Ps. 146:3).

The Israelites' fatal flaw was that they wanted to ***be like all the nations***. Living as a nation under the leadership of God had set them apart as different and unique, a designation that they believed left them at a disadvantage. These same fears are the stumbling blocks of many would-be Christians today. They genuinely want to find a new life in Christ, but they are afraid of being considered 'strange' or 'different.' So, instead of seeking a personal relationship with Him, they attempt to do so through as many different layers as possible. They ignore the teachings of the Bible and follow after the charismatic teachings of men. They set their ultimate goal as being a forward-thinking citizen of a strong Christian nation, and they do not concern themselves with learning how to be a Christian in the image of Christ Jesus. As they strive to serve the popular god of the majority, they fail to realize that they have yet to meet God, Lord of all creation.

***Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do*** (Mark 7:7-8).

**Thought for the Day:** *It is natural for us to look to another for guidance, but how silly we must look, running past God to seek counsel from those as clueless as ourselves.*

**Christ Portrayed:** Through Samuel, who faithfully served Israel as judge (I Sam. 8:1,3), prophet (8:10-18; 9:6,9,19,27; 10:1-9), and priest (8:10,21; 10:8). Jesus was the **Prophet** promised through Moses (Deut. 18:15); He is our **Great High Priest** (Heb. 4:14); and one day He will judge all mankind: ***For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son*** (John 5:22).

**Word Studies:** 8:3 **lucre** = money gained dishonestly; 8:9 **protest solemnly** = object seriously; 8:12 **ear** = plow; 9:2 **goodly** = handsome; 9:7 **spent** = used up; 9:16 **captain** = leader since God was the true King.

**Pray for Staff:** Jennifer Palafox • **Country:** Isle of Man (86,159) In the Irish Sea • **Major Languages:** English, Manx Gaelic • **Religious Freedom** • Protestant, Roman Catholic • **Prayer Suggestion:** Draw near to God in prayer with a true heart in assurance of faith (Heb. 10:22).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 4



***And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering. And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which He commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought Him a man after His own heart, and the LORD hath commanded Him to be captain over His people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee (I Sam. 13:11-14).***

Nowhere in Scripture are we given any indication that Saul did not believe in the existence of the one true God. We have no reason to think that Saul ever engaged in idol worship or bowed before false gods. As a matter of fact, we are given ample proof that Saul publicly acknowledged God as Lord of Israel. ***And Saul built an altar unto the LORD: the same was the first altar that he built unto the LORD*** (I Sam. 14:25). Yet despite his public religious persona, Saul was inwardly an empty man; for all his ‘knowledge,’ he lacked the simple assurance of faith.

Because he was acting without faith, Saul was unable to relinquish control to God. Saul trusted, first and foremost, in his own abilities; his decisions and actions were self-serving. What he believed he needed at any given moment would always be given more weight in his decision-making process than God’s directives. Because of this lack of faith, God removed the kingdom from Saul’s care. ***The LORD hath sought Him a man after His own heart***, and Saul had proven that he was unwilling to turn his over to God.

God knew when he first called him to the position that Saul would utterly fail as king, but that does not mean that God set Saul up for failure. Far from it. ***And it was so, that when he***



***had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day*** (I Sam. 10:9). When God called Saul to be king, He gave to Saul ***another heart*** (the gift of faith), just as He would one day give to David (I Sam. 16:13). The difference between the two men is that Saul chose to ignore the gift and ultimately lost it (16:14), whereas David embraced it and allowed it to determine the course of his life.

***For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God*** (Eph. 2:8). Faith is a gift from God, but it is not something that He forces on us. If we refuse to accept it and refuse to allow it to have any sway in our lives, then it will fade away into nothingness as if it were never there in the first place. Saul consciously chose to place his trust in himself rather than God, and that choice ultimately cost him his kingdom and his life.

***But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him*** (Heb. 11:6).

**Thought for the Day:** *God may elevate us to positions of authority over our fellow man, but we should never make the mistake of believing that He has pulled us closer to heaven in the process.*

**Christ Revealed:** By Samuel the intercessor (I Sam. 12:23). Right now, Jesus is interceding for believers. ***It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*** (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25).

**Word Studies:** 12:4 **taken ought** = received a bribe; **ought** = anything; 12:21 **vain** = worthless; 13:10 **salute** = welcome, greet; 13:17 **spoilers** = raiders; 13:20 **share . . . coulter . . . mattock** = agricultural tools.

**Pray for Staff:** Judy McCrary • **Government Officials:** Rep. Norma Torres (CA) • **Country:** Israel (7,707,042) In the Middle East • **Major Languages:** Hebrew, Arabic • **Religious Freedom** (governmental and legal discrimination against non-Jews and non-Orthodox streams of Judaism continued) • 75.1% Jewish (mostly secular); 17.4% Muslim (largely Sunni); 2% Christian; 1.6% Druze; 3.9% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Remember that the Lord is faithful to keep His promises (Heb. 10:23).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 5

***And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou*** (I Sam. 15:26-28).

One point that is easily forgotten when reading of the early days of the monarchy of Israel is that Saul was hand-picked by God to lead His people. ***To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over My people Israel, that he may save My people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon My people, because their cry is come unto Me. And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over My people*** (I Sam. 9:16-17). God looked favorably on Saul, imbuing him with the Spirit of the Lord (10:6-7) and gifting him with the skills necessary to make him an exceptional military leader (11:1-15). Had Saul remained humble and willing to be led by the Spirit, he would have, in turn, led Israel into an era of righteous glory.

Saul's choices, not God's, revoked his calling. The further Saul rose in the people's esteem, the further away he pulled himself from God. Saul's love for the adulations he received from his subjects caused him to take great pride in his accomplishments and led him to forget the true source of his power. He began to think of himself not as God's anointed king but as the all-powerful 'King' of all Israel. Saul believed that as 'King,' he had both the right and the responsibility to interpret God's Commands and to modify them in whatever manner he felt necessary. The problem with that, of course, is that once modified, the Commands were no longer of God. ***Thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.***

There is no greater feeling in the world than being full-on

called by God. To stand before Him and know, beyond any shadow of any doubt, what path He expects you to follow and what purpose He expects you to fulfill is to experience the most soul-deep satisfaction possible for a mortal man to experience. Yet it is also at this point that we may also find ourselves in the greatest spiritual danger of our lives. As we start down the path God has laid before us, we must never allow ourselves to lose sight of our reason for being there. Regardless of our earthly standings, we will never be anything more or less than God's humble servant. If we give into the temptation to forget that fact and start believing in our own importance, then we risk losing it all. Just as Saul was called and later rejected due to his prideful nature, so too is it possible for us to lose our focus and be removed from His service.

***I therefore, the prisoner of the LORD, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*** (Eph. 4:1-3).

**Thought for the Day:** *Being called to serve in a position of earthly power by God does not automatically give us a seat next to Him.*

**Christ Revealed:** Through David's name (I Sam. 16:13), which means **beloved**. David is a type of Jesus, whom the Heavenly Father called **My beloved Son** (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35).

**Word Studies:** 14:24 **adjured** = threatened under oath; 14:31 **smote** = struck down; 14:41 **perfect lot** = right answer; 14:47 **took the kingdom** = took possession; **vexed** = harassed; 14:52 **sore** = fierce, severe; 15:29 **repent** = change His mind; 15:32 **delicately** = fearfully; 16:18 **comely** = handsome.

**Pray for Country:** Italy (61,482,297) in Southern Europe • Major Languages: Italian, German • Religious Freedom • 80% Christian (overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, some Jehovah's Witness & Protestants); 20% Atheists/Agnostics; Muslims (about 700,000 but growing) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Give thanks for the privilege of assembling with other Christians each week (Heb. 10:25).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 6

***And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him (I Sam. 17:4-7).***

The thing we most focus on when reading about the Philistine champion, Goliath, is his immense size. Everything about him was larger than life. Standing over 9.5' in height, he towered over everyone else on the battlefield. His armor was thicker and heavier than any man could bear, the coat alone weighing in at over 125 pounds, and he carried a massive spear tipped with 15 pounds of iron. We marvel at this terrible giant and wonder what it would have been like to stand in his shadow. Would we have cowered in fear at the sight of him, as did Saul and the Israelite army? In almost the same breath, we praise the courage and fortitude of David, the young shepherd boy who bravely stood against the monster and ultimately emerged victorious from battle.

By standing in awe of Goliath's size and David's courage, we are missing the point. The lesson that God has for us here is not one of perseverance against overwhelming odds, nor is it one of steadfast bravery while enduring persecution. The lesson here is one of simple faith. David believed in God with all his heart, mind, and soul. He believed in God's promise to protect and provide, and he believed that God's will would prevail. David did not measure the strength of Goliath against his own strengths but rather against the power of God. ***Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied (I Sam. 17:45).***

David wasn't brave. Bravery implies courage in the face of

uncertainty and danger, neither of which David experienced as he approached Goliath. When David looked at the other man, he didn't see a giant, or a champion, or even an opponent to be fought. David looked at Goliath, and all he saw was a man foolish enough to defy God. David did not march into battle uncertain of the outcome; He stood in faith and allowed the Spirit of God to work through him. ***Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee*** (17:36-37).

God is not merely the most powerful force in existence; He is the ONLY true source of power. When we stand firm in His will and allow His Spirit to flow through us, nothing can defeat us, not even death itself.

***Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us*** (Rom. 8:30-31)?

**Thought for the Day:** *No matter how beautiful and/or terrible we may find something in this world, God is greater still.*

**Christ Portrayed:** By Jonathan, who ***stripped himself*** of his royal robes and ***made a covenant***, promising all that he had to David (1 Sam. 18:3-4). Knowing the will of God, Jesus cast off His heavenly robes ***and took upon Him the form of a servant . . . and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*** (Phil. 2:5-8).

