

**David: Issues of the Heart**  
**A Chastened Heart**  
**Part 6**  
**2 Samuel Chapters 12 to Chapter 18**  
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Good Morning! If you turn in your Bible to 2 Samuel this morning we are going to continue looking, as we have been for a number of weeks, at events in the life of David, to whom there is given a lot of space in the Old Testament Scriptures.

If you saw the bulletin as you came in, you will notice that the passage we are going to look at covers seven chapters, 2 Samuel Chapters 12 to Chapter 18.

I am not going to read those to you because there wouldn't be time to do anything else. But I am going to pick out one or two things from those chapters that I think will be helpful to us on one central theme as to how we respond to sin.

That is crucial to our well-being. And if I have a verse that will serve as a good launch for this, it would be 2 Samuel Chapter 14 and the second part of Verse 14. 2 Samuel 14:14 the second half of this verse which says,

“But God does not take away life; instead he devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from him.”

God devises ways that a banished person may not remain estranged from Him.

In these chapters we are going to look at two responses to sin. One is a serious response to sin; the other is a superficial response to sin.

The first is David's response to God when God brought conviction to him for sin in his life. The second, the superficial response, is the relationship that David had with his son Absalom that illustrates a kind of forgiveness that is superficial in its source and superficial in its effect.

And it's the kind of response to our sin that many of us would like to receive from God, and that is why we are going to talk about it.

Let me look at then, at the, what I am going to call a serious response to sin. You remember that after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and then had her husband Uriah sent to the front line and put in a position of certain death in order that David then could take Bathsheba and no one would know he was the father of her baby (for she had been found to be pregnant), and to make her his wife.

It was after that the prophet Nathan came to David with a parable that we talked about last week that brought a deep conviction of sin into David's life.

And I want to read you two statements that Nathan made to David.

The first is in 2 Samuel 12:10. 2 Samuel 12:10 where God said,

“Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.”

That is a solemn judgement. “The sword will never depart from your house.”

And three verses later in Verse 13,

“Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the LORD.’

“Nathan replied, ‘The LORD has taken away your sin.’”

Now there are two statements there I want to talk about.

“The LORD has taken away your sin” is one statement, but “the sword will never depart from your house” is the other statement, both related to the sin of David in his adultery with Bathsheba.

You see our sin is either under the judgement of God when it is not confessed or it is under the discipline of God when it has been confessed. And I want to show that from this passage.

The person God forgives of deliberate willful sin sometimes has to drink deeply of the well that he has tapped in that sin. There is collateral damage from sin. It is not a “shrug your shoulders and it’s all over with” response that we make to God.

And usually that damage is to those we love most. And David has sown something into his life, he has sown something into his family, he has sown something into the nation that will continue to pay back in some way.

And the events that followed in David’s life were not because God had not forgiven him, but because God had forgiven him.

But now there is a discipline of God which comes into his life to mould him and make him the person that he had broken in his act of sin.

And it is in God’s kindness that He disciplines us in order to re-mould us and remake us. David has sown a wind and he is going to reap a whirlwind. We are going to read about that in a moment.

But it is a whirlwind that brings discipline and correction and a training in righteousness, to quote the New Testament speaking of the effect of the Word of God – to correct, to train in righteousness.

And if I have a text for today, it is not written by David; it is written by his son, Solomon. Solomon was born to Bathsheba – not her firstborn who died, but a second born to Bathsheba from David was his son Solomon, who of course became his successor on the throne of Israel.

And Solomon writes in Proverbs 3:11, 12,

“My son, do not despise the LORD’S discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.”

The discipline of God is a love story. We sang about how that I am loved by God. That isn’t always comfortable. Sometimes the love of God is expressed in ways which are painful because the Lord disciplines those He loves, wrote Solomon.

As the Father of the son He delights in, because He loves David, because He delights in David, because He loves you, He delights in you, He disciplines, He chastises, He corrects.

You see the story of David and Bathsheba is not the love story. That is a story of lust, a story of pride, a story of cover-up, a story of death. It is the painful discipline of God in response to that that is the love story in this passage.

And God loved David, God delighted in David, therefore He disciplined David.

Now let me go back to Chapter 12:10 that I read at the beginning.

“Now, therefore,”

(God said to David through Nathan the prophet)

“Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me...”

