1:18 After praying for a child, Hannah went her way “and her face wasn’t sad any more” because she truly believed she would soon become pregnant. She’s a great example to us of believing and feeling that what we have prayed for, we have actually received (Mk. 11:24).

1:19 Hannah’s prayer of thanks is clearly the basis for Mary’s prayer; and Hannah had requested a child, and received it. As Hannah described herself as “our handmaid” (1 Sam. 1:18), so did Mary too (Lk. 1:38). God remembered His mercy in making Mary conceive (Lk. 1:54), just as God had remembered Hannah in answering her prayer (:19). And just as Hannah “rose up” and went to Ramah, so Mary “rose up” and went to Judea (Lk. 1:39). There is reason to think that Hannah too desired to bear Messiah. The lesson is that examples of prayer influence others, both in prayer and style.

2:3 Hannah had reflected upon God’s omniscience; and on this basis she tells Peninnah not to be proud and use hard words against her, exactly because of this. That He sees and knows all things should humble us and affect our speech.

*Yahweh is a God of knowledge, though actions be not weighed*- Although actions are not judged immediately and publically (“weighed”), they surely will be- because, quite simply, God knows.

2:6 Clearly *sheol* refers to the grave and not any place of eternal condemnation in fire.

2:12 *Men of Belial*- The idea is ‘sinful men’. In the Old Testament, sin was personified as ‘Belial’, so we shouldn’t be surprised if it’s personified as ‘the enemy’ or ‘satan’ in the New Testament.

2:24 *You make Yahweh’s people disobey*- We can spiritually destroy our brother, for whom Christ died (Rom. 14:15); we can undo the work of the cross for a brother who would otherwise be saved by it. We can make others sin (Ex. 23:33; 1 Kings 16:19). There is an urgent imperative here, to really watch our behaviour; e.g. to not drink alcohol in the presence of a brother whose conscience is weak.

2:25 *They didn’t listen to their father, because Yahweh intended to kill them*- God has an ability to confirm men in the path to destruction they chose to tread. The very experience of sin confirms sinners in that way: “the way of the wicked seduces them” (Prov. 12:26). The spiritual effect of God upon men over and above their own strength is indicated by this example (cp. Josh. 11:20; Jud. 14:4; 2 Chron. 10:15).

2:30 God is unashamed about the fact that He can change His stated purposes about people in response to human behaviour; the fact God does this is simply an indication of the extent to which He is sensitive to our actions and decisions.

2:32 *The wealth which I would have given Israel*- Some prophecies simply won’t come true because they refer to what God had potentially prepared for His people, but they disallow Him from giving them what He had intended. This is an example. Knowing this, women like Hannah clearly hoped and prayed that their sons would be Messiah (2:10 = Ps. 89:24); for they perceived that God’s purpose was open to such a thing.

3:13 Eli did rebuke his sons; but in God’s eyes he didn’t (cp. 2:24). He said words for the sake of saying words, but in his heart he didn’t mean them. He honoured his sons above God, to make himself “fat with the best of all the offerings”. The description of Eli as being fat surely reflects his guilt (2:29; 4:18). And yet he appeared on the surface to run his family life on a spiritual footing. Eli is presented as a kindly old man who had a heart for God but was too soft on his children; but God’s judgment of him is much harsher, teaching us the serious consequence of sins of omission, and of allowing abuse to continue when it is in our power to stop it. Because Eli wouldn't restrain the abuse, he was seen as committing those very things which he failed to rebuke. Likewise the man who wouldn’t discipline his wayward ox was to be treated like as if he had committed the crime the ox did, and therefore must die if the ox killed a man (Ex. 21:29).

3:18 When Samuel told Eli of the prophetic vision which he had received, Eli commented: “It is Yahweh”. He meant ‘It is the word of the Lord’; but he saw God as effectively His word. “The word”, the “word of the Kingdom”, “the Gospel”, “the word of God” are all parallel expressions throughout the Gospels. Our attitude to God’s word is our attitude to Him.

4:10 God wished to demonstrate by this defeat that mere religious tokenism wouldn’t save anyone. Israel’s tokenistic use of the ark, a mere wooden box, is similar to the way some use the crucifix and icons today. It is the essence behind the symbol rather than the symbol itself which we must understand and believe in. See on 5:9.

4:13 *His heart trembled for the ark of God-* The record emphasizes Eli’s love for the ark; even after the shock of hearing that his sons had been killed, it was only when he heard that the ark had been taken that he had a stroke and died (:18). Likewise his daughter in law died with mourning for the ark on her lips (:22). But this love of the external things of one’s religion (see on :10) wasn’t the same as true spirituality. For all Eli’s love of the things associated with the true God, he was severely condemned for not having the glory of God and care for His people at heart (see on 3:13). It’s not difficult to love the external trappings of our religion- the church hall, the social events, the regular activities, the general ambience. But this isn’t the same as true spirituality.

5:9 God didn’t give Israel victory because they had the ark with them in battle, and yet He kills many Philistines because they have the ark with them. So strong was His desire to demonstrate that religious tokenism will not bring blessing, in fact the very opposite- it is the path to death (see on 4:10 and 4:13).

5:12 God has a sensitive heart even for the sufferings of unbelievers. He so hates to see any of His creation suffering. Those believers who fear God’s final rejection should remember this; that He has a hugely sensitive heart. Note that as ‘ascending to Heaven’ is hyperbole and not literal (see too 2 Chron. 28:9; Ezra 9:6; Ps. 107:26), so likewise the language of ‘falling from heaven’ in verses like Is. 14:12-14 must also not be read literally.

6:9 *He has done us this great evil*- God is repeatedly described as the source of both good and “evil” in the sense of disaster; God is all powerful, and it isn’t the case that all good comes from Him and all “evil” from some supposed ‘Satan’ figure. God creates both good and “evil” (Is. 45:5-7).

6:19 The men of Beth-Shemesh were smitten because they looked into the ark, probably because they wanted to find more jewels which the Philistines might have placed there (:15). In the face and presence of the things of the supreme glory of Yahweh of Israel, they scavenged around in a spirit of petty materialism- just as men gambled for the clothes of Jesus at the foot of His cross; they trampled upon the supreme holiness of God in their crazed fascination with wealth. And people are doing this all around us.