**Word Studies:** 17:6 **greaves** = leg armor; 17:18 **take their pledge** = bring back news of how they are doing; 17:20 **trench** = camp; 17:22 **carriage** = baggage, supplies; 17:31 **rehearsed** = reported; 17:39 **assayed** = tried, attempted; **proved** = tested, tried; 17:40 **a scrip** = his small pouch; 17:43 **staves** = sticks

**Pray for Government Officials:** Rep. Joseph Courtney (CT), Rep. Mike Exell (MS), Gov. Tim Walz (MN) • **Country:** Jamaica (2,909,714) in the West Indies • Major Languages: English, English Patois • Religious Freedom • 62.5% Protestant; 2.6% Roman Catholic; 14.2% Other/Unspecified; 20.7% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Diligently seek the Lord in prayer and He will bless your efforts (Heb. 11:6).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 7

**Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die** (I Sam. 20:30-31).

David, the young shepherd boy whom King Saul had welcomed into his court with open arms (I Sam. 16:22-23), had grown into a man who was greatly feared by Saul. **And Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal Saul's daughter loved him. And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually** (18:28-29). The king wanted nothing more than to execute David, but his popularity with the people, as well as his marriage to Saul's daughter Michal and close friendship with his son Jonathan, made that a risky proposition. Several times, Saul had arranged for David to be on the frontlines of impossible battles (18:25; 19:8), yet each time, David had emerged victorious and unscathed, protected by the Lord he served with all his heart and soul. As hatred, anger, and jealousy continued to fester in Saul's heart, his actions against David became more and more bold (19:10; 19:15; 19:20) until his true intentions could no longer be concealed: **Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.**

The driving force behind Saul's anger was the desire to see his kingdom secured in the person of his son and heir, Jonathan. Samuel had told him long ago that God had removed the kingdom from him and his line, **But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee** (13:14), but Saul's self-centered nature blinded him to the truth of his situation. Saul was unwilling to believe that God would move against him, and instead, he clung to the belief that David was actively seeking to replace

him in the nation's favor and steal his kingdom out from under him. He nursed this flame of paranoid jealousy into a burning hatred. In Saul's mind, if the threat of David were removed, then his family's hold on the throne of Israel would be assured.

Jealousy is one of the most dangerous of all human emotions. It first begins to take root when we allow feelings of envy and wounded pride to fester within us, and from there, it grows quickly, insinuating itself into every facet of our lives. It runs roughshod over positive emotions, leaving only burning anger, hatred, and suspicion in its wake. Left unchecked, jealousy suppresses our ability to give or receive love of any kind, including the love of God. This is what happened to Saul. His desperate jealousy against the man whom God had chosen as his successor ultimately destroyed him—heart, mind, body, and soul.

***But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.*** (James 3:14-16).

**Thought for the Day:** *To act upon jealousy is to stand in rebellion against what God has willed.*

**Christ Portrayed:** By David, who, as a servant of Saul, suffered at the hands of the one whom he served (I Sam. 19:1,10-11). Jesus suffered at the hands of the ones He came to serve and to save. ***From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples, how that He must . . . suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day*** (Matt. 16:21).

**Word Studies:** 19:9 **played with his hand** = played music on the harp; 19:13 **bolster** = headrest; 20:2 **but that he will shew it me** = without first telling me.

**Pray for Government Officials:** Rep. Lisa McClain (MI), Rep. Lori Chavez-DeRemer (OR), Rep. Troy Nehls (TX) • **Country:** Japan (127,253,075) off the Eastern Coast of Asia • Major Language: Japanese • Religious Freedom • 83.9% Shintoism; 71.4% Buddhism (Exceeds 100% because many people belong to both Shintoism and Buddhism); 2% Christian; 7.8% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray for those who are in adverse circumstances (Heb. 13:3).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 8



***And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the LORD; because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not shew it to me. But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the LORD. And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod (I Sam. 22:17-18).***

Saul, the man who God had chosen to be king over all Israel, had now drifted so far from the Lord that he had no qualms about ordering the death of ***the priests of the LORD*** and their families. The reserved, humble young man (I Sam. 9:21; 10:21-23) that Samuel had anointed as God's servant king (10:11) had disappeared. In his place stood a proud and mighty king of men, a king who would protect his throne at all costs.

Years earlier, ***Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which He commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought Him a man after His own heart, and the LORD hath commanded Him to be captain over His people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee (13:13-14).*** Not long afterward, the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul (16:14) and came to rest upon David. Saul had not heeded Samuel's words; likewise, he appeared not even to notice the absence of the Spirit of the Lord. Without ever consciously changing his allegiance, Saul had renounced God and bound himself to the god of the world (II Cor. 4:4). His lust for power and his jealousy of David had driven him past the darkest edges of his sanity. ***For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world (I John 2:16).***

The life of Saul should stand as a warning to us all. Saul was not a man who set out to do evil, but by placing his perceived 'needs' before God's will, he soon rendered himself unable to

do anything else. In arrogance and pride, he held himself out to be God's chosen representative, a claim that both he and the world accepted at face value. Saul desperately needed God, but he never sought Him out because he had convinced himself that he automatically had God's approval and support in all that he did.

Spiritually, the most dangerous choice we can make is to deem ourselves wholly righteous in the eyes of God. When we believe that we can determine right from wrong and good from evil on our own without prayerful consultation of His Word and communion with the Holy Spirit, we cut ourselves off from the one thing we need above all else—the guiding presence provided by our Lord and Savior. Without that presence, we are well and truly lost.

***And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you*** (John 14:16-17).

**Thought for the Day:** *Wickedness is the nature of man and, as such, is often difficult for us to spot in ourselves; only through the discerning eyes of God will we truly see.*

**Christ Revealed:** By David's refusal to take the kingdom by force or before the appointed time set by God (1 Sam. 24:10-13). Christ refused to become King of Israel. ***When Jesus . . . perceived (knew) that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a King, He departed*** (John 6:15).

**Word Studies:** 22:4 **hold** = stronghold, safe place; 22:17 **footmen** = guards; 22:18 **fell upon** = attacked and murdered; 22:22 **I have occasioned** = I am to blame for; 23:9 **practiced mischief** = planned harm.

**Pray for Staff:** Ryan McCrary • **Country:** Jersey (95,732) In the English Channel • Major Language: English • Religious Freedom • Protestant, Roman Catholic • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray to be content with and thankful for the things you have (Heb. 13:5).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 9

***And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran (I Sam. 25:1).***

The first verse of the 25th chapter of I Samuel stands alone, seemingly unconnected to the narrative that occurs either before or after it. In it, we learn of the death of Samuel, one of the greatest spiritual giants in Israel's history (Heb. 11:32). Because of his spiritual insight and loyalty to the Word and will of God, Samuel surpassed all of the judges that came before him. As a direct result of the guidance of Samuel, 12 disparate tribes were once again united as one nation under God.

From the moment of his conception, Samuel's life was dedicated to God (I Sam. 1:27-28). As soon as he was old enough to understand, Samuel accepted that dedication in his own right and faithfully served the Lord in all things (3:1,19). He was a man of prayer, both in good times and in bad (15:11; Ps. 99:6), and he made sharing the Lord with others one of his top priorities. He established the first school of the prophets, in which he took an active teaching role (I Sam. 19:20-24), and he officiated as a priest (7:10) and a judge, holding court in places such as Beth-el, Gilgal, Mizpah, and Ramah (7:15-17).

When, in His permissive will, God acquiesced to the people's demand for a king, Samuel worked to the best of his ability to advise and guide the Lord's anointed (10:1-8; 19:19). As David faced exile, fleeing from the murderous rage of Saul, he desperately needed the counsel and support of a righteous man such as Samuel, but, with the death of the old prophet, such support was denied him. From a human viewpoint, this seems to be a miscalculation on the part of God. Why take Samuel when both David and the people needed him so desperately? Why not wait until David ascended to the throne and peace and order replaced the current chaos caused by the discordant reign of Saul?

***For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD (Is. 55:8).*** While we can be assured that God does not make mistakes (Ps. 145:17), we are

not meant to always understand ‘why’ He allows circumstances to unfold as they do. The death of Samuel was a tragedy to many, and ***all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him***, but it occurred within the scope of God’s will. ***And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose*** (Rom. 8:28). Samuel was gone, but the Lord still provided for David.

We will never understand why a young child succumbs to cancer or why otherwise healthy individuals are taken by accidents or acts of violence. Conversely, we may have a hard time understanding why some are left in this world to linger into extreme old age, having already lost their ability to think and reason. In these instances, we can see all sorts of human reasons for the Lord to intervene. Yet, in both the permissive and the perfect will of God, His reasoning supersedes our own. Instead of wasting our time asking ‘why’—a question without any earthly answer—let us instead open our hearts to the blessings that He brings forth from the pain. God is in control; we must, therefore, be content.

***In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind*** (Job 12:10).

**Thought for the Day:** *It is a disservice to ourselves to consider the dead as being taken from us. How can we claim to have more of a right to someone than God?*

**Christ Revealed:** By Abigail’s efforts to make peace between David and Nabal (I Sam. 25:21-28). ***God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself*** (II Cor. 5:19).

**Word Studies:** 25:3 **churlish** = harsh, cruel, rude; 25:14 **railed on** = insulted; 25:15 **were conversant with** = associated with; 25:21 **required** = returned, repaid; 25:27 **blessing** = gift; 25:28 **a sure house** = a lasting dynasty; 25:29 **bound in the bundle of life** = safe in the care of the Lord; 26:5 **in the trench** = inside the barricade.

**Pray for Staff:** Tiffany Parisi • **Country:** Jordan (6,482,081) in Southwestern Asia • Major Languages: Arabic, English • Religious tolerance • 92% Muslim (Sunni); 6% Christian; 2% Other (Shia/Druze) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Offering praise and thanks to God is a sacrifice pleasing to Him (Heb. 13:15).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 10

***Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the LORD hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand. For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike (I Sam. 30:23-24).***

David had amassed quite a following while in exile. His initial band was made up of misfits and malcontents with nowhere else to turn (I Sam. 22:2), but it soon expanded to include trained fighting men who had become dissatisfied with the leadership of Saul (I Chr. 12:1-40). Eventually, every tribe in Israel was represented in the army of David. By the time of Saul's last, fatal run-in with the Philistines, the men under David's command numbered at minimum 600 (I Sam. 30:9).

Exile with David had proven profitable for these men. From their new home in Ziklag, they successfully launched raids on the Geshurites, Gezrites, and the Amalekites (27:8-9). They used the spoils and provisions gained in these raids to provide for their families and make a comfortable life for themselves, far out of the reach of Saul. When it became apparent that battle between the Philistines and the armies of Saul was imminent, this quiet, comfortable life was threatened. They had no desire to go to war against their fellow Israelites, but they stood to lose everything if they refused to fight. In the end, they did not have to choose. The Lord rewarded David's faithfulness and trust by having them sent away from the battle (29:6-11).

