

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 13 November 2022. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Sure Mercies of David

Matthew 1:6-7

Most of us have heard of the famous book, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. If you haven't heard of this book, it was written in the 1600's by a Baptist pastor named John Bunyan; and it is an allegory of the Christian life. In the story, a man named **Pilgrim** flees from the City of Destruction (which represents this sinful world); and he sets out to find the path to the Celestial City (which represents Heaven). Now, shortly after Pilgrim had fled the City of Destruction, a kind man named Evangelist (who represents a godly Christian) pointed him in the direction of the Celestial City. He said that in order to get onto the way that leads to the Celestial City, Pilgrim first had to go to the cross, and to the empty tomb of Jesus, to have his burden of sin removed from his back. (This represents the moment of salvation, when a person is freed from the burden and penalty of sin.) However, just *before* going to the cross, Pilgrim first had to go to the house of a man named **Mr. Interpreter**. Mr. Interpreter represents the Holy Spirit of God, who opens sinners' understanding as to *why* they must be saved, and *how* they must be saved.

After Pilgrim had arrived at Mr. Interpreter's House, Mr. Interpreter took Pilgrim throughout his house, and showed him little dramas and object lessons to help illustrate salvation. In one of the rooms, they came across **a man in an iron cage**, who was looking down toward the floor in shame. Pilgrim asked the man in the cage who he was; and the man replied that he was once "a fair and flourishing professor" of Jesus Christ—both in his "own eyes," and in the "eyes of others." At one time, he had *thought* himself to be a Christian, and to be on the way to the Celestial City; but now, he was shut up in this cage of despair, and knew that he could never repent of his sin, and be saved. He had come right up to the threshold of salvation, but had never truly been saved; and now, because he had rejected his many opportunities to be saved, God was no longer convicting him, or drawing him to Himself. Pilgrim asked the man how he had gotten into this condition. The man's reply was, "I laid the reins upon the neck of my lusts; I sinned against the light of the Word and the goodness of God; I have grieved the Spirit, and he is gone; I tempted the devil, and he is come to me; I have provoked God to anger, and he has left me: I have so hardened my heart, that I cannot repent." Pilgrim then asked the man *for what reason* he had turned from God. The man replied, "For the lusts, pleasures, and profits of this world; in the enjoyment of which I did then promise myself much delight; but now every one of those things also bite me, and gnaw me like a burning worm." The man then cried, "O eternity, eternity! how shall I grapple with the misery that I must meet with in eternity!"

The enticing pleasures of sin have, indeed, drawn countless people away from the threshold of salvation, and dragged them down into the flames of hell. Countless people once *appeared* to be believers, yet they never were; and now, they are passed out of this life, and are eternally damned. Sadly, such is the case with many of the people in the lineage of the Lord Jesus Christ. As you know, we have, in this past month, been examining the lineage of Christ in **Matthew 1**; and as we've studied these people's lives, we have learned about many people who were very imperfect—yet redeemed. Last week we learned about **King David**, and his wife **Bathsheba**, and their son **Solomon**. All three of these believers committed terrible sins, which brought awful consequences into their lives. Yet, they were truly redeemed; and God chastised them, and brought back into close fellowship with Himself. However, this morning we will be learning about at least one, and possibly two, of Jesus' ancestors who didn't know the Lord at all. In the coming weeks, we will learn about many other of Jesus' ancestors who were just like that man in the iron

cage—people who *professed* faith in Jehovah, yet who couldn't bring themselves to give up the sins and pleasures of this world; and they died bound in the cords of their sins. This morning, we will see how God used these men, *in spite of their rebellion and apostasy*, to bring the Saviour, the King of Israel, into our race. We will also see how we can avoid making their awful mistakes, which cost them their *joy*, at best, and their *soul*, at worst. The title of this message is *The Sure Mercies of David*.

Read Matthew 1:1-7.

I. Rehoboam—the fool

Last week, we learned that God established a covenant with King David. God promised David that He would establish his descendants upon the throne of Israel forever. God also promised that from David's family line, the Messiah would one day be born. Even if David's descendants sinned against God, God promised that He would *not* take the kingdom away from David's family, as He had taken it away from King Saul. Instead, he would chastise them, to correct them. Let's go back to **2 Samuel**, and remind ourselves about the details of this covenant.

Read 2 Samuel 7:11-16.

At first glance, the meaning of **verses 13-14** seems simple enough. This "*seed*" of David—who, God says, would build a house to His name—appears to be David's son, Solomon. To be sure, Solomon did build the Temple after his father's death. However, when you look more closely at the LORD's words, it is clear that Solomon is not the only "*seed*" that God had in mind.