7:6 The pouring out of water before God symbolized the state of their hearts in repentance before God. Repentance is literally a re-thinking, something internal, a pouring out of self before God. Water poured on the ground can never again be gathered up where it was before; some permanent change happens every time we experience an episode of true repentance. Water being poured on the ground became a Hebraism for death (2 Sam. 14:14); in repentance, we recognize that we have sinned and ought to die for what we have done, but in the continued life given us by God’s grace we will seek to live for Him.

7:9 As the Philistines closed in upon Israel, Samuel was busy offering up the burnt offering, symbolizing Israel’s plea to God for help, with all the intensity of the suckling lamb crying to its mother- when the natural reaction would have been to think ‘Enough of that, come on, do something practical now…’. We see here the supreme priority of prayer and the urgent intensity of powerful prayer. The desperate bleating of the suckling lamb was intended to be identified with Samuel’s prayer.

8:3 Samuel failed as a father in the same way as his mentor Eli did, although he wasn’t condemned for it as Eli was. The lesson is that even in later life, we are influenced by the examples we saw in the spiritual mentors of our youth. The power of influence is far greater than we imagine; we have more responsibility for our actions and examples than we think. Nobody lives life to and for themselves, because every life has such a powerful effect upon others (Rom. 14:7 and context).

8:7,8 Here is an example of the mutuality between God and man: ‘They didn’t reject you, they rejected Me, but they rejected you, in that you are with Me’.

8:8 Israel sinned not only by worshipping idols but by thereby omitting to worship God as He required. God is highly sensitive to human sin; sins of commission often lead to and involve sins of omission, which are equally significant to God.

8:11,12 Israel were told three times that Saul would have many chariots. If they were spiritually aware, they would have realized that by multiplying horses and chariots, he was going to be a King who ruled in studied disobedience to the Mosaic Law (Dt. 17:16-21). They were given the spiritual potential to grasp this. But they were already hard bitten in their rebellion, and this potential spiritual help went unheeded (although God still gave it to them potentially, even at a time when it seemed pointless. He is so ever willing to coax His people back!).

8:14 When God offered Israel a king, He did so with a series of warnings that this king would treat them just like the prophesied invasion of condemnation described in Dt. 28; he would take their sons, seed, vineyards etc. in just the same way. The links are unmistakable (8:14 = Dt. 28:30,33; 8:11,14 = Dt. 28:41; 8:15 = Dt. 28:38; 8:17 = Dt. 28:43). Through these allusions, Yahweh was saying to Israel: Do you want the condemnation for disobedience? And they answered 'Yes!'. And yet, in His grace, Yahweh still worked through the system of human kingship to bring about His purpose of salvation with Israel. Thus through our unfaithful actions now we will be witnesses against ourselves at the final judgment (Mt. 23:31); indeed, in that the judgment process is now ongoing, we *are right now* witnesses against ourselves when we sin. And we are not only witnesses, but also the judge who pronounces the verdict of condemnation: for the sinner is condemned *of himself* (Tit. 3:11). In this lies the illogicality of sin and the blindness of man to the implications of his actions before God.

8:22 God was Israel’s King and they were His Kingdom. To reject Him as king was therefore to count themselves as not His Kingdom. And yet God still tried to work with them through the system of human kingship. Likewise, He didn’t want a physical temple; but they wanted one, and so He came and dwelt in it and worked through it, but it wasn’t His idea desire. God thus makes concession to human weaknesses, so eager is He to remain at work with us; and yet our use of those concessions often makes spirituality harder rather than easier. We should also learn to allow others some concessions to their human weaknesses- for God certainly does so with us.

9:15,25 What we hear in the ear, that we must preach on the housetops (Mt. 10:27). This is built on these verses, where God speaks in Samuel’s ear, and then he speaks that word to Saul on the housetop. Jesus is saying that in essence, we are all in Samuel’s position; we hear the word of this world’s salvation, the word about “the Kingdom” as it was for Saul, and that very fact is in itself the imperative to overcome our natural reservations and share it with those for whom it is intended- even if, as with Saul, we may consider them unlikely and unspiritual hearers.

9:16 Their request for a human king was, as God Himself mightily demonstrated to them, an utter rejection of Him, and He grieved because of it. And yet when God gave them a King, He expresses His decision in quite a different tone- as if Saul would save them from the Philistines in response to the people’s request to God. God speaks as if the gift of Saul was akin to the provision of Moses, to save poor Israel from their unwarranted persecution. Actually, Saul was slain by the Philistines- in His foreknowledge, the Almighty knew all about Saul. But in His pure grace, He doesn't reflect this in the way He speaks at this time. Another view would be that Saul could have saved Israel from the Philistines, that potential scenario had been enabled by God, but like so many people, he failed to live up to the potential God had created for him.

10:9 *God gave him another heart*- God is able to work directly on the human mind, giving us mindsets and attitudes which are more spiritual than we would otherwise have. He can make us “another person” (:7). But despite this will and ability of God to do this, Saul was ultimately untransformed, because he simply preferred the flesh.

10:19-21 It was God's wish that Israel would not have a human king; hence His sorrow when they did. Yet in the Law, God foresaw that they would want a human king, and so He gave commandments concerning how he should behave (Dt. 17:14,15). God foresaw their weaknesses and somehow provided for them, as He does with us. These passages speak of how Israel would choose to set a King over themselves, and would do so. Yet God worked through this system of human kings; hence the Queen of Sheba speaks of how God had set Solomon over Israel as King, and how he was king on God's behalf (2 Chron. 9:8). Israel set a king over themselves; but God worked with this, so that in a sense He set the King over them. However, by opting to make use of God's concessions to human weakness, real spirituality became harder to achieve. Thus it was harder to accept Yahweh as King if they had a human king demanding their allegiance.

