

1 Samuel 24 to 2 Samuel 1 : Summary of Practical Points

1 Samuel 24

Verse 4. We should exercise care how we interpret God's providential ways. It is easy for us to mistake the opportunity of doing what fits in best with our own preferences for God's will for us. Seemingly providential happenings – and indeed all circumstances – must be read in the light of the principles and teachings of God's word. Helpful and convenient circumstances are not necessarily a guarantee of God's will and purpose for us. They may be allowed by the Lord as a test of our faith.

There are perhaps occasions when we too can be tempted to take some 'short cut'. Maybe some 'breakthrough' or 'insight' which will *instantly* lift our Christian living and experience to some higher plane, rather than the demanding and time-consuming labour of day-by-day self-control and sanctification.

Verse 5. We should treasure and cultivate a sensitive conscience. Remember Paul's words to Felix, 'Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men', Acts 24. 16.

Verse 6. We should respect those in positions of authority.

At some time or another, we all face the temptation to get even with those we believe have wronged us in some way. But revenge restrained is a victory gained.

Verse 8. There may be occasions when we will have to take significant risks in attempting to bring about reconciliation.

Verse 16. The genuineness of my repentance is proved, not by the depth and intensity of my emotions at the time, but by the resulting change in my behaviour.

Verse 17. Sadly, it is possible for me to know that I am doing wrong and still to do it.

Verse 17 etc. It is possible for me to recompense (a) evil for good, (b) evil for evil, (c) good for good, or (d) good for evil. Which best describes my response?

Verse 20. Sadly, it is possible for me to know God's will and yet to resist it.

1 Samuel 25

Verses 1 and 38. Both Samuel and Nabal are said to have 'died'. We are told that 'all Israel' lamented Samuel, but as far as we know, no-one sorrowed over the death of Nabal – not even his wife. Let us make the effort so to live that, if we die, men may have cause to remember us with affection and respect.

Verse 2. We ventured the thought that, by the *foolish and selfish abuse* of his riches, Nabal secured for himself only 'eternal fire', Luke 16. 22-28, but that, by the *wise and unselfish use* of his riches, Barzillai made 'friends' and was received into 'eternal tabernacles', Luke 16. 9. We noted that Nabal was rich only in worldly substance – not, as his wife, in wisdom and godliness – that he was not, in the words of the Lord Jesus, 'rich towards God'. In what do my riches consist?

Verse 3. We noted the many stark contrasts between Nabal and Abigail. Yet they were bound together as husband and wife. We need to be aware that there are occasions when a Christian finds himself or herself married to an ungodly spouse – even though that spouse may masquerade as one of God's people. There are occasions when a godly wife in particular can be held in the grip of lifelong humiliation and sorrow. We should be alert to such cases and bring to them our prayer, sympathy and understanding. And how thankful those of us who have the untold blessing of a happy Christian marriage should be to the Lord.

Verse 5. We considered a man who lived only for himself and who used his wealth only for himself. We need to be constantly on our guard against covetousness and greed. I was struck some time ago by 'Toddler's Creed', written by Elisa Morgan, president of Mothers of Preschoolers : 'If I want it, it's mine. If I give it to you, and change my mind later, it's mine. If I can take it away from you, it's mine. If I had it before, it's mine. If it's mine, it will never belong to anyone else, no matter what. If we are building something together; all the pieces are mine. If it looks just like mine, it *is* mine'. And that philosophy isn't confined to toddlers by any means. But how different is both the example and teaching of the Lord Jesus!

Verse 13. We noted that the measure of our Christian character is as much, if not more, the way in which we treat our equals or those in some sense 'beneath' us, as the way we treat our superiors or those who are in some sense 'above' us.

We noted that, in his determination to slaughter Nabal for his meanness and intentional insult, David had enrolled himself in what we called the school of *the zeal of 'the sons of Boanerges'* rather than the school of *the meekness of the Son of David* – that David did not 'know what spirit he was of'. The Lord Jesus has made our duty clear to us, 'whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also'. This is the law of the kingdom! Yes, but do I obey it?

Verse 14. We noted the all-important role played by Nabal's young servant who acquainted Abigail with all that had happened. He was simply a link in a chain. Not a very big link – but a necessary link for all that. We compared his role to that of Naaman's little maid and Paul's nephew and invited ourselves to stand in awe at the wonderful workings of our God, who can bring about His purpose through whoever He pleases.

Verse 25. We noted that a man with great possessions, who would be judged hugely successful by the world, in God's book was a fool. Remember that the worth of a man consists, not in what he has, but in what he is.

