

Committed – 2 Samuel 15:19-22

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Israel's Blessing*

1. At Mt. Sinai, when God gave Israel the invitation to be His special covenant people, He said they would become a *kingdom of priests*. [Exo. 19:6]
2. He meant Israel was to bring the knowledge of the One True God to the entire world.
3. One of the ways they would do that was through the blessings God would pour on them as they faithfully followed Him, as spelled out in the Law of Moses.
 - a. As they prepared to enter Canaan, Moses told them if they followed Yahweh they'd know blessing & goodness *unparalleled* in history. [Deut. 28]
 - b. But if they turned from God to worship idols they'd have the *opposite*; judgments that would be *worse* than any other.
 - c. The choice was theirs = Obedience & blessing, or disobedience & a curse.
 - d. *Either way* – God would make Israel a *witness* to the nations.
 - 1) They could bear witness to Him through blessings exalting them among the nations.
 - 2) Or they would stand as a witness through the abundance & severity of their trials.
4. *Under David's leadership*, Israel became an effective witness to the world of the reality & power of Yahweh.
 - a. Though David was far from perfect, he loved God. His deepest desire was to honor the Lord.
 - b. And he did his best to spread the Faith throughout the territory God had promised to Israel.
 - c. Because of this, God showered tremendous blessings on Israel at that time.
 - 1) Israel experienced a boon in material prosperity as bumper crops & herds came in year after year.
 - 2) History tells us the major world empires went into decline at this time.
 - a) They *reversed* their decades long pattern of expansion & withdrew behind their own borders to deal with *internal problems*.
 - b) This left a power vacuum that allowed David to extend Israel's borders to their *furthest extent*.
 - c) He made treaties with bordering nations that increased trade & wealth.
 - d) For the first time in nearly 600 years there was *peace* in Israel – no one was oppressing or threatening them.
5. This was *Israel's Golden Age*, which grew even more under David's son, Solomon.
 - a. During Solomon's reign, the world came to see Jerusalem's glory & hear his wisdom.
 - b. Kings, queens, & wise men came from far & wide to verify the rumors of Israel's exceptional blessing.
 - c. They were told Israel's blessing was due to Yahweh's goodness.

- d. Some of these visitors returned to their lands as converts to the Faith of Israel, just as God intended. [1 Kings 10]

B. Setting the Scene

1. At this time, Israel's Golden Age has *begun*.
2. Because she was the emerging world power, mercenaries came seeking employ in David's army.
3. They were soldiers of fortune who sold their services to whoever could pay their price.
4. But among them was a man who came with a *different motive*.
 - a. Like the others, he was a warrior, but his trip to Jerusalem wasn't driven by greed.
 - b. He came because he'd learned the lesson God's blessing was meant to teach: Yahweh was real!
 - c. His name was Ittai, a Philistine & we read of him in our text today.

5. While this is the beginning of Israel's Golden Age, all is not well in David's home.
6. His good-looking, popular son Absalom is impatient for the throne. He can't wait for David to die off, so he staged a coup.
7. Not wanting to see Jerusalem destroyed, David fled.
8. In humble brokenness, assuming this turn of affairs was God's discipline for the heinous sins he'd committed with Uriah & his wife, he led the few followers still loyal to him in a retreat.
 - a. As they reached the eastern gate, David stopped & let all of them exit while he stood as their rear-guard.
 - b. As they passed, he had a chance to see who'd remained loyal, as well as those who'd **NOT**!
 - c. As the end of the line passed by, David realized there were *too few* to mount a defense. Their only hope was to outrun Absalom's forces.
9. Yet even with this awareness of *the need for more men*, David saw a guy he had a concern about.