That, by the way, was the root of David’s sin.

“Because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite...”

And I pointed out last week she is never called the wife of David, never called Bathsheba; she is called the wife of Uriah the Hittite, even into the New Testament, reminding David of his sin.

“You took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.”

“And because of that, the sword will not depart from your house.”

Sin cannot be hidden. It may lay silent. It may be covered over. But in the end it will reveal itself because, as I quoted last week, and I am building on from that, in Numbers 32:23 where God said to Moses,

“You may be sure that your sin will find you out.”

Your sin will find you out. Not your friends will find you out. Not your wife will find you out. Not your husband will find you out. Not your parents will find you out. Not your kids will find you out. Your sin itself will find you out because it is a virus that spreads poison through your system and it will expose itself - it will expose itself and find you out.

Asaph in Psalm 79:8 prayed something which the Old Testament talks about, but he prayed against this thing.

“Do not hold against us the sin of our fathers.”

Because several times in Scripture it speaks of a trickle-down effect of our sin to our children, our children’s children, down to the third and fourth generation.

In fact that is in Exodus 34:7.

“He does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.”

There is this trick-down effect. And it was understood that way, which is why when Jesus came upon a man who had been blind from birth, you remember, His disciples asked Him a question which to us sounds a very strange unnecessary question – we wouldn’t ask it.

But they said, “Who sinned – this man or his parents that he was born blind?” Because they understood that sometimes the sins of the parents do trickle down to the children. But Jesus said this has nothing to do with sin, nothing at all to do with either his sin or his parents’ sin. This man’s blindness has another effect, which is going to be for the glory of God, He said.

But there is this natural law. Now the good news of the Gospel under the New Covenant is this natural law can be broken because in Jeremiah 31:29 when Jeremiah writes about the New Covenant, he says,

“In those days people will no longer say, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’

“Instead, everyone will die for his own sin; whoever eats sour grapes – his own teeth will be set on edge.”

Now under the New Covenant we are - that chain is broken, that stronghold is broken. Under the New Covenant we are inclined to blame our parents. We don’t need to; we can start afresh with God and the sour grapes of our parents need not set the children’s teeth on edge, is what Jeremiah writes about there.

However for David, “the sword will never leave your house because you despised Me.” In Chapter 13 you find – I won’t read it, but you find there David’s firstborn son, whose name was Amnon, raped his half-sister Tamar, driven by what he called love but which turned out to be hatred. Because in Chapter 13:1,

“Amnon son of David fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom.”

She was the full sister of Absalom, one of David’s sons, the half-sister of Amnon. It tells how he tried to woo her and then he tried to seduce her. And then eventually because she resisted, he raped her.

And Verse 15 says,

“Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her.”

Well, he never loved her; he just loved himself and was driven by lust, which, when it was over, the deed was done, expressed its true nature – it was hatred. And he hated her with an intense hatred. And Amnon said to her when it was all over,

“Get up and get out!”

And Tamar put ashes on her head and torn the ornamented robe she was wearing. She put her hand on her head and went away, weeping as she went. And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom’s house a desolate woman.

Lust is made up of hatred, though we can kid ourselves and confuse ourselves as Amnon did that no, this is love. No, this is totally selfish, self-centered lust.

And Verse 21 says,

“When King David heard all this, he was furious.”

But how could David rebuke his son for a sin which he himself had committed?

Tamar’s brother Absalom seethed inside at this for two years. And after two years Absalom invited Amnon to a party (he had hated Amnon during those two years), he got him drunk and in Chapter 13:28,

“Absalom ordered his men, ‘Listen! When Amnon is in high spirits from drinking wine and I say to you, “Strike Amnon down,” then kill him. Don’t be afraid. Have I not given you this order? Be strong and brave.’

“So Absalom’s men did to Amnon what Absalom had ordered.”

They killed him in revenge.

And then later in the chapter, Verse 30, it says,

“The report came to David: ‘Absalom has struck down all the king’s sons; not one of them is left.’

“The king stood up, tore his clothes and lay down on the ground; and all his servants stood by with their clothes torn.

“But Jonadab son of Shimeah, David’s brother, said, ‘My lord should not think that they killed all the princes; only Amnon is dead. This has been Absalom’s express intention ever since the day Amnon raped his sister Tamar.’”

