

WORD AT WORK

VOLUME XXI NUMBER II
The Sure Mercies of David VI

THURSDAY, February 1

Scripture: Second Samuel 7:4-17

The issue of God extending a covenant of sure mercy to man has a purpose which when perceived enables us to overcome the personal obstacles which often hinder receptivity. God has an eternal purpose which includes David but extends beyond his generation. God has the same purpose which includes us but extends to other generations. His purpose was to bring Messiah through *mercy* just like that purpose continues toward bringing a harvest of nations through *mercy*. Only a covenant of mercy can overcome man's propensity to fail and establish His plans. It is not just an issue of forgiving people their sin. It becomes an issue of forgiving them in order that they may contribute their assigned part to the ultimate purpose. When we fail to forgive, divisions develop in the Body of Christ which often lead to church splits thwarting God's purpose of revealing Jesus to unbelievers through the love of the Saints. Every time a church which splits opens its doors, it is a spiritual beacon proclaiming covenantal failure of *mercy*. Don't you love the Body of Christ?

FRIDAY, February 2

Scripture: Second Samuel 12:9-18

One of the things we have to understand about the God of covenant mercy is His mercy covenant does not preclude judgment when failure takes place. It does allow the individual to recover and fulfill his eternal call, but he may often find he lives the remainder of his life in various manifestations of judgment. The God of *mercy* dispenses judgment and king David not only receives *mercy*, but lives in judgment the remainder of his life. Sin is not only devastation for the perpetrator but also for his family, spiritual and physical. When a spiritual family rejects a man or woman because of their sin, Phariasism grows. A question begins to emerge concerning the price tag for ignoring or denying God's covenant of mercy. The price for David was his remaining life filled with repercussion for his sin. The price for those of us who divide churches today are tailor-made judgments. Because David's sin was adultery in secret, God said I will take away the wives I have given you and your neighbor will lie with them in front of all Israel. David's judgment was custom made to fit his sin. Such is the case today in some relationship failures for congregations who refuse to extend the covenant of mercy. They end up sowing the same kind of pain in the lives of members they previously refused to forgive. We cannot afford violating God's covenant of mercy.

SATURDAY, February 3

Scripture: Second Samuel 12:19-23

We need to ask ourselves if David's personal failure, which necessitated receiving *mercy*, transformed David into a more compassionate person in extending *mercy*? It may be the process of personal failure and resulting judgment can actually contribute tremendous benefit for a person in leadership. If we can find in David's life a real transformation in the mighty warrior of Israel, then we can not only understand more about the covenant of sure *mercy* but we can see the fruit in a divine weaving of God's heart and character into a leader. If this is God's pattern, then even His judgments are redemptive.

SUNDAY, February 4

Scripture: First Samuel 25:21,22

If we're going to look for change in David's life we must first look at him prior to his moral failure with Bathsheba. In First Samuel 25:14-22 we find David has been in the wilderness for a long time and while there he protected a man named Nabal, his property and livestock. Later on, in a time of need, David sent his messengers to Nabal asking for provision, but Nabal reviled David and the response was typical of his character and M.O. during this season. "Now David said, 'Surely in vain I have protected all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belongs to him. And he has repaid me evil for good. May God do so, and more also, to the enemies of David, if I leave one male of all who belong to him by morning light.'" David was determined to take Nabal's head off with all the other males in his house. This is David – the man of war! This is David the judge and executioner. David is a mighty man of war. Cross him – and you lose your head. No wonder he is called a warrior king!

MONDAY, February 5

Scripture: First Samuel 25:32-34

Nabal's wife, Abigail, decides she is going to humble herself and apologize for her husband, Nabal, by sending provision to David, plus a personal apology to follow. When David receives the provision and then Abigail, his response, in First Samuel 25, demonstrates his nature and character during this season. He says, "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand. For indeed, as the LORD God of Israel lives, who has kept me back from hurting you, unless you had hastened and come to meet me, surely by morning light no males would have been left to Nabal." Once again David recognizes God's hand in keeping him from avenging himself and states his intended purpose would have been accomplished had it not been for Abigail's intervention. Abigail saves David from personal vengeance releasing the judgment of the Lord to fall on Nabal; he died and David received Nabal's wife. A perfect picture of how God's *mercy* when acted on, in this case by Abigail, and received by David, released God to judge the offense rewarding David with a bonus – an excellent wife. God's ways are unique.

