

## **“THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID”**

The late founder of “The Voice of Prophecy,” H. M. S. Richards, Sr., tells the story about he and his brother who were always mixing it up at home to the aggravation of their mother. She was beside herself to know what to do to get them to be civil to one another.

One day they had been exceptionally mean to one another and this time mother took them into the back room and sat them down for a “talk.” Mother explained how she didn’t know what she had done wrong to produce boys that would fight so. They deserved a severe beating. She instructed them to go down to the stream and pick some cat o’ nine tails and bring them up. Then she said, “I can’t bring myself to punish you boys. So take the cat tails and give me the lashes on my back!”

Instantly the boy’s hearts were broken for their sin against their mother. Their tears burst forth. They could not bring themselves to strike their mother, but she insisted. They limply struck her and she said, Strike harder, for that’s what is deserved. Those boys then learned what mercy is all about. They didn’t get what they deserved, but another stood in their place to receive the punishment.

We read in Isaiah a delightful description of the covenant which God gave to King David in which he connects mercy with the everlasting covenant. “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.” Isaiah 55:3, 4. The sure mercies of David are the blessings which are assured to us through Christ, the Son of David. As surely as David was delivered from His enemies, because God had made him a promise, just so surely shall we be delivered.

The text speaks about David who is a good type of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom our salvation lies. Jesus was One who was despised and rejected, just as David was in his own family. When Samuel came to anoint as king one of the sons of Jesse, David was away watching the sheep—he was not thought worthy of being called in till Samuel specially sent for him. His brothers evidently despised him and condemned him as being forward when really he was more courageous than they were.

So, too, our Lord was despised and rejected of men—they did not think that the Nazarene could be the Messiah. It was enough, merely, to mention His name and to speak of Him as Jesus of Nazareth, for them at once to ridicule His claims. They judged that it was not possible that He, who was so poor, so meek, so lowly—that He who had so little of anything which they looked for in the promised Deliverer, should be the Savior—yet He was and still is the *only* Savior.

You know what it's like to be rejected by friends, loved ones, and family. Jesus has carried that sorrow and borne that grief for you on His cross.

You know the story that when they were building Solomon's Temple, all the stones were marked to indicate the places where they should go, for no hammer or chisel was to be used upon them in the sacred courts. There was one stone of a very awkward shape and the builders could not find a place for it. They turned it over and tried to fit it in here and there, but it would not go in anywhere, so they threw it aside and the nettles and the thistles grew over it. It became a proverb and a by-word. One would say to another, "Will you not try to build in that stone?" but they all in turn gave it up—it was the stone which the builders refused.

At last, the Temple was all but finished—it only lacked one cornerstone and they looked about for it, but they could not find it. Someone at last suggested, "Perhaps that odd-shaped stone is the very one intended to complete the Temple." So they brought it out and found that it was even so.

Our Lord applied to Himself the words of the Psalmist, "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes." Matthew 21:42. Like David, Jesus was the Rejected One, but He is the Anointed of the Lord!

Interpersonal rejection ranks among the most potent and distressing events that people experience. Romantic rejection, ostracism, stigmatization, job termination, and other kinds of rejections have the power to compromise the quality of people's lives. You have experienced rejection up close and personal. Maybe you had a boyfriend who didn't want to be with you anymore. Or maybe there was a job that you lost. Or maybe you had a parent who kept yelling, "You'll never amount to anything!" Whatever it was, at some point in

your life, you experienced a painful rejection. And you decided then and there that you didn't want to be hurt like that ever again.

Our salvation lies in Another, even in One who has fought our greatest enemy, and overthrown him. This was the mark of David that, in due time, he came to the front when all Israel fled from the gigantic Philistine. The two champions meet for the deadly duel, the stone flies from the shepherd's sling, the giant falls! His head is cut off with his own sword and David brings the gory trophy to King Saul.

