

(1 Samuel) God Helps the Undeserving

by David Guzik

David's journey illustrates the importance of seeking God's mercy and guidance during times of spiritual decline and distress.

Duration: 35:44

Scripture: 1 Samuel 21:12, Psalm 34:1-4, Psalm 34:17, Psalm 56:3-4, Psalm 56:10

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Divine Guidance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of having accurate maps in our lives. He gives examples of tragic events caused by inaccurate maps, such as a pilot crashing into a gondola cable and a helicopter hitting power lines. The speaker then shifts to the story of David, who turns to the Lord in times of trouble. David's cries to God are recorded in the Psalms, and he acknowledges God as the chief musician. In a moment of crisis, David praises God's word and seeks guidance from Him.

Transcript

1 Samuel chapter 21. Now, we've been following the life of David as it unfolds in the book of 1 Samuel, and as we've seen it, I think it's spoken very powerfully to me and to you too, I'm sure, that this is certainly God's book that we're dealing with. When men write the story of their own lives or the lives of others, they usually fix it up and dress it up.

If we were to write or to read the story of David's life in a book that man wrote, it would just have it like on a rocket ship to glory. You know, just one continual chorus of, Oh, isn't it beautiful? But that's not the way God writes His book. When God speaks to us about the lives of men, He shows the good and the bad.

And last week when we were together looking at the life of David for the first time, we saw David in sin. We saw David in compromise. Where David, trying to protect himself, trying to defend himself with his own cleverness, he lied repeatedly and in a confirmed way to the priest Ahimelech at the tabernacle in a place called Nab.

Well, David got himself out of a scrape, he thought, through his lies. But as we're going to see as the weeks unfold, the lies just ended up doing more damage than David could ever have imagined. But when we left David last week, he was leaving the city of Nab and heading on for somewhere else, and David was in this first period of sin and compromise that we've ever seen him before in his life, and sort of threw me off.

Like, what's going to happen next? I mean, we're wondering, are we going to see the same story in David's life that we saw in the life of King Saul? Both David and Saul started out well as they took the throne of Israel, but Saul then started on a downward course, and when Saul started on that downward course, there were no breaks. And he just kept going and going and gathering momentum and going faster and faster and declining in his walk with God. Now, the kind of spiritual jargon word we use for that, one that preachers like to use in their sermons, is we call it backsliding.

You don't use that word in anything else, but preachers use it. And what it means is it means to decline in your spiritual life. Do you know what that is in your own life? If you don't, then either you've been a Christian for probably about a week, or you're not being very honest with yourself.

Because everybody's Christian life has ups and downs. Even this great king of Israel, the man after God's own heart, he knows what it's like to decline in his spiritual life. Friends, the issue isn't whether or not you ever decline, the issue is where are the breaks in your life, and are you going to put on the breaks? Well, as we come into verse 10 of 1 Samuel chapter 21, David hasn't hit the breaks yet.

Look at it, verse 10, 1 Samuel 21. Then David arose and fled that day from before Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath. Okay, well David goes to a place called Gath, I get it, I see it, that's fine.

No, it's not fine. Gath is the city of the Philistines. David is going to find refuge among the ungodly.

And we take a look at this and we scratch our head and we say, David, what are you doing? First, you're trusting in your own cleverness, in your own ability to lie. That's how you got out of the scrape at the tabernacle at Naam. Then you go on your way and you think you're going to find some refuge among the ungodly.

David, what are you doing? That's not going to help you. Your lies aren't going to help you. The Philistines aren't going to help you.

David, you're going to all the wrong places for your health. I don't know if you've ever noticed this in your own life, but when you're in a period of decline spiritually, many times you don't think very clearly. David wasn't thinking clearly.

He is on the way from Naam to Gath. And as he enters into the city of Gath, he would have seen a sign. I'm making this up, of course, but you ever seen this? You go into a sign saying, you know, Welcome to, you know, so-and-so-ville.

And it says, Home of... Carl E. Estremsky. Whatever. Some star.

Some famous person. I don't know why I said Carl Estremsky. It just came to my mind first service, so I thought I'd repeat it again second service.

But a great ball player, of course. One of the last men to win the Triple Crown. But that's a whole other story.

But you get the feeling here, right? Towns like to identify themselves by their famous citizens. You know what David would have seen walking into Gath? Welcome to Gath, hometown of Goliath the Giant. That's where Goliath was from.