III. TEXT

A. David Opens the Door - Vs. 19-20

Vs. 19-20

1. Among the people fleeing with David from Absalom was a man named *Ittai* from the Philistine capital of Gath.
2. You'll remember David had some history w/Gath. He'd fled there when on the run from Saul years before.
 - a. Gath was also Goliath's hometown. The Gittites knew David well.
 - b. 25 years have passed since David became King & by now the Philistines have been *subdued*.
3. Ittai was a Philistine, a resident of Gath, who at one time had been a commander of the Philistine army. He'd probably faced David in battle & come out the loser.
 - a. Instead of *resentment* toward David & Israel, Ittai *admired* them.
 - b. Since the Philistines had been superior in numbers, training & weapons,

- victory ought to have been assured. They had dominated Israel for decades!
- c. But under David, Israel had an unbroken string of victories that ended Philistine hegemony & made them little more than a vassal state to Israel.
 - d. Ittai was a sharp guy—he drew the right conclusion—Yahweh, Israel’s God, *was real & powerful*.
 - e. David’s reputation as the slayer of Goliath & the story of how he’d risen to the throne proved to Ittai he was a genuine follower of Yahweh.
 - f. After several years of watching Israel’s rise to peace, power, & prosperity, while his once great hometown of Gath fell further & further into trouble & decline, Ittai decided it was time for a change.
4. He knew the wise thing to do was to put *his* faith in Yahweh *too*.
 - a. Learning how to follow God would best be learned by the *one man* who best exemplified such faith – David. So Ittai packed up his family & moved to Jerusalem.
 - b. When he shared his plans with the men under his command, they expressed their desire to go with him. So they packed up their families too & the group went to Jerusalem.
 5. They arrived just days before Absalom’s rebellion.
 6. As David was fleeing, he pulled Ittai aside & said –
 - a. “Look, I appreciate your support, I certainly could use it. But this isn’t your fight.
 - b. You just got here & don’t know the political situation.
 - c. You don’t have homes yet & your loyalty is undeclared, so why risk siding with me when it looks so bleak?
 - d. It would be smarter for you to stay here & wait for Absalom.”
 - e. Notice David referred to Absalom as “the king.” He doesn’t know how this whole thing is going to turn out & at this point it’s not looking good.
 7. Because Ittai was so *new* in town, David hadn’t had a chance to interview him yet.
 - a. He didn’t know his reasons for emigrating.
 - b. David probably saw Ittai as just one more mercenaries who’d come over the last few years offering their services.
 - c. Most of those were now backing Absalom because he looked like the right one to bet on.
 - d. As much as David could use the help, he didn’t want to hold Ittai to a promise he’d never had a chance to make.
 - e. So he opened the door to leaving & said, “Thanks for the kindness – but really, if you’re here for what your mercenary buddies are after, you have a better chance linking up with Absalom.”

B. Ittai Closes the Door – Vs. 21-22

V. 21

1. Ittai made it clear he wasn’t following David with a mercenary motive.
2. He uses the *covenant* name of God here – Yahweh.
 - a. He didn’t use the *generic* name for God – El, which could mean just about anything.
 - b. Ittai didn’t refer to God as the “big guy upstairs” or “my higher power.”

- c. He was Yahweh – that special name God gave those who want a personal relationship with Him.
- 3. Ittai says *his* place, *his* calling, is at *David's side*, whether that be in life or death.
- 4. *Most of Israel* may not recognize David as God's anointed king as they went after the upstart Absalom, but *Ittai* knew who the *real* king was – & would be loyal even if no one else was.
- 5. For Ittai, life was not about winning or losing, success or failure, survival or defeat, gain or loss.
- 6. It was about one thing: Being where David was.
- 7. Ittai understood that believing in & following God at that moment meant serving King David.
- 8. So even though David had called Absalom the king, Ittai respectfully *corrected* David; Absalom wasn't the king – *David was*.
- 9. And if the king was living in the wilderness, that's where Ittai would be as well.
 - a. He knew that sitting on a throne would not make Absalom a king.
 - b. But if David sat on a rock in a cave, that would *make* it a throne.
 - c. Thrones do not make kings; Kings make thrones.
- 10. Ittai was a man of immense character who understood in making our choices we either decide to do what's easy & pleasing, or what's right.
- 11. He was committed to what was right – no matter how difficult.

V. 22

- 12. They accompanied David into hiding in the wilderness.