Our salvation lies in One who has destroyed death, and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. I see Him coming back with the tokens of His triumph in His hand! Like David, He has slain His ten thousands in slaying the one great enemy of His people! In this Jesus, who died on Calvary and in dying, destroyed death and burst the bonds of the grave, lies our salvation! Yet it lies in One who, despite His glorious triumphs, was sorely persecuted.

David did not go straightway from his victory over the Philistine to sit upon his throne—he was hunted by Saul like a partridge on the mountains and long had to carry his life in his hands. He had to pass through sore persecution before he became king.

And in a certain sense, that is the condition of our Lord Jesus Christ even now! He is still rejected. I know that His name is used and men like to call themselves His followers, but if you set forth a real Christ, crucified among them, and preach His great sacrifice, you shall see that He is no more a favorite among men than He used to be! Still will they spit in His face! Still will they scourge Him! Still will they crucify Him. There has been a long, long battle, through these nearly two thousand years.

But the King will yet come to His Throne. God says, concerning Him, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." "I will set His hand, also, in the sea, and His right hand in the rivers. Also I will make Him My First-Born, higher than the kings of the earth." But, for a while, the Prince of this world prevails, the Saul, the enemy that walks in darkness, is allowed to "worry whom he can't devour." And though it shall not always be so, yet at present it is a time of conflict and trial.

Our salvation still rests in a despised Gospel, in a hunted Christ—but as Israel looked to David in Engedi, by the tracks of the wild goats, and not to Saul upon the throne—so we look to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Though He is still cast out and persecuted, He is the one hope of our spirits!

We come to the time when David had been on the throne a long time, and his own son had rebelled against him. In the basest manner Absalom had treacherously turned the hearts of the people from David, and now had only one desire, and that was to take his father's life. Taken wholly by surprise by the strong conspiracy that had secretly been formed against him, David was forced to flee from his palace, with but a few attendants, and so seemingly hopeless was his case that a miserable creature dared to curse him to his face, and throw stones at him, declaring that God was now punishing him for his sins as he deserved. While thus an outcast, he sang again, as we read in the third psalm:—

“Lord, how are they increased that trouble me I many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, there is no help for him in God. But Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and He heard me out of His holy hill. I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God; for Thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord; Thy blessing is upon Thy people.”

David was not saved nor did he trust in God because of his own goodness, but because of God's mercy. David was a sinful man, as are all men; but his heart was tender, he acknowledged his sinfulness and God's righteousness, and believed God's promise. It is natural for men to think that God is unrighteous because they are; and the more they know themselves to be unrighteous, the more they think God to be the same. Thus it is: It is most common for one to say, “I am so great a sinner, I dare not believe that God forgives my sins.”

I cannot find it within my heart to forgive my x-husband who is a Christian but who abused me mentally and emotionally for the 21 years that I was married to him. I cannot push from my mind the way he forced our family to live in slum conditions though he earned wages that placed our living standards in the middle class category. I stayed in the marriage as long as I did because my religion taught that wives are to be submissive to their husbands and wait on God to correct them as long as they don't commit adultery. After many years of this treatment and being submissive I didn't care if I lived or died. I used to beg God to end my life. I cannot forgive myself for having not

had the insight or strength to get out of the situation and give my kids a better life. I now am 47 years old and did finally divorce this man. I continue to take medication for depression and I have nightmares and dreams of the life I spent with him. I have no self-esteem and confidence in myself and am not the woman I was prior to marrying this man. How can I forgive myself for having made such a stupid mistake in marrying him in the first place and how can I forgive myself for having subjecting my children to a life that could have and should have been so much more fruitful for them. I know we all make bad choices in life. I also know that forgiveness is necessary to move on with life. I am stuck because I cannot forgive. I want to forgive but I cannot stop thinking about the things he did. I cannot forgive myself for having been so stupid.

God has declared that His righteousness consists in the forgiveness of sins. 1 John 1:9. Therefore to say or to think that God cannot or will not forgive sins, is to charge Him with being unrighteous. Thus it is that sinners often make God out to be as bad as they are.