Their joy at having been spared from the frontlines of the battle with Saul turned quickly to anguish when they arrived back home and discovered that the city had been raided in their absence and that all of their families had been taken captive. As one man, they turned to pursue the Amalekite raiders, but the prolonged chase soon caused the differences in the ages, training, and conditioning of David's mixed band to be readily apparent. At the brook of Besor, 200 of his men succumbed to exhaustion and were left behind to guard the camp (30:9-10).

David's men were victorious over the Amalekites. They re-

trieved every captive alive and unharmed, and they also stripped their enemies of everything of value, resulting in a large quantity of plunder. Those who fought the actual battle felt entitled to the spoils. They looked down on their fellow countrymen who had stayed behind. David, however, viewed things differently: ***as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike.***

Contrary to frequent misinterpretations, this verse is not meant to be a ringing endorsement of socialism. While Scripture does indeed teach us that God expects us to share what we have with those in need, that is also not the lesson that is being imparted here. Today's lesson is meant to underscore the importance of teamwork.

David viewed his fighting men as a cohesive unit. Each individual member was highly valued and necessary for the well-being of the whole. Consequently, he believed that all should share in the victories, just as all would shoulder the responsibility for defeat. Centuries later, the Apostle Paul applied this same principle to those who had joined to form the body of Christ (the Church). What was true then is still true today. Together, we serve the Lord. Together, we receive His blessings.

***And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it*** (1 Cor. 12:26).

**Thought for the Day:** *If the soul is truly willing, though the body is weak, God is no less satisfied.*

**Christ Revealed:** Through the Urim (1 Sam. 28:6), which was used to determine the will of God. Today Christ speaks to us through His Spirit and when we read His Word. (Heb. 1:1-2). (John 16:13).

**Word Studies:** 28:2 **keeper of mine head** = permanent captain of my bodyguard; 28:7 **familiar spirit** = demonic spirit that works through a medium, spiritualist, witch, or fortune-teller (Lev. 19:31; 20:6,27; Deut. 18:9-12); 28:14 **mantle** = robe.

**Pray for Staff:** Gilbert Palafox • **Country:** Kazakhstan (17,736,896) Central Asia • Major Languages: Kazakh, Russian • Religious tolerance • 70.2% Muslim; 23.9% Russian Orthodox; 2.3% Other Christian; 0.1% Buddhist; 0.2% Other; 2.8% Atheist; 0.5% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask the Lord to work in your life in whatever way pleases Him (Heb. 13:21).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 11

***But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim; And made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel. Ish-bosheth Saul's son was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David. And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months (II Sam. 2:8-11).***

Saul was dead. David grieved the man whom he had once loved as a father and revered as God's anointed king, but he also must have been filled with unimaginable joy. At the direction of God, he was going home! ***And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the Lord said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron (II Sam. 2:1).*** David had spent nearly a decade running for his life, and now, suddenly, that curse had been taken from him. Not only that, but his tribe had accepted him as Saul's successor. In practically the same breath, he went from fugitive to king. It was a lot to take in. ***And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, That the men of Jabesh-gilead were they that buried Saul (2:4).***

David was crowned king over the tribe of Judah almost immediately following the death of Saul, but things progressed less smoothly for the remainder of the Israelites. There was a five-year gap between Saul's death in the battle with the Philistines and the time when ***Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim; And made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel.*** Directly after the battle, Ish-bosheth assumed leadership over an internally divided and battle-weary Israel. The deaths of his elder brothers alongside his father in battle had ensured his position as Saul's heir, but he ascended to the throne through the machinations of man, not



the blessings of God. As time went on, this fact grew increasingly apparent. ***Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker*** (3:1).

Civil war had come to Israel, and the reality was brutal. Already weakened from a prolonged campaign to subdue the Philistines, Ish-bosheth's army met defeat at every turn. ***And there was a very sore battle that day; and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David*** (2:17). The men who were loyal to Saul's son fought for king and country; David's men fought for the man God had chosen to lead. The fighting for territory would continue for the entirety of Ish-bosheth's reign, but David remained patient and unhurried. He knew that the throne of Israel was God's to fill, and he would not take it by force.

***When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power*** (Acts 1:6-7).

**Thought for the Day:** *We observe and abide by God's will, not with patience, but with faith.*

**Christ Revealed:** In David's sorrowful poem (II Sam. 1:17-27). He did not dwell upon all his years of suffering at the hand of Saul but dwelt only upon the pleasant things.

**Word Studies:** 1:2 **did obeisance** = bowed in honor; 1:9 **anguish** = extreme pain; 1:18 **use of the bow** = song of the bow; 2:6 **requite** = repay; 2:14 **play before us** = hold a contest as to which side has the best soldiers.

**Pray for Country:** Kenya (44,037,656) in Eastern Africa • Major Languages: English, Swahili • Religious Freedom • 47.4% Protestant; 23.3% Roman Catholic; 11.8% Other Christian; 11.1% Muslim; 1.6% Traditionalists; 1.7% Other; 2.4% None; 0.7% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask the Lord for wisdom as you read His Word, and it will be given to you (James 1:5).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 12

***Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed My people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel. So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel (II Sam. 5:1-3).***

***Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah (I Sam. 16:13).*** David had been anointed by Samuel and received the ***Spirit of the LORD*** as a youth barely in his teens. God had great plans for David, and it must have looked to David as if He intended to speedily bring those plans to fruition. After being led by the Spirit to slay the giant Goliath (17:48-51), David had been assimilated into the king's household. Under Saul's tutelage, David had grown to become a skillful warrior (18:5), and in his house, he had found acceptance, friendship, and love (18:1-4,20). The Lord's blessings had seemed endless, and David had been content.

Seemingly in a blink, all of that changed. Saul's fatherly love first gave way to jealousy (18:7-8,29) and then to murderous hatred (19:10). David, unwilling to raise his hand against God's anointed, lawful king (24:6), was forced to flee for his life (20:1-42). Where once he had been captain over thousands of the king's troops, now he led the disenfranchised and the destitute (22:1-2), men with no power and an uncertain future. He who had lived in the luxury of the king's house now hid in dank caves, exiled from the land of promise. Yet through all of this, David never questioned God. His faith remained stronger than his fear, and he held fast to the promise he had received when he had been little more than a child.

David's patient acceptance can be understood only by first understanding the nature of his relationship with God. When God came to David, He did not anoint a king. He called a ser-

vant, and David answered that call. Consequently, David was able to stand patiently through every pleasure or trial that life threw at him. His life was no longer his own, and he trusted in the power of the Lord to whom that life had been willingly given.

Twenty-five years after his initial encounter with Samuel, God's plan for David was recognized by all the tribes of Israel. They gathered at Hebron and ***anointed David king over Israel*** in the perfect time of God's choosing. They did not come to David because of his military might, nor did they choose him by lots, as they believed they had chosen Saul. Instead, they reminded him of the charge God had given him so long ago: ***And the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed My people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel.*** Israel had experienced having a king like other nations (8:19-20), and it had nearly destroyed her. Now her citizens turned to David—striving, through him, to return to God, the One true King.

***And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS*** (Rev. 19:16).

**Thought for the Day:** *One can never be stripped of God. We can choose to disregard Him, but we can never make Him go away.*

**Christ Portrayed:** By David, the anointed ***king over Israel*** (II Sam. 5:3). Christ is the Lord's anointed. "Christ" is Greek for the Hebrew word ***Messiah*** (Anointed One) (Ps. 2:2; John 1:41).

**Word Studies:** 3:1 **waxed** = grew; 3:10 **translate** = transfer; 3:12 **league** = covenant; 3:27 **smote** = stabbed; 3:31 **bier** = a stand for carrying a corpse; 4:2 **reckoned to** = considered part of; 5:8 **getteth up to the gutter** = enters the city through the water tunnel; 5:23 **fetch a compass** = circle around.

**Pray for Staff:** Jennifer Palafox, President Bible Pathway Ministries • **Government Officials:** Rep. Tim Walberg (MI), Rep. Chuy Garcia (IL) • **Country:** Kirabati (103,248) 3 Islands in Southwestern Pacific • Major Languages: Kiribati, English • Religious Freedom • 55% Roman Catholic; 36% Protestant; 3.1% Mormon; 2.2% Baha'i; 1.9% Seventh-Day Adventist; 1.8% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray with unwavering faith so that your prayers may be answered (James 1:5-7).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 13

***And David gat him a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of salt, being eighteen thousand men. And he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all they of Edom became David's servants. And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went. And David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people. (II Sam. 8:13-15).***

Chapter 8 of the Book of II Samuel offers us our first in-depth look at the extent of David's power and military might. Unlike the surrounding chapters, which provide insight into David's character and utter devotion to God, this chapter focuses on chronicling the military victories of Israel under the command of God's true anointed king.

***In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites (Gen. 15:18-21).*** God called David to be king over all of Israel, and David took that calling with the utmost seriousness. When he first ascended to the throne, much of the land which God had claimed was still under foreign control. Bit by bit, battle by battle, David worked to restore to Israel that which by right belonged to God. ***The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me (Lev. 25:23).***

***Now therefore so shalt thou say unto My servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel: And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither***

***shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime*** (II Sam. 7:8-10). It is important for us to remember when reading this chapter that David did not enter into these battles seeking personal gain or recognition. He was in no way attempting to glorify either himself or the nation of Israel; his entire focus was on following the directives of God. Because of this heartfelt obedience, ***the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.***

David's victories are recorded here to draw our attention to the faithfulness of God. They are here to remind us that with God, nothing is impossible, no matter how difficult or unlikely it may seem from a human standpoint. Finally, they are listed here to give us the courage to seek our own victories in Christ. David stood before the world, unashamed and with absolutely no doubt in his heart, and claimed the promises of God. God's power then flowed through him for all the world to see. ***And David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people*** (8:15).

***For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God*** (I John 5:4-5)?

**Thought for the Day:** *Biblical heroes are not those who accomplish great deeds; they are those who most clearly reflect the glory of God.*

**Christ Revealed:** By the Ark of the Covenant, which ***they . . . set . . . in the midst of the Tabernacle*** (II Sam. 6:17). The Ark contained the Ten Commandments, given to Moses (Deut. 10:1-5). Christ is the Living **Word** (John 1:1) and dwells within those of us who ***are the Temple of God*** (I Cor. 3:16) – ***Christ in you, the hope of glory*** (Col. 1:27).