TUESDAY, February 6

Scripture: Second Samuel 12:24-25

We understand God's covenant of *mercy* brought David into restoration in order that he might produce the builder of the temple, wisest man in the world, the next king. God's covenant of *mercy* enabled David to overcome his failure which deserved death, and pick up his calling for God's greater purpose. We also must understand that as great and noble and wonderful as that is, the sin did not go unpunished. David will have to live with manifestations of judgment for the remainder of his life on the one hand – while on the other hand he nurtures the son of *mercy* and prepares him to be the next king. David must have felt as if he lived in two worlds – the world of God's *mercy* which brought him a son from Bathsheba that would be king – and the

continued pain of a sword that fell among the remainder of his children. God's covenant of mercy enables His purpose and plan to be fulfilled through us when we fail, but the reason why we teach people they must not sin is they don't want to live those same days in judgment, sorrow, and destruction. David is a great example.

WEDNESDAY, February 7

Scripture: Second Samuel 13:1-14

Second Samuel 13 marks the beginning of the judgment that comes at David through his family. Absalom, one of David's favorite sons, has a very lovely sister whose name was Tamar. Another son of David named Amnon loved Tamar and he loved her so much that he wanted her for his wife, but he was convinced David would never give him a sister to marry. So in explaining his problem to one of his worthless friends, the friend hatched a plot for Amnon to take Tamar and get her into his bedroom. He executed the plan. It worked. And he ended up raping his sister. David's sexual sin now finds its way into his family. His parental pain probably went off the chart. God warned David about this season when He said, "Because you've taken the sword against Uriah the Hittite, the sword will never depart from your house." We see the beginning of the sword in this violation – not necessarily for the sexual rape, but for the refusal to follow the covenant procedures prescribed in such a situation.

THURSDAY, February 8

Scripture: Second Samuel 13:14-20

Amnon, at this point, had an option of going to David and saying that he very much loved Tamar and would David please consent to give her to him as wife. Tamar pleaded with Amnon to do this and he refused. He sent her away which was a reproach in Israel and a violation of the law. The amazing thing is that whenever Tamar went back to the house and saw her brother Absalom he immediately picked up on what had happened. Absalom's first question to her was, "Has Amnon your brother been with you?" Absalom responds, "But now hold your peace, my sister, He is your brother; do not take this thing to heart." So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house." It is obvious the sword was about to fly in the house of David. Abigail helped save David from avenging himself, but God is not going to save Absalom from avenging his sister. The sword has been released in David's house.

FRIDAY, February 9

Scripture: Second Samuel 13:16 and Deuteronomy 22:28,29

Tamar was right when she said, "No, indeed! This evil of sending me away is worse than the other that you did to me." Deuteronomy 22:28 and 29 say, "If a man finds a young woman who is a virgin, who is not betrothed, and he seizes her and lies with her, and they are found out, then the man who lay with her shall give to the young woman's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife because he has humbled her; he shall not be permitted to divorce her all his days." Amnon's refusal to take Tamar violates the law and the repercussion in Absalom is a determination to destroy Amnon. But now the question is how will David respond? Will the mighty warrior take off Amnon's head, or after his own failure, will he begin to extend God's *mercy* which restored him?

SATURDAY, February 10

Scripture: Second Samuel 13:21,22

Does David take off Amnon's head? Does he respond as he did before his personal moral failure? The answer is "no." Verses 21 and 22 say, "But when King David heard of all these things, he was very angry. And Absalom spoke to his brother Amnon neither good nor bad. For Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar." David was angry but apparently took no other major action. What do we know about David?

He is demonstrating that as a man who needed *mercy* he can now extend it or perhaps he is afraid not to. David has often been accused of being a rotten father who failed to discipline his kids. What could you do to a child who failed just as you had? David's *mercy* has but one origin – personal failure!

SUNDAY, February 11

Scripture: Second Samuel 13:28,29

While David has become a man of *mercy*, Absalom, having known no such failure, is a man of judgment reminding us of David in his youth. Verses 28 and 29 say, “Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, ‘Watch now, when Amnon’s heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, “Strike Amnon!” then kill him. Do not be afraid. Have I not commanded you? Be courageous and valiant.’ So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king’s sons arose, and each one got on his mule and fled.” Absalom refused to show *mercy* and took vengeance and judgment into his own hands. Now the question we must ask is a very simple one - what is the price for ignoring or dishonoring God’s covenant of *mercy*? Is the price consistent? Absalom certainly refused *mercy* to Amnon. Amnon refused to extend *mercy* to Tamar in her pleadings about not being sent away. Amnon forfeits what He refuses to extend to Tamar. Amnon dies. What could we expect for Absalom?