So David, the man who killed Goliath, is walking into Goliath's hometown. And what does he have with him from the tabernacle? Well, he has some bread that he got, right? Bread from the temple. What else does he have? The sword of Goliath.

Hello, David. Can we have a moment of clarity here? You're the guy who killed Goliath. You're going into Goliath's hometown.

And you're carrying Goliath's sword. He's not thinking very clearly. So what happens? Well, you could have predicted it.

Look at verse 11. And the servants of Achish said to him, Is this not David, the king of the land? Did they not sing of him to one another, and dances saying, Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands? Now, the remarks of the Philistines are very interesting. First of all, isn't it fascinating how the Philistines look at David and say he's the king of the land? Saul couldn't see it.

The Israelite king couldn't see it. But the Philistines could see it. David's the king of the land.

But the second thing they say about David is they say, wait a minute. We remember a song about this guy. Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

Now, do you know the occasion upon which that song was composed? It was composed upon when David killed Goliath. And everybody sang this song. Now, David used to love that song.

He'd go all around Israel, and every time he'd go into a new village, a new city, he'd start approaching the city, and the women of the city would come out singing and dancing and just honoring him. And they'd sing this song. This was the number one song all throughout Israel.

Apparently, it made the charts among the Philistines too. And when David goes into Gath, he sees that maybe there's some woman making bread or doing the laundry or helping out. And she's singing this song as she's working.

And David says, they're singing this song here? Because I hate that song now. You know, he's seeing that fame has that double-edged sword of it. It's two sides to it.

Now, he's too famous for his own good. And so the servants of the king of this city say, wait a minute. This is the guy.

This identifies him. We're not going to let him get away. We've got to put a clamp down on this right away.

And David knew what was up. Look at verse 12. Now, David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish, the king of Gath.

So what possibly can David do now? Here he is. He's captured. They've detained him in this Philistine city.

He thought he was doing something good for himself, but now in the midst of his spiritual decline, he's just in a worse place than ever. David, you've put yourself in a horrible mess. What are you going to do? Now, we know that David was captured by the Philistines in this.

The way I'd like to picture it in my mind at least is there they are. They've taken him. They've tied him up for, you know, whatever the ancient equivalent of handcuffing was.

They throw him into a detention cell and they say, good. Let's wait for orders from King Achish and we'll see what we're going to do with this guy. We'll let him squirm because we know he's not getting out of here alive.

Maybe Achish wants to devise some torturous way for him to die because there's no death that's too horrible for this man to die. Not only has he killed Goliath, but he's killed hundreds of our Philistine brothers. There are women in this city who are widows because of what this man has done.

We're not going to let him escape from here alive. And there's David. You can hear this talk outside of his detention cell.

And he's scared. He's nervous. What's going on? What's he going to do? You know what he does? He turns to the Lord.

Now, keep your finger here on 1 Samuel. I want you to turn to Psalm 56. You know, David, in times like this, both in times of emotional high and emotional low, would cry out to God.

And fortunately for us, what he cried out to God is recorded for us in many psalms. I want you to take a look at the title to Psalm 56. It says, To the chief musician... By the way, you know who the chief musician is.

That's the Lord. He was saying, Lord, you are the chief musician. This is for you.

To the chief musician, set to the silent dove in distant lands... That must have been the tune to which the song must have been sung to. And then he says, Amiktam of David, when the Philistines captured him in Gath. So this is David's heart as he sits in that detention cell.

And he cries out to God. And what did he say? Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up. Isn't it beautiful? David calls out to God for mercy.

You know what I think is fascinating about this is that in other psalms where David's in trouble, where David's being persecuted, where David's in danger, he doesn't cry out to God for mercy. You know what he cries out to God for? For justice. He says, God, I'm in the right.

They're in the wrong. Deliver me, Lord. David has no cry for justice in this psalm.

You know what he wants? Mercy. Do you know why you ask for mercy? Because you know that justice is against you. And if you were to be given justice, it would destroy you.

Now, take a look at it from a coldly analytical point of view. Both practically, and then in the bigger spiritual context. Practically, David deserved to die at the hands of the Philistines.

Didn't he? This was a soldier against them. Any judge in the land would put the gavel down and say, execute him. Then you take a look at it from the larger spiritual context.

David deserved to be in this mess. He put himself into it by his own free choice. God would have had every right to say, David, you want justice? Here is justice.

You can die. You put yourself into this mess, you can get yourself out of it. But David was smart enough, and I hope we'll all be smart the same way, where we say, you know what, Lord? Forget your justice.