10:27 *As though he had been deaf* – Much later, David describes himself as responding to criticism like this: “I as a deaf man, heard not” (Ps. 38:13). Yet he was alluding to how Saul, when likewise criticized by wicked men, “was as though he had been deaf” to their words. David learnt the secret of seeing the positive in our weak brethren, even in our persecutors, and he didn’t let all that was wrong with Saul interfere with this. He saw the good in Saul, he remembered that one good example he showed- and it empowered him to follow it. This not only develops and reflects humility, but it helps us cope with ongoing abusive situations without completely losing any sense of the value and significance of every human person- including the person of our abusers.

11:5 The call of God comes to us right in the midst of ordinary, mundane life. Gideon was called whilst in the middle of threshing wheat in a time of famine (Jud. 6:1), Saul whilst he was out looking for lost cattle (1 Sam. 9:10) and again whilst he was coming home from work one evening (1 Sam. 11:5); David whilst he was looking after the sheep; Samuel whilst he was asleep; Amos whilst he was leading the flocks to water (Am. 7:14); and see too 1 Kings 11:29; 19:16; 2 Kings 9:1-13,18. Christ likewise called men, arresting them with His radical call in the very midst of daily life, at the most utterly inconvenient moment, even the most humanly inappropriate moment- such as being on the way to your father’s funeral, or in the very act of casting a net into the sea.

11:11 Saul attacked in three groups because he was trying to imitate Gideon, whom he had as his spiritual hero: 1 Sam.11:11 = Jud.7:16; 13:2 = Jud. 7:8; 13:5 = Jud.7:12; 13:6 = Gideon offering before fighting Midian; 14:5,20 = Jud.7:22; 14:24 = imitating Gideon and his men going without food; 14:28,31 = Jud.8:4,5; 11:7 = Gideon killing his father's oxen. But merely replicating the outward actions of a faithful person doesn’t of itself mean we are spiritually minded nor finally acceptable to God.

12:14 *With both you and the king*- If all Israel had been obedient, then Saul would have been too. If a majority are spiritually minded, this can at times and in some ways influence a potentially weaker minority; even though the reverse is more often true. And yet Saul made the people “follow him trembling” because they weren’t spiritually stronger than him (13:7).

12:14,15 Israel requested a human king. God was Israel's king, and therefore their desire was effectively a rejection of God and Israel's special relationship with Him. And yet God gave them a human king. If they had a human king, it was harder for them to be God's Kingdom, to personally realize that God was their King, that He was the one to whom they owed all allegiance and duty. And yet God gave them a human king, because this was the path they had chosen; and by so doing He in one sense pushed them down the downward spiral of disobedience because they had chosen this themselves.

12:20,21 If we don't serve God whole-heartedly, we will serve the idols of this present age. There's no third road.

12:23 It is an actual sin- albeit a sin of omission- to cease to pray for our brethren.

13:9 Are we going to be like those Israelites who offered a peace offering, when actually they were not at peace with God at all (see too 2 Kings 16:13; Prov. 7:14; Am. 5:22)? This is a thought worth bearing in mind as we approach the breaking of bread service.

13:13 *Yahweh would have established your kingdom in Israel forever* – God sets up amazing potentials for people, and yet they fail to achieve them. It must be so tragic for God, seeing all the wasted potentials of humanity. And yet this would explain His enthusiasm to confirm us in our attempts to rise up to the potentials He has enabled for us. God’s punishment of Saul may appear severe, but Saul’s actions obviously embodied a large amount of unspirituality which was beneath the surface.

13:14 *A man after His own heart*- The God whose ways are above our ways as far as Heaven is above earth can say that David was of the same mind as Himself. This shows the extent of God’s humility, His enthusiasm to connect with man, and His eagerness to count our feeble spiritual mindedness for far more than it really is of itself.

14:6 Perhaps David was in fact "the young man who carried his armour”. Saul also calls him "young man" in 17:58. There was evidently an intense  spiritual and physical rapport between Jonathan and his armour bearer which was similar to that described between Jonathan and David. "I am with you according to your heart" (:7) has firm connection with David and Jonathan being described as having their souls knit together in 18:1. The record of David's battle with the Philistines in 2 Sam. 5:17-24 has certain similarities with the exploits of 14:8-11; as if, years later, David replicated his early adventure of faith. David already had a reputation in Israel for being "a mighty man of valour, a man of war” (16:18), even before the Goliath incident. This would be understandable if he had gone with Jonathan in chapter 14. His becoming Saul's  armour bearer (16:21) would then be seen as a logical promotion from being Jonathan's armour bearer. David came to lead Jonathan, rather than the other way around. And yet Jonathan accepted this, recognizing his own weakness and David’s spiritual superiority to him, without any jealousy. In this we see a wonderful humility. See on 18:3.

14:10 It is open to debate whether we should set up signs for God to fulfil. As we mature spiritually, it should become clearer and more intuitive to us from His word what we should do and how we should decide issues, without the agonies of indecision and dilemma.

14:20 *Every man’s sword was against his fellow*- This was God’s preferred method of destroying Israel’s enemies in so many of the victories He gave them. Division within a community is therefore a sign of God’s judgment of it; and those who justify and encourage division are therefore living out a position of condemnation.

14:33 Pointless following of legalistic obedience often leads people into sin because of their basic humanity.

14:37 In the same way as answered prayer reflects God’s pleasure, so prayer which God doesn’t respond to at all is one indicator of His displeasure (e.g. Saul’s experience in 1 Sam. 14:37). This isn’t to say that when we don’t receive the answers we expect, then God hasn’t responded. There’s a difference between God responding to prayer and God answering prayer as we expect Him to answer.

14:39 *Even if it is Jonathan my son*- It would seem that Saul was purposefully manipulating circumstance in order to kill his own son. This is how far jealousy blinds eyes, breaks families and relationships and obsesses people beyond reason.

15:6 Guilt by association isn’t a Biblical idea; in fact the very opposite is taught, and we should be careful not to practice this.

15:11 God tells Samuel of His rejection of Saul, and Samuel cries to Him all night. The implication is that Samuel was pleading with God to consider another future with Saul (see too :35; 16:1). Having stated His intentions, God is open to persuasion before He carries them out; that gap period is intended to inspire intense prayer and dialogue with God on our part.