Ultimately, this "*seed*" of David, who will build a house for God, is the Lord Jesus Christ! Solomon did build a house for God; but eventually, that house was destroyed by the Babylonians. Solomon is merely a *type*, or *picture*, of the *ultimate* "seed of David"—the one who will build the beautiful Temple in Mount Zion when He returns to earth! *Jesus* is the one that the LORD was really talking about when He said, "***I will be his father, and he shall be my son.***" In **Hebrews 1:5**, Paul quoted these very words, and applied them to the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wrote, "***For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?***" Paul is contrasting Jesus to the angels, and is saying, "Which of the *angels* can meet these qualifications? Which of the *angels* have this unique 'Father-Son' relationship that God the Father and Jesus Christ have?" Obviously, the answer is, "None of them"! *Jesus* is this unique "Son" of the Father. There is none else like Him.

So, if Jesus Christ is the ultimate Seed that God promised to David, that means that Solomon is a *type*, or *picture*, of Christ. That's quite an honour for Solomon, isn't it? How sad, then, that Solomon, who had all that honour and privilege, failed the Lord so badly! As Solomon began to think like a worldly politician, and stopped trusting the Lord, he married daughters of pagan kings in order to make alliances with them; and these unbelieving wives turned Solomon's heart away from the Lord. Yet, despite Solomon's rebellion in the latter part of his life, God continued to be merciful to the house of David, for *David's* sake. That is why, in **Isaiah 55:3**, God refers to His covenant with David as "***the sure mercies of David.***" God showed His mercy to David and to his descendants; and because God showed them mercy, and used them *in spite of themselves*, Jesus the Messiah was born into our world, from their lineage.

Now, let's return to Solomon. The Bible says that in the latter years of Solomon's reign, there were rumblings of rebellion. There never was *war* during Solomon's reign, because God had promised that it would be that way; but God did allow troublesome *enemies* to rise up, and to lurk behind the scenes. Solomon tried to kill these enemies, but he couldn't. However, even

worse trouble was coming; and the trouble was coming from *within* the land, not from the outside. Because Solomon had brought idol worship to the land, God promised to split the kingdom of Israel into two pieces—the ten northern tribes, and the two southern tribes.

Read 1 Kings 11:1-4, 9-13, 26-36.

Read 1 Kings 12:1-20.

Christian, sin has consequences. You may not have idols of wood or stone lying around your home; but when you erect idols in your *heart*, God *will* chastise you. The punishment doesn't always come directly from God, either. Sin is its *own* punishment; and oftentimes, the worst consequence of our sin is that our *own children* follow our evil example! Solomon, in the latter part of his life, did get right with God; and by inspiration of God, he wrote the book of **Proverbs** to his son, Rehoboam, to urge him to follow after *wisdom*, and not to be a fool. Nonetheless, a "fool" is exactly what Rehoboam turned out to be. He followed the *evil* example of his father, instead of his earlier godly example. Rehoboam was 41 years old when he came to the throne; and for the greater part of his life, he had seen his father's godly example. Yet, that evil example in the last ten years or so of his father's life is what impressed him most. Rehoboam's heart was filled with pride; and his words revealed it. Rehoboam's speech to the people was a mere **16 words**; yet, those 16 words split a kingdom in two, and changed the course of history! Now, it is true that Jeroboam had recently returned from Egypt; and it does appear that he was trying to "stir the pot" of discontent among the people. However, it was Solomon's own son, Rehoboam, who drove away ten tribes of Israel with his harsh words.

Christian, when you are not humbling your heart before God every day, and putting the flesh to death, and allowing the Spirit of God to control you, you are in a dangerous place. Sooner or later, the words that come out of your mouth will wield destruction. Your words can destroy your relationships with your husband or wife, with your parents or children, or with your whole family. Your words can end a wonderful friendship in a wink. A few simple words can split a church in two. Our words can heal or destroy, depending on what we are treasuring up in our hearts. **Proverbs 18:21** says, "***Death and life are in the power of the tongue.***" **Proverbs 18:6-7** says, "***A fool's lips enter into contention (quarrelling, fighting), and his mouth calleth for strokes. A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.***" What kind of words come out of your mouth? Are they loud, bitter, angry words? If so, God says, "***Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.***" God also says, "***A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger.***" Are your words often caustic, critical, sarcastic, or insulting? If so, Jesus warns us that whoever calls his brother "***Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.***" That word "***raca***" means "empty head"; and the word "***fool***" (*moré*) is the word from which we get our English word "moron"! Words such as "moron," "stupid," "dummy," "doofus," "nincompoop," "cretin," or "fool" are words that should *never* come out of a Christian's mouth, in addressing another person. God does use the word "fool" in Scripture to describe someone who rejects Him and His word; but only *He* has the right to address someone as "fool." How about the veracity of your words? Are your words trustworthy? If not, you cannot justify less-than-honest words by saying, "Everyone knows I'm just joking." **Proverbs 26:18-19** says, "***As a mad man who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?***"