I want your mercy. Give me your mercy, Lord. You want that from the Lord here this morning? You want mercy from the Lord? That's what we need.

Now, David also shows a different heart. Do you remember in verse, which verse was it there? I guess it was verse, chapter 21, verse 12, where it says David was very much afraid of Achish, the king of Gath? That's how he was when he was in that detention cell. But while he was there, crying out to God, pleading for mercy, God did a work in his heart.

He changed his heart. Look at what it says next here in verse 3 of Psalm 56. Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in you.

Isn't that beautiful? Before, David wasn't singing that song. You know what David's song was before? Whenever I'm afraid, I'll trust in my own cleverness and ability to lie. Whenever I'm afraid, I'll trust in the ungodly.

I can find refuge there. David says, forget that business. Being in this detention cell has taught me I can't trust in those things.

Whenever I'm afraid, I will trust in you. Matter of fact, it goes on in verse 4 of Psalm 56 and he says, In God I will praise His word. In God I have put my trust.

I will not fear. What can flesh do to me? Now, when David was trusting in God, he could say, what can man do to me? When he was trusting in himself, he says, what can man do to me? He can cut off my head. That's what he can do.

Now David's trusting in God. David renews his relationship, his confidence in God, in Psalm 56. David gets back in touch with God's word in this Psalm.

Three times in Psalm 56, David repeats the phrase, I will praise His word. Look at verse 4. He says, In God I will praise His word. Then look at verse 10.

In God I will praise His word. In the Lord I will praise His word. David wasn't trusting in God's word when he was lying at the tabernacle.

David wasn't trusting in God's word when he stepped into the city of Gath. He was trusting in other things. But God says, No, no, he's done a work in David's life and now David is at the place where he says, I'm going to trust in Your word, God, not in anything else.

And I'll praise Your word. You know, the need for this really hit home in my mind this morning as I was taking a look at the newspaper. I read a story in there that described how in 1998, a Marine Corps pilot was flying low in the Italian Alps and he clipped a gondola cable.

And 20 people in that gondola plunged to their death. And just a few weeks later, a crew of five Navy flyers were killed in California's Sequoia National Forest because their helicopter smashed into some power lines. Three years earlier than that, a crash involving the same power lines had killed two more people.

And then just a few weeks ago, NATO forces bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, killing three Chinese journalists and 20 others. You might say, Well, what's the connection between all these events? All these events have the same connection. They were all caused by bad maps.

Inaccurate maps. In Italy, the map that the pilot had, it never indicated that there was a cable car there and a gondola system. The power lines in the forest, they weren't indicated on the map.

And the story is that in Belgrade, that the map was wrong or inaccurate. Friends, if you don't have the right map, you're going to get into a lot of trouble. So I want to know, what map are you following for your life? That book that's on your lap right now, that needs to be your map for living.

If you don't have the right map, you're not going to go the right place. You might be making up your own map as you go along. You might be taking the map from other people.

Friends, that's not going to work. David tried his own map. That was when he was lying at the tabernacle.

David tried the map of the ungodly. That's when he went to the city of Galilee. Neither of those worked for him.

David now says, I will praise your word. I need your map in my life, Lord. Back in touch with that essential road map for his life.

So you see the change of heart that happens in David's life. And friends, isn't this exciting? Because we find that right now, when David was in that detention cell in the city of Galilee, awaiting what seemed to be his certain execution, what happens in his life? He's on that decline. And in that detention cell, he hit the brakes.

And he turned to the Lord. Now we breathe easy. David's not going to be like Saul, is he? David hit the brakes.

He was on the decline. But now he's stopped. And he's turned his heart towards the Lord in a powerful way.

Now, he's stopped the decline. He's turned his heart towards the Lord. But can I tell you something? He's still in a mess.

It's not like as soon as he turned his heart towards the Lord, he was miraculously transported out of the detention cell into a beautiful Judean pasture land with birds singing. And, you know, there's Bambi off to the side. Music's playing.

Oh, isn't it great? Not at all. You know, you've been on that decline. You hit the brakes.

You turn your heart back to the Lord. You're still in a mess, aren't you? But the Lord loves you. And look how the Lord will get you out of the mess.

Look how He got David out of it. Verse 13, back in 1 Samuel 21. So He changed his behavior before them.

Feigned madness in their hands, scratched on the door of the gate, and let his saliva fall down on his beard. David puts on a display of being foaming at the mouth crazy. He's mad.