Not so with David; sinful as he was, he would insist that God was nevertheless righteous and faithful. God had promised him that he should be king, and not only that, but that his throne should stand for ever. But this promise was through Christ, for the throne of David was the throne of the Lord (1 Chron. 29:33), and the promise that he should sit on the throne and that it should be established for ever, was the promise of everlasting righteousness which God would freely give him through Christ.

So David's confidence was in God's promise. God had said that he should be king, and no man or men could frustrate God's purpose. It was not for David's sake but for the Lord's own sake, to vindicate His kindness and faithfulness, that God preserved David, and in this David was confident.

Absalom was a wayward son. Now much of this waywardness was due to his father's indulgence, we need not now stop to inquire. The fact is that he was thoroughly selfish. There is no evidence to show that he had any real love for anything except himself. Yet his father loved him.

When Absalom killed his brother Amnon, and fled, "David longed to go forth unto Absalom." The soul of David was consumed with longing for his son. Finally Absalom was recalled from exile and received the kiss of forgiveness, and lived in the presence of his father. Surely

he could not ask for more than this. But then it was that the hatefulness of his disposition began really to show itself.

“And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him and said, Of what city art thou? And he said. Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right: but there as no man deputed of the king to hear thee. Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice. And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him and kissed him. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment; so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.” 2 Samuel 15:1-6.

David was a good and just king. He ruled in the fear of God. But Absalom would not give him an opportunity to redress the grievances of his people, for he would stop them before they could make their case known to the king. Then by his wicked lies he would steal their hearts away from the king, and fix them upon himself.

After Absalom had pursued this course until he thought he could depend upon the people’s following him, he came to his father, and with a lying pretence of wishing to pay a vow to God, secured leave to go to Hebron. There he consummated his rebellion against his father. He sent spies all through the tribes of Israel saying, “As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron. And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gibeonite, David’s counselor. . . . And the conspiracy was strong: for the people increased continually with Absalom.” 2 Samuel 15:12.

Then the old king had to flee for his life from the face of his son. With a few who still clung to him, he left the city on foot. In David’s palace in Jerusalem, Absalom plotted to take away his life. “Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night; and I will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed, and I will make him afraid; and all the people that are with him shall flee: and I will smite the king only; and I will bring back all the people unto thee; the man whom thou seekest is as if all returned: so all the people shall be in peace. And the saying pleased Absalom well.” 2 Samuel

17:1-4. This advice so gladly received by Absalom shows his heartlessness. His only desire was to kill his father. The only reason why he did not act upon it was that he was led to believe that there was a more sure way of taking the life of the king. GOD defeated the counsel of Ahithophel. Then Absalom raised a great army and went out to take the life of his father, who had never showed him anything but love.

So much for Absalom. But how did the king still feel toward his rebellious son? Listen to him as he stands by the gate as the people go out to meet the army of Absalom: "And the king commanded Joab and Abishai, and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom." 2 Samuel 18:5. Not a thought of revenge entered into the king's heart. Only love for his wicked son was there.

In spite of the king's request, Absalom was slain. Very tenderly and delicately was the news broken to David. "And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber and wept; and as he went, thus he said. O my son Absalom, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, Absalom, my son, my son!" 2 Samuel 18:33. And "the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom. O Absalom my son, my son!" 2 Samuel 19:4.

Stop a little, and think of such wonderful love after all that Absalom had done to him. And this was the man who wrote. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Psalm 103:13. Does not that text mean much more when we consider these circumstances? It is God Himself who gives us this illustration of his love for us; for his Spirit caused the story of David and Absalom to be recorded, and his Spirit inspired the words in the one hundred and third psalm.

The three marines got off their military van and proceeded to the home of the father of 20 year old Lance Cpl. Alejandro Arredondo. The marines assigned to these sad duties are well trained and have a lot of practice. One stands in front flanked by two others. Their uniforms are spotless and their brass buttons shine like gold. They wear super white gloves and the lead soldier carries a certificate. "We regret to inform you that . . ." are usually the first words said to the family.

