

DAVID:
The Man Who Had
The Heart To Be King



Hosted by the Southaven church of Christ
Southaven, Mississippi

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Lectureship Director

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Dedication

It is with great delight that we dedicate this lectureship book to B.J. and Tish Clarke. They are abundantly worthy of this honor, and many more (Rom. 13:7).

When B.J. and Tish came to Southaven, they were little more than kids. They were not yet thirty years of age and had just started their family. Daniel was not quite three, Holly was just over a year, and Michael was still a couple of years from being born. In many senses, the Clarke family grew up at Southaven, and the church grew to maturity with them.

It is hard for me to think of the Southaven congregation without thinking of B.J. and Tish. I know that it must be even harder for those who were privileged to call him their preacher for 16 ½ years. Like many in the brotherhood, my first impressions of the Southaven congregation were formed through B.J. and Tish. They were then and still are now great representatives for the Southaven congregation and for Christ. Their extensive travels in teaching God's word continue to spread the name of the church far and wide.

With great gladness, B.J. and Tish have spent the largest part of their lives sacrificially serving the Southaven congregation (2 Cor. 12:15). In a day when it is extremely rare for preachers to stay with one congregation for more than a few years, B.J. and Tish made Southaven their home. No doubt, there were many who tried to woo them away down through the years. However, they always made the decision to remain. Wise were the elders who brought them to Southaven, and wise were the elders who did all that they could to ensure that they stayed.

Time and tongue fail to tell of the tremendous impact that B.J. and Tish have had upon the lives of the members of

the Southaven congregation. Perhaps, one day, in the perfect light of heaven, we will know the full measure of their work. However, even from the limited light and narrow vantage point that we have now, the difference that their presence has made is impressive.

It is the highest of honors for my family and me to be following B.J. and Tish at Southaven. However, I must admit personally, that it is extremely humbling to do so. It is humbling to sit in the office where B.J. spent so many hours studying God's word. He has forgotten more than I will ever know. It is humbling to stand in the pulpit where he for many years eloquently and powerfully proclaimed Christ. It is humbling to edit POWER. His pen was and is so prolific. Finally, it is humbling to be directing this lectureship. It was under B.J.'s direction that the POWER lectures resumed and reached new heights. For thirteen years he produced books that continue to be among the best in the brotherhood. Since B.J. is a Pittsburgh Steelers fan, I will use that team to try to convey to you the challenge that is before me. Just think about what it must have been like for the quarterback that followed Terry Bradshaw. How would you have liked to have been in his cleats? Can you recall his name? Likely, like me, you cannot. However, I can tell you this, the quarterback that followed Bradshaw, whoever he was, felt honored to play the same position and to be a part of such a great team. I feel the same way.

B.J. and Tish have been such a great encouragement to our family since arriving at Southaven. They have been so supportive and so helpful. Most in the preaching profession will tell you not to move to a congregation where the former preacher and his family are going to continue on as members. I suppose that is generally good advice. However, B.J. and Tish aren't most people. They are genuine, godly, and gracious. Their presence continues to bless the Southaven congregation and our work with it. It is to this exemplary Christian couple that this book is lovingly dedicated.

Wade Webster

Acknowledgments

Putting together your first lectureship is a challenge in and of itself. Trying to do so in the midst of two moves, buying and remodeling a house, and adopting a baby, is an iron-man triathlon. I do not recommend it.

Producing a lectureship book in the best of times is a team effort. It is even more so in a year like the one that I have just described. I would be amiss if I did not acknowledge those who have stepped up to help.

First, I would like to thank the elders of the Southaven church of Christ, Larry Everson and Con Lambert, for having the vision to host the lectureship and the confidence to allow a greenhorn like me to direct it. I hope that they will be satisfied with the finished product.

Second, I would like to thank the office staff, Betty Marshall and Shelley McGregory, for handling the almost daily issues that came up relative to the lectureship. They kept organization in the midst of chaos. They handled things in my absence and kept things rolling when they attempted to stall. Whatever needed to be done, they did it; and, they did it well. Pounds and pounds of pressure were removed from me by their willingness to handle the constantly multiplying things that had to be done.

Third, I would like to thank my co-worker, Robert Jefferies, for his help. Like me, Robert doesn't yet have a full year at Southaven under his belt. Yet, he was willing to make calls, send emails, and to do other things that were very helpful. The Sundays that he preached allowed me a temporary relief from the constant winds of local work. It is good to have such a capable co-worker.

Fourth, I would like to thank John Wofford for his technical assistance. John has spent countless hours

updating our computer system to allow us to use technology in a much broader and more beneficial way during this lectureship. The work that he has done in designing and redesigning logos, websites, backgrounds, and publications has helped tremendously to renew interest in what we are trying to do.

Fifth, I would like to thank each of the talented men and women who authored the chapters in this book. The study and work that they put into their manuscripts is evident. I especially appreciate the timely manner in which they turned in their manuscripts. Other lectureship directors have told me great tales of woe. Thankfully, this was not the case for me. You took mercy on me, and for that I am very thankful.

Sixth, I would like to thank Paul Sain and the staff at Sain Publications for helping to pull this off. They took on more this year than they usually do, and I appreciate their extra effort very much. It is comforting to commit this book to their care. I know that they take great pride in what they produce.