He's insane. He acts in an irrational manner, saying strange things, acting strange ways, foaming at the mouth. Now, many Bible commentators look at this action of David in verse 13.

And they say, you know what? Here's David. Off in the flesh again. Look at what he's doing.

I understand the point, but I don't agree with it. I think David was doing what the Lord wanted him to do in this situation. The Lord wanted David to act like this.

Now, I'm not saying that God necessarily directly gave him this plan. You know, it's not like God spoke to David in the detention cell, act like a madman. I doubt that.

I think it just came to David's heart, to David's mind, but it was still inspired by God. Why? What did God want to do? Why do I think that this could be from the Lord? Friends, I don't know. I just know from my own life, and looking at the lives of others and their walk with God, that when you're on that decline, and God puts on the brakes, but you're still in a mess, a lot of times, the way that the Lord gets you out of it involves humbling yourself in some way or another.

Don't you think this is pretty humbling for David? Humiliating! I mean, these are his enemies. These are the people that he wants to impress, that he wants to strike fear in their hearts, and he has to act like a total madman in front of them. God's saying, David, you've been acting spiritually crazy, with the lying at the tabernacle, with walking into the city of Gath.

What are you thinking? So, because you've been acting spiritually crazy, why don't you really act crazy, and then I'll get you out of this. Well, and that's what happens. Look at verse 14.

Then Achaz said to his servants, Look, you see the man is insane. Why have you brought him to me? Have I need a madman, that you've brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house? And so, Achaz says, Get him out! I don't need him. Either this isn't the guy who killed Goliath, because this guy obviously doesn't have the capability to do something like that.

Or, if it is the guy who killed Goliath, he's so messed up, he's so out of his mind, that it would be a greater torture to let him go on living the way he is. Get him out of my presence. And David escaped.

Now, I just imagine it, you know, the Philistine guards come in, and they grab David out of that detention cell, and they drag him up to the city gates, and then they throw him out of the city, like a bouncer throws a guy out of a cheap bar, and he bounces there on the road a few times, and David picks himself up, and starts walking away from Gath, and how do you think he feels? How do you think David feels as he's walking away from Gath? He's pumped. He's excited. I mean, take a look at it.

Okay, back to the Psalms. Psalm 34. It'll show you how David felt.

Psalm 34. Again, look at the title of the Psalm. It says, A Psalm of David, when he pretended madness before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed.

So, David sang this song on the way away from Gath. What does he say? Look at it. Is this guy pumped or what? He says, I will bless the Lord at all times.

His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the Lord. The humble shall hear of it and be glad.

Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. Isn't that glorious? He's excited.

He's so joyful in the Lord. Yes, Lord, You did it. You met my need.

It's so exciting. Thank You, God. It looks so dark.

It looks so discouraging. But, Lord, You came in and fixed everything. The whole Psalm is a glorious declaration of praise.

David was amazed with gratitude towards the Lord. Now, do you know why David was especially happy? Because God got him out of a mess that was his own making. Do you know the Lord does that in our lives? Aren't you glad that the Lord didn't look down on David and say, You got yourself into it.

You get yourself out of it. Aren't you glad that the Lord doesn't only help us when we deserve it? No. Often times, God's goodness is shown to us by bringing us His help when we don't deserve it.

As it says in Romans 5.8, God demonstrates His own love towards us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. When did Jesus die for you? When you were a sinner. Not when you decided to be better.

Not when you'd say, I'll turn over a new leaf. Not when you'd say, I'll clean up my life for you, Lord. It's while you were in sin, while you were in rebellion.

Friends, we need to get ourselves out of this attitude that we can somehow deserve the blessing of God. Maybe some of you are right here this morning and you identify with what I've been saying about being on the decline because you've been on the decline. And now you come and you say, Well, I guess the Lord can't bless me.

I'm not worthy to be blessed. I guess I'm not going to be blessed. I'm on the decline.

Well, friends, I'm just calling out to you right now. Put the brakes on the decline right now. But expect God to love you and to bless you even though because His blessing is given to you apart from your deserving.

I think a lot of times we're in a lot worse trouble when we feel like we're doing good with the Lord and we think that God owes us blessing. That we deserve it somehow from Him. Friends, forget about it.

Get the ideas of earning and deserving out of your head. The idea in the Christian life is believing and receiving. Jesus Christ, with what He did on the cross, He earned it.

He deserved it. Now we just trust in Him. Friends, David could be blessed even though he didn't deserve it.

And he can walk out of the city of Gath praising God, blessing the Lord at all times. He's singing a happy song. Everything's glorious.