15:17 Notice the links between Saul and Paul. "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (10:11) was directly matched by 'Is Saul of Tarsus also among the Christians?'. The way Paul was let down through a window to escape persecution (Acts 9:25; 2 Cor. 11:33) was surely to remind him of what King Saul had done to David (see on 19:12). They were both Benjamites, and perhaps his parents saw him as following in Saul's footsteps. And it seems Paul was aware of this. The implication is that Paul consciously changed his name from Saul to Paul ('the little one'), consciously alluding to this statement that when Saul was little (Heb. 'the littlest one') in his own sight , God anointed Saul and made him the rosh, the chief, over Israel. Maybe Paul's parents intended him to be the rosh over Israel; and it seems he would have made it had he not been converted. Paul saw how he had persecuted Christ, as Saul had David. He saw the self-will within him as it was in Saul. Yet he went on to see how pride had destroyed a man who could have achieved so much for God. And he determined that he would learn the lesson from Saul's failure; so he changed his name to Paul, the little one. What influence his sustained meditation on one Old Testament verse had upon him! It affected some basic decisions in his life; e.g. the decision to change his name. There was a time when Saul felt he was 'the littlest one' (as demonstrated in 9:21; 10:22). Paul alludes to it when he says he is less than the least of all saints, least of the apostles, chief of sinners (1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15). He earnestly resolved to be like Saul was at the beginning. "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19) is surely a reference back to Saul's disobedience (:22). What Bible characters are we trying to consciously learn from? For the Bible is largely history, and the range of characters and situations recorded are chosen so that we can always find some Biblical precedent and guidance for whatever situation we are in (Rom. 15:4).

15:23 *Because you have rejected the word of Yahweh, He has also rejected you*- Our attitude to God’s word is our attitude to Him; as we treat God’s word, so He will treat us.

15:35 *Samuel mourned for Saul*- Any condemnation of the wicked by God or occasional separation from them which we are asked to make must be the result of much sorrow (see too Lev. 10:6; 1 Cor. 5:2; Phil. 3:17-19). The idea of 'block disfellowship'- the cutting off of whole groups of believers because of their association with some more questionable ones -  hardly enables 'mourning' and pleading with individuals as is required.

16:14 The “spirit” often refers to an attitude of mind (e.g. Dt. 2:30; Prov. 25:28; Is. 54:6; 61:3; Ez. 18:31; Mk.14:38; Lk. 2:40; 2 Cor. 2:13; 12:18; Eph. 4:23). The “evil spirit” refers to Saul’s state of mind here; just as a “holy spirit” refers to a sanctified state of mind. The idea that ‘evil spirits’ refer to invisible cosmic beings isn’t Biblical; they would hardly flee just because of how a man plays a harp. Notice that here the “evil spirit” was “from Yahweh”- this is emphasized (:14,15,16; 18:10); this attitude of the mind was sent by God, not a super-human evil being acting in radical opposition to God.

17:9 This conflict is prophetic of Christ’s victory over sin on the cross (see on :54). The way that Israel failed to find a man to fight until David arose is exactly the language of the prophecies which speak of our inability to find a single man who could overcome sin, until Christ did so on the cross (Is. 41:28; 50:2; 59:16). There was a very real possibility that Christ like David could have failed [for He was man, not God Himself]- with the same disastrous consequences.

17:16 The faithful Israelite would have thought of the sacrifices being offered morning and evening, and would’ve reflected that they were powerless to give victory (cp. Heb. 10:4).

17:26 *What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine…?*- David asks this having just heard what would be done for the man who killed Goliath (:25); and then he asks it again (:30). The implication is that the offer of Saul’s daughter he found motivating. As Saul’s servant, from a poor family, he likely would’ve looked on at her from a distance, regretting that she was unreachable (18:23); and she was in love with him (18:20). Jonathan, her brother, was perhaps already his good friend (see on 14:6). Perhaps this looks forward to how Christ was motivated in His battle with sin by the thought of thereby winning us, His bride.

17:32 *Let no man’s heart fail*- Just before Christ destroyed the power of sin on the cross, He assured us in similar words (Jn. 14:1,27).

17:35 *I went out after it and struck it, and rescued it out of its mouth*- This shows an unusual level of commitment to the sheep, after the pattern of the unusual shepherd in Christ’s parable who risks His life in fighting a wild animal to save a sheep- no normal shepherd would do this. David not only prefigured Christ as the ultimately “good shepherd”, but shows the value he attached to all God’s creation.

17:40 *Five smooth stones*- He took five not because he thought he might miss a few times but because Goliath had four sons whom he likely intended to kill at the same time (2 Sam. 21:18-22; 1 Chron. 20:4-8). This was indeed spiritual ambition. But those four sons were killed later, by David’s men; just as we are left with some aspects of Christ’s victory against sin to follow up on ourselves.

17:46 *I will strike you down and cut off your head*- David was completely confident in faith, and had worked out what he would do after the initial victory- he would cut off Goliath’s head. Christ likewise was confident of victory on the cross and His parables and teachings assumed that victory ahead of time.

*That all the earth may know that there is a God*- The spirit of Christ’s words just before He went out to kill the power of sin on Golgotha (Jn. 14:31; 17:23).

17:49 *His forehead*- This is twice emphasized; pointing forward to how Christ’s victory over sin was ultimately in the mind.

17:54 'Golgotha' meaning 'The place of the skull' may well be the place near Jerusalem where David buried Goliath's skull. The whole incident opens up as a prototype of Christ’s victory over sin on the cross, with Goliath presented as a “man of sin”.

18:3 Our notes on chapter 17 have shown that David’s killing of Goliath was typical of Christ’s killing of sin on the cross. His victory there enabled the new covenant to come into operation with those who believe in Him; and so Jonathan becomes representative of us, and the covenant he enters with David looks ahead to the new covenant. Jonathan as the king’s son and commander of the army was the one who ought to have fought Goliath; but he didn’t (see on 14:6). Instead of being filled with envy, he humbled himself, stripped himself and gave his all to David, as we should to Christ, motivated by the wonder of His victory.