MONDAY, February 12

Scripture: Hebrews 12:14,15

We’re told in Hebrews 12, “Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will see the LORD: looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled:....” Bitterness exists when we can’t let go. Absalom could not let go. The bitterness conceived in a few short years. That root of bitterness produces fruit. It produces vengeance and judgment. Absalom’s vengeance and judgment takes Amnon’s life. By refusing to extend *mercy* Absalom demonstrates the depth of bitterness. This bitterness propelled him toward a future of judgment which has all the finality of what he has just executed upon Amnon. Are we aware of what happens when we make such choices?

TUESDAY, February 13

Scripture: Second Samuel 13:36

We are told in Second Samuel 13:36, “So it was, as soon as he had finished speaking, that the king’s sons indeed came, and they lifted up their voice and wept. Also the king and all his servants wept very bitterly.” The fruit of a root of bitterness in Absalom now produces bitterness for the whole Davidic family. EVERY ROOT PRODUCES FRUIT AFTER ITS OWN KIND. Absalom in refusing to show *mercy* allows bitterness to take hold and demonstrates that what he is yielding to is now producing the same fruit in the whole family. God’s laws have not changed. We’re still seeing fruit weekly. His word shows us what to do to possess a crop failure when we recognize the seed sown has no eternal value. By choosing the offense we guarantee sowing bitterness into a much larger group.

WEDNESDAY, February 14

HAPPY VALENTINES DAY

Scripture: Second Samuel 13:37

The second step in the process of the seven-fold fruit of bitterness is in verse 37 which tells us, “But Absalom fled and went to Talmai the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son every day.” The first fruit of bitterness is it reproduces multiplying itself dramatically. The second fruit, in verse 37, is that it separates you from your family. You end up fleeing from God and friends. Such separation can be

deadly because it can result in further isolation from God and ultimate destruction. Absalom's determination to usurp the throne takes root and grows during his separation. Separation is deadly when rebellion germinates.

THURSDAY, February 15

Scripture: Second Samuel 13:38

The third fruit of bitterness is in verse 38 and it tells us, "So Absalom fled and went to Geshur, and was there three years." Bitterness produces bitterness, separates you from family and friends, and third, reduces you to isolation and captivity. Absalom found himself being isolated from Israel into the captivity of a foreign culture. It is amazing how often violating the covenant of mercy, making our own judgments, sets up a counter spiritual culture and takes us into captivity where we are removed from the things of the Spirit. Whenever you have church without the Holy Spirit, somewhere in the root structure may be a violation of *mercy* and resultant spiritual captivity. Are we having fun yet?

FRIDAY, February 16

Scripture: Second Samuel 13:39

Finally the fourth fruit is exhibited in verse 39, "And King David longed to go to Absalom. For he had been comforted concerning Amnon, because he was dead." David could not go to Absalom because Absalom was locked in exile. A refusal to extend *mercy* ultimately locks us in a place of spiritual exile where we are incapable of receiving the kind of fellowship and blessing that God wants us to have. Does spiritual exile produce further fruit? It may, but aren't the first four enough to convince us we can't afford not to show *mercy*? Year by year Absalom grows more determined to rid Israel of its "evil influence" – king David.

SATURDAY, February 17

Scripture: Second Samuel 15:1-6

The fifth fruit of bitterness is utter deception. We are told in Second Samuel 15:1-6 that Absalom works out a deal to come home. He makes it home and Absalom would get up early and stand in the gate of the city and when anyone had a lawsuit and was approaching the king, Absalom would find out where he was from then he would say, "You know what, you have a good case. The problem is there is no deputy of the king to hear you." Then Absalom would say, "Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice." Absalom demonstrates his bitterness against king David as judge by what he says to the people. He obviously is telling them, "Look, you will get no justice from the king. I know. I've been in a situation and justice was not given." The bitterness is growing into a measure of utter deception. What a fruit to have in your life. If that is fruit number five – what will six and seven be like?