Now again, I know how it would be if I was writing the book. It would just be, OK, David had his little blip in the road now, right? Now it's just a rocket ship to glory. Yes, thank you, Lord.

That's not how it's going to work. Look at chapter 22, verse 1. David therefore departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. Now, on the journey from Gath to Adullam, you pretty much have to pass through a certain area of Israel.

And that certain area that you have to pass through is known as the Valley of Elah. That's where David fought Goliath. He walked over the same ground where he had won his greatest victory.

And they say that from the entrance of the cave of Adullam, you can see the Valley of Elah. So can you just picture David there? He's all excited. He's all pumped up.

But friends, have you ever had this instance in your life where you're all exhilarated? Yes, you're just absolutely pumped. It's great. God's done a great thing.

You're singing God's praises. I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

You're just singing that song with David. And as the day goes on, you just sit. It's great.

Now, what do I do next? Then after you've had that great high, the depression starts to set in again. You know, the adrenaline that was flooding your body, it leaves. And you're at a low.

Do you think I'm reading too much into this to say that David was in a low at the cave of Adullam? I'm not reading into it at all. Because we need to take a look at another psalm here. Take a look at Psalm 142.

This describes David's heart, David's feeling when he was in the cave of Adullam. Psalm 142. Look at the title.

It says, A Contemplation of David, A Prayer When He Was in the Cave. Get the heart of this. David is there at the cave of Adullam.

He can look out. He can see the Valley of Elah. And he says, I've come a long way from the Valley of Elah.

There was my greatest victory. People used to sing my praises. Now look at me.

I'm alone. I'm forsaken. I have to live like a hunted criminal.

And I don't know what's ahead of me. So he sings this song, verse 1. I cry out to the Lord with my voice. With my voice to the Lord I make my supplication.

I pour out my complaint before Him. I declare before Him my trouble. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then you knew my path.

In the way which I walk, they've secretly set a snare for me. Look on my right hand and see, for there's no one who acknowledges me. Refuge has failed me.

No one cares for my soul. You sense the depression, the darkness that David feels as he sits in this cave. He says, refuge has failed me.

Do you know what the name Adulam means? It means refuge. And so here's David in refuge cave crying out, refuge has failed me. You know why he's crying out that? Because God never wanted a cave to be David's refuge.

Oh, I'm not saying that it was wrong for him to hide out there. But David was to find his refuge in the Lord. Now while he's in the cave, while he's in this depressed state, while he's crying out to God, God does something in his life.

Look at verse 5. I cried out to You, O Lord. I said, You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living. Isn't that beautiful? Now David's in a different place.

He went to Adulam maybe thinking that that would be his refuge. But as he sat there, he said, this isn't a refuge for me at all. But then God worked in his heart and He said, no, Lord, You are my refuge.

You and You alone. And then the Lord started doing such a beautiful work in David's heart that there as he sat all alone in Adulam cave, God was working on his heart. Let's look at one more psalm to get a feel for this.

Go back to Psalm 57. Now we already took a look at Psalm 56, but here's Psalm 57. We'll see more of David's heart in Adulam cave.

And he says there again, here's the title. It says, To the chief musician set to do not destroy, a miktam of David when he fled from Saul into the cave. Look at how he starts out again.

Be merciful to me, O God. Be merciful to me, for my soul trusts in You. And in the shadow of Your wings, I will make my refuge until these calamities have passed by.

You see how he repeats the idea of refuge over and over in the Lord. Lord, You are my refuge. Not my own cleverness.

I tried that at the tabernacle and that failed. Not the ungodly. I tried that at Gath and that failed.

Lord, not even a cave. That even can't be my refuge. You are my refuge.

Verse 2, he says, I will cry out to God Most High, to God who performs all things for me. He shall send from heaven and save me. He reproaches the one who would swallow me up.

God shall send forth His mercy and His truth. Isn't it glorious the change that's happening in David's heart? In this whole time we've seen him up and down. He's on the decline.

He puts on the brakes. He goes back up. God delivers him.

He's praising God. Now he's back down. Then the Lord brings him up again.

Look at verses 9 and 10. Actually, let's start at verse 7 here. This man, he's not depressed anymore.

He says, my heart is steadfast, O God. My heart is steadfast. I will sing and give praise.

Awake, my glory. Awake, lute and harp. I will awaken the dawn.

I will praise You, O Lord, among the peoples. I will sing to You among the nations, for Your mercy reaches unto the heavens and Your truth unto the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens.