18:5 To achieve this state of mind must have required a lot of conscious thought and self-analysis by David. We get the sense that David pitted his wisdom against Saul's anger and bitter persecution; David's wisdom and prospering is repeatedly mentioned in tandem with Saul's anger against him (:5,11,14,15,30). These words are referring back to Dt. 29:9, which promised that those who kept the words of the covenant would prosper. David's charmed life and prospering despite all manner of plotting against him was due to his single-minded devotion to the Law; to those very chapters which tired Bible readers are wont to skip over as boring and not motivating. Yet David found something immensely inspiring and practical about the Law. The word made him wiser than his foes (Ps. 119:98)- and there is reason to think that Ps. 119, which is all about how much David loved God’s word, was written by David at the time of his persecution by Saul.

18:10 *An evil spirit from God*- See on 16:14.

19:5 Saul wanting to slay “innocent blood” = Mt.27:4; his persecution of David “without a cause” was exactly what the Jews did to Christ (Jn. 15:25). We see clearly David as a type of Christ and Saul as representative of the Jewish opposition to Him.

19:12 There are many connections between Saul and Paul; and Paul noticed them and was motivated by them (see on 15:17). The way Paul was let down through a window to escape persecution (Acts 9:25; 2 Cor. 11:33) was not of his own choice; God set up that situation to make him realize that he should not be as Saul, his namesake. And so, led by God in this, he purposefully changed his name from Saul to Paul, ‘the little one’, recalling how when Saul was “little” in his own sight, he was acceptable to God (15:17). We too are to look for the similarities between our lives and those of Biblical characters, and act accordingly; and God will work in our lives to make the similarities, differences and lessons the more apparent to us.

19:13 *An idol*- Although both Michal and David were in love with each other when they married and they were both members of God’s people, indeed Michal’s brother Jonathan was a very faithful believer, Michal was clearly not devoted to Yahweh as she should’ve been- for she had a large idol in the house. Ultimately the marriage didn’t work out. Being in love and both being nominally believers isn’t enough to make a marriage work as God intends; there must be on both sides a genuine love of God.

20:8 *Your servant*- David was respected by Jonathan as his spiritual superior because of David’s victory over Goliath (see on 18:3), but despite that, David considers himself Jonathan’s servant, in the spirit of servant leadership which characterizes Jesus.

20:16 *Yahweh will require it*- This affects the question of whether there will be a specific 'going through' of many (all?) our deeds at the day of judgment, or at least, all the sinful deeds of the condemned. Actions in this life will be "required" by God (Dt. 18:19; 23:21; Josh. 22:23; 2 Chron. 24:22; Ez. 3:20; 33:6,8)- at judgment day, when an explanation for our behaviour will be "required". The Hebrew word translated "require" in the above passages has the sense of to search / enquire- which suggests a process of discussion during the judgment process. Likewise God will "require" the flock at the hand of the pastors (Ez. 34:10; Heb. 13:17). There must be answerability before God for human actions; in this life and / or at the day of judgment when Christ returns. The apparent silence of God in this life can lead us to think that there are things we can ‘get away with’; but ultimately there will be accountability before God.

20:27 The Jews asked about Jesus "Where is he?" at a feast time (Jn. 7:11); just as Saul did about David.

20:30 *To the confusion of your mother’s nakedness* – The Hebrew idiom is hard to interpret, but it could suggest that Saul was falsely accusing Jonathan of having a homosexual relationship with David. If you feel you have been slandered by gossip in the church, remember that almost every servant of God has been through this at the hands of those they counted as their brethren: Joseph, Moses, Job, David, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, Paul, and above all Jesus Himself

20:31-34 Jonathan  represents us all in our relationship with Christ (see on 18:3). He lived in an environment which was bitterly opposed to David; yet he stuck up for him, at the risk of embarrassment and opposition, and certain damage to his own prospects; as we should in this wicked world. As Saul cast a javelin at David, so he did at Jonathan; as we should fellowship the sufferings of David's greater son. Saul's hate of David resulted in Jonathan being "grieved for David, because his father had treated him shamefully". Is this not our response to our world in their ceaseless blasphemy of Christ?

21:9 David’s eager taking of the sword of Goliath contrasts sadly with his earlier rejection of such weapons in order to slay Goliath (17:39). And David later reflects how he knew that his faithless taking of that sword and the showbread  would lead to the death of Abiathar’s family (1 Sam. 22:22). But still he did it. David was ultimately a righteous man, but if we were to draw a graph of his level of faith, with time along the bottom and his level of faith on the side- it would be a jagged graph. Just like our lives.

21:13,15 Going down South to Achish of Gath and playing the mad man has sad connections with the patriarchs going down to Egypt in times of weak faith. This was a weak period of David’s life; see on :9.

22:2 David at this time could be likened to Christ in our period of history, still awaiting being enthroned and given the Kingdom promised to Him. Those who followed David at this time would then represent us who follow Christ at this time, when society generally doesn’t accept Him. Those who came to Him were initially spiritually weak, but they developed during their time in the wilderness with Him. And it was those who were loyal to Him in the wilderness who later became the rulers in his Kingdom, as we will in Christ’s Kingdom when it is established on earth (Rev. 5:8). Those who came to David were initially driven to him by their hard experiences in this world, rather than attracted to him for purely spiritual motives; and so it is with many of those who come to Christ. Our motives for doing so change and mature over time.

22:5 *Go into the land of Judah*- David’s whole experience with Saul was of course led and arranged by a loving Father. The sensible thing would have been for David to get out of Saul’s way and lay quiet- and this is what he tried to do, by going to Moab. But then God tells him to go back into Judah. This was political suicide; it’s similar to how Christ returned to Judea in a similar situation (Jn. 11:7,8). It made no human sense to expose himself to Saul again. And then God tells David to go and fight with the Philistines in order to rescue the people of Keilah (23:2). Yet the men of Keilah weren’t allies worth having- even they were prepared to betray David to Saul, and by this action he made the Philistines hate him yet more, so refuge amongst them was no longer possible. Again and again, God led David into situations that were politically suicidal, that only made things worse for him… because He wanted David to trust in Him alone. And so it happens in our lives. Time and again.