SUNDAY, February 18

Scripture: Second Samuel 15:12-14

In Second Samuel 15:12-14 we are told, "Then Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city, namely from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy grew strong, for the people with Absalom continually increased in number. And a messenger came to David, saying, 'The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom.' So David said to all his servants who were with him in Jerusalem, 'Arise, and let us flee; or else we shall not escape from Absalom. Make haste to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly and bring disaster upon us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword.'" The sixth fruit of a refusal to extend *mercy* is full-fledged rebellion. Absalom could not stand the *mercy* David showed Amnon. Day by day it grew into the full fruit of absolute rebellion. Is it possible that when we violate God's law of *mercy* that we open a door for increasing developmental rebellion until its fruit fully produces? It was true with Absalom and

it may certainly be true today in a variety of different manifestations. Can we learn from the biblical examples that are given so we might not repeat these steps toward utter destruction? God is a God of *mercy* – He extends a covenant and He demands we walk in it and extend it ourselves. Our future depends on being established in God's covenant of *mercy*.

MONDAY, February 19

Scripture: Second Samuel 15:31-34

One of the first things Absalom did in chapter 15 verse 12, when he chose to completely rebel against David, was send for the wisest counselor in all of Israel. Verse 12 tells us he sent for Ahithophel, David's counselor. We find out what kind of an individual Ahithophel was in verses 31-34 of the same chapter. When David learned, in verse 31, "...Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.' And David said, 'O LORD, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!'" David went on to attempt to produce some insurance concerning the counsel of Ahithophel when he meets Hushai the Archite. David says in verses 33 and 34, "David said to him, 'If you go on with me, then you will become a burden to me. But if you return to the city, and say, to Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king; just as I have been your father's servant previously, so I will now also be your servant,' then you may defeat the counsel of Ahithophel for me.'" In the midst of Absalom's rebellion and David's loss of the throne, David's greatest concern is the counsel of Ahithophel. That speaks volumes about the reputation Ahithophel had earned in Israel for his prophetic counseling ministry. He obviously speaks the word of the LORD directly and distinctly and now we have to ask ourselves why is Ahithophel siding with Absalom? It is possible that he too is an individual who is flirting with a root of bitterness? What law of *mercy* has Ahithophel violated that he would walk down the same pathway bringing deception and destruction to Absalom? Is there a consistent spiritual law emerging concerning this issue of *mercy*? Possibly!

TUESDAY, February 20

Scripture: Second Samuel 16:20-23

Absalom begins to ask counsel of Ahithophel. We're about to find out if David's fears had foundation. Verse 21-23 says, "And Ahithophel said to Absalom, 'Go in to your father's concubines, whom he has left to keep the house; and all Israel will hear that you are abhorred by your father. Then the hands of all who are with you will be strong. So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the top of the house, and Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if one had inquired at the oracle of God. So was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.'" As Absalom accepted and acted on the counsel of Ahithophel, not only was God's prophecy of judgment fulfilled concerning David, but all the hands of those in the rebellion were strengthened to continue the course. It is obvious that David's fears concerning Ahithophel were well founded. He is obviously the chief prophetic counselor in the land. His word is as if one received direction directly from the throne room. How did this awesome counseling ministry get caught up in the fruit of bitterness?

WEDNESDAY, February 21

Scripture: Second Samuel 17:1-3

In 17:1-3 we get a look at the heart of Ahithophel revealing a clue that may help us discover how such a wise counselor could end up on the wrong side of an issue. We're told, "Moreover Ahithophel said to Absalom, 'Now let me choose twelve thousand men, and **I will** arise and pursue David tonight. **I will** come upon him while he is weary and weak, and make him afraid. And all the people who are with him will flee, and **I will** strike only the king. Then **I will** bring back all the people to you. When all return except the man whom you seek, then all the people will be at peace.'" The four "I will's" in these three verses reveal someone greatly offended. That offense has not only eluded any extension of *mercy*, but has emerged into a full fledged vendetta

causing a prophetic counselor to believe he can take the sword of a warrior and bring back the head of the king he once served, the man who for years he counted as his best friend. What vile deed has David done that so consumed Ahithophel he could no longer extend *mercy* but would prefer destroying David from the earth? Ahithophel and David were best friends. Absalom and Ahithophel now have something in common – they are in agreement – David does not deserve to live. If they are agreeing against God’s purpose, their agreement may bring judgment.