So there is havoc in his family now. One son is murdering another because of the raping of Absalom’s sister.

But how could David discipline Absalom for murder when faced with the murder of Uriah that he had been responsible for?

How could David discipline Absalom for getting Amnon drunk in order to abuse him when David had gotten Uriah drunk in order to take advantage of him but it hadn’t worked?

This is why we have to deal very deeply with our sin because it is a virus within us if we don’t deal with it that spreads its poison. It’s not enough to say sorry when we sin – simply not enough. We have to go down to its cause, down to its roots.

Psalm 51 is a psalm to read and meditate on in the light of all of these details because the heading of the psalm, probably in your Bible is this: “This is a psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.”

If you want to know the state of David’s heart and mind and spirit, you have to read Psalm 51 after his adultery had been pointed out to him. And he cries out,

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

“Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.”

This is David now pleading for cleansing and washing, but he doesn’t stop there. In Verse 6 he says,

“Surely you desire truth in the inner parts.”

“You require wisdom in the inmost places – that’s where I have to go,” says David, “into the inner part. That’s where my lust was living, that’s where my greed was living. That’s where my

pride is living. It's not just saying sorry for the symptoms of that, but going down into the inner place, the inmost place, the inner parts of me," he says.

And then in Verse 10 he cries out,

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

"Because my spirit is broken and it's contaminated." And David takes his repentance from simply being sorry for what he has done into the inner part of his life, into the inmost place to seek a pure heart, to seek a renewed spirit within him.

And this is not merely looking for the benefit of a clean conscience. I know that appetite; let's get my conscience clean, but let's not go deep into the source and do the hard work of understanding it and rooting it out.

It's easy just to enjoy the freedom of a clean conscience but we don't deal with the root, we don't go to the cause, we don't go to the inmost place, into the inner parts, into the heart, into the spirit, as David speaks about.

And to help us get there is the chastening hand of God. The chastening hand of God is never destructive. It is always constructive if we listen to it and we take it and we go with it and we do the hard work that it demands of us in the inmost part.

If we excuse any sin just casually, we avoid it. We don't have to deal with it; we have excused it.

If we blame any cause outside of ourselves and we land on an explanation for our sin which is out there somewhere or back there somewhere, we have avoided our sin.

If we blame our sin on our parents, on our spouse, on our work, on our environment, on our history, we have avoided it.

We have to go where David went and in Psalm 139:23 he said,

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

"See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

David is pleading with God then to search him. And it's all about me; that's where the problem lies. Search me, know me, test me, know my thoughts, identify the offensive way in me, and then lead me in the way everlasting.

It may take time, it may be painful, but lets God into the deepest parts of our own soul. And we do not deal with sin until we have dealt in that way with it.

This is what I have called the serious response to sin.

But there is a superficial response to sin as well. And this is illustrated in David's broken relationship with his son Absalom. Absalom was his third son. And I mention him just now because he had killed Amnon and David was furious after that but did nothing towards Absalom because he had no moral grounds on which to do anything. He himself had been guilty of similar things.

But after Absalom being away from David, he decided to try and bring about a reconciliation. David loved his son Absalom.

Chapter 13:38 says,

“After Absalom fled and went to Geshur, he stayed there three years. And the spirit of the king longed to go to Absalom.”

Here we see David was a loving father despite the great wrong that had taken place, longed to be reconciled to his son. But however much he longed to be reconciled to his son, his son's actions, his son's sin, had separated them from each other.

Meanwhile in Chapter 14, Verse 1 says,

“Joab son of Zeruiah knew that the king's heart longed for Absalom.”

Joab, if you read the story of David, was David's courageous commander, sometimes his crafty and wily commander, but commander of David's army. And he knew David longed to be reconciled to Absalom.

So he set a crafty plan in place to bring about the reconciliation. You can read about it in Chapter 14.

He got a woman from Tekoa to dress up in mourning clothes as though she were grieving for the dead. And she went to David with a story.

She said, “My husband is dead and I was left with just two sons. And these two boys got into a fight and one killed the other. And now my whole clan has risen up and they demand that I give my living son to them that he might die also as a punishment for killing his brother. But if he dies,” she said, “I will have no heir. My husband's name will be gone forever.”

She says frankly in Verse 7,

“They would put out the only burning coal I have left.”

There would be nothing left.