C. *Ittai as 'Disciple'*

- 1. Ittai is a fitting picture of us as we follow the *Son of David* – Jesus.
 - 2. A few vs. later we read David crossed the Kidron, weeping as he *fled for his life*.
 - 3. A thousand years later, the Son of David crossed that same stream on His way to Gethsemane where He *offered His life*.
 - 4. Both David & Jesus left Jerusalem as rejected kings. Both wept on the west slope of the Mt. of Olives over wayward Jerusalem.
 - 5. Both heard of betrayal by a close friend there; David by Ahithophel; Jesus by Judas.
 - 6. Both had a few loyal followers who went with them.
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- 7. The parallels go on & become even more acute, even prophetic, but I'll stop there today & leave the rest till later in our study of the life of David when we see His return to the City.
 - 8. What I want to focus on this morning is *Ittai's commitment to David in the meantime*. It's a wonderful picture of our commitment to Christ.
 - a. As the rejected king fled to hide in the wilderness, here comes Ittai, a foreigner, a one time enemy, who pledges himself to follow David, even to death.
 - b. David clarified Ittai's motive; offering him an out. But Ittai affirmed his commitment.
 - 9. Jesus, the Messiah-King of Israel, was rejected by His people.

- a. He went to the cross, rose from the dead, & returned to heaven.
 - b. We await the day when He returns to take His rightful throne, just as David returned to reclaimed his.
 - c. Ittai, a foreigner, is an apt picture of *Gentiles* who come to faith in God.
 - d. Just as Ittai realized serving Yahweh meant following his anointed, King David, we realize serving God means following His anointed, the Son of David, King Jesus.
 - e. Remember what being a disciple meant at the time of Jesus – it meant being WITH the Rabbi 24/7.
 - 1) Wherever the rabbi was, his disciples were.
 - 2) *So close* did they follow, they aspired to be covered with the dust from his feet.
 - f. Look again at Ittai’s commitment in v. 21. – “In whatever place my lord the king shall be, ... there also your servant will be.”
 - g. That’s the heart, passion & desire of a disciple.
10. Following David meant exchanging the comforts of Jerusalem for the challenges of the wilderness.
- a. So David asked him, “Is this what you want? Are you ready for what following me means?”
 - b. Jesus did the same to some of His would-be followers.
 - 1) When they came with a set of *conditions*, Jesus turned them away. [Luke 14:25-33]
 - 2) He told them to *count the cost* of discipleship. What was that cost? ***Everything!***
 - 3) He said, “If anyone wants to be My disciple, he must take up his cross, die to self & follow Me.”
 - 4) He said, “Once you set out with Me, there’s no turning or looking back with regret.” [Luke 9:57-62]
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11. The most common *label* given to believers today is “***Christian.***”
- a. But that word means different things to different people.
 - b. Judging by recent polls of what people believe – the majority of those who call themselves ‘Christians’ don’t hold anything close to a Biblical worldview.
 - c. They’re deeply confused on some of the most basic doctrines of the Faith.
12. Taking a cue from Ittai’s example—it might be better if we called ourselves “***followers*** of Jesus” & meant by that what *he* said to David – “In whatever place Jesus, my master & king is, there will I be also.”
13. Being a Christian doesn’t mean ***adding*** Jesus onto our already busy lives as some kind of ***accessory***.
- a. It means laying down our lives, our dreams, desires, wants, priorities, values –
 - b. To receive a whole new life, marked by ***new*** dreams, desires, wants, values & priorities.
14. Jesus isn’t an ***additive*** we put in to add more spice to life.
15. He’s not a ***song*** we insert in our ***playlist***.
16. He isn’t a ***color*** splashed on our canvas to add interest.

17. He's not a *game* to play when bored.
18. He's the *Sum* of all life, meaning, & purpose.
19. He's the *Center*. Our lives revolve around *Him*, not He, us!
20. He's the King! *He* rules, not we.
21. He is *God* - we exist **FOR** Him, not He for us.
22. This is what it means to be a follower of Christ, a *disciple*. If it's *anything less* than this, it's *not* what Jesus meant.
23. Just as Ittai had to turn his back on Jerusalem, the city that rejected her king, so he could follow David,
24. We must turn *our* backs on a Christ-rejecting world to follow the Son of David.
25. John said it this way in 1 John 2:15 – “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. “
26. James is even more clear in 4:4.