**Word Studies:** 6:7 **error** = fault committed through negligence; 6:14 **linen ephod** = priestly, linen garment; 6:19 **dealt** = distributed; 6:21 **play** = celebrate, show my joy; 7:8 **sheepcote** = pastureland; 7:9 **cut off** = destroyed, eliminated.

**Pray for Bible Pathway Printer:** Pollock Printing, Nashville, TN • **Government Officials:** Rep. Jim Costa (CA), Sen. Robert P. Casey, Jr. (PA) • **Country:** Korea, North (24,720,407) Eastern Asia • **Major Language:** Korean • Government sponsored religious groups exist to provide illusion of religious freedom. Traditionally Buddhist & Confucianist some Christian and syncretic Chondogyo • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray in faith, without doubting (James 1:6).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 14

**W**herefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon (II Sam. 12:9).

Up until this point, we have read of David, the extraordinary man of God. Today, instead of learning more about that David, we are introduced to David, the adulterer and murderer. No matter how we felt about him going into today's reading, there is no way that we can minimize his actions. With arrogance reminiscent of Saul, King David sees what he wants (Bathsheba) and takes it. He is ruthless in his pursuit, and he doesn't hesitate to take any steps necessary to cover up his sin, up to and including orchestrating the cold-blooded murder of her husband, Uriah. Afterward, with seemingly no guilt whatsoever, David marries Bathsheba and settles down happily with his new wife and son.

The David we meet today is far removed from the young shepherd boy who fearlessly placed his entire trust in the Lord (I Sam. 17:45-47). This David seems to have totally forgotten the Commandments of God; his actions are self-ish and undertaken solely on the authority of the king. This David also bears little resemblance to the humble king of yesterday, the one that, above all else, desired to give back to God (II Sam. 7:1-3). Yet, however different they seem, the fact remains that all of these descriptions are of the same person. The David who loved and served God is the same David who murdered Uriah.

By including the grievous sins of David in His holy Word, God is allowing us to see the imperfect nature of mankind. Even the best and brightest among us can be laid low by a momentary slip. Loving God does not free us from temptation (James 1:14), nor does it guarantee that we will always make the right choices. However, truly loving God with all of our heart and soul (like David did) means that when we DO fall into sin, we have someone who will help us climb back out again. ***My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father,***

**Jesus Christ the righteous** (I John 2:1).

***Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin*** (Ps. 51:1-2). Of all of the lessons that we could learn from the life of King David, the lesson of learning to admit our faults before the Lord without explanations or excuses is perhaps the most valuable. When confronted with the magnitude of his sins, David genuinely repented. He acknowledged that God was his judge and that God's judgment was justified (51:4). Without reservation, he placed himself at the mercy of the Lord, realizing that only God could restore his broken spirit. ***Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me*** (51:10).

What David had done could not be undone. The earthly consequences of his actions would be numerous and far-reaching, and the course of his life and the lives of his descendants had been forever altered. Nevertheless, David was able to live out the rest of his life knowing that through the grace of God, his sin had been removed from him and his spirit had been restored.

***Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from Him cometh my salvation*** (Ps. 62:1).

**Thought for the Day:** *None of us are devoid of sin or immune to temptation, but by humbling ourselves and repenting before God, we can ensure that they do not bind us.*

**Christ Revealed:** In the prophet Nathan giving Solomon the name Jedidiah, which means beloved of the Lord (II Sam. 12:24-25).

**Word Studies:** 10:12 **play the men** = show our courage and strength; 11:1 **after the year was expired** = in the spring of the following year; 11:8 **mess of meat** = gift of food; 12:4 **spared** = refused; 12:11 **in the sight of this sun** = publicly for all Israel to know.

In Memory of Rita Guerra and Dorothy Stone • **Pray for Government Official:** Rep. David Valadao (CA) • **Country:** Korea, South (48,955,203 Eastern Asia • Major Languages: Korean, English • 24% Protestant; 7.6% Roman Catholic; 24.2 % Buddhist; 0.9% Other/Unknown; 43.3% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray for grace to overcome temptation, and God will reward you (James 1:12).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 15



***For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth He devise means, that His banished be not expelled from Him*** (II Sam. 14:14).

***And the soul of king David longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead*** (II Sam. 13:39). David loved his children fiercely. Amnon's rape of Tamar had enraged David (13: 21), but his sense of guilt and shame over his own sins had prevented him from taking any corrective action. Absalom's delayed revenge killing of Amnon had broken his father's heart. David openly mourned for his dead son, but privately, he was equally distraught over Absalom's flight and subsequent banishment. He longed to see his son again, but he was hampered by both the law of the land and his pride.

In a scene reminiscent of the way in which God had used the prophet Nathan to convict David of his sins concerning Bathsheba, Joab engaged a wise woman from Tekoah to appear before the king disguised as a widow in mourning. He carefully coached her on how to present the situation of Amnon and Absalom to David in the form of an anonymous parable so as to arouse David's compassion and mercy. The ploy worked, and the woman then followed up by challenging David to apply the same compassion and mercy to his own situation. ***And the woman said, Wherefore then hast thou thought such a thing against the people of God? for the king doth speak this thing as one which is faulty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished*** (14:13). She ended her plea by comparing David's hardened heart unfavorably to God's merciful one and reminding David that death was inevitable and would end all chance of reconciliation when it came.

Ultimately, David softened his stance and recalled his son Absalom to Jerusalem. ***And the king said unto Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again*** (14:21). ***And the king said, Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the***

**king's face** (14:24). He made the choice to spare his son's life, but he was unwilling to go any further. He did not offer Absalom forgiveness in the nature of God but merely a pardon after the fashion of kings. This choice, as with many others in David's life, would prove to have far-reaching consequences.

Was David right to pardon Absalom? This is a question that we are not equipped to answer, and neither was David. God could have shown him the way, but instead of seeking out the Lord's guidance, he allowed his actions to be directed by the opinions of man. He then compounded that mistake by offering Absalom official 'mercy' without any sort of Godly reconciliation or forgiveness.

David was not a stranger to God's correction, mercy, or forgiveness. He also had proven in his dealings with others that he understood how to let God work through him to offer correction, mercy, and forgiveness to others. Yet when it came to his children, that ability seemingly disappeared. He ruled the kingdom under the command of God, but he attempted to parent alone. In this, he failed.

***I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing*** (John 15:5).

**Thought for the Day:** *For all our pride, we can never truly take a matter "into our own hands." It is either in God's hands or subject to the way of the world.*

**Christ Revealed:** Through David's restoration of Absalom (II Sam. 14:33). If an earthly father's compassion reconciles him to his estranged son, how much more will our loving Heavenly Father reconcile us to Himself when we confess our sins. ***God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing*** (counting, crediting) ***their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the Word of reconciliation*** (II Cor. 5:19).

**Word Studies:** 13:4 **lean** = depressed, looking so wretched; 13:5 **make thyself sick** = pretend to be sick; 14:2 **feign** = pretend; 14:4 **did obeisance** = showed reverence, honor.

**Pray for Staff:** Gilbert Palafox • **Government Officials:** Rep. Colin Allred (TX) • **Country:** Kosovo (1,847,708) in Southeastern Europe • **Major Languages:** Albanian, Serbian, Bosnian, Turkish, Roma • **Religious Freedom** • Muslim, Serbian Orthodox, Roman Catholic • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask the Lord to enable you to endure temptation (James 1:12).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 16

***And lo Zadok also, and all the Levites were with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God: and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city. And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me again, and shew me both it, and His habitation: But if He thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him (II Sam. 15:24-26).***

David was little more than a boy still in his father's house when God anointed him as Saul's successor, but he patiently waited decades before God saw fit to install him on the throne of Israel. Although David had the military might as well as the support of the people (I Sam. 18:5-7), he never once considered taking the kingdom from Saul by force. ***Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my LORD; for he is the LORD's anointed (I Sam. 24:10).*** David trusted wholly in the judgment of God, and he was content to wait for Him to work His will. ***And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will (Acts 13:22).***

David's patience was not a trait that Absalom, his son, had inherited. The death of Amnon had elevated Absalom to the position of heir apparent to David's throne, and Absalom was not inclined to wait for his inheritance. After spending three years in exile in Syria (I Sam. 13:8-38), he returned to Israel with a rebellious heart and a mutinous spirit (15:1-6). Where David had been directed by the Spirit of God, Absalom was moved only by a sense of entitlement. He had no respect for his father or his father's God, even going so far as to cloak his plan by claiming he needed to travel to Hebron to fulfill a vow to the Lord. Once there, he declared himself king and openly challenged his father's right to rule over Israel (15:10-13).

The David who was forced to face his son's betrayal was older and had much more worldly experience than the boy who had fled before Saul. This David had known the corruption of absolute power; he had been nearly broken by the weight of his own sin only to have been cleansed and renewed by God's magnificent grace (Ps. 51). Yet despite the change in circumstance, one thing about David had remained constant. His life belonged to God, and his trust in Him was complete. ***If I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me again, and shew me both it, and His habitation: But if He thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him.*** When David left Jerusalem ahead of his son's advancing troops, his heart was broken (II Sam. 15:30), but his faith was intact. No matter what happened next, he was confident that God's will would prevail.

***And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done*** (Luke 22:41-42).

**Thought for the Day:** *Walking God's path with impatience is never virtuous or proactive, and the destination reached by following such an impulse is never desired.*

**Christ Portrayed:** By David, as he rebuked his followers when they wanted to execute his enemies (II Sam. 16:10-11; compare I Sam. 26:8-9). When Jesus' disciples wanted to do the same, He rebuked them, saying: ***Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them*** (Luke 9:54-56).

**Word Studies:** 15:27 **seer** = prophet of God who has discernment (I Sam. 9:9); 15:28 **certify** = inform; 16:5 **cursed still** = shouted curses continuously.