Verse 31. We noted that Abigail helped David to imagine how his present planned action would look to him when he eventually became king. It would be a healthy exercise for all of us to stop and imagine how any given course of action will appear to us from the standpoint of heaven.

Verse 32. We noted that David was prepared to listen to the counsel and advice of someone else – and when he knew it to be right to act on it. He was prepared to get the egg on his face of admitting he had been wrong – and to do that in the eyes of his own men – having earlier told them to put on their swords. Are my ears open to advice from others? Am I prepared to admit my errors of judgement?

We noted that David blessed the Lord before he blessed Abigail and her advice. That is, David looked beyond the instrument who the Lord had used to the Lord Himself. Do I? And thank Him accordingly?

Verse 33. We noted that David then went on to express his appreciation to the one who the Lord had used. We too should always be ready to thank the human instruments through whom the Lord chooses to bless us.

Verse 34. We noted David's recognition that Abigail had arrived only just in time to avert the massacre of Nabal and his men. Our God is a God of perfect timing. Surely, with His track record, we can afford to trust Him!

Verses 34 and 39. We noted that David recognized that the Lord had restrained him both from hurting Abigail and from shedding the blood of Nabal and all the males in his household, and suggested that one day we may be surprised to learn just how much we owe to God's restraining hand on us. There can be little doubt that if, meanwhile, we reviewed the details of each day more carefully, we should find more reasons to praise God for His gracious, sin-preventing providences.

Verse 38. Nabal died. And he left every one of his 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats behind him. When alive, he loved to gloat that all these things – and everything else with which he had been blessed - were his, and his only. But when he died he took nothing with him – not so much as a single sheep. We need to take to heart the words of Paul, 'godliness (and Nabal, as a biblical 'fool', was an ungodly man) with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out', 1 Tim. 6. 6-7.

Verse 41. We noted that, though, at the time, David was an outlawed, homeless wanderer, Abigail was willing to throw in her lot with him and to endure hardship and danger for his sake – because she knew that it would be for only a brief season. We too have the privilege now of associating ourselves with 'the rejected King', knowing that in due time we shall 'reign with him'. 'Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach'.

1 Samuel 26

David had been here before. With the passage of time, his attempt to win Saul over in chapter 24 had come to nothing. Yet David persisted in his longsuffering – not willing to give in easily. Note Paul's words to the Colossians about being 'strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all *patience* (endurance, steadfastness, the ability to see things through) and *longsuffering* (the opposite of wrath, retaliation and a spirit of revenge) with joyfulness', Col. 1.11. That is, I will need God's power (proportioned not so much to my need, but to God's own abundant supply) to work in me, if I am to show joyful – even, cheerful – (a) endurance in the face of adverse circumstances and (b) long-suffering towards people.

Verses 3-6. If there is a rift and estrangement between me and another, I ought to take the initiative and do all in my power to heal it and get it sorted out. Compare Matt. 5. 23-25 (action to be initiated by the guilty party), and Matt. 18. 15-17 (action to be initiated by the injured party).

Verse 10. David did not know which means the Lord would use to achieve His will – nor did he need to know that. He knew all he needed to – not how it was that *providence* would work, but what it was that *obedience* required. He knew that the Lord didn't want him to dispose of the anointed king himself. Our business as God's people is not to fret because we do not understand all of God's ways but to submit to His word and commands. Deuteronomy 29. 29 is a text well worth learning – 'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law!'

Verses 18-19. We noted that what hurt David most was that he would no longer be able to attend the house of God – then the tabernacle – and we picked up something of David's firm attachment to God's house and dwelling from many unmistakable references to this his psalms. We quoted 1 Timothy 3. 15 and posed the very personal question, 'How great is my affection for – and commitment to – the house of God today?'

Verse 21. Some 16-18 months before his death¹, Saul had to confess, 'I have sinned ... I have played the fool, I have erred (gone astray) exceedingly'. Note that three-fold 'I have'. In stark contrast, another 'Saul' – now 'Paul' - also probably within months of his death – could claim, 'I have *fought the good fight*, I have *finished my course* (race), I have *kept the faith*', 2 Tim. 4.7. How am I going to finish my course? Like the Saul of the Old Testament or the Saul of the New Testament?

Am I sincere when, in accordance with 1 John 1. 9, I confess *my sins*? Is my repentance real?