Now stories got through to David's heart. When Nathan told him the story, it got through to his heart; this story gets through to David's heart.



And he says, “Go home and I will issue an order and not one hair of your son’s head will fall to the ground.”

At that, the little old lady straightened herself up, took off her mourning clothes, and said, “When you talk like this, you are convicting yourself. You have not brought back your banished son, Absalom.”

And that’s when she said in Verse 14,

“God does not take away life; instead he devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from him.”

And listening to this, David said, “Is Joab behind this?”

She said, “Yes, he is.”

Then she flatters him, “You know everything, you have wisdom like an angel of God, there is nothing that can be hidden from you. You work everything out perfectly.”

She flatters him that way. But David takes it to heart and he brings his son Absalom home to Jerusalem because in Verse 21 of Chapter 14,

“The king said to Joab, ‘Very well, I will do it. Go, bring back the young man Absalom.’”

So he brings about the reconciliation with his son, but there has been no remorse on the part of Absalom, no repentance certainly on the part of Absalom in killing his brother; he has felt justified in that.

And so David invites him to come back to Jerusalem. So he is no longer a fugitive, no longer having to be running and hiding from David. He can now live in peace in Jerusalem but because there was no real repentance in his heart, there was no real restoration to David, only a legal arrangement that gets him off the hook.

So in Verse 23,

“Joab ...brought Absalom back to Jerusalem.”

Verse 28:

“Absalom lived two years in Jerusalem without seeing the king’s face.”

What’s the significance of that? Absalom is back home but there is no fellowship restored, no communion with David, just a legal standing without the love and intimacy between them.

He is brought back to the land but he is not brought back to the father.

And we can settle for that kind of forgiveness, that kind of relationship. Sometimes all we want from God is forgiveness, that's all we want. We want a technical relationship that we assume comes when we pray what people call "the sinner's prayer."

So we feel legally we are off the hook. We are over the line of salvation. We are in by the skin of our teeth.

But there is no active fellowship with God. There is no growing relationship with God. This is a superficial forgiveness. It is a forgiveness that wants to experience being forgiven primarily to ease our guilty conscience.

Like I said last week, we want a vending machine forgiveness. You put sorry in the slot; you get forgiveness out of the bottom. Or we want God to act like a dog owner who comes behind the dog and scoops up the poop that the dog leaves on the path, sticks it in a bag, throws it away, the dog just carries on.

That isn't the kind of forgiveness that God offers. It's this forgiveness with no real change of heart.

And Absalom's heart has not been changed. It has just been made convenient for him to live no longer under the law, no longer under threat. But his relationship with David is never restored.

Now if you read the story, and some of you know it, of Absalom. He became a very popular man in Israel. He had great charisma. He was good-looking, he had no blemish, it tells us. He loved his beautiful long hair, which apparently on one occasion weighed up to five pounds – that's a lot of hair.

He was spoiled. He was arrogant. He expected his own way. His will was never broken because his relationship with his father was never restored.

True repentance breaks our will, by the way. It breaks the desire for my own way, for my own plans, my own desires, my own pleasures.

Reconciliation without brokenness is not real repentance, it's not real forgiveness.

David wrote in Psalm 51 [vs.17],

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."

Saying sorry and pleading for forgiveness is not enough. It is the breaking of our hearts and the breaking of our spirits has to come about over our sin. And forgiveness without brokenness permits us just to sin again.

A cheap, easy sense of forgiveness may actually encourage us to sin because we have this idea that if I sin and I confess it, God forgives me so I sin and confess and God forgives, I sin and confess, I sin and confess, I sin and confess, I sin and confess.

Unless we learn to hate sin, we will be crawling back to God again and again with the same issue. And our sense of cheap, easy forgiveness will actually encourage us to do it. "I can always be forgiven."

The old saying, "forgiveness is easier to obtain than permission," well I'll just get forgiven – do it anyway.

That's what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called cheap grace. In his book "The Cost of Discipleship" he defined cheap grace as "*forgiveness without repentance*" (I'm quoting what he said about it now) "*forgiveness without repentance, baptism without discipline, communion without confession, grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without the lordship of Christ.*" That's his quote.

The benefits of the Gospel, in other words, without the cost of surrender to God - and a superficial sense of sin is satisfied with a superficial forgiveness.

