

DAVID AND ABIATHAR

A SERMON

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“But with me you shall be in safeguard.” 1 Samuel 22:23

KING SAUL was a man that did not understand the position into which he came; he did not understand that God was the King of that nation, and that everything was to be done by the Lord, by faith in him, and by the laws which the Lord had given. Had Saul have understood this, he would not have been moved by the women and the people that went forth in the dances ignorantly ascribing thousands only to Saul, and ten thousand to David in the victory. Saul would have said, Whether David or Saul, it is God that has given us the victory, and wrought this deliverance; and if he were pleased to employ David, instead of employing any other, that was simply according to his good pleasure. But this essential truth king Saul did not recognize, and so he went blindly on. Nor did he recognize the sacredness of the priesthood, that that priesthood typified the greatest event that time ever saw or will see, and the most important event to man. No event has ever taken place so important and advantageous to man as the one great sacrifice made by the Great High Priest of our profession. Saul did not recognize this, and therefore presumptuously took the priesthood into his own hands, and began to offer to God, not in God's way, but in king Saul's own way. And when Samuel came forth, as you are aware, he immediately declared the destruction of Saul's power. Saul went on until he killed the priests of the Lord, and one of them escaped and came to David, and David received him, and said, “Abide you with me, fear not; for he that seeks my life seeks your life;” we have one common enemy; “but with me you shall be in safeguard.” The prophets all understood their position, and the Lord Jesus Christ never for one moment lost sight of his position. It is a great thing for a minister to be able to realize, as far as he possibly can, his position; and it is a great thing for every Christian to be able to realize, if possible, his position, where he stands before God, what his hope should be, what his spirit should be, what his pursuits and prospects should be; and when the Christian can recognize this in some measure, he reaps the benefit of it. Hence it was a mark of striking distinction between king Saul and David. David recognized his position; and though he had two opportunities of slaying king Saul, yet David, recognizing his position, would not do so; No, he said; if God does not put him to death, it is not for me to do so, though he, in a mistaken spirit, would put me to death, yet, as God has taught me better, I will not put him to death. If the Lord is pleased to do so, that is a matter I must leave; but I will not slay the Lord's anointed. I will come to the throne in a way that shall not make me

unhappy when I get there; I will not come to the throne with my hands defiled with blood; I will not come to the throne by violence or by anything unscriptural. If I am to come to the throne, as the Lord said I shall, I shall come to it by his providence and care. Just so, friends, the Lord has promised all his people that they shall come to the antitypical throne; for “he that overcomes,” as all the people of God shall, “Shall sit down with Jesus in his throne.” But then we are to come to that throne scripturally, in the spirit of meekness, faith, prayer, and love, and goodwill to all men. So, David did come to the throne, and so the people of God shall ultimately come to what the Lord has for them.

I shall treat our text in an accommodatory way, and I will take a threefold view of it; “With me you shall be in safeguard.” First, *spiritually*; second, *circumstantially*; third, *conditionally*; that is, the safeguard depends upon certain conditions, which are implied in the first part of the verse: “Abide you with me, fear not; for he that seeks my life seeks your life; but with me you shall be in safeguard;” that is, if you abide with me; but Abiathar did not abide finally with David, and therefore becomes to us all a source of solemn instruction upon that point.