Verses 22-23. David refused to recompense evil to Saul but looked to God to vindicate and deliver him. There are two of Solomon's proverbs which could well have come out of his father's experience; 'Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee', Prov. 20. 22, and 'Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me', Prov. 24. 29. The latter of which links, of course, with the saying of the Lord Jesus, 'All things whatsoever (in quantity) ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so (in quality) to them: for this is the law and the prophets', Matt. 7.12. I guess that, by setting His 'Golden Rule' in the context of the fulfillment of the scriptures, the Lord provided His disciples with a handy summary of the righteousness to be lived out in God's kingdom.

It is, of course, the Son of David Himself who has left us the greatest example of One who trusted the Father to vindicate Him. We have only to think of Peter's well-known words, 'Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously', 1 Pet. 2. 21-23. And we recall that our Lord's very last words before He released His spirit were based upon those of David in Psalm 31; 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit', Luke 23. 46; Psa. 31. 5. Our vindication does not always come, as did David's, in the present life. Sometimes it will come, as Jesus' vindication did, after death. But at some time or another, God will balance the scales of justice. We do not need to avenge ourselves – 'leave it to the wrath of God', Rom. 12. 19 ESV.

1 Samuel 27

Verse 1. I expressed my view that one of the factors which explained David's sad failure was that he was weary, noted several references to weariness in the New Testament, and suggested that weariness is a far more dangerous enemy of Christian life and service today than many of us realize. Let us determine therefore to spend more time in the presence of the One who has promised, 'they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint'.

I suggested that the reference to David taking counsel with himself is set against the background of David's normal practice of seeking counsel from God when making any major decision, and noted that in verse 1 he made constant reference to himself but none to the Lord. I further suggested that this was an indication that David had taken his eyes off the Lord and turned them onto himself – onto his circumstances, his anxieties, his problems. But how do I face my pressures and problems? Do I view them in the light of God's past and present provision and enabling – or do I allow them to come between me and Him? In other words, do my circumstances and trials drive me to the Lord, or, in effect, drive away from Him?

I suggested that another root of David's problem was his lack of faith. I find that I am never free from the temptation to doubt God and His word. In his book 'The Holy War', John Bunyan describes how, when the town of Mansoul was in the power of Diabolos (the devil), *Incredulity* (the reluctance and unwillingness to believe) was made Lord Mayor of the town. When Immanuel captured the town, Incredulity was doomed to execution, but managed to break out of prison, 'and *lay lurking in such places and holes as he might, until he should again have opportunity to do the town of Mansoul a mischief*. Yet again, when the devil assaulted the town with the hope of retaking it, 'Old

Incredulity', as Bunyan labelled him, reappeared, and was made general of the army 'because none truer than he to the tyrant' – to Diabolos, that is. After the assailing army was defeated, and many of the officers and soldiers in it were put to death, Incredulity still managed to evade capture. How often I have to pray, with the father of the lad with the unclean spirit at the foot of the Mount of the Transfiguration, 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief', Mark 9. 24.

I acknowledged that it is not always easy for the believer to distinguish between prudence and unbelief – between trusting God and tempting God – between faith and presumption. We need – as David should have done – to judge each situation in the light of God's word to us.

I posed the question why, if the Lord had proved Himself faithful to David in the past in meeting his every need, David should now doubt that He could, and would, continue to meet his need now? But I was careful to add that we will be startled at how soon and how much David forgot of God's past faithfulness *only* if we lose sight of our own fickle hearts and failing memories! Let us praise God today that we have such a longsuffering and gracious Saviour who doesn't forget us but who bears with *our* forgetfulness.

Verses 4 and 12. I noted that Saul 'sought no more again for him', and that 'Achish believed David', and learn that the seeming success of a policy or action is not necessarily a guarantee that it was God's will.²

Verse 7. We discovered that David abode with the Philistines, and I guess we might well ask, in words similar to those of the Lord to Elijah much later, 1 Kings 19. 9, 'What are you doing *here*, David?' Just, I suppose, as we might also ask "What are *you* doing here, Abram?", when the patriarch was in Egypt, passing his wife off as only his sister, Gen. 12. 10-20. Just as we might ask, 'What are *you* doing here, Peter?', when, having fled in Gethsemane, he sat warming himself among those who had apprehended the Lord Jesus and brought Him to the house of the high priest, Luke 22. 24-55. But the issue which faces me is not why Abram, David, Elijah or David were where they were at these times, but whether the Lord ever has occasion to say to me, 'And what are *you* doing *here*, Malcolm?'