III. CONCLUSION

A. *Commitment*

1. Being a Christian in the good ole' US is fairly trouble-free today.
2. The only opposition we face is the sneer of a skeptic or the hostility of a hypocrite.
3. Other than that, we don't really face persecution.
 - a. We meet freely & openly.
 - b. We have our own radio & TV stations, newspapers, music, & books.
 - c. We even have our own *slogan industry* that churns out bumper stickers, shirts, jewelry, wristbands, even key-chains & lanyards!
4. And we're blessed with a level of *material prosperity* unparalleled in history.
 - a. We get 3 squares a day, have a closet full of a clothes, a home theater & a computer with broadband.
 - b. If we get sick, there're doctors, medical clinics, & drug stores on every other corner.
5. The danger *WE* face isn't the hostility of the world so much as a love *for* it, attraction *to* it!
6. The little slice of the world we live in doesn't *attack*; it *seduces*.
7. We need to be as *tough-minded & battle-hardened* in our commitment to Christ as our brothers & sisters in Sudan & China who right now are being *martyred* for their faith.
8. The battle is *no less real* for us – the enemy is just using a *different tactic* on us.
9. **And know this** – the day *is coming* when persecution like that taking place in Sudan & China, & what millions have endured throughout history for the name of Christ, *will come here*.
10. Read your Bible. Discover what it says about the End times.
11. We already see the tide turning as the Christian Faith is increasingly marginalized & God is pushed from the public square.
12. How serious is your commitment to Christ?
 - a. If we can't hold fast our confession here, *now* – when the worst we're likely to face is being *called* 'religious fanatics' –
 - b. How are we going to stand when being a Christian may cost us our lives?

13. I know that sounds dramatic & even far-fetched Persecution seems remote.
14. Let me tell you a quick story as we end –
- a. In the 1930's in Germany, there was a small group of pastors who grew troubled by Adolph Hitler's increasing popularity & power.
 - b. He brought Germany back from economic & social chaos & the nation was booming once more.
 - c. It seemed like happy times to nearly everyone. Everyone except a small group of believers who heard in his speeches the seeds of hate.
 - d. They quietly began to plan for the time when they'd no longer be able to meet openly.
 - e. Their peers told them they were being paranoid; after all, Adolph had made it clear he supported the church & would leave it alone.
 - f. But these pastors continued to prepare for a future they *dreaded* but knew was coming.
 - g. Sure enough, the day came when Hitler co-opted the churches & made them just one more part of the Nazi regime.
 - h. When these men refused to turn their pulpits into fascist platforms they were sent to prison, where they were executed for crimes against the State. Probably the most well known of these martyrs was *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*.
 - i. It's ironic that 8 years before Bonhoeffer was hanged by the Nazis, he wrote a book that's become a classic of Christian literature titled, *The Cost of Discipleship*.
 - a. In 1937, as he looked at German churches he saw thousands of people who were 'Christian' in name only. There was no commitment to Christ that would weather the gathering storm about to descend on them.
 - b. He challenged those who claim to be believers to examine themselves & make sure they heeded the call to **Follow Jesus**.

B. End There

1. That's where I want to end today – As a pastor concerned for his flock.
 2. Are you an Ittai? One who says to Jesus, "Where ever You go, is where I go. Life for me *is* YOU!"
 3. Paul said it this way – To live is Christ – to die is gain."
 4. David *challenged* Ittai – he *tested* his commitment. Jesus did the same with His disciples.
 5. And now, here – the Spirit does the same with us.
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6. I want to apologize to those of you who've thought Christianity was simply fire insurance.
 - a. That you could live any way you wanted to, but as long as you *call yourself* a Christian, put a bumper sticker on your car, & go to church once every 6 weeks, you'll avoid the hot spot.
 - b. And you think that because that's the way the Gospel was presented to you.
 - c. Maybe that's the way the person who originally shared with you lived.
 - d. I've heard some pretty atrocious altar calls over the years.
 - e. The speaker made it sound as if being a Christian was little different than subscribing to a magazine - & that was about all the commitment that was needed.

7. I'm sorry if that's what you were told – it's not correct.
8. Here's the commitment Jesus requires, in His words – “If you want to be My disciple, you must take up your cross, die to self, and follow Me.”