I don't know what "damage control" Rehoboam might have tried to do after his officer was stoned to death; but the damage had already been done. He couldn't take his words back. He

couldn't say, "I was just kidding." What came out of his mouth came from his heart. *Pride* was in his heart; and therefore, his lips spewed forth proud, angry, scornful words. Just as his father Solomon had warned him, "***Proud and haughty scorner shall he be called, who dealeth in proud wrath.***" Jesus said, "***A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.***"

Now, how did Rehoboam fare after his kingdom was divided? Did he ever get right with God? Well, the Bible says, in **2 Chronicles 11**, that Rehoboam and the nation of Judah followed the LORD for the first 3 years of his reign. In fact, many godly Jews from the 10 northern tribes migrated down into Judah, because King Jeroboam had invented his own state-sanctioned religion of golden calf worship; and these godly believers wanted to be in a place where the true God was honoured and worshipped. It seemed that all was going well; but then, after Rehoboam had established his kingdom, he suddenly "***forsook the law of the LORD***"; and the people joined him. He followed the example of his father Solomon, during his years of rebellion against God. He built high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree. The Bible also says that sodomites abounded in the land. Homosexuality was embraced and celebrated; and God's anger was at a boiling point. Therefore, in the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign, God allowed Pharaoh Shishak of Egypt to invade Judah; and Rehoboam was forced to give Shishak all the golden treasures from the Temple, and the 300 shields of gold that his father had made, as a tribute. The once-sovereign Kingdom of Judah was reduced to a vassal state.

It was at this time that a prophet named Shemaiah came to Rehoboam, and told him, "***Thus saith the LORD, Ye have forsaken me, and henceforth have I also left you in the hand of Shishak.***" How did Rehoboam react to this? The Bible says that he and his princes humbled themselves before God and said, "***The LORD is righteous***"; and they tried to reverse the evil that they had been doing. Therefore, things "***went well***" in Judah for the rest of Rehoboam's reign. However, the power that Israel had once had was never regained.

In light of all this, a question arises: "Was Rehoboam really saved?" Or did he go through motions of repentance only because he knew that his kingdom was in serious trouble? It's hard to tell. He may have been; but he may not have been. After all, the Bible says that the wicked King Ahab of Northern Israel "repented" for a time; but it is obvious that it was not true, saving repentance. As for Rehoboam, all we know is that God concluded the record of his reign by saying, "***And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD.***" We can only hope that Rehoboam's repentance was real. Yet, let's assume that Rehoboam's repentance *was* real, and that he *was* a believer who wandered very far from God, but came back. If this be the case, then what can we learn from his failures? In fact, what can we learn from *Solomon's* sin and repentance? What we can learn is this: though a Christian may always get right with God, and find cleansing, it doesn't change the fact that **there are often consequences for our sin which cannot be reversed**. Those brass shields that Rehoboam made to replace his father's golden shields are almost symbolic of a one-time glory that was lost. The world says, "*My attitude is the result of your actions: so if you don't like my attitude, you can blame yourself!*"; but God says that we are each accountable to God for our heart attitude toward Him, and toward others. We cannot blame anyone else for our spiritual failures.

Christian, what is the condition of *your* heart? Should your heart be wandering from God, don't drift for one second longer! Don't allow yourself to be controlled by works of the flesh, such as adultery (whether outwardly, or in your thoughts); or idolatry in the heart; or covetousness, or rebellion, or hatred, or fighting and quarrelling, or jealousy, or anger, or gossip, or envy.

Confess your sin to God; ask Him for cleansing; and ask Him to give you the power to overcome the fleshly lusts which war against your soul.

II. Abijah—the double-minded man

(Read Matthew 1:7 again.) The next man in the lineage of Christ is **Abijah**, the son of Rehoboam. Abijah’s reign was short—a mere three years. And what was his reign like? Did he follow the LORD during those three years? Well, let’s look at the record.

Read 2 Chronicles 13:1-22.

The record of Abijah here in **2 Chronicles 13** looks pretty good, doesn’t it? Surely this man was a believer in Jehovah. After all, he rebuked King Jeroboam for his apostasy, and for his worship of the golden calves. He boldly said, “*But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him.*” He declared that *Judah* worshipped at the *true* altar, and that their Levite priests were the *true* priests of God. In **1 Kings 15:15**, we are told that Abijah brought gold, silver, and vessels to the Temple, and dedicated them to the LORD. Also, God helped him in this battle, and gave him a great victory. It also appears that God brought blessing to the land in general throughout the rest of his reign. Surely Abijah was a true believer!