22:22 David had great sensitivity and this led to an almost telepathic ability to enter into other's problems; it became legendary throughout Israel, and this was one of the things which endeared him to his people (see too 2 Sam.14:17,20; 18:13)- and there is a powerful similarity here Christ, whose sensitivity was greater than anyone’s. His ability to know things may have been partly due to direct Divine guidance, but sometimes it may’ve been simply due to His acute sensitivity to people and human situations. We can take comfort that He is the same today as He was yesterday, and is highly sensitive to all our circumstances.

23:2 See on 22:5. This situation is typical of Christ’s in Jn. 11:7,8.

23:15 *To seek his life*- Psalm 54 was written when David received the news that the Ziphites had betrayed him. The reference to oppressors ‘seeking after my soul / life’ (Ps. 54:3) uses the same Hebrew words as here, where Saul seeks for David’s life at Ziph. That Psalm gives an insight into the mind of David; how he perceived himself, how he understood God. He was obviously in a desperate situation- he’d been betrayed, and Saul appeared certain now to corner him and kill him. He asks God of course to save him; he doesn’t just resign himself to what looked like an impossible situation. He had the vision to believe that God can do miracles. He asks God to ‘judge’ him, to ‘plead my cause’ (Ps. 54:1 Heb.). There he was, just having received the news… and he prays, and composes a Psalm, right there and then. Composing poetry in the heat of the moment was his way of calming down and focusing his faith. That’s not to say, of course, that he didn’t later refine Psalm 54 and ‘write it up’ as it were.

23:16,17 Only occasionally could Jonathan and David meet, brief moments of intense fellowship away from the rest of the world, strengthening each other's hand in God, re-confirming their covenant together (18:3; 20:8,16; 23:18). No wonder their goodbyes were so hard (20:41). Not surprisingly, they looked forward to the promised day of David's Kingdom. Our communion meetings with Christ (see on 18:3) during our wilderness journey must surely mirror those meetings.

23:21 *Yahweh bless you, for you have had compassion on me*- Saul made the common mistake of assuming that anyone on his side and against his perceived enemies was therefore also on God’s side. But our enemies’ enemy isn’t therefore necessarily a good person or Godly. This logic leads to all manner of damaged relationships between individuals and groups.

23:26 *Saul went on one side of the mountain and David and his men on the other*- David was going up one side of the cone shaped mountain, getting higher and higher, whilst Saul was chasing him, never catching up with him, but going around the other side. The dust from David’s group would’ve been visible to Saul’s army. It was clear that soon David would reach the summit- and there would be no way out, apart from upwards to Heaven. He was in a no way out situation, just as God sometimes puts us into. But amazingly, God stopped Saul in his tracks, just as He sometimes saves us from such humanly hopeless situations, so that we will walk humbly and gratefully before Him the rest of our days. See on 29:4.

23:27 The way Saul returns from pursuing David because of a rumour of invasion is so similar to Rabshakeh’s retreat from Jerusalem after rumours of incursions (Is. 37:9,10). There is a tremendous repetition within the Biblical narratives. Individuals tend to go through very similar experiences, and often the same words are used in the descriptions of the experience or their response to it. Some of these similarities are so specific and humanly unlikely to be replicated that one can only conclude that there was a higher power over-ruling their situations. It may be that the Angels work in human lives according to some kind of Divine pattern, and this accounts for the sense of repetition and déjà vu. But it may also be because it is God's intention that we meditate upon the lives of previous servants to the point where we see their experiences coming through, in principle, in our own lives; and we are urged on to a like victory as they attained.

24:4,5 David saw Saul for who he was, the anointed of God. Christ too taught His men to have respect for the Pharisees, who ‘sat in Moses’ seat’ , and therefore ought to be given reverence on that account (Mt. 23:2). David's extreme respect for Saul is shown in the fact that Yahweh had explicitly told him that he would deliver Saul into David's hand, and David was free to do as he wished to him; but because of his genuine respect for Saul, David didn't take the liberty of killing him; he chose a higher level on which to relate to Saul. Indeed, he even felt guilty at cutting off the blue ribbon from Saul's coat, such was David's respect for Saul. All those baptized into Christ have been “anointed” in that we are “in Christ”, ‘the anointed one’ (2 Cor. 1:21). We must truly respect others on account of their being in the body of Christ / God’s people, as Saul was. Paul deeply loved Corinth and respected them for their status as men and women in Christ, in receipt of the Father's love and grace, even though they abused him. Therefore he like David could love his enemies within the ecclesia; for Saul was in the ecclesia of Israel as much as David was.

24:15 *Yahweh therefore be the judge and give sentence between me and you; may He plead my cause*- It’s not as if God isn’t watching what’s going on now, and will only open the books and judge human behaviour when Christ returns. His judgment is in a sense ongoing; we live out our lives before His judgment presence, and the final day of judgment will be a public declaration of the verdicts which have already been announced; it will largely be for our benefit rather than God’s. David mixes metaphors here- God is for him both the ultimate judge, and also his counsel for the defence. Paul does the same in Romans 8, concluding in awe that if God in Christ is both our judge and our personal advocate, the one on our side in the case, then nobody and nothing can be against us; our salvation is assured.

24:18 it seems God later gave Saul into David’s hand when “a deep sleep from the Lord” fell upon Saul at the very time David intended to kill him (26:12). Saul himself realized that the Lord had delivered him into David’s hand to kill him. God thus gave David the possibility to get revenge and freedom from persecution- and yet at the last minute, it seems, David chose an even higher level; of love and deep respect for this spiritually sick man.

25:3 *He belonged to the family of Caleb*- A reminder that a faithful believer doesn’t always have faithful descendants. We each stand independently before God, and yet nurture can play a significant part in the final algorithm determining why some end up faithful and some don’t.