**Pray for Staff:** Judy McCrary • **Country:** Kuwait (2,695,316) in the North-eastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula • Major Languages: Arabic, English • Some Religious Freedom • 85% Muslim; 15% Christian & Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray that you will obey the Word of God and not be just a deceived hearer (James 1:22).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 17

***And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father*** (II Sam. 17:23).

One of the interesting things we discover while reading the Word of God is how convoluted and far-spread the consequences of a single action can be. Even after a sinful action has been atoned for with God, the worldly ripple effects can still be seen and felt, sometimes for generations to come. Such is the case with David's original dalliance with Bathsheba. ***And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and inquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bath-sheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house*** (II Sam. 11:2-4). We have already discussed how David's sons were influenced by his immoral behavior and how his guilt over his sin adversely affected his parenting. In today's reading, we are shown yet another way that this seemingly private and personal sin sowed far-reaching seeds of destruction.

Ahithophel was an exceedingly wise man who had served David faithfully for many years. ***And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom*** (17:23). We know very little about the personal life of this trusted advisor, but we are given basic genealogical facts, Ahithophel was the father of Eliam (23:24), and Eliam was the father of Bathsheba. Bath-sheba, the woman whom David had taken in a fit of carnal lust and whose life had forever been changed as a result. Knowing this, Ahithophel's betrayal of David suddenly becomes a lot easier for us to understand.

Absalom had waited for the perfect opportunity before taking his revenge on Amnon for the rape of Tamar. As he waited, he had stored up bitterness in his heart. Here, we find that Ahithophel had likely done much the same thing regarding the hurt that had been done to his granddaughter. His advice to Absalom was razor-sharp and viciously on point. From instructing the prince to claim his father's concubines (16:20-22) to devising a sound and crafty plan that would have allowed Ahithophel himself to personally slay David with a minimum of extemporaneous bloodshed (17:1-3), it is evident that Ahithophel wanted above all else to see David humiliated and dead. His bitterness had consumed him, and he was single-minded in his purpose.

Ahithophel's suicide offers us one last sad look at what can happen to a life that has been consumed by bitterness and hatred. In attempting to destroy David, Ahithophel had destroyed himself.

***But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes*** (1 John 2:11).

**Thought for the Day:** *When we live only for ourselves and our passions, we will inevitably arrive at a dead end in a direction God would not have intended for us to go.*

**Christ Revealed:** Through Mahanaim, a city of refuge where David went when he was fleeing from Absalom (Josh. 21:38; II Sam. 17:27). Christ is our Refuge. ***We . . . have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the Hope set before us . . . even Jesus*** (Heb. 6:18,20).

**Word Studies:** 17:8 **chafed** = angered; 17:17 **wench** = maidservant; 17:25 **host** = army; 18:3 **succour us out of the city** = remain in the city and assist by providing reinforcements; 18:9 **taken up** = left hanging, suspended.

**Pray for Government Official:** Rep. Guy Resbenthaler (PA), Gov. Greg Gianforte (MT) • **Country:** Kyrgyzstan (5,548,042) Eastern Central Asia • Major Languages: Kirghiz, Russian, Uzbek • Religious Freedom • 75% Muslim; 20% Russian Orthodox; 5% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Draw near to God in prayer with a clean and pure heart (James 4:8).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 18

***And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace (II Sam. 19:24).***

Long before David became king, He had sworn an oath with Jonathon, son of Saul: ***And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not: But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth*** (I Sam. 20:14-15). Jonathon had perished in the same battle as his father, but David never forgot his promise. After restoring peace to the nation, David sought to discover if any of Jonathon's family still lived. ***Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant! And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually*** (II Sam. 9:6-7). Mephibosheth was physically disabled, but that didn't dissuade David from restoring all of his familial land to him and ensuring that he had servants enough to work the land (9:10-11).

When David fled from Jerusalem ahead of Absalom's approaching troops, he was shocked to discover that Mephibosheth had stayed behind in the city. ***And the king said, And where is thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father*** (16:3). The apparent rejection from Jonathon's son had been difficult for David to accept, and his confusion had only deepened when, upon returning to the city, he was met by an obviously distressed Mephibosheth.

The younger man approached David humbly, in shame and grief. He explained how he had been hampered by his disability and betrayed by a greedy servant. Mephibosheth said he had been forced to watch Absalom's grab for power without interfer-



ing, but he swore that his thoughts had never strayed far from David, his king. He presented himself as a man in mourning ***and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace.***

David was moved by the remorse he saw on the face of the man he had treated as a son. Although he had no way to determine the truth of the matter, David chose to act with compassion and once again honored his promise to Jonathon by restoring a portion of the family lands to his son. For his part, Mephibosheth appeared unconcerned about the dispensation of his lands. His joy was found in once again being in the presence of the king.

When we find ourselves distanced from God, whether through our own deliberate sin or because we have become caught in the wake of the sins of others, what do we crave the most? Do we seek to rejoin the world? Are we concerned with having our lives returned to ‘normal,’ or do we wish, first and foremost, to regain the peace brought about by the presence of God?

***Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost*** (Rom. 15:13).

**Thought for the Day:** *God’s truth is the one constant in a world of deceit; with it, we can never truly be fooled.*

**Christ Portrayed:** By David, who wished to be invited back as king (II Sam. 19:11). Our Lord Jesus wants to be invited into the hearts of all mankind. He comes in only by our invitation. ***Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him*** (enjoy sweet fellowship together), ***and he with Me*** (Rev. 3:20).

**Word Studies:** 19:14 **bowed** = swayed; 20:3 **ward** = guarded house; 20:18 **were wont to speak** = used to say.

**Pray for Staff:** Kevin Jennings • **Government Officials:** Sen. Ron Johnson, (WI), Rep. Bob Latta (OH), Rep. Gwen Moore (WI) • **Country:** Laos (6,695,166) in Southeast Asia • **Major Languages:** Lao, French, English • **Great suppression of all Christian activities** • 67% Buddhist; 1.5% Christian; 31.5% Other/Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up (James 4:10).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 19

***And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; The God of my rock; in Him will I trust: He is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my Saviour; Thou savest me from violence. I will call on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies*** (II Sam. 22:2-4).

We live in an ever-changing world, ensconced in a society built by mankind on a foundation of shifting sand. Moral codes are fluid—formed from popular opinion and changing from generation to generation. Right and wrong are nebulous concepts with no clear definition, determined primarily by the wants and needs of those in control at any given time. This has been the way of the world since the very beginning when Eve first yielded to temptation and sin entered into God's creation. ***And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat*** (Gen. 3:4-6). With the first taste of the forbidden fruit, humanity traded its innocence for the illusion of independent self-reliance.

Now an old man, David had seen first-hand the destruction wrought by that illusion. He had witnessed the rise, fall, and ultimate ignoble death of Saul, a man whom he'd loved as a father and honored as God's anointed king. He himself had abused the power of his kingship to indulge in adultery with another man's wife, then turned to murder in an attempt to cover up his sin. He'd watched as his two oldest sons fell prey to their own lusts and ambitions, resulting in the rape of his daughter and the deaths of both sons. David understood better than most that independence was an illusion and self-reliance was just another word for self-destruction. But as he looked back over his life, he didn't linger on the pain or the hard times. He didn't bemoan the evilness of the world, waste time chastising

himself for his missteps, or analyze what he could have done differently. Instead, he counted his blessings and gave thanks to God for His steadfast presence and boundless love.

David understood the greatest truth of all. When one is anchored to the solid foundation of God, the storms of the world lose their power. God is our **rock**, our **deliverer**, our **refuge**, and our **Saviour**. He will guide, correct, instruct, and mold us. He will shelter, carry, support, and deliver us. And He will save us—from our enemies, but most importantly, from ourselves.

***Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it*** (Matt. 7:24-27).

**Thought for the Day:** *Mankind's nature is self-destructive. We require the influence and guidance of God to thrive.*

**Christ Portrayed:** As the One we call upon for salvation (II Sam. 22:4). ***Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*** (Acts 4:12).

**Word Studies:** 21:5 **coasts** = boundaries, territories; 22:3 **horn of my salvation** = saving strength; 22:6 **prevented** = confronted; 22:19 **stay** = support; 22:27 **froward** = perverse; **unsavoury** = astute, cunning; 22:31 **buckler** = defender; 22:46 **close places** = strongholds.

**Pray for Country:** Latvia (2,178,443) Eastern coast of Baltic Sea in North-eastern Europe • Major Languages: Latvian, Russian • Religious Freedom • 19.6% Lutheran; 15.3% Orthodox; 1% Other Christian; 0.4% Other; 63.7% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray when you are afflicted and suffering (James 5:13).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 20

***And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me a drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem, which is by the gate! And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Beth-lehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD. And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men*** (II Sam. 23:15-17).

***And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth*** (I Sam. 17:49). One stone. One small stone let fly from a slingshot transformed an unknown shepherd boy into a national hero (18:5-7). From that point onward, throughout his long service to God, David was a mighty man of war (I Chr. 28:3) whose very presence commanded the respect of those around him (I Sam. 22:1-2).

Yet despite all of this, David was a humble man. He knew God was the author of all his victories and the source of all his strength. ***Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who am I, O LORD God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto*** (II Sam. 7:18)? Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all (I Chr. 29:11). David did not take the loyalty of the men under his command for granted; he accepted their service in God's name, understanding that it was to Him that their loyalty truly belonged.

Scripture does not clarify a timeline for the vignette of loyalty in today's reading. Perhaps it occurred early on when David was on the run from Saul and first sought refuge in the cave of Adullam. Or it could have been later during one of his various battles after he'd assumed the role of king of all Israel. What-

ever the time frame, a weary David made a wistful comment of longing for a remembered comfort of his youth. ***Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem.*** His words were in no way a request or a command, but the three mighty men who overheard them immediately acted to fulfill his desire. They acted out of love and loyalty to a man they respected above all others; the desire to see his needs met meant more to them than their own lives. When they returned with the water from the Bethlehem well, David recognized it for the gift that it was. Rather than accepting it as his due or chastising them for their reckless behavior, David forwarded their gift to the only One worthy of their heartfelt loyalty and sacrifice. Through their selfless love of David, they illuminated the glory of God.

***And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me*** (Matt. 25:40).

**Thought for the Day:** *It is wrong to take God's gifts for granted, but the greatest danger to our faith comes from taking credit for these gifts ourselves.*

**Christ Revealed:** Through the silver which David used to purchase ***the threshingfloor*** upon which he ***built . . . an altar unto the LORD*** (II Sam. 24:24-25).

**Word Studies:** 23:10 **clave** = clung; **spoil** = plunder, loot; 23:13 **chief** = foremost, captains; 23:14 **hold** = stronghold, fortification; 24:10 **heart smote him** = heart bothered him; 24:14 **a great strait** = great distress, difficulty; 24:16 **stay now thine hand** = do no more.