And I know in my own heart that the more you permit sin, maybe some favorite little sin, the more superficial becomes your sense of forgiveness and your sense of holiness before God.

William Booth who was the founder of the Salvation Army exactly 150 years ago, wrote at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century concerning the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, which was just about to break on them; he said, "*The chief danger that confronts the coming century will be religion without the Holy Spirit, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, heaven without hell.*"

Just a veneer of "I'm feeling good because I am forgiven" but no depth, no substance.

Absalom illustrates this. He had all the benefits of being reconciled to the nation of Israel, living again in the city, but none of the costs, none of the responsibilities.

He is restored to Jerusalem, but no business with the king himself. He didn't see the king's face for two years. No fellowship, no deepening relationship.

And salvation is not just coming out of our sin; it is coming into this relationship that is alive and central to our lives.

I have likened salvation before, as the Bible does, to marriage. And Scripture tells us that when a person marries as Genesis 2:24 says,

"A man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they will become one."

There are two aspects to that – there’s a leaving and there’s a cleaving. You are leaving the old family unit; you leave your father and your mother. And you cleave to your wife; you become one flesh and you establish a new family unit.

That’s the picture of the Christian life. Christ is the bridegroom and the church is the bride. There is a leaving of our old life, a leaving of our sin, but also there is a cleaving to Jesus Christ.

It’s not just leaving; it’s not just getting rid of our sin. I’m not just a Christian because I have prayed the prayer, but I am not interested in developing a living relationship with Jesus Christ. It’s leaving in order to cleave.

If you met somebody who is getting married on Saturday and all he could say to you is, “I’m really looking forward to leaving home on Saturday,” you would say to yourself, “you are going to have a shock on Sunday” because whereas leaving home is a necessary part of the process, marriage is not about leaving home. You don’t define a marriage as having left home; you define a marriage as having come together.

You don’t define a Christian as having left your sin behind; you define a Christian as coming into the fullness of life that God has for us. That’s what makes a Christian.

If you went to somebody’s 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and after the meal the husband got up and said, “I want to testify 25 years ago today I left home and I have never been back since” you would think that was rather strange wouldn’t you?

But that’s who some Christians talk about their Christian life. “I have come out, I have come out, I have come away, I have left behind,” but for what? They have nothing to say about the face to face relationship with the Lord Jesus, their living in fellowship with Him.

We come out of the old life in order to come into this life of fellowship with God. There is a hymn - some of you who are older will know this hymn – it was an evangelistic hymn that, when I grew up, we used to sing it a lot. And it captures this well.

It says,

*Out of my bondage, sorrow and night  
Jesus, I come, Jesus I come  
Into Your freedom, gladness and light  
Jesus, I come to You*

*Out of my sickness, into Your health  
Out of my want, into Your wealth  
Out of my sin, into Yourself  
Jesus, I come to You*

And sometimes the Christian life we want is out of my bondage, out of my sickness, out of my want, out of my sin. It’s purely for convenience and comfort and an easy conscience.

That was the forgiveness Absalom had been given and received – just changed his legal status but nothing more.

And it's a picture of that superficial forgiveness often we are looking for. And Absalom, having come out of the judgement of David, never came into fellowship with David, and so lived in Jerusalem. And for two years he never saw the king's face. And for two years he was never interested in seeing the king's face.

And so the story gets worse. Absalom wants to become the chief judge in the land. He wants to succeed to the throne in the land. So he makes trouble. You don't have to be clever to make trouble and he starts to make trouble and he agitates and he stirs up, and he offers people the world if they will get behind him. And they fall for it.

And in Chapter 15:6 it says,

“Absalom...stole the hearts of the men of Israel.”

And Chapter 15:13 says,

“A messenger came and told David, ‘The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom.’”

He won their hearts, and when you win someone's heart you then win their mind. And when you win their mind you can then win their will. You get people's hearts, you have got their minds; get their minds, you get their wills.

You ask any advertiser. I was reading a thing on why does advertising work. It said it doesn't work instantly; it works over a period of time. They create some kind of warmth to get your heart first of all. That's the skill of advertising, and once you have identified something warm, you begin to want it. It affects your mind, it affects your will.

And so Absalom then mobilizes the people to try and take the throne from David. He gets an army of 12,000 men together and all kinds of intrigues and double-crossings take place.