Or was he? If you look carefully, there is at least one suspicious statement in Abijah’s speech. (Read **2 Chronicles 13:5-7**.) Did you notice how Abijah left out the fact that *God* had anointed Jeroboam to be the king over the ten northern tribes? To be sure, Jeroboam turned out to be a wicked man; yet, God *did* anoint him to be king. Abijah is making it sound as though Jeroboam committed treason by assuming the throne of Northern Israel. Also, Abijah makes it sound as though his father, Rehoboam, were a victim—when, in fact, it was his own foolish words that caused him to lose the kingdom. Abijah clearly was not looking at the division of the kingdom from *God’s* perspective. Perhaps he was jealous that *he* didn’t rule over the ten northern tribes!

However, one thing is for sure: the record of Scripture is that Abijah was a wicked man, who worshipped idols! Let’s go to **1 Kings 15:1-15** to get the other piece of the puzzle.

Read 1 Kings 15:1-15.

This is a completely different picture of Abijah, isn’t it? In **2 Chronicles**, it would *appear* (at least, from the information that is recorded there) that Abijah was a believer. Yet, here in **1 Kings 15**, we are told that he followed the wicked example of his father Rehoboam. He walked in “*all the sins of his father, which he had done before him.*” This includes the idols, and the groves, and the sodomites. The Bible doesn’t give any indication that he ever repented, either. The final verdict of his life was that “*his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God.*” That word “*perfect*” is translated from the word *shalem*, which means “complete.” It seems that, in his heart, Abijah *knew* that he should worship Jehovah; and he had an *inclination* to do so; yet, he couldn’t bring himself to do it. Not *truly*, that is. He tried to maintain an outward *appearance* of worshipping Jehovah; yet, he worshipped idols, because he knew that that was what the people wanted. He even changed his *name* to go along with the pulse of the people. According to **2 Chronicles**, his birth name was **Abijah**, which means “My father is Jehovah.” Yet, according to **1 Kings**, he was also called **Abijam**, which means “My father is the sea”! That sounds like some kind of pagan name doesn’t it? It sounds like the evolutionary idea of some “primordial life form” arising from the “primordial soup,” and evolving from “goo to you”! Apparently, Abijah chose to call himself by this name, because it pleased the people.

How could the Scriptures give us such completely different portraits of the same man? Because Abijah had “two faces.” He was like the character “By-Ends,” from *Pilgrim’s Progress*—or like the character “Facing-Both-Ways,” or “Mr. Money-Love.” He wanted to go to Paradise; but he also loved the world. Abijah liked the religion of Jehovah, as long as he walked “in his golden slippers, in the sunshine, and with applause” (in other words, as long as it was popular to be religious). He was like the Rock star **Jerry Lee Lewis** (who, tragically, passed away on 28 October). All his life, Jerry Lee Lewis *knew* that Rock music was of the devil. He was brought up in a Bible-preaching environment; and he *knew* that he was a lost man, who had chosen to stay on the path to hell. From the time that he was kicked out of Bible college for playing boogie-woogie rhythms during chapel, he was constantly tormented by the thought of his eternal destiny. Oftentimes, he frantically argued with his Hollywood producers, and protested that he couldn’t sing a certain song (such as “Great Balls of Fire”), because it was too wicked. It is said that once, in a conversation with Elvis Presley, he asked him, “Elvis, I’m going to ask you one thing before we part company here. If you die, do you think you’d go to heaven or hell?” Lewis said that Elvis “got real red in the face, and then he got real white in the face, and he said, ‘Jerry Lee, don’t you ever say that to me *agin*.’”¹ These men *knew* they were on their way to hell; and they appeared to try to ease their consciences by occasionally singing Gospel songs. However, they would not repent of their sin, and turn to Jesus. They lived for drugs, booze, fornication, adultery, worldly fame, and for the wicked music of the world. Yet, they had no peace. As recently as 2015, when Lewis was 80 years old, he admitted, “I was always worried whether I was going to heaven or hell...I still am. I worry about it before I go to bed; it’s a very serious situation. I mean you worry, when you breathe your last breath, where are you going to go?”²

What can we learn from Abijah’s life? Well, first of all, if you have not been saved, I am here to warn you that you *must* be born again! You may have 87 years on this earth, as Jerry Lee Lewis had; but, on the other hand, you may not have even one more hour. Also, you don’t know when the Holy Spirit will cease to convict you and draw you to Christ. *Nothing* in this world is more important than knowing that your sins are forgiven, and that you will spend eternity with God. Jesus paid the full price for your sins, and rose again to seal your justification; and He is offering salvation to you as a free gift. However, you must want *Him*. You cannot have it both ways. You can’t have the world and Jesus. You cannot come to Jesus for salvation, yet still cling to your sin, and to this sinful world. In your heart, you must turn to Christ, *from sin*.