First, *spiritually*; “With me you shall be in safeguard.” David knew the truth well; he knew it when he was very young; indeed, he was but young at this time; he knew the truth well, and he well knew that everything that was to be done aright in his position was to be by faith in God. David, therefore, when he came to meet Goliath, looked back and saw what the Lord had enabled him to do; and he had at this time, as you know, slain Goliath. David, therefore, was well acquainted with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in both covenants; David understood both covenants; he understood the national covenant and the everlasting covenant, which I must dwell upon for a moment. I do not know any man that more disdained, despised, and held in infinite and eternal contempt other gods than David did. There is not a man in all the Scriptures more decided for God in the new and everlasting covenant than David was; and he was held up as a pattern to all after kings, and even to all after believers; for when persons professing to belong to the God of the Hebrews were halfhearted, it is said, “You have not followed me with all your heart, as my servant David did.” David, therefore, understood not only the national covenant, that God was their King, but he understood the better covenant, the covenant that the Lord made with Abraham, ordered in all things and sure. I am tempted here, because it will do no harm, once more to remind you of how the Lord made that covenant with David, and how the Lord makes a covenant with his people; and if he has made that covenant with us, then, abiding by that covenant, and in fellowship with the Lord, there we are spiritually in safeguard. Now I must confess that for some years that scripture rather puzzled me; “He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; this is all my salvation and all my desire,” even “though he make it not to grow,” if I do not seem to enjoy it. Well, I saw great excellency in it, and yet I could not clearly understand it. Where the difficulty was with me was here: “He has made with me an everlasting covenant.” Now it David had said that God had made with Christ an everlasting covenant, and that Christ as the Mediator of that covenant had carried out all the items of that covenant, and by his precious blood had confirmed this testamentary covenant, he being the testator, and he being the mediator of this covenant, I could have understood it. But when David said, “He has made with me,” I could not clearly understand it; and it used to make me sometimes uneasy. I thought, Well. I am afraid I don’t know savingly what spiritual things are; though I trust I have been brought to realize the mercy of the Lord, yet I do not seem to understand this covenant. I went on like that for a long time, and by and by I found the key, and glad enough I was; I found it in the last verse of the 59th

of Isaiah, and that unlocked it to me, and it has been plain ever since. The key is this: the Father, speaking of himself, and to his dear Son, says, "As for me, this is my covenant with them," notice that, "this is my covenant with them, my Spirit that is upon you," meaning his dear Son, "and my words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your seed," which seed I take to be the apostles, there especially referred to; "nor out of the mouth of your seed's seed," which I take to be all after Christians; "said the Lord, from henceforth and forever." Oh, I thought to myself, here it is; and then I traced out what the spirit of Christ was, which I will not now stop to do, any further than just to say that Christ's spirit was, in the most emphatic sense of the word, what I may call a gospel spirit; in other words, a new covenant spirit. "This is my blood," as you will have to commemorate this afternoon, "of the new testament, which was shed for you." It was, therefore, a spirit of God's testamentary will; it was a spirit that delighted in God's good will to man; it was a spirit that delighted in God's testamentary will; "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." I thought within myself, If making a covenant with me is making me a partaker of this spirit, as sure as I exist I am a partaker of this spirit; and that he has made this covenant with me by his dear Son, as here described; and being brought to believe in Jesus Christ, God is my witness that I can answer, and I believe hundreds of you can answer to the same, where the Lord said, by Malachi, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in; behold, he shall come, says the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming?" Why, we see who abode, all those that believed in him. Here then is the spirit in which David was; he had this spirit of the new covenant, ordered in all things and sure, "My words shall not depart out of your mouth;" and did the dear Savior ever part with one doctrine of the new covenant? May I not say for more than the thousandth time that the 17th of John is a kind of epitome of that covenant; and does the dear Savior throughout that chapter find a single fault with his disciples? He might have found ten thousand faults, but he does not find a single fault with them; and so, by this covenant they are pure, holy, righteous, faultless, unblameable. In the old covenant, because the people were faulty, the Lord found fault with them; here is a covenant where he finds no fault with them, because Christ has put their faults eternally away. "And my words," concerning this covenant, wherein we have God's eternal love, Christ's eternal achievement, the eternal indwelling of the Spirit of God, the yea and amen promise, the assurance that if the ordinances of heaven and earth shall by any creature power depart from the Lord, then shall these great and glorious truths give way; "My words, which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your seed, nor out of the mouth of your seed's seed, says the Lord, from henceforth and forever." Why, I have no more inclination to part with anything belonging to this blessed covenant than I have to part with Christ himself, because it is this covenant and the testimonies thereof, that present the Savior in a form exactly adapted to our condition as sinners. Besides, it is such a display of the infinite love, good will, and immutability of the blessed God, all summed up in these few words, "Because he could swear by none greater, he swore by himself." Now this is where David was spiritually, and he said to Abiathar, "With me you shall be in safeguard." Jesus has this covenant, with him we are in safeguard; the people of God have this covenant, with them we are in safeguard spiritually. That minister who is faithful in this covenant, whose heart is steadfast in this covenant, whose heart is strengthened by this covenant, whose heart is full of this covenant, whose loins are girded with the truth of this covenant, whose feet are shod with the preparation of this covenant, who has on the breastplate of righteousness found in this covenant; who has the helmet of salvation found in this covenant; who has the shield of faith, found in this covenant; and who wields the two-edged sword