25:19 *Go on before me; I am following you*- Abigail was learning from Biblical precedent, just as we should; in this case, the example of Jacob trying to appease the approaching Esau and his men (cp. :20) by sending extravagant presents and then following behind them (Gen. 32:13-22). The similarity presents David as unspiritual Esau, and indeed this was a low point in David’s spiritual life; see on :33. Her bowing with her face to the earth was exactly what Jacob did to Esau (:23 = Gen. 33:3). Her mind was clearly in that record, and she succeeded as we should in translating Biblical history into a practical template for our daily crises.

25:33 David thanks Abigail for persuading him not to ‘shed blood’ and “avenging myself with my own hand”- the very things he elsewhere condemns in his Psalms (e.g. Ps. 44:3). Time and again in the Psalms, David uses that Hebrew word translated “avenging myself” about how God and not man will revenge / save him against his enemies, for God saves / avenges the humble in spirit not by their strength and troops but by His. But in the anger of hot blood, David let go of all those fine ideas. In the heat of the moment we too can let go of all the far higher principles we know and love, and do the very things we detest when we see in others.

25:34 David sent messengers to Nabal meaning well to him, and they were rudely rebuffed, resulting in his anger which only Abigail’s grace and wisdom saved him from . And yet the same situation repeated in its essence when he sent messengers to Hanun who were likewise misinterpreted and rebuffed (2 Sam. 10:3). Again, David got angry- but there was no Abigail to restrain him, and he did get into an impossible fight… from which by grace God delivered him. David failed to learn from his previous experience. David had just been tested by God in the matter of sparing the life of his enemy Saul- and he came through the test with flying colours (1 Sam. 24). But now, soon afterwards, he was tested again in the same area in the matter of Nabal- and he initially failed, intent as he was to take the life of his enemy Nabal. Thus a circumstance can repeat over a matter in which we were previously successful- and we can still fail that test. God is ever seeking to teach us by repeating circumstances in our lives.

#### 25:35 It seems that the thief had a deep Bible knowledge. It could be that when he asks to be remembered for good when the Lord Jesus returned in His Kingdom, he had in mind Abigail's words: that when David returned in glory in his Kingdom, "my Lord, then remember your handmaid" (:31). This was prefaced by her asking: "Forgive the sin of your handmaid” (:28). David's response was marvellously similar to that of the Lord Jesus to the thief: “Go up in peace to your house. I have listened to your words and have granted your request”. It would seem that the thief saw in David a type of Christ, and saw in Abigail's words exactly the attitude he had. And Christ accepted this. Again we see how the faithful didn’t just read the Bible as history but proactively saw the similarities with their situations and spoke and acted accordingly.

25:39 *Has kept back His servant from doing wrong*- God is able to work in our lives to stop us sinning over and above our own steel will; and we should ask Him to do so. We should also seek to be like Abigail, using wisdom and humility to stop others falling into sin.

26:12 See on 24:4,518.

26:19 So many of the Psalms contain references to the smear campaign against David (Ps. 27:12; 31:13; 109:23 all seem to have reference to this verse). This frequency of reference in itself indicates the weight with which this tragedy rested upon David's mind.

*They have said ‘Go and serve other gods!’*– Whether or not they said these very words, to exclude someone from the worshipping community [which can be done by anything from being too lazy to give them a ride to a meeting to formal excommunication] effectively invites people to go to “other gods”. Many fail this test; others like David learn that in fact God is far wider than what they had previously thought (see on :20).

26:20 *Far from the presence of Yahweh*- David still held the wrong idea that a national god, in this case Yahweh of Israel, could only be served on his own territory and not outside of it. This explains why David so bitterly regretted that Saul had made it practically impossible for him to remain within the territory of Israel (:19). Yet David’s later Psalms reflect his realization that Yahweh is the one and only God of all the planet, His presence is everywhere and He can therefore be worshipped anywhere on earth. Although David had a wrong understanding of God on this point, this didn’t mean that he couldn’t have faith in God nor please Him; and through reflection on the circumstances God sent him, David came to the truth about this matter.

26:21 *I have sinned*- The very words of Judas (Mt.27:4), again confirming David as a type of Christ and Saul as representative of the opposition to Christ.

26:24 Here we see established the principle that the grace we show others is related to the grace God will show us. David could have killed Saul, indeed God gave him the legitimate opportunity to do so, but he chose the higher level- of grace and forgiveness, despite Saul’s lack of repentance at the time. We learn that someone doesn’t have to be grovelling in repentance before we show grace to them.

27:1 *I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul* is surely a collapse of faith, given that God had anointed him as king. And it led to the way in which David deceived Achish by pretending he was attacking Israelite towns, when in fact he was going out and attacking the Amalekite settlements, killing all men, women and children in them so that nobody was left alive to tell that it was David who had attacked them (:8-10). Innocent people were slain by David’s sword for the ‘political’ reason that he had to keep Achish ‘in the dark’ about what he was really up to. And so in case a five year old say something incriminating later, David simply killed the little boy. Indeed, when Achish later says that David would be best not to go with him to fight Saul, David hypocritically insists that he has been a loyal and upright servant of Achish (29:8). This was hardly an example of the “integrity” and “uprightness” which David glorifies in his Psalms, and which he insisted he was full of (Ps. 25:21). Indeed he claims that his integrity is the basis of his acceptance by God (Ps. 26:1). It’s recorded that in this ethnic cleansing which David performed, he took the spoil of those settlements for himself (:9). Indeed when he destroyed Ziklag, he took away their herds “and said, This is David’s spoil” (30:20). The pressure of circumstance can so easily lead us to slip into periods of life where we betray the principles we enthusiastically proclaim in worship, as David at this time lived quite contrary to the spirit of his own Psalms.

27:4 *Searching*- It’s emphasized that Saul "sought" David in order to kill Him (19:10; 23;14,15,25; 24:2; 25:26,29; 26:2,20; 27:1,4; 2 Sam. 4:8), and likewise the Gospels stress that the Jews “sought” to kill Christ (Mt. 21:46; Mk. 11:18; 12:12; 14:1,11,55; Lk. 19:47; 20:19; 22:2,6; Jn.5:16,18; 7:1,11,25,30; 8:37,40; 10:39; 11:8,56; 18:4,7,8).