Now, what can you learn from Abijah’s life if you are *saved*? Well, let’s see what James said.

Read James 1:5-8.

It is important to remember that James was writing these words to *Christians*. That word “**double-minded**” literally means “double-souled.” A genuine Christian is saved by God’s grace; and nothing can change that, because the believer is kept by the power and faithfulness of God. However, a Christian *can* be “double-souled.” A Christian *can* look and sound just like an unbeliever, if he be not firmly anchored in God’s Word. A Christian who is not in God’s Word daily, and who is “hit and miss” in his attendance of God’s House, and who doesn’t spend real time with God in prayer, and who is not living in submission to God, will be “**unstable in all his ways**.” Because he is not drawing from God’s heavenly wisdom, he will be open to sensual, devilish wisdom, and to confusion, and every evil work. A Christian who is out of touch with

¹ Simon Hattenstone, “Jerry Lee Lewis: ‘I Worry about whether I’m going to heaven or hell,’” *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/aug/08/jerry-lee-lewis-interview-heaven-hell>

² *Ibid*.

God can become so spiritually short-sighted, that he even forgets that he was purged from his old sins. Christian, don't be double-minded! Stay close to the Lord!

III. Asa—the righteous man who became prideful

(Read Matthew 1:7 again.) The next man in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ is **Asa**. Asa was a genuine believer, who had strong faith in God. Let's take a look at some of the early victories of faith in Asa's life.

Read 2 Chronicles 14:1-13 / 15:1-8.

We don't know much about the family or friends who surrounded Asa during his formative years; but apparently, there was at least *one* godly person in his life, who led him to a saving knowledge of the Lord at an early age. As soon as Asa came to the throne, he began to undo everything that his father had done. He destroyed the idols, the groves, the high places, and the sodomite brothels. He removed his own mother, Maacah, from being queen, because she was secretly worshipping an idol. He even had the faith to fight against, and destroy, an enemy army of one **“thousand thousand”** (yes, that is “a million”)! (Satan *really* pulled out all the stops to try to wipe out the bloodline of the Messiah!) Yet, by the end of his lifetime, Asa had become quite a different man. Let's take a look at the record of the end of his life.

Read 2 Chronicles 16:1-14.

How did Asa come to this point in his life? He had once had the faith to ask God for deliverance from an army of one million men, with the full assurance that God would do it! Yet, by the end of his life, we see him spinning political deals with pagan nations in order to protect his nation. Then, when a man of God confronted him about this unholy alliance, he became filled with rage, and threw him in prison, and began to oppress other people, too. Then, when God chastised him by striking him with a terrible disease in his feet, he refused to pray and ask God for help. How did this believer come to such a point in his life? **Pride!** Pride is an insidious evil, which can creep into the heart of even the godliest believer. The Bible says, **“Better is a poor and wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished.”** Pride strangles a believer's love for God, and blinds him to truth; and it always leads to anger and bitterness. Why? Because anger is simply wounded pride. “How dare that brother rebuke me? How dare he tell me I've done wrong? Doesn't he know I'm spiritual?” Watch out, Christian! The Bible says, **“When pride cometh, then cometh shame.”** Follow the example of the young, godly Asa, who trusted the Lord, and not the old, proud, bitter Asa, who had forgotten to trust God.

Conclusion: Solomon, Rehoboam, Abijah, and Asa were all very imperfect men. Of these four, only two were, beyond question, believers. Nonetheless, God used these men to accomplish His plan of bringing Jesus, the King of Israel, and the Saviour or mankind, into the world. **Have you personally placed your faith in this Saviour?** Is Jesus just a name to you? Or is He your personal Lord and Saviour? If you have never repented of your sin and trusted in Him to save you, please do so today! For those who are saved, I would ask: **“Is your heart right with God?”** What if the main events from *your* life were written down in Scripture, for billions of people over scores of generations to read, and study, and examine? What would the story of *your* life tell? Would it be filled with accounts of faithlessness, and of lust, and anger, and continual spiritual defeat? Or would there be wonderful accounts of faith and trust in God? Should there be any “double-mindedness” in your heart, please get it taken care of today!