of the Spirit, to defend the rights of this covenant, and the liberty of these people, "With me you are in safeguard." Moses, in his new covenant capacity, was here, therefore I shall stop with Moses; Joshua was here, so I shall stop with Joshua; all the prophets were here, so I shall stop with the prophets; and all the apostles were here, so I shall stay with them; and above all, the Lord Jesus Christ was here "Abide in me, and I in you;" and if you abide in me, and I and my words abide in you, you shall bring forth much fruit, and will have much to praise and glorify me for; so shall you stand manifest as my disciples. So then, "with me you are in safeguard" spiritually.

I hardly dare take up another thought that presents itself here, and that is the contrast, is it a small matter to be deceived spiritually? Look at the nation of the Jews, how they were deceived. If they had been right spiritually, instead of wrong, they would not have despised and crucified Christ; they would not have treated the holy apostles and the children of God as they did; that wonderful man of God, when his face was like an angel's, his soul being full of the glories of this new covenant, I mean Stephen, they would not have stoned him to death. "They do these things," said the Savior, "because they have not known the Father nor me." So then let me be in safeguard spiritually. We live in a day when spiritual preservation is thought a mere nothing. If you can keep up a decent morality, an outward profession, and a respectable business, and get people to deal with you because they think you are so superlatively pious, as for anything spiritual, that may go. Whereas morality is but the mere outward dress of religion; it forms no more vital part of religion than your dress is a part of your person. We like to be tidily and respectably dressed; but it is no part of our person. So true religion lies in that which is spiritual and vital, "You must be born again." And by and by you will get to the end of morality, when you get to heaven; your surroundings then will be as spiritual as the vitals; all around you then will be spiritual, Christ a quickening Spirit, God is a Spirit, and the spiritual realities of eternity will play around your soul as well as fill your soul, for God will be all in all, and he will be all over all, and he will be all under all, for underneath are the everlasting arms; and he will be all around all; "the opening heavens around you shine." This spiritual preservation is a great mercy. It was a privilege very conspicuously enjoyed by the prophets and apostles, and shall be by the saints to the end of time. This is the very thing the martyrs suffered for. Their enemies did not put them to death because they were so moral, or because they bore such a good name in the world; they put them to death because they held fast the truth; they held the commandments of God in contrast to the commandments of men, and the testimony of Christ in contrast to the testimony of men. Now the Puseyites have a very neat way of doing things in their own eyes; they tell us the less we say about the martyrs the better. How do you make that out? Why say they, Luther had his faults. Who denies it? Calvin had his faults. Who denies it? John Knox had his faults. Who denies it? Latimer and Cranmer had their faults. Who denies it? Ergo, we name these Reformers by their faults; you see what they were, and therefore the less you say about them the better. Very well. Now, friend Puseyite, do you see the legitimate consequence of your line of argument? We don't pretend to be so shrewd as you are, but we think we can recognize the logical consequence, the unavoidable conclusion, of your argument, namely, that Moses had his faults, and so we must not believe his writings; Joshua had his faults, so we must not believe his writings; David had his faults, and great faults too, so we must throw the Book of Psalms away; the apostles had their faults, and so we must think nothing of the Evangelists, nothing of the Epistles; in a word, the prophets and apostles were men of like passions; even that wonderful man of God, Elijah, the lip of infallible inspiration declares that he was a man of like passions with ourselves, so the Puseyite to be consistent ought to reject the Bible altogether. Of course, the Pope and the Puseyites have no faults. So according