THURSDAY, February 22

Scripture: Second Samuel 17:7-14

David’s plan for Hushai works just as he proposed. Hushai goes back. He takes the opposite tack from Ahithophel and he says in verses 11-13, “Therefore I counsel that all Israel be fully gathered to you, from Dan to Beersheba, like the sand that is by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in person. So we will come upon him in some place where he may be found, and we will fall on him as the dew falls on the ground. And of him and all the men who are with him there shall not be left so much as one. Moreover, if he has withdrawn into a city, then all Israel shall bring ropes to that city; and we will pull it into the river, until there is not one small stone found there.” Hushai does exactly what David wants him to do. The amazing thing about bitterness and the rebellion it brings is that it leads us into a place where our discernment departs. Our godly discernment enabling us to make a choice of wisdom departs and we no longer have the ability to discern what is God and what is not. Absalom finds himself in such a place. Ahithophel is not there because “the gifts and the callings of God are without repentance” and he is gifted as a counselor and therefore he retains the gift but loses his ability to discern only the personal consequences of his actions. The gift still operates. God truly is amazing in His administration of His word where we are concerned.

FRIDAY, February 23

Scripture: Second Samuel 17:14

Verse 14 says, “So Absalom and all the men of Israel said, ‘The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel.’ For the LORD had purposed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring disaster on Absalom.” In the seventh and final step of the root of bitterness, we finally begin to see the fruit. It always brings us to a place of death – either spiritual or physical. The fruit of bitterness when it reaches the seventh and final stage ends life as we know it. That is the sad thing about the fruit of bitterness and the people who embrace it because they cannot find it in themselves to extend God’s *mercy*. Absalom is a mighty example of how the fruit of bitterness takes seven full steps to bring total destruction and death. The truth of the matter is – we can’t afford it. We need to understand *mercy* and the necessity of extending it. David did and got his throne back.

SATURDAY, February 24

Scripture: Second Samuel 17:23; 23:34

Perhaps verse 23 is one of the saddest verses in the Bible because it reveals the end of the greatest counseling ministry in Israel during the victorious reign of David. Verse 23 says, “Now when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey, and arose and went home to his house, to his city. Then he put his household in order, and hanged himself and died; and he was buried in his father’s tomb.” The saddest thing about Ahithophel’s death is that it was needless. Had he made the decision to extend *mercy*, he could have saved his life and possibly been very very fruitful in developing succeeding leadership generations. Ahithophel possibly forfeited his greatest ministry over the issue of extending *mercy*. Can we afford not to extend it? Such a choice caused Ahithophel’s death. If we want to live and complete God’s assignments we better make some decisions concerning the extension of *mercy*. What caused Ahithophel to follow the same path as Absalom? In order to find that out we must look in the passages most of us tend to skip when we’re reading

through the Bible because they seem so boring - genealogies. In Second Samuel 23:34 in the midst of a passage on lineage we discover, “Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maacathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite,....” There is one thing we know about Ahithophel so far and that is he had a son named Eliam. Does Eliam have a child involved in this situation? If we can discover who is related to whom, perhaps all can see why Ahithophel is after David – we may find the root of the four “I will’s” that brought him the full fruit of bitterness – which was death. Can we afford not to extend the *mercy* of God? Absalom and Ahithophel couldn’t and chances are – we can’t either.

SUNDAY, February 25

Scripture: Second Samuel 11:3

In Second Samuel 11:3 we discover the root of Ahithophel’s bitterness. We are told in verses 2 and 3, “Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king’s house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold. So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, ‘Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?’” If Ahithophel had a son named Eliam and Eliam had a daughter named Bathsheba then Bathsheba was Ahithophel’s granddaughter. So when David chose somebody to fool around with he just happened to choose his counselor’s granddaughter and brought shame to the whole family. Is it any wonder that Ahithophel so quickly moved over to help Absalom and *personally* volunteer to lead a detachment of troops and destroy David himself. Absalom and Ahithophel have a lot in common. Both of them found it impossible to forgive, both judged David, both rebelled, both sought vengeance, both of them died. Our choice of whether or not to extend *mercy* becomes a spiritual issue of life or death. When we judge and fail to extend *mercy* we can find ourselves walking through seven spiritual steps toward destruction. The saddest thing for Ahithophel was he could have lived to see a great-grandson taking over as king in Israel and possibly have contributed what would have saved Solomon from destruction at the end of his reign. Ahithophel couldn’t get over the shame to possess the blessing. Can we walk through the bitterness and extend *mercy* in order that we might fulfill our call and complete our assignment? We actually can find another example in Second Samuel 16 of how David’s failure brought him into a place of extending *mercy*. In verses 5-14 when David was departing from Jerusalem, running from Absalom, he met an individual named Shimei. Shimei was throwing stones and cursing. He was castigating David as being a blood-thirsty individual who had taken by force the kingdom from the house of Saul. In verse 9 when Abishai wanted to go take his head off, David said “no.” David extends *mercy* saying that maybe God will hear his curses and “...repay me with good...” David realizes the extension of *mercy* may come back upon him in blessing. It did! Where did David learn that? Perhaps he learned it with Bathsheba. David has been forever changed by his failure. In the early days Shimei’s head would have been gone in a heart-beat. But *now* David has been transformed and the change came through the greatest failure of his life and ministry.