The first is to create terror in the nation. It tells us that in Chapter 17 - strike the people with terror. It's an old tactic. We use the word terrorism for that today, but it's an old tactic. People then flee because they are insecure, uncertain. And many of the nation fled from Jerusalem leaving David exposed so that Absalom would then, he thought, come in and kill him.

And you can read the story for yourself.

And then you have the pathetic picture of David running up the Mount of Olives to get away from Absalom, and as he is running up the Mount of Olives he is weeping.

Why is he weeping? Is it because he may lose his throne? No, I suggest he is weeping because his forgiven son is still his enemy. There has never been reconciliation, never been brought into fellowship together.

And David sent his men to fight against Absalom and his 12,000 men. And he gave them this instruction: “Be gentle with Absalom, be gentle with him.”

But in pursuit Absalom got his hair caught in a tree as he was riding his mule underneath it. And the mule kept going and Absalom hung by his hair. Somebody sent word to Joab, David’s commander, “Absalom is hanging in a tree.”

So he went up and it was Joab who put three javelins into the heart of Absalom and he was killed. He went back with his message and in Chapter 18:33 it says,

“The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said, ‘O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you – O Absalom, my son, my son!’”

This is the weeping of a father who had extended forgiveness but never known reconciliation and relationship on the part of the forgiven person. It had been only a superficial forgiveness.

Is that the kind we want from God? We just want God to clean us up so that we are clean, our conscience is easy?

Do we want forgiveness? We don’t expect then to have to go deep into the inner heart, inner soul, examining, asking God to examine our hearts that we might understand the root that lies behind them and deal with that root.

Am I forgiven but I have my favorite sin over here – no God, You don’t have access to that. You can clean it because I will need cleaning it every once in a while, but this is my favorite sin, this is my habitual sin, this is my besetting sin, whatever term we want to use for it.

And we don’t want to allow God into the depths of that sin deeply with soul-searching true repentance.

There is a serious response to sin, which leads to serious repentance, which leads to brokenness, which leads to wholeness, for it is out of our brokenness we are made whole.

Or there is a superficial response to sin that leads only to a superficial repentance with no brokenness, no humility, no true fellowship with God, just a ticketed Christianity – I’ve got my ticket – but there’s no life, there’s no power.

Now I know that sin, when we talk about it, there are sins that we fall short of the character of God, we sin with regularity. But there are particular sins – some of them are intentional. And if they are not now, they were, but they have got a grip on us.

And I want to encourage you to be part of the Rooted course. We will have a number of groups starting in February. And one of the things that Rooted course does is look at strongholds in our lives.

It does a lot more than that, but that is one of the aspects. I encourage you to join our life groups where, in the fellowship of a small group of people, we can be accountable and we can talk honestly and openly and help and support each other.

I encourage you, though you can't do this until next September, to join our Freedom Sessions which go every Monday night. It's an eight month course which deal particularly with those things which have gripped us, those strongholds in our lives.

And there are a whole variety of them and many people in this church now who have gone on the Freedom course and will testify to a liberation of freedom they have found through that. And I encourage you to look towards that, although it is now 9 or 10 months away.

But join a Rooted group; join a life group; get a good friend in order to go down into the roots and the depths and deal with a serious response to sin which involves a serious repentance and a serious brokenness that comes through that.

Otherwise we are left only with the superficial. And David's heart was broken over the superficial forgiveness that had been offered to his son but never made serious.

And God wants you and me to live in a serious relationship where we have come out to come in, to enjoy the fullness of His presence and His love and His power.

Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus, we stand humbly before You this morning. We can do no other. We have no grounds on which to be anything but extremely humble. You know the truth about our hearts better than we do. You love us within those truths. You know about us. And because You love us, You want to pull us out, and because You love us, You not only forgive us but You discipline us.

And whatever the nature of that discipline may be, we pray that every event in our life may become a means of our turning more deeply to Yourself that we may increasingly know Your presence, Your love, Your joy, Your fullness. And we find ourselves increasingly liberated from those things which otherwise have occupied the deepest parts of our hearts.

We don't want cheap grace, Lord Jesus; it just leads to a cheap salvation, to a cheap Christianity. We want the real thing that is deep and transforming, that leaves us satisfied and whole. I pray this will be ...