**Pray for Staff:** Ryan McCrary • **Country:** Lebanon (4,131,583) in the Middle East • Major Languages: Arabic, French, English, Armenian • Limited religious freedom • 59.7% Muslim; 39% Christian; 1.3% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Intercede fervently in prayer for others (James 5:16).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 21

***Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so? and he also was a very goodly man; and his mother bare him after Absalom. And he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they following Adonijah helped him (I Kings 1:5-7).***

The Books of I and II Samuel covered a relatively brief period of time, taking us from the birth of Samuel through the reigns of both Saul and David, a time span of approximately 130 years. The Books of I and II Kings cover over four centuries. I Kings opens with David's death and Solomon's briefly contested ascension to the throne, and II Kings closes with the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple, just as Moses had foretold prior to the original settlement of the Promised Land (Deut. 28:52). In between these two events, they outline the overall spiritual decline of God's chosen people and the kings that led them. This decline came about gradually, so gradually, in fact, that most people were unaware that it was happening. There were many different reasons for this, and over the course of our studies, we will examine them all. One of the more overlooked reasons is presented here in the opening chapter of I Kings. ***And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?***

Time after time throughout the Scripture, the Lord has reminded us of the importance of hands-on, practical, godly parenting (Deut. 6:6-9; Eph. 6:4; Prov. 19:18-19; 22:6; 29:15; Heb. 12:7-11), but as with many of His most important lessons, this one has been regularly disregarded. David offers us a prime example of this. The busy king left the day-to-day raising of his sons to others, offering neither discipline nor guidance and allowing his children to grow up undertrained and overindulged.

Adonijah, the fourth-born son of David, provides us with a perfect illustration of the amount of spiritual decay that can happen within a single generation when God is ignored. Although David was a man after God's own heart (I Sam. 13:14), he did

nothing to ensure that his children were raised in the ways of the Lord. Adonijah treated God's name as little more than a 'buzzword.' He considered the worship of God as a necessary public display in his quest for power (1 Kings 1:25). He largely dismissed God's chosen successor for David's throne (Solomon) because he didn't believe in the power of the Lord. He viewed his father as a self-made man who had now reached the end of his days, and he had every intention of following in (what he perceived as) David's footsteps. ***Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king.***

From that point to this, little has changed. Many otherwise Godly parents still allow themselves to get so wrapped up in their service to the Lord that they forget their responsibility to guide their children onto their own righteous paths. Consequently, the children are left to form their own attitudes and opinions about the lives that they watch their parents lead. Without the discernment provided by a personal relationship with God, the children frequently confuse God's blessings with worldly entitlement, thus setting themselves up for a lifetime of vain pursuits, personal strife, and ultimate failure, which they, in turn, will pass on to the next generation.

***Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it*** (Prov. 22:6).

**Thought for the Day:** *God's guidance is needed to lead us to salvation, just as our guidance is needed to lead our children to Him.*

**Christ Revealed:** By the oil used to anoint Solomon (1 Kings 1:39). Oil, symbolic of the Holy Spirit, was poured out upon those chosen for special service. Jesus is the Anointed One of God: ***God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good*** (Acts 10:38).

**Word Studies:** 1:2 **cherish** = be of service as his nurse; 1:6 **not displeased** = never rebuked or corrected; 2:6 **hoar head . . . peace** = die of old age in peace; 2:17 **say thee nay** = refuse your request.

**Pray for Country:** Lesotho (1,936,181) within the East-central part of the Republic of South Africa • Major Languages: Sesotho, English, Zulu, Xhosa • Limited religious freedom • 80% Christian; 20% Indigenous Beliefs • **Prayer Suggestion:** Remember that prayer changes things (James 5:16-18).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 22



***And the king said unto him, Do as he hath said, and fall upon him, and bury him; that thou mayest take away the innocent blood, which Joab shed, from me, and from the house of my father. And the LORD shall return his blood upon his own head, who fell upon two men more righteous and better than he, and slew them with the sword, my father David not knowing thereof, to wit, Abner the son of Ner, captain of the host of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, captain of the host of Judah. Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab, and upon the head of his seed for ever: but upon David, and upon his seed, and upon his house, and upon his throne, shall there be peace for ever from the LORD (I Kings 2:31-33). So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; which went out, and fell upon him, that he died. And the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon (I Kings 2:46).***

Saul, the first king of Israel, spent his entire reign attempting to establish Israel's place amongst the neighboring kingdoms. From the moment he took his place on the inaugural throne, his was a kingdom of perpetual war. Saul was a man with something to prove. In the end, he died as he had lived, embracing endless battle and relying solely on his own strength to carry him through. ***So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armourbearer, and all his men, that same day together*** (I Sam. 31:6).

David's tenure as king was no less violent than Saul's, but it was much more productive. David's battles were waged for the glory of God, and God's might determined the outcome. David went into battle, not as king, but as God's humble servant. Any nation foolish enough to rise up against the Lord was summarily put down, and one by one, God's enemies learned to respect the borders of the land of Israel (II Sam. 8:1-14). ***And David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people*** (8:15).

Solomon ascended to the throne of a strong, secure world power. ***And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border***

**of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life** (I Kings 4:21). He had no reason to fear outside trouble, so guided and bolstered by David's specific charge, **And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself** (2:3), Solomon took stock of the inner workings of his nation. He identified the trouble spots and then quickly and efficiently eliminated them. Solomon earnestly desired to **keep the charge of the LORD**, and those who dealt in deceit, trickery, and betrayal had no part in that charge.

When we first enter into the body of Christ, we frequently come with worldly baggage in tow. Cutting ties to our old way of life can be difficult and (often) painful, but it is an essential step to establishing stability in our new life in Christ. By naming, facing, and 'slaying' (removing) our temptations, we clear our path to **walk in His ways** and **keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies**.

**Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice** (Eph. 4:21).

**Thought for the Day:** *In practice, the leadership of God's community is no different from any other task He appoints us; to accomplish the task, we must keep all eyes firmly on the Lord.*

**Christ Portrayed:** Through the wisdom which God gave Solomon (I Kings 3:12). **That no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord** (I Cor. 1:29-31).

**Word Studies:** 2:44 **is privy to** = knowingly did; 3:1 **made affinity** = made an alliance by marriage; 3:19 **overlaid it** = laid on him; 3:26 **her bowels yearned** = she had motherly compassion; 4:6 **tribute** = forced labor.

**Pray for Staff:** Gilbert Palafox • **Country:** Liberia (3,989,703) in West Africa • Major Languages: English and more than 20 local languages of the Niger-Congo language group • Religious Freedom • 85.6% Christian; 12.2% Muslim; 0.6% Traditional; 0.2% Other; 1.4% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Be grateful for your inheritance as a child of the King (I Pet. 1:3-4).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 23

***And king Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. He was a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass: and he was filled with wisdom, and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass. And he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work (I Kings 7:13-14).***

***Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for My name; and he shall be My son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever.*** (I Chr. 22:9-10). When God chose Solomon to succeed David as king of Israel and build the Temple of the Lord, he hadn't even been conceived. God made His proclamation before David gave in to lust and took another man's wife (II Sam. 11:2-4). Before David compounded his sin by attempting to cover it with murder (11:15-17). Before David repented (12:13), and before all the ugly consequences of the sin became manifest. God knew the horror that was to come from David's exercise of free will, but He also knew the good that He would bring from it. ***And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*** (Rom. 8:28).

Although we know considerably less about the life of ***Hiram out of Tyre*** and his parents, it is just as easy to find evidence of God's hand in his life. Hiram was also the child of a union rooted outside God's will. Tyre was a pagan city-state on the outer border of Canaan, located in the land God granted to the tribe of Asher for their inheritance (Josh. 19:29-31), and God had forbidden the Israelites to intermarry with Canaanites (Deut. 7:3). Hiram's mother was an Israelite from the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre. We know nothing of the circumstances surrounding their marriage, nor do we know what led to Hiram's mother being widowed, but in Hiram, we see the good that God chose to bring about from those circumstances.

Just as was Solomon, Hiram was born with a God-appointed

purpose (though, as is the case with most of us, that purpose was likely unannounced and known only to God). God blessed him ***with wisdom, and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass***, and Hiram used those blessings to their fullest extent to bring glory to God. ***And he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work. And Hiram made the lavers, and the shovels, and the basons. So Hiram made an end of doing all the work that he made king Solomon for the house of the LORD*** (I Kings 7:40).

Our worth is not determined by the circumstances into which we are born but rather by our acceptance of the path that God has set before us. He has equipped each of us with a unique set of gifts so that we might traverse that path and bring glory to His name. In doing so, we will fulfill our purpose and discover our worth.

***If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen*** (I Pet. 4:11).

**Thought for the Day:** *It should come as no surprise that times of tribulation occur more frequently as we stray further from God.*

**Christ Revealed:** Through ***the Temple*** (I Kings 6). Christ is the true ***Temple*** (John 2:21). Through Christ all believers have access to God (Rom. 5:12-21). ***Through Him we . . . have access by one Spirit unto the Father*** (Eph. 2:18).

**Word Studies:** 5:3 ***under the soles of his feet*** = under his control; 5:4 ***evil occurrent*** = evil happening; 5:13 ***levy*** = forced labor; 6:2 ***cubit*** = about 18 inches; 6:5 ***oracle*** = Holy of Holies. ***Oracle in I Kings 8:8-9*** = inner sanctuary, location of the two tables of stone. God cannot be separated from His Word whether spoken or written; 6:38 ***month*** (of) ***Bul*** = October/November; 7:4 ***ranks*** = rows

**Pray for Staff:** Jennifer Palafox • **Country:** Libya (6,002,347) in North Africa • Major Languages: Arabic, Italian, English, Berber • No form of Christian witness to Libyans is permitted • 97% Muslim; 3% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Offer your gift of praise to God in prayer (I Pet. 2:5).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 24

***And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven. And he stood, and blessed all the congregation of Israel with a loud voice, saying, Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto His people Israel, according to all that He promised: there hath not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised by the hand of Moses His servant (I Kings 8:54-56).***

Chapters 6 and 7 of the Book of I Kings go into great detail on the building of the Temple of the Lord. It is easy to be overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the undertaking, and the finished product was surely an architectural masterpiece filled with museum-quality tapestries, wood, stone, and metal works. Yet, as Solomon stood before the people of Israel and offered prayers of dedication for the newly completed Temple, none of that mattered. They were not there to celebrate the work of man; they were there to rejoice over the glory of God.