Let Your glory be above all the earth. Man, if I was making a movie of this, I know just how I'd do it. I'd have David standing at the entrance of a Doolam cave shouting that out because God's done a work in his heart and he can't hold it in.

He wants everybody to exalt the Lord, to praise Him, because God has put him on a higher ground. Now, two points I'd like to close with. First of all, look at where David finds this higher ground.

He finds it while he's living in a cave. It's dark. It's cold.

It's rocky. It's uncomfortable. As David lay his head down on that rocky dirt floor, he's thinking back to the nights he spent in the palace.

That was nice, wasn't it? Hey, member of Saul's court. Lots of people around to help you. You're praised.

You're honored. You're there in the palace of the king. Now, for many of us, we think that we can't come to the place that David has of triumphant, bold, trusting in God unless we're in the palace.

Lord, put me in the palace and I'll praise You. Lord, put me in the palace and things will be okay. No.

No. You can praise God like that from the cave. Well, I don't feel like I can.

You can. Decide to do it. Turn your heart towards the Lord.

Let Him work on your heart. You can do it. God can change your heart.

As a matter of fact, I would say that you're not really praising God until you can do it from the cave. Anybody can praise God from the palace. Can you do it from the cave? Can you trust God and have that joyful confidence in Him from that cave? David could.

You say, well, I'm not a David. That's right. But the same God who is in David's life is in yours.

And secondly, I want us to deal with the bigger picture of this decline and putting the brakes on it. We kind of feared that David would end up like Saul. Both starting out well.

Then they started to decline. Saul kept on going and kept building momentum. And we saw David last week when he lied at the tabernacle.

Oh, David, don't do that. And then this week, the first few verses. Oh, David, don't do that.

Don't go to Gath. And it just seems like he's picking up momentum. You say, David, when do you get to hit the brakes? And he hit them there in Gath.

And he stopped the decline. Friends, I need to ask a very pointed question of you this morning. If you're in a place of spiritual decline this morning, when are you going to hit the brakes? When? Why not now? Isn't that why the Lord has brought you here this morning? You could have been somewhere else this morning.

But hasn't the Lord brought you here this morning to challenge your heart and to say whether you're declining a little bit or a lot, whether you're going five miles an hour down that hill or whether you're going a hundred miles down the hill, you're in decline, stop it now. Hit the brakes. Turn your heart back towards the Lord.

Stop asking for justice. Ask for mercy. And let the Lord do a precious work in your heart.

You can't come back. You can't stop the backslide. I think the precious thing about it is that if I was the Lord, when David hit his decline, I would have said, okay, fine, no more king of Israel.

No more man after God's own heart. Forget it, David, you're disqualified. David was not disqualified.

Matter of fact, we would think that his decline might have disqualified him from being a man after God's own heart. Quite the contrary. When he hit the brakes fairly soon and came back, it proved David to be a

man after God's own heart.

Let me illustrate to you what I mean by that. Think of the parable of the prodigal son. There's the guy, he leaves his father and his family and he goes out and he blows all his money on riotous living and when the money's gone and he doesn't have anything, he ends up in the pig pen, feeding the pigs, living with the pigs.

Now let me ask you a question. What's the difference between the prodigal son and the pigs at that time? Both the prodigal and the pigs, they probably smelled the same. They probably looked the same.

They ate the same food. They lived in the same place. So what's the difference between the prodigal and the pigs? One difference.

The prodigal went home. That proved that he was a son. The pigs were happy to stay there.

So if you're in that place of decline, my friends, don't think that that disqualifies you from being a man or a woman after God's own heart. Hit the brakes today. Turn your heart more to the Lord.

Show yourself to be a prodigal, not a pig. Say, Lord, I want to be a man, a woman after God's own heart. Father, we ask that you do that deep work in our hearts here this morning.

I pray, Lord, that as you touch everybody's heart here, that you would prove your goodness, that you'd prove your excellence, and that you'd help us to enter into the place where we can hit the brakes, so to speak, Lord, on whatever decline we're in the midst of. Lord, I know that there has to be at least a few this morning whom you're speaking to in a powerful way about that. I pray that you'd give them the courage to do their business with you right now in their hearts.

Say, Lord, I want to get it right with you. If it means humbling myself, then I'll humble myself, Lord, but I want to get right with you and stop the decline, and walk with you rightly. Lord, help us to be men and women after your own heart, just like David.

We pray this, Lord, in Jesus' name.

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