MONDAY, February 26

Scripture: Second Samuel 19:14-23

When the kingdom is restored and David returns to cross the Jordan, the tribe of Judah meets him to welcome him to Jerusalem. In verses 19-21 Shimei speaks to the king, “Do not let my lord impute iniquity to me, or remember what wrong your servant did on the day that my lord and king left Jerusalem, that the king should take it to heart. For I, your servant, know that I have sinned. Therefore here I am, the first to come today of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king. But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, ‘Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD’S anointed!’” David’s response is classic when we consider the transformation he has experienced from man of war - to man of *mercy*. Verse 22 says, “‘What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should be adversaries to me today? Shall any man be put to death today in Israel? For do I not know that today I am king over Israel?’” David has grown in his understanding of the covenant of *mercy*. David extends *mercy* the second time to Shimei

even though Abishai is right – he deserves to die. What can we say that David has learned? He has learned the power of covenant and because he received *mercy* he is obligated to extend it. Do we recognize this today? When we receive Jesus as LORD, we receive God's *mercy* and we can do nothing but extend it. Our failure to extend it opens the door to seven steps of destruction we cannot afford.

TUESDAY, February 27

Scripture: Second Samuel 18:5-14

There is one other example for a person who chooses judgment or *mercy*. In Second Samuel 18:5-14 the king had commanded the army when they fought with Absalom to spare him. Absalom got caught in a tree and was hanging off the ground by his hair. One of the Israeli soldiers saw it and came back to camp to tell Joab what he had seen. Joab's response was not one of *mercy*, but one of severe judgment. He explained, “ ‘You just saw him! And why did you not strike him there to the ground? I would have given you ten shekels of silver and a belt.’ But the man said to Joab, ‘Though I were to receive a thousand shekels of silver in my hand, I would not raise my hand against the king's son. For in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, “Beware lest anyone touch the young man Absalom!”’” Joab immediately went out, in verse 14, and took three spears and killed Absalom right where he was caught hanging from the tree. Joab refused *mercy* and manifested judgment. What do we know about those who refuse *mercy* and bear the arm of judgment? Judgment always comes back to them in the end. It was at the end of the season, Joab had to face the judgment of God as it was dispensed by Solomon. He refused to extend *mercy* and when the time came he got no *mercy*! Can we learn God's laws concerning *mercy*? It's certainly time we began to embrace them.

WEDNESDAY, February 28

Scripture: Jeremiah 33:19-21

How important is God's covenant of sure *mercy*? Jeremiah 33 tells us exactly how important it really is. It is so important that God wants us to be absolutely thoroughly established in it. The Scripture says, “And the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: “If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levites, the priests, My ministers.”’” How important and how strong is God's covenant of sure *mercy*? It is so strong that in order to break it we have to visibly witness an end to day and night as we know them. When the sun no longer rises in the east and sets in the west, and we no longer have day and night in the earth – then and only then will the covenant of sure *mercy* be suspect. God so much wants us to **know** that His *mercy* is greater than anything we will ever do that He has said to us as long as we live with the sun and moon doing their job we know His covenant of *mercy* is upon us from morning to night. That is strong persuasion – strong evidence that we have a covenant and it is time we walk in it with all of our heart! Embracing it demands we extend it! Are we ready to extend it? God is waiting for our choice!

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Focus fully on Thee

Wholeheartedly seeking

All You want of me

Jayne Houghton

ONE THING YOU MUST KNOW

IT SHOULD MAKE YOUR HEART SING

YOU ARE NEVER ALONE

YOU BELONG TO THE KING

FOR MOMENT by MOMENT

SOMEONE WALKS by YOUR side

YOU ARE NEVER ALONE

God is ALWAYS beside

JAYNE HOUGHTON