And we noted that, apart from later references to the duration of his reign, the time of David's stay in the country of the Philistines is the only precise time-note we find in the entire narrative of David's life. I observed that, as far as I can tell, this period was marked by an absence of any psalm-writing and took note that the Lord knows the number of the years – and months – which the locust eats. Let us determine to cleave to the Lord and to starve that locust!

1 Samuel 28

Verse 3. We saw that, in his better days, in accordance with God's word, Saul had waged war on spiritism and the occult. God's word is clear – 'Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them', Lev. 19. 31 NASB. Make no mistake; we are not going to find honey in the jar on which God has written 'Poison'! If we dabble in the occult, even its milder forms, we are flirting with demonism and seriously jeopardize our spiritual health and usefulness for the Lord.

Verse 5. We saw that Saul had to learn that 'whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap', Gal. 6. 7. That principle holds true in every realm. In the context of Galatians 6, it seems to apply primarily to the use to which we put our money and possessions and to whether we do good to others or not. Let us determine to sow what we have, not for this present physical world, but for the world to come.

Verse 6. We saw that because Saul had failed to obey God's word to him in the past, God refused to reveal more of His will to him in the present. How important it is that we live up to the light we have.

I suggested that Saul's real concern lay, not with his poor spiritual condition, but simply with his desire to avert trouble for himself. In his letter, James puts his finger on the central issue, 'Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts', James 4. 2-3. We need to watch our motives when we pray.

Verses 6 and 12. When considering **verse 6**, we saw that there was no *real* contradiction between the statement there that 'Saul enquired of the Lord' and the statement in 1 Chronicles 10.14 that he 'enquired not of the Lord'. And when considering **verse 12**, we saw that there was no contradiction between the appearance of Samuel and our Lord's *actual* teaching in Luke 16. Both cases only served to confirm what we know well – that we can always trust our Bibles!

Verse 12. We reached the conclusion that neither the woman nor Saul – that neither Satan nor the demonic world – had any hand in Samuel's appearance – and that he appeared only by the power and permission of God Himself. Because of its unique nature and the manifest intervention of God's own power, the incident therefore offers no support for the claims of mediums today that they are able to communicate with the dead.

Verse 18. I suggested that, though Saul had been told by Samuel that the One who rent the kingdom from him would 'not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent', Saul may have come to believe, with the

passing of the years, that the Lord had nevertheless changed His mind. If he had, Samuel soon put him right. The Lord most certainly had not changed His mind! Let us remember that, if, as Christians, we sin and come under God's discipline, our repentance and genuine brokenness may well change God's ways with us, but the passage of time in itself won't.

General. From the appearance of Samuel, then long dead, let us grasp the firmer that there is indeed another world beyond the present – and let us prize the more that far clearer understanding we have as Christians of what awaits us should we die; 'absent from the body ... present with the Lord', 2 Cor. 5. 8; 'with Christ; which is far better', Phil. 1. 23!

1 Samuel 29

Verse 3. We compared the words used by Achish about David, 'I have found no fault in him', with the words used by Pilate about 'the Son of David' – of whom he said, three times, 'I find no fault in him' – and noted the stark difference that, whereas Achish's assessment of David rested on David's deception, contrary to the charge laid against Him by the Jews, the Lord Jesus, was no 'deceiver'. Let us determine to imitate Him of whom Peter wrote – who left 'us an example, that we should follow his steps, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth', 1 Pet. 2. 21-22.

Verse 11. David had clearly hoped to exploit his present situation and to throw himself into the forthcoming battle on the side of Saul and Israel. But, like David, we are not always permitted to do what we want – even when we perceive it as an opportunity of serving God and His cause. Sometimes we are most needed back home.

Closing remarks. We noted the merciful and timely intervention of God's providence, by means of which, in spite of David's ambition to fight at Jezreel, David was compelled to go back home just at the right moment to enable him to recover his wives and property from the Amalekites. God knew best – and He still knows best! 'Professor E. C. Caldwell ended his lecture. 'Tomorrow', he told his class of seminary students, "I will be teaching on Romans 8. So tonight, as you study, pay special attention to verse 28. Notice what this verse truly says, and what it doesn't say". Then he added, "One final word before I dismiss you—whatever happens in all the years to come, remember: Romans 8. 28 will always hold true". That same day Dr. Caldwell and his wife met with a tragic car-train accident. She was killed instantly and he was crippled permanently. Months later, Professor Caldwell returned to his students, who clearly remembered his last words. The room was hushed as he began his lecture. 'Romans 8. 28', he said, 'still holds true. One day we shall see God's good, even in this'. (Our Daily Bread, 19 December 1991.) May God give us grace to rest in His promise and to trust Him even when we cannot understand His ways with us.