***And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD (I Kings 8:10-11).*** Prior to that moment, the building had just been a building; it was the presence of God that transformed it into holy ground. Solomon's earnest prayer of dedication was also one of revelation. The people had desired a home for God. They had looked to the Temple as a place where He could be tucked away, safe and secure for when they needed to seek Him out. Solomon's words made clear the fallacy of that thinking. ***But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded (8:27)?***

God can never be controlled or contained. He is with us—always, whether we look to Him or not—because He loves us and chooses to be with us. The Temple of the Lord built by

Solomon was a beautiful, tangible tribute to God, just as are the many dedicated houses of worship that exist in the world of today, but neither it nor today's constructs are inherently holier than any other location. God is with us always, everywhere we go (Matt. 28:20). We are called to recognize and rejoice in His glory every day and every place, not just within the walls of a house of worship. ***Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul*** (Ps. 103:21-22). As we celebrate His glory, we reflect it outward for all the world to see. ***That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God, and that there is none else*** (I Kings 8:60).

***If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me*** (Ps. 139:8-10).

**Thought for the Day:** *The number of faithful neither diminishes nor bolsters God's power; even a small congregation can spread His message far and wide.*

**Christ Revealed:** As the perfect Temple of God before whom all kings of the earth one day must bow (I Kings 8:54; John 2:19-21). ***Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name*** (Phil. 2:9).

**Word Studies:** 8:2 **Ethanim** (later called Tishri) = September/October; 8:37 **blasting** = blight; 8:47 **bethink themselves** = learn their lesson and repent.

**Pray for Staff:** Judy McCrary • **Country:** Liechtenstein (37,009) in Western Europe • Major Languages: German, Alemannic dialect • Religious Freedom • 76.2% Roman Catholic; 7% Protestant; 10.6% Unknown; 6.2% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray that your life will be a good testimony to others, even when faced with opposition (I Pet. 2:12).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 25

***And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice*** (I Kings 10:6-9).

King Solomon had it all—wisdom, prosperity, and fame. His land was at peace. He had fulfilled his father’s dream to build a permanent Temple for the Lord. His subjects loved him and were happy and content with their lives. He was respected and revered the world over—the epitome of a gracious king. ***And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart*** (I Kings 10:24).

Solomon was blessed beyond measure, but somewhere along the way, he forgot from where all those blessings flowed, just as Moses had warned could happen. ***When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day*** (Deut. 8:10-11). ***And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth*** (8:17).

The sin of pride was Solomon’s downfall. Little by little, Solomon began to believe his own press. He forgot that he was expressing the wisdom of God and, instead, accepted the accolades of the people as no more than his due. He looked around him and saw his land, his people, and his accomplishments, and he swelled with personal pride. He then sought more, in direct contradiction to the command of God. ***Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set***



***king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold*** (Deut. 17:15-17).

In the eyes of the world, Solomon was the greatest king ever to live (I Kings 10:23). He accumulated great personal wealth (10:14), raised and kept a standing cavalry (10:26), and married multiple foreign wives (11:1). But in the eyes of God, Solomon was a foolish man who willfully threw his blessed life away. ***Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant*** (11:9-11). When Solomon turned his back to the light of God, he became lost in the dark.

***The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness*** (Matt. 6:22-23)!

**Thought for the Day:** *If we believe our success is due only to ourselves, then we will only rely on ourselves, and our nature will always be the first thing to betray us.*

**Christ Portrayed:** By David, who lived to please the Lord ***in integrity of heart*** (I Kings 9:4).

**Word Studies:** 9:13 **Cabul** = displeasing, as worthless; 9:15 **levy** = tax in the form of forced labor; 9:22 **bondmen** = slaves, forced laborers; 9:24 **Millo** = a mound of earth raised as a fortress just north of Mount Zion and outside the original city of David; 10:2 **train** = royal attendants.

**Pray for Country:** Lithuania (3,515,858) Eastern coast of Baltic Sea in Northeastern Europe • Major Languages: Lithuanian, Russian, Polish • Limited religious freedom • 79% Roman Catholic; 4.1% Russian Orthodox; 1.9% Protestant; 5.5% Other/Unspecified; 9.5% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Wives, pray for a quiet, loving spirit to win your husband to Christ (I Pet. 3:1-2).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 26

***After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places. And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth (I Kings 13:34).***

The united kingdom of Israel was no more. Solomon had turned from God, and God had forcefully responded. ***Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant*** (I Kings. 11:11). God chose Jeroboam, ***a mighty man of valor*** (11:28), to assume the throne of Israel over the ten northern tribes: Asher, Dan Ephraim, Gad, Issachar, Naphtali, Reuben, Simeon, and Zebulun. Meanwhile, the newly christened southern kingdom of Judah, formed by the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, remained loyal to the throne of David and rallied around King Rehoboam, son of Solomon.

Despite the ever-widening schism between countrymen, God had not abandoned either side. They were all still His people, living under His covenant in the land He had given to their ancestors. Rehoboam led his small nation bolstered by God's covenant with David (II Sam. 7:12-16). To Jeroboam, God had promised: ***And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in My ways, and do that is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as David My servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee*** (I Kings 11:28). All either king had to do to for their nation to prosper and grow was wholeheartedly follow the laws, commandments, and statutes of God and rule according to His will. One king or two, separate or united, if the children of Israel had hearkened to God, they would have been richly blessed.

Neither nation made any attempt to do so. Under the leadership of Rehoboam, ***Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and***

***they provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done. For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree*** (14:22-23). Meanwhile, in the northern kingdom of Israel, Jeroboam ordered the construction of two gold calves, set them before the people as representations of God, and ordered them to worship at the feet of his idols rather than journey to the temple in Jerusalem (12:28-33). To facilitate this, he ***made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places.***

If asked, both kings would likely have said they were adapting God's laws and statutes to fit their unique situation and that such compromises were necessary for the welfare of all and would keep God 'relevant' as they navigated their new normal. If that reasoning feels uncomfortably familiar, it should. It is the exact same reasoning offered today by politicians, church leadership, and many individual Christians to explain the necessity for reinterpreting the Word of God through the filter of the 'modern' world. It was a devil-inspired lie then, and it is a devil-inspired lie now.

***Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you*** (Deut. 4:2).

**Thought for the Day:** *Trading tradition for convenience is a purposeful act of distancing ourselves from God.*

**Christ Portrayed:** Through ***Shemaiah***, who spoke for the Lord (I Kings 12:22). Jesus spoke only what the Father told Him: ***I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a Commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak*** (John 12:49).

**Word Studies:** 12:14 **scorpions** = scourges with sharp points; 12:32 **high places** = pagan shrines; 13:6 **Intreat** = Plead in prayer; 13:32 **cried** = shouted, declared.

**Pray for Staff:** Kevin Jennings • **Country:** Luxembourg (514,862) in Western Europe • Major Languages: Luxembourgish, German • Religious Freedom • 87% Roman Catholic; 13% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Husbands, give honor to your wives, or else your prayers will be obstructed (I Pet. 3:7).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 27

***And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did David his father. And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol, and burnt it by the brook Kidron. But the high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa's heart was perfect with the LORD all his days*** (I Kings 15:11-14).

***Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD... Asa's heart was perfect with the LORD all his days.*** As children of God and members of the body of Christ, can we think of a more desirable epitaph? Despite having been raised by a morally ambivalent father and an idolatrous mother (biological grandmother), Asa loved God after the fashion of King David and modeled his leadership of Judah after David's charge to Solomon: ***And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself*** (I Kings 2:3). Asa spent his entire life loving God and endeavoring to live within His will.

From the life of King Asa, we can learn many things. He modeled for us the importance of placing God number one on our priority list, over all others, even family (15:13). He demonstrated the overwhelming power of faith-driven prayer (II Chr. 14:8-13). And he taught that true humility before God is one of the highest forms of worship we can offer (15:8-15).

Not all of the lessons he has for us are positive in nature, however. Asa loved God, but he was an imperfect man living in an imperfect world. From Asa, we learn the devastating consequences that come from trusting in our own strength and cunning rather than turning to God (I Kings 15:18-19; II Chr. 16:7-9). We also learn the folly of placing our lives in the hands of man alone without ever consulting God. ***And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet,***

***until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians. And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign*** (II Chr. 16:12-13).

Perhaps the most important lesson we can learn from King Asa is that loving God and desiring to live in His will does not mean we are immune to temptation or bad choices. Living for God is not a passive, one-time choice; it is an action that must be undertaken each and every day. If we take our eyes off Him, even for a moment, we open ourselves up to all manner of dangerous detours.

***Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God*** (Heb. 12:1-2).

**Thought for the Day:** *If we do not turn to God in our time of need, how can we truly believe in His power over all things?*

**Christ Revealed:** In Asa's ridding the land of idols and sodomites (I Kings 15:11- 14). Christ cleansed the Temple (Matt. 21:12-13; John 2:13-17). As Christians, we are the Temples of God, bought with His own blood (I Cor. 6:19-20; II Cor. 6:16-17) and are cleansed of all unrighteousness when ***we confess our sins*** (I John 1:9).

**Word Studies:** 14:3 **cracknels** = cakes or fig bars; 14:5 **feign herself** = pretend; 14:6 **heavy tidings** = very sad news; 14:15 **groves** = pagan idol shrines; 15:12 **took away the sodomites** = banished homosexual male prostitutes; 15:17 **suffer** = allow or permit.

**Pray for Government Officials:** Sen. Cory Booker (NJ), Gov. Jim Justice (WV), Rep. Daniel Webster (FL) • **Country:** Macau (583,003) Southeast Asia • Major Languages: Chinese, Mandarin • 50% Buddhist; 15% Roman Catholic; 35% None/Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray for unity of spirit with other believers (I Pet. 3:8).

**Optional Reading:** Acts 28

***And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word (I Kings 17:1).***

The northern kingdom of Israel was no stranger to bad leadership or wicked kings, but with the ascension of Ahab to the throne, they were plunged into an era of spiritual darkness deeper than any they had ever before experienced. ***And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him*** (I Kings 16:30). Ahab ruled side by side with his pagan queen, Jezebel (16:31). Under their rule, Baal worship became the national religion, and the worship of Jehovah, the One True God, was driven far underground. Ahab and his queen fiercely persecuted any who stood for the Lord, and as many prophets as could be found were rounded up and killed (18:4).