Carlos Arredondo, after being notified that his first born had been killed in the Holy City of Najaf, quietly went to the garage, got a lighter

and some gasoline. He then walked to the US Marine Corps van, doused it with the gasoline and locked himself inside. He then lit the van and himself. The three US Marines were unable to stop him.

David's love for Absalom could not save his life. How different the case with God. He is able to do all that is in his heart. His love was so great towards his rebellious children that He did actually give Himself. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Romans 5:8-10.

Such love as this is beyond human comprehension. It is that passes knowledge, and yet it may be known by all who will receive it. It does not exhaust itself in vain longings for its object, but it accomplishes definite results. It saves the soul from death, by saving it from its rebellion. It sheds itself abroad in the heart of the sinner, turning his rebellion into love. "We love Him, because He first loved us." And we can confidently trust this love: for since God bestowed it so freely upon us when we were rebels, what may we not expect when we have become friends through it?

"What shall we then say to these things?" "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

"I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Note that this follows the statement, "Hear, and your soul shall live." That is, the sure mercies of David embrace the resurrection of the dead. God made great promises to David, but none of them could be fulfilled except by the resurrection, and David so understood them. He confessed that he was a stranger and a sojourner as all his fathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were. Psalm 29:12. Now all that say such things declare that they seek a better country, that is an heavenly; "wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city." Hebrews 11:13-16. Christ is the Son of David, and He is to sit upon the throne of His father David, and to "reign over the house of Jacob for ever." Luke 1:31-33.



But the fact that the sure mercies of David are performed only through Christ and the resurrection, shows that everybody who believes and accepts Christ has a share in them; for Christ died and rose again for all. Indeed, this is seen from the text before us, for the call is unlimited. The call to drink, and to buy bread and wine and milk without money and without price, is issued to all who need. It is the gracious call of the Gospel to all needy, thirsty, sin-sick souls. Well, to the very same ones is it said, “I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David,” and this shows that whoever accepts the Gospel becomes a member of the house of David, a subject of the kingdom of Israel. So we find that Israel is not any nation known and recognized on this earth, but is “the righteous nation which keepeth the truth.” Isaiah 26:2. For such the gates of the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, will open. Revelation 22:14.

Robbie Flockhart used to, constantly, preach in the streets of Edinburgh, and he told this story. He said, “I had a friend in the army and he committed some offense in war-time for which he was condemned to be shot. So he said, ‘Robbie, I have to die tomorrow, and as I have a little money, I have made my will and left it to you.’ ‘Thank you,’ I said. The next morning, instead of being taken out to be shot, the soldier received a free pardon, so,” said Robbie, “He got his life and I lost my legacy, for a testament is not in force while the testator lives. He must die to give effect to his will. And,” said Robbie, “our great Testator is dead. We know that He died, they nailed Him to the Cross. Therefore His will stands good—let us go and take the legacy He has bequeathed to us. But,” added Robbie, “that story is not enough to set forth Christ’s work for us. Some time after, another friend left me a legacy and he *did* die.” There were some lawyers who got hold of the money and Robbie never received a penny of the legacy. He said, “if my friend had been alive, I would have got it—that is to say, if he would have died and then, *afterwards*, have been alive, again, he would have seen that I received the legacy. So, the first time I lost my legacy because the friend who left it to me did *not* die and, the second time, I lost it because the friend who left it to me *did* die, but did not rise again. But,” he said, “see the glorious safety of the Believer’s legacy from His Lord! He who died and so made the will to be effective, has risen, again, and He will see that no lawyer, honest or dishonest, shall ever interfere with the legacies that He left to His people! Not even the devil, himself, shall prevent the heirs of

everlasting life from obtaining the heritage which Christ has left them in the New Covenant which He has sealed with His blood!"

Beloved, the mercies of David are sure because your Son of David lives! He died to purchase these mercies for you—He lives to claim them on your behalf! He died to cleanse you—He lives to apply that cleansing to you and to see that the work is fully done! Come to God in the name of Him that is living and was dead! I entreat you to come to Him!