to your argument the Reformers are to be rejected because of their faults. You pass by their excellences, we pass by their faults; you pass by their excellences, and take them by their faults; we pass by their faults, and take them by their excellences. So if you prefer to take the prophets and apostles by their faults, and pass by their excellences, we will take them by their excellences, and pass by their faults; and in so doing we shall be followers of the Lord, for that is just what he does; and there is not in the New Testament, from the 1st chapter of Matthew to the last of the Revelation, one fault of one of the Old Testament saints named. You take the high doctrine people by their faults, and pass by their excellences; very well, you are quite welcome to the chaff; we will take them by the wheat, and leave the chaff for those that prefer chaff to wheat. So then, we don't pretend, of course, to be so astute, learned, shrewd, perceptive, keen, clever, and ingenious as our adversaries; we are plain people; but we can see the tendency of their logic. David was wrapped up in God's everlasting covenant; therefore, could use the language of our text in this sense.

Secondly, *circumstantially*, David was here in the cave of Adullam, and he was there for safety. Now, friends, I must occupy a little time upon circumstantial safety. While our God is a God of grace, mercy, and eternal salvation, he is a God of providence; and it is therefore a great thing to be guided by him in that. He knows where it is best for us to be. And where shall I find some instances in the word of God of the Lord interposing at certain times as a God of providence to preserve them that fear him? I will begin with Noah. Here is a flood to take place; what is the flood to be? Universal. The arguments of men against the universality of the flood have no weight with me. Well, they say, we could believe it was universal, if we could make it accord with science; but it does not accord with science. Perhaps not; do you know the reason it does not accord with science? It is because you are not sufficiently versed in the science you hold. If you were, sufficiently versed in geology and every other science, you would see that science and the universality of the flood perfectly agree; for the laws of nature and the laws of God are never at war; physical laws and Biblical testimony are always harmonious, but men cannot always discover it. My Bible says that "all the high hills under the whole heaven," well, I think that's universal; no Wesleyan could wish anything more universal than that, I am sure, "all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered, and all the mountains, fifteen cubits high" that's about twenty-one feet six inches; that's a pretty good depth. That is how it is to be. Noah, now where will you go to? Go to, Lord? there is nowhere to go to; there is no tower, no high hill; I don't know what I shall do. Well, I don't mean you to do without me. Noah, I will find a way for you. You make an ark. I don't think I have got money enough, Lord. Oh, I will find money for you; the silver and the gold are mine. I don't think I can get men to work for me; nobody likes me. Oh, I will incline their hearts to work for you. I am afraid I shall not understand it, Lord; I am not a carpenter, but a vine-dresser, an agriculturist; I don't understand hammering boards together. I will give you wisdom, Noah. So, Noah began, and got on very well, and escaped. There was a kind providence, you see, the Lord interposing. "Abide with me, and you shall be in safeguard." Bless the Lord! don't let us think that he does not care about our bodies, and lives, and circumstances; he does watch over us providentially. With the Lord, then, circumstantially, Noah was in safeguard. Then, again, what shall I say to the Israelites? Here is the angel of death coining over the land: how are the exempted to be distinguished, so that not one of them shall be touched? Well, the Lord directed them what to do: to take the paschal lamb, "and when I see the blood, I will pass you by." Ah, my hearer, don't think that prayer in the church of God is out of fashion; don't think the Lord is not the same now that he was in olden time. He heard the prophet's prayer, and the heavens were shut up for