***The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied*** (Ps. 37:18-19). Despite the worst that Ahab and Jezebel could do, they could not stomp out the spark of faith in the hearts of the truly righteous. Elijah the Tishbite was such a man. A prophet of God, he dared to be bold in his faith regardless of the evil circumstances and possibly fatal consequences. Elijah answered the call of God and stood confidently before Ahab, proclaiming that the Lord would withhold rain from the evil land until such time as Elijah asked Him to send it again.

Elijah was a prophet of God, but he was also a man like any other. The drought affected him in the same manner as it did his neighbors. Yet, unlike those who were frantically crying out to Baal without any relief, Elijah felt no fear as all earthly sources of sustenance around him dried up (17:7). He trusted in the Lord to provide and patiently waited for Him to do so.

As the effects of the drought became dire, the Lord sent Elijah to a widow in Zarephath who, along with her young son, was on the verge of starvation (17:12). Elijah approached and asked for food and drink, and the woman responded in faith.

She accepted the Lord's promise to provide and used the last of her food to feed Elijah. Her faith was rewarded by a miracle. ***And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah*** (17:15-16).

As members of the body of Christ, we are expected to maintain our faith in Him regardless of the circumstances we find ourselves in. No matter what the situation, it is the Lord's prerogative to provide for us in whatever manner He sees fit, and it is our spiritual obligation to trust that He will do so, even in the absence of physical proof. When we, by word and deed, confirm our belief in His faithfulness, as did both Elijah and the poor widow, we will find ourselves rewarded beyond our ability to comprehend.

***That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ*** (1 Pet. 1:7).

**Thought for the Day:** *If we consistently allow our worldly concerns to override our spiritual ones, we risk being chained to the world forever.*

**Christ Portrayed:** By Elijah, whom God used to provide flour and oil for the needy widow at Zarephath (1 Kings 17:13-16). Christ our Provider supplies all our needs ***according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus*** (Phil. 4:19).

**Word Studies:** 17:16 **wasted not** = was not used up; 18:4 **cut off** = murdered; 18:19 **eat at Jezebel's table** = are provided for by Jezebel; 18:21 **halt** = waver, undecided.

**Pray for Staff:** Ryan McCrary • **Government Officials:** Rep. Tom Cole (OK), Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan • **Country:** Macedonia (2,087,171) in Southeastern Europe • Major Languages: Macedonian, Albanian • 64.7% Macedonian Orthodox; 33.3% Muslim; 0.37% Catholic; 1.63% Other/Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray that you will sanctify the Lord God in your heart (1 Pet. 3:15).

**Optional Reading:** Romans 1



***And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time (I Kings 19:1-2).***

On Mount Carmel, the Lord revealed Himself in all His glory: ***Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, He is the God; the LORD, He is the God (I Kings 18:38-39).*** Elijah left the mountain triumphant, secure in his belief that a true revival was underway. He marveled at the glory of the Lord, and he was sure that the wicked king and the idolatrous queen would now rule in fear of the One true God.

Ahab and Jezebel, however, did not react in the manner expected by the prophet of God. ***For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them (Matt. 13:15).*** They had both embraced the lies of the enemy and built their lives upon that foundation. Their hearts and minds were permanently closed, and they were incapable of seeing the truth of God. Their reaction to the display of power on Mt. Carmel was one of anger and outrage at having their absolute sovereignty challenged.

Consequently, Elijah felt that he had failed the Lord. When he met up with God in the wilderness outside of Beer-sheba, He was a broken man. ***But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers (I Kings 19:4).*** In today's reading, we are privileged to watch as the Lord ministers to Elijah, offering him comfort and sustenance all while gently correcting

Elijah's misconception of his failure.

If we do everything God asks of us in accordance with His will, then it is impossible for us to fail Him. Elijah's deep depression came from the fact that His expectations had differed from the Lord's. Elijah had sought to change the king's heart, but God had never set His sights on Ahab and Jezebel. It had been His will that the people were to see His glory and know His power, which is exactly what happened. The people had departed from that mountaintop with the understanding that ***The LORD, He is the God*** (18:39). Through Elijah, God's purpose had been fulfilled. ***Yet I have left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him*** (19:18).

God's directions do not always come with explanations, and there will be many times that we will have no way to judge our level of 'success' as we carry out His will. That's okay. We don't need to know every objective or outcome. It is enough that God knows. We can rest in Him and be content.

***There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand*** (Prov. 19:21).

**Thought for the Day:** *God's plan is bigger than we are and often impossible to understand; we won't always succeed in the eyes of the world, but His will is always done.*

**Christ Portrayed:** By the unnamed prophet who prophesied victory to King Ahab so that he would know his destiny was controlled by God: ***Thou shalt know that I am the LORD*** (1 Kings 20:13,28). ***Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*** (1 Cor. 15:57).

**Word Studies:** 19:8 **Horeb** = Mount Sinai; 19:14 **jealous** = zealous; 19:21 **instruments** = yokes; 20:11 **harness** = armor; 20:12 **Set yourselves in array** = Get ready to attack; 20:24 **rooms** = positions, places.

**Pray for Staff:** Tiffany Parisi • **Government Officials:** Sen. Debbie Stabenow (MI), Rep. Steven Horsford (NV), Rep. Joe Morelle (NY) • **Country:** Madagascar (22,599,098) an island in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Mozambique • **Major Languages:** French, Malagasy, English • **Increasingly anti-Christian** • 52% Indigenous Beliefs; 41% Christian; 7% Muslim • **Prayer Suggestion:** Rejoice and consider yourself blessed when you suffer for the name of Christ (1 Pet. 4:14).

**Optional Reading:** Romans 2

***And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money. And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee (I Kings 21:2-3). And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite (I Kings 21:7). They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people. And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died (I Kings 21:12-13).***

Naboth was falsely accused, summarily convicted without a trial, and stoned to death, all because he chose to conduct his life according to the law of God. ***The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land (Lev. 25:23-24).*** Had Ahab merely sought to lease or even just seized control of Naboth's vineyard, the humble man likely would have yielded to the king's will, but Ahab's request to permanently purchase the land went against God's commandment and was therefore refused. This refusal ultimately cost Naboth his life. ***Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died.***

Obedience to God will not always protect us from the evils of the world; at times, it even puts us directly in its path. Doing the 'right' thing can be difficult, even dangerous. It can put us in awkward, uncomfortable positions—up to and including placing us in opposition to civil authority. Cloaking ourselves in God's Word does not mean we become invulnerable to mortal trouble. Looking at it strictly from a worldly perspective, evil

regularly triumphs over good, and ‘happy endings’ in life are much rarer than many modern-day evangelists would have us believe. This is the price of living in a fallen world—the cumulative effect of sin—and we cannot escape it. But with God’s help, we can endure it; touched by His grace, uplifted by His mercy, cleansed by His love, and reborn in His Spirit, we can emerge victorious on the other side. The same cannot be said for those who unrepentantly embrace evil, no matter how good they may have it in life.

Everyone, everywhere, regardless of their level of worldly power and influence, is ultimately answerable to God. All will come before Him on His terms; all will be held accountable for the unrepented sins they carry into His presence. In that moment, no defense will be possible. With all revealed, ignorance of His will won’t be a valid excuse, and the perceived righteousness of human law will provide no shield. Anyone who ***hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD*** (I Kings 21:10) will answer to Him for their actions.

***For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God*** (Rom. 14:11-12).

**Thought for the Day:** *Our worldly lives are a trial. God does not guarantee a life free of pain, but the promised life after will be free of all suffering.*

**Christ Portrayed:** By Micaiah, who would say only what God instructed him to say (I Kings 22:14). Jesus faithfully told others only what God told Him to say. ***Then said Jesus unto them . . . I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things*** (John 8:28; 12:49-50).

**Word Studies:** 21:27 **softly** = sadly, subdued; 22:3 **be still** = do nothing; 22:11 **push** = gore; 22:13 **with one mouth** = unanimously; 22:16 **adjure thee** = put you under oath; 22:34 **at a venture** = without specific aim; **hardness** = armor; 22:48 **broken** = wrecked.

**Pray for Government Official:** Rep. Bobby Scott (VA), Rep. William Timmons (SC), Rep. Robin Kelly (IL) • **Country:** Malawi (16,777,547) in Southeastern Africa • Major Languages: English, Chichewa • Religious Freedom • 82.7% Christian; 13% Muslim; 1.8% Other; 2.5% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Humble yourself before the Lord (I Pet. 5:5-6).

**Optional Reading:** Romans 3

## PRAYERS IN THIS MONTH'S READING

Hannah----for a son.....I Samuel 1:11  
Hannah---in thanksgiving.....I Samuel 2:1-10  
Israelites--in confession of sin.....I Samuel 7:6  
Samuel and others-in locating Saul.I Samuel 10:22  
Saul-for direction concerning battle.I Samuel 14:37  
Samuel-for protection from Saul.....I Samuel 16:1-3  
David-----for guidance.....I Samuel 23:1-4  
David--in praise and supplication..II Samuel 7:18-29  
David-----for forgiveness.....II Samuel 24:10  
David-----for Israel.....II Samuel 24:17  
Solomon-for wisdom.....I Kings 3:6-14  
Solomon-for prayer of dedication...I Kings 8:23-61  
Elijah--to raise the widow's son.....I Kings 17:20-21  
Elijah--for triumph over Baal.....I Kings 18:36-37  
Elijah----for death.....I Kings 19:4

## *Become part of the vision*

*Jesus fed the 5000 with just five loaves and two fishes. There are multitudes of people in this world still hungering for His Word. Thousands of souls die each day with no knowledge of the saving grace of our Father in Heaven. As Christians, God has commissioned us to tell of Him and witness to the unbelievers that they may know Him.*

*God is leading Bible Pathway Ministries to send out an additional 5000 Bibles and devotionals monthly, starting in January 2024. For this project to become a reality, I must ask in Jesus' precious name for your financial support in this endeavor. The estimated cost for this mission is \$250,000.00.*

*We are stepping out in faith and preparing the first shipment, trusting that God will make it possible. And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us; and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him (1 John 5:14-15).*

## This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.