1 Samuel 30

Verse 4. We noted that there is no shame in grown men weeping. Oh, that we knew more tears over our own spiritual condition and that of others, Phil. 3.18 – and that we knew what it was to weep in sympathy with those who weep, Rom. 12. 15.

Verse 6. We saw that David's experience at Ziklag had much in common with that of Israel in a future day, to whom the Lord says, 'I will hedge up thy way with thorns ... then shall she say, I will go and return', Hos. 2. 6-7. We need to learn, as David did in the past and Israel will in the future, that sufferings and trials are often a token of God's love – meant, when our hearts grow cold towards Him, to draw us back to Himself.

David found renewed spiritual strength by focusing afresh on God's presence, power and promises. Ask the Lord for help to do the same.

When, as happened with both David in the Old Testament and Paul in the New Testament, circumstances come our way which we cannot explain, let us draw consolation from the fact that 'though we may not always be able to grasp the Lord's ways with us, we can always grasp His hand'.

Verses 7-8. We noted that, even in David's waywardness, Abiathar, David's high priest didn't forsake him, that he stayed with him through all his hardships, and that he was uniquely qualified to sympathize with David and his men because, like them, he knew what it was to lose a whole family. Let us be thankful that we have a *Great* High Priest who never fails us, and who, because of His experiences when in the world, has an unrivalled capacity to sympathise with us in all our trials and troubles.

Verse 12. We saw how the Holy Spirit recorded the fine detail of what David and his men gave to the young Egyptian slave and I quoted the words of William Gurnall, 'He that shows any kindness to a saint, is sure to have God for his paymaster'. 'Let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith'.

I imagined how easy it would have been for David to have ignored the plight of the young slave because of David's 'more important mission' of pursuing the destroyers of Ziklag. And I recounted a story of some seminary students who failed to give help to someone apparently in need because they were on their way to preach about the Good Samaritan! May the Lord touch our hearts with the needs of others and save us from being in too much of a hurry to turn aside to meet those needs.

Verse 16. From the destruction of the Amalekites on account of their complacency, let us learn to be spiritually vigilant. 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall', 1 Cor. 10. 12.

Verse 23. We saw that David stressed that all that which he and his men had brought back with them had, in reality, been given to them by the Lord. How we regard what we have will determine how we use it. Let us always be ready, out of that which the Lord has entrusted to us, to 'distribute to the necessity of saints', Rom. 12. 13.

Verses 24-25. We saw that David regarded the baggage-keepers as in no way inferior! I am reminded of a story told by Captain Charlie Plumb, who flew 74 successful combat missions over North Vietnam.³ In his book 'Insights into Excellence', Captain Plumb tells how he was sitting in a restaurant when a man came up to him and said, 'You're Plumb. You flew jet fighters in Vietnam. You were on the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down! You parachuted into enemy hands and spent six years as a prisoner of war'. 'How in the world did you know all that?' asked the Captain. The man, who had been on the same ship, replied, 'Because I packed your parachute'. Captain Plumb recorded, 'I staggered to my feet and held out a very grateful hand of thanks. This guy came up with just the proper words. He grabbed my hand, he pumped my arm and said, "I guess it worked"'. 'Indeed it did', the Captain said. That night he thought of the many hours this man must have stood at a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship carefully folding parachutes. 'I wondered', Captain Plumb wrote, 'how many times I might have passed him on board the Kitty Hawk. I wondered how many times I might have seen him and not even said "Good morning", "How are you?" or anything – because, you see, I was a fighter pilot and he was just a sailor'. But in God's service there are no high ranking or low ranking people. We all depend on one another. Let's never forget those who 'pack the parachutes'. Many of the Lord's people serve Him faithfully and conscientiously in a host of behind-the-scenes ways, often providing support for some much more visible aspect of the Lord's work. 'In that day' the Lord, the righteous Judge, is going to reward His unknown and unrecognised servants just as He will reward those more prominent.

Verse 26. We saw that David was not the kind of man to forget the love shown in the past by his friends in Judah when they had ministered to him and his men. Hebrews 6 assures us that 'God is not unrighteous to forget your work, and the love, which ye have shewn to his name, having ministered to the saints, and (still) ministering', Heb. 6. 10. And we noted at the same time that David expressed his appreciation in a tangible and generous manner. Let us hear what the apostle John had to say – 'My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth', 1 John 3.18.