three years and six months; again, the prophet prayed, fire came and consumed the sacrifice, and rain came from heaven. Do not think it is out of fashion: it is the same God. If any of you, therefore, seem as though you were upon the very eve of ruin and destruction, everything going against you, be quiet, stand still and see the salvation of God. You do not yet see a way of escape; but he will make one; he will find an ark or a shelter for you. Abide in the house where the lamb is, and the angel of death will not come near you. Oh, what emphasis all these things give to that testimony that "safety is of the Lord." Then, shall I just run from Egypt across the wilderness? I won't be so long as the Israelites were; I will go across in half a minute, and just cross the Jordan without dividing it, I won't stop to do that, and go up to Jericho and see Rahab, and hear this language of the spies: "If you and all that are with you abide in the house," abide where you are, for with us you will be in safeguard; and if any hand be upon you, then your blood shall be upon our heads; but if you go out of the house, or lay aside the scarlet line of eternal truth, and are ashamed or afraid to show that; or if you utter our business, if you have got a slack, empty brain, that everybody knows more about than you do yourself, you will utter our business and lose your standing; but if you utter not this our business, and are not ashamed of the scarlet line, and abide in the house, then not a hair of your head shall be touched. And so, it was: they abode in the house, and when the city was taken, all were saved. Ah, then, take the text here as the language of the Lord: "with me you shall be in safeguard." I come now to two more circumstances to illustrate this matter. The first is the captivity of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar. You see from the 8th of Ezekiel what a state of idolatry the service of God at Jerusalem was turned into. Now the city is to be destroyed, and the temple burned; where is my safety, where shall I take my dear wife and children to? where shall I take my furniture to? where shall I go to for protection? The prediction is that the army of Nebuchadnezzar shall roll in like a burning mountain, that none can break their ranks; none shall be able to resist them; they will spare neither sex nor age; they will come in a merciless way; how shall I escape? Now, friends, listen to me: those people, and those people only, that could distinguish the true prophets from the false, escaped. Those that could see what Jeremiah was. and you know what he was in new covenant matters: look at his 31st chapter, and many other parts, those that could see that Ezekiel was a true prophet; those that could distinguish the true prophets from the false, what was the result? They bowed to Nebuchadnezzar, went to Babylon, took their wives, their children, their furniture, did not wait for the destruction; and the Lord went with them, and said: "I will be a little sanctuary there." I know it is a state of tribulation for you to leave that land you have so loved, and in which you have hoped to live and to die; never mind, after seventy years you shall come back to this land; for my counsels of mercy concerning this land are not yet completed. And what shall I say here of the Lord's faithfulness when they did come to Babylon? Was he not as good as his word? Did he not prove to be a sanctuary to them there? Did he not make wonderful revelations to them there? Did he not quench the violence of fire there? Did he not stop the lion's mouths there? Did he not appear to them and for them, and fulfil every iota of his blessed word? I am ashamed this morning of my poor little discourse upon these great things. I would I had gifts more powerfully to commend godliness, and to commend the interposing hand of the blessed God. Ah, we shall need eternity to praise him for all he has done for our eternal welfare, and for the care he takes of such poor creatures as we are, "beset with snares on every hand," and exposed every day and night of our lives, if I may use the expression, to a thousand destructions, and yet he preserves us. With him we are indeed in safeguard. See the importance, then, even for temporal purposes, of distinguishing, when they were going to Babylon, between the true and the false prophets. Those who were led by false prophets were subjected to indescribable miseries and cruelties. Oh, may we never make light, then, of the circumcision of

the ear and of the heart, and of that discriminating eye by which we are enabled to see the evil, and reject it; to receive the good, and walk thereby, dwell and rejoice therein. I will mention one more event, more solemn still. You have, a great many of you, I dare to say, read Josephus; and if you have not, it is of no great consequence. Still, though he was not a professed Christian, his work does show a literal fulfilment of all the miseries described in the 24th of Matthew, the 13th of Mark, and the 21st of Luke. There you have the miseries that were to come upon Jerusalem. Josephus shows, to the very letter, the fulfilment of the whole. But upon whom did those miseries come? Ah, upon those that knew not Jesus; that knew not the apostles; that knew not the truth. Had those people have known God's truth, God's Christ, would those miseries have come? No; there would have been no reason why the city should be destroyed. The Savior wept over the city, for though he knew it would be destroyed, he did not make light of it: he wept over the city, and said, "If you had known the things that belong to your peace; but now they are hid from your eyes. Ah, some of you may not think it of much importance to discover the difference between the true prophets and the false, between true doctrine and false; but the time will come when you will find out that you have made a terrible mistake, if you have treated all alike. How, then, can a minister, in preaching, testimonially take forth the precious from the vile, if he does not know the difference between the regenerated soul and the un-regenerated? How can a man rightly divide the word of truth, if he does not, by the testimony of God's truth, sweep away error, make Christ all in all, make God ultimately all and in all?