27:8 *From ancient times*- The Hebrew word *olahm*, often translated ‘for ever’, clearly doesn’t always mean literal future infinity- although in some places it can have that sense. It’s actually used in places to describe the past; events of a long time ago, but not events that happened an ‘infinitely long time’ ago. It describes up to the time of the Exodus (also in Is. 51:9; 63:9); and elsewhere the time of a previous generation (Dt. 32:7; Job 22:15); to the time just before the exile of Judah (Is. 58:12; 61:4; Mic. 7:14; Mal. 3:4); to the time just before the flood (Gen. 6:4). Descriptions of the Law of Moses and other things as being *olahm*, eternal, must be understood in this more limited sense of a long time, an age, but not necessarily literal eternity.

28:6 *When Saul inquired of Yahweh, Yahweh didn’t answer him*- But in God's final analysis of Saul, He says that He smote Saul because Saul sinned against God's word by not enquiring of God, but of a witch (1 Chron. 10:13,14). But Saul did enquire of God (see too the same Hebrew word in 14:27), but God didn't answer him. Although Saul prayed to God and enquired of His word on the surface, in his heart, he did nothing of the sort; and therefore his prayer and enquiry was reckoned never to have happened. And we must ask how much of our prayer and Bible study is seen by God as being only spoken and read on a surface level. This was exactly the problem of natural Israel (Hos. 7:14; 11:7).

28:11,12 Death is total unconsciousness (Job 3:17; Ecc. 9:5,10). Notice that Samuel came "up" out of the earth as in a resurrection, not down from heaven, where we would expect him to be if common ideas are correct. (:14,15). Samuel appeared as an old man, not a “soul” (:14). The woman surely guessed she was talking to Saul- he was the tallest of the Israelites (10:23), and was well known to everyone as the king; hence she could accept his assurance of immunity from prosecution (:10). She was used to running fake séances (because nobody truly communicates with the dead), and so she pretends she has some insight to know she’s talking to Saul even though it was obvious (:12), and then describes Samuel in the kind of terms Saul would’ve expected- an old man wearing a prophets’ mantle (:14), just as Saul would’ve last remembered Samuel. However, Samuel then appears for real, temporarily resurrected by God according to the principle of Prov. 26:5, that God answers fools according to their foolish requests. Perhaps her scream of :12 was in genuine shock at seeing Samuel appear for real. This would explain why the woman stops speaking to Saul and Samuel talks directly to Saul- not through the woman as a medium between them, as was usual for such a séance.

28:19  Saul, Jonathan and Samuel all went to the same place at death. Righteous Abraham was “gathered to his people” (or ancestors), on death; they were idolaters (Gen. 25:8; Josh. 24:2). The division between sheep and goats will be when Christ returns, at the resurrection and judgment seat (Mt. 13:48; 25:33)- not at the moment of death. At death we return to dust like the animals, good and bad all go to the same place- but the difference is that those responsible to God will be resurrected and judged, and the faithful will then live eternally in God’s Kingdom on earth.

29:4 David was in an impossible situation; he had not been attacking Israelites as he had previously claimed to the Philistines; he had a strong conscience against killing Saul; yet he had given the impression he was willing to zealously fight against and kill his own Israelite people; it seemed there was no way out. And then, God’s gracious hand acted. Some of the Philistine army leaders objected to David’s presence on the battlefield- at the very last minute! God leads us into apparently dead end, no way out situations- and then delivers us out of them by His grace, in ways we had never considered. See on 23:26.

30:6 Yet David was innocent. Grief leads to a strong desire to blame someone for the loss, and that desire can lead to friends and brethren turning upon each other. Indeed, much harmful behaviour arises from the basic human need to find a scapegoat, someone or something upon which to place guilt. One implication of our seriously accepting that Christ on the cross was a guilt offering, the fulfilment of the Mosaic scapegoat ritual, is that we will no longer experience such a need to scapegoat and lay guilt. For all guilt, however perceived and from whatever cause, has finally been carried away into the wilderness by His unique and far reaching sacrifice there.

30:7 There are several references to the ephod and to “Urim” and “Thummim” in the historical records. The ephod was the priest’s waistcoat upon which the breastplate was hung. It seems that Urim and Thummim were the names of two stones kept within the ephod. From the questions answered by them, it would seem they were capable of giving binary answers to questions, presumably through flashing in a certain sequence- if God chose to work through them in response to prayers for answers about yes / no choices.

30:22 Paul considered that Mark had not gone with them to the work (Acts 15:38). This is quoting the Septuagint of 1 Sam. 30:22, where "all the wicked men and troublemakers among David’s followers said, Because they *didn’t go with us* we will not give them any of the spoil”. Why does the Spirit make this connection? Is it not suggesting that Paul, zealous soldier of David / Jesus as he was, was in those early days in some sense a sinful man, bent on achieving his own glory in preaching, and unwilling to share it with anyone who wasn't spiritually or physically strong enough to do it as he was (cp. the weaker followers of David)? If this is the case, then this is a far, far cry from the Paul who wrote his letters some years later, begging Timothy to come to encourage him. Paul like David developed spiritually over the course of his spiritual journey.

30:31 We wonder why God arranged for David to have the experiences of this chapter just before the death of Saul. The moment of Saul’s death was of huge significance to David psychologically- it was the end of an era of persecution, the end of a love-hate relationship which must have emotionally and spiritually drained him, and the beginning of his own kingship. God is very sensitive to us, and He obviously knew that David needed these humbling experiences in order to prepare him for the news of Saul’s death- e.g. he had to go through the experience of having his supporters turn against him to the point of almost literally killing him, falsely blaming him for a disaster (:6), in order to prepare him for widespread acclaim and desire to crown him king just days later.

31:4 *His armour bearer would not, for he was respectful*- David had been known throughout Israel for teaching by example that he would not harm the Lord’s anointed, and that anybody who did so would have to give account (24:6; 26:9-11). Although Saul’s armour bearer was likely one of his most loyal supporters in the campaign against David, David’s spiritual reasoning and example had influenced him, so that in the heat of battle he acted accordingly. We learn from this that our examples are far more powerful than we may realize.