Finally, I suggested that David chose to send the relief to the elders of each city because they represented reliable centres of distribution. We too should take care that, when we send out support and relief for distribution to those in need, we use only trustworthy sources and channels.

1 Samuel 31

Verses 1-7. We learnt from Saul's death and disgrace something of the high price and seriousness of disobedience.⁴ We saw also that the fall of a man in a prominent position usually leads to disastrous consequences for others – often for his own family and for the people of God more generally. I should live my days with an eye to the effects which my actions might have on others – for good or ill.

Verses 9-10. We saw that Saul's disobedience, defeat and death gave grounds for the enemies of the Lord to discredit and disgrace the Lord's holy name. And yet again we learn that *our* spiritual defeats and failures can likewise cause God's name to be blasphemed among unbelievers.

We noted that, though the heathen have idols which, while having ears, hear not, we have a God who can and does hear us when we call upon Him. We are therefore able to address Him with confidence, in the words of David, as 'Thou that hearest prayer', Psa. 65. 2.

I suggested that the death of Saul and his sons bought David the time he needed to establish a military force capable of subduing the Philistines. Israel may have been defeated and Saul may have failed to fulfil his allotted task, but God was still God! Let us remember that today also – in all situations, whether of physical persecution, the indifference of the world around us, our own failures as God's people, or whatever – God is still God!

Verses 11-13. From the daring exploit of the men of Jabesh, we learn that we should always be ready, as occasion arises, to show our gratitude to all and any who have done something for us – even if this was sometime in the past.⁵

And then we observed, with sadness, that the man who had begun so well – so full of promise and potential – finished so very badly. Here is a pointed lesson and warning for everyone one of us. Lord, help me to finish well!

2 Samuel 1

Verse 12. We noted that it was the condition of ‘the people of the Lord’, as the verse specifically describes them, which disturbed David and his men – and observed that we also ought to feel, and to mourn over, not only our own weakness, failure and coldness, but over the weakness, failure and coldness of all who are truly ‘the people of the Lord’.

Verse 16. David told the Amalekite, ‘thy mouth hath testified against thee’. We do well to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, ‘that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned’, Matt. 12. 36-37. Perhaps we need to pray with David in Psalm 141. 3, ‘Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips’.

Verse 17. We noted that David nursed no grievance against Saul and spoke only well of him after his death – and that, with just one, understandable exception, every negative thing which David said of Saul he said to his face. Let us determine to take a leaf out of David’s book!

We saw that, at no point, did David make Saul out to be something he wasn’t. David was truthful in all that he said about Saul although he was deliberately selective. We learnt from this that it isn’t wrong for us also to be selective when speaking about others – that honesty doesn’t require us to tell everything which we know about them.

Verse 18. We noted from David’s requirement that others be taught his song about Saul and Jonathan that we should do what we can to see the upcoming generation are made aware of the great debt we – and they – owe to men of God of a bygone day.

We also noted that the sorrows and wounds God’s people receive from their losses aren’t necessarily healed after a short time ... and that as Christians we are sometimes far too impatient with the grief of others. Let us try to be more sensitive. It is true, of course, that we don’t sorrow as those who have no hope – but that doesn’t mean that we don’t sorrow!

We saw that David clearly shared the convictions of the apostle Paul about ‘teaching ... one another in ... spiritual songs’, and concluded that we ought to be careful both about *what* we sing and about *how* we sing – considering both the doctrinal content of *what* we sing and the sincerity and level of concentration *with which* we sing.

Verse 20. From David’s desire that the defeat of Israel shouldn’t be broadcast in the cities of the Philistines, we learnt that we too should make every effort to prevent the faults and failures of God’s people being aired before unbelievers.

End-notes

¹ 1 Sam. 27. 7.

² Compare Num. 20. 7-12.

³ Charlie Plumb flew 74 successful combat missions over North Vietnam and made over 100 carrier landings. On his 75th mission, just five days before the end of his tour, Plumb was shot down over Hanoi, taken prisoner, tortured, and spent the next 2,103 days as a Prisoner Of War. See <http://www.charlieplumb.com/book-insights.htm> - together with Captain Plumb's 'Military History' on the same website.

⁴ Disobedience cost Adam a garden, Gen. 3. 24, Moses a land, Deut. 33. 51, Saul a kingdom, and many their souls, 2 Thess. 1. 8.

⁵ Compare how Paul expected Philemon to remember his great debt to the apostle and, now that occasion presented itself, to repay it in part – saying of Onesimus, 'If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides', Philemon 18-19.