But, lastly, *conditionally*; "with me you shall be in safeguard:" that is, if you abide with me. Abiathar, after abiding with David many, many years, and David seems highly to have honored him, people universally respected him, and no one had any suspicion of him; but, somehow or other, by and by he began to be a little weary in well doing; he began, by some mysterious means, to slight God's truth and counsel, and the great truth that God was especially the King, Governor, and God of that nation. And when you begin to slight the truth, or the service of God, that state of mind prepares you for something that will by and by carry you away, if not to your destruction, and it cannot of course carry you away to your final destruction if you are a child of God; but it will carry you away into that state of things that you may end your days in a very miserable sort of way. Such appeared to be the case with Abiathar; and therefore, he began to think lightly of David, began to move away from David; and Adonijah secretly said to Abiathar, seeing him a little bit indifferent, So you are about to give up your position? Well, I don't care much about it; I want to take to farming, or something else. Well, then, said Adonijah, I mean to be king. Well, but the Lord says Solomon shall be king. Oh, never mind about the Lord. David said that Solomon shall be king. Oh, never mind about him; I don't think so much of David as I did; he has always had his own way in everything, but I shall give him up now. Very well: off Abiathar goes, and they had a feast, and all rejoiced together. Oh, says Abiathar, I am ten times better off than I was. By and by there in something the matter, a great shouting upon the others side of the city, at the top of the hill. These were on the low ground, in more senses than one. A great shouting; what is all that about? Well, it is merely the Lord prevailing over man. Solomon is God's choice, and David, by the Spirit of the Lord, has so appointed him, and the people have crowned him, and they are going on still shouting. Away went Adonijah, away went Joab and Abiathar. What will become of me? what, indeed? Don't you wish you had abode in the service of the Lord? Here is a summons for you from Solomon. He comes into the presence of Solomon; and the king said to Abiathar, "Get you to Anathoth, unto your own fields, for you are worthy of death; but I will not at this time put you to death, because you bore the ark of the Lord before David my father, and because you have,

been afflicted in all wherein my father was afflicted.” Thus, Solomon thrust him out, and we hear no more all through the Old Testament of Abiathar. Oh, my hearers, let me pause for a moment; Is there such a calamity awaiting any of us? Shall we grow old, and when we are old and grey headed, our strength forsaking us, and we shall need the Lord more than ever, shall we then turn apostates, shall we then turn traitors, shall we then grow weary of well-doing, shall we then be thrust out, and be brought into such a state as to feel that the service is gone, God is gone, we are gone, everything gone? You hear no more of Abiathar. But of David you do hear something more, after Abiathar had forsaken him. I do not now refer to David’s last words concerning the new covenant, nothing of which we hear from Abiathar; but we do hear that David died in a good old age: the 92nd Psalm will show you that the goodness of old age lies in spiritual victory, strength, and fruitfulness. “The righteous” righteous by faith in Christ, “shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon,” strong in the Lord and the power of his might, which David was. “Those that he planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing to show that the Lord is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.” David died full of days, full of the day of everlasting love, full of the day of eternal election, full of the day of mediation, of the day of eternal glory; and richer, that endure forever; and of honor that can never be tarnished. Such was the triumphant departure of the man after God’s own heart, let the world say what they may about him. But Abiathar goes into the dark, goes under the cloud; we hear no more of him. May it never be our unhappy lot to grow weary of the service of the Lord, but to abide in his service, and feel willing to do all we can to forward the greatest, most glorious, and wonderful cause the world ever saw, or will see; for what so concerns us all as the eternal salvation of our souls, the salvation of the souls of our dear children and grandchildren, those that are old enough to have grandchildren? I think nothing of that religion wherein man’s heart does not expand to be anxious for the welfare of others. Shall we merely say, “My Father?” Let us say, “Our Father.” My soul is not the only one that needs salvation, your soul is not the only one that needs salvation. May we, to our own good, and as an example for the encouragement of others, still tarry by the stuff.