No doubt, there are many others who are deserving of mention. I apologize for not mentioning you. Your prayers, help, and encouragement are invaluable.

Foreword

Although Israel had the perfect king in God, they foolishly asked for an earthly king that they might be like the nations around them (1 Sam. 8). The aftershocks of that request are felt throughout the rest of the Old Testament. Israel paid dearly for her folly.

Saul, the son of Kish, was selected as Israel's first king. He certainly looked like a king. He was a choice young man who stood head and shoulders above the rest of the people (1 Sam. 9:2). At the start, he seemed to also possess the heart to be king (1 Sam. 10:9). There was not a "goodlier person than he" among the children of Israel (9:2). His heart was humble and he seemed worthy of his selection (1 Sam. 9:21; 10:21-22; 15:17). However, over time, his heart filled up with pride, jealousy, and anger. He did things that God had not commanded and the kingdom was taken from Him (1 Sam. 13:8-14; 15:10-31; 16:14). He no longer had the heart to be king.

With the rejection of Saul, the search for a new captain began (1 Sam. 13:14). In place of prideful and rebellious Saul, God was looking for a man after his own heart. God found the man for which he was looking among the sheepfolds of Jesse, and He sent Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint him (1 Sam. 16:1). When Samuel arrived and saw Eliab, Jesse's oldest boy, he was sure that he had found the next king of Israel (1 Sam. 16:6). Evidently, Eliab reminded Samuel of a much younger Saul in countenance and in height (1 Sam. 16:7). Sadly, he was a lot like Saul in other areas as later events would reveal (1 Sam. 17:28). God looked on his heart and rejected him. Samuel continued his search through six more sons of Jesse without success. Finally, Samuel learned of a younger son and summoned

him from the sheepfolds of his father. When David stood before Samuel, God declared, "This is he" (1 Sam. 16:12). God had found the man that He was looking for to lead Israel.

It is with great delight that we enter into this study of David, the man who had the heart to be king. The men and the women who have penned this volume have attempted to look on David's heart by examining David's life (Prov. 4:23; Matt. 12:34-35). I think that they have done a masterful job in reaching into the deepest recesses of David's heart. It is our hope that you will enjoy the book. It is our prayer that you will embody the heart!

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**Overview
Of
David's Life**

CHAPTER 1

An Overview Of David's Life: The Man Who Had Heart To Be King

Wade Webster

There are a number of great descriptions given to individuals in the Bible. For example, Abraham was called "the Friend of God" (James 2:23; 2 Chron. 20:7) and Moses was called "the man of God" (Deut. 33:1-2). As great as these descriptions are, and as much as I would like to be known by either of them, the most coveted description of all may be that which was given to David when he was described as the man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). In my mind, it doesn't get any better than that.

There are a number of great traits for which Bible characters are known. For example, Solomon was known for his wisdom (1 Kings 3:12) and Job was known for his patience (James 5:11). As great as it would be to be known for these things, the greatest thing of all may have been that for which David was known, - his heart. Again, in my mind, it doesn't get any better than that.

David personified heart. As you know, there were many differences between Israel's first and second king. For example, Saul was tall and David was small. However, the greatest difference was not in height, but in heart. David had the heart to be king (1 Sam. 13:14; 15:28; 16:7),

and Saul did not. In this study, we want to take a closer look at David, the man who had the heart to be king.

David The Soldier: A Courageous Heart

David's final charge to his son Solomon was for him to "be strong and of good courage" (1 Chron. 28:20). Of course, all that Solomon had to do to fulfill these words was to follow in his father's footsteps. From the beginning of his life to the end of his life, David possessed a courageous heart. As a young boy, when a lion and a bear stole his father's sheep, he pursued after them and slew them (1 Sam. 17:34-36). David was neither a hireling, nor a weakling. He cared for the sheep and wouldn't let them be taken without a fight. He possessed courage far beyond his years. He was as bold as the lion or bear that dared to feast upon his father's flock (Prov. 28:1). It was this lion-like courage that moved David to accept the challenge of Goliath, the Philistine champion. The shepherd-boy David stood in faith while the soldiers of Israel shook in fear (1 Sam. 14:23-30). At the end of his life, when his physical strength was fleeting, his heart remained as courageous as ever. In fact, he was almost slain by Ishbibenob, one of the sons of the giant (2 Sam. 21:16). Abishai, one of David's mighty men, had to step in to finish the fight (2 Sam. 21:17). Today, God is still looking for men who have courageous hearts and will stand in the gap (Ezek. 22:30). He is still looking for those who will not let fear hold them back (Heb. 13:6; Acts 4:13, 29, 31; 9:27, 29; 18:26; 19:8).

David The Shepherd: A Compassionate Heart

Throughout Scripture, shepherds are known for their compassion. We see them nursing the sick back to health and carrying the young in their bosom (Isa. 40:11). In keeping his father's sheep, David must have done these

things on a number of occasions. To his credit, David's compassionate heart stayed with him throughout his life. Becoming king did not harden his heart. Following the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, David sought out any remaining members of their family. Unlike other kings, David wasn't trying to remove all threats to the throne. He was seeking to show kindness for Jonathan's sake (2 Sam. 9:1, 7). When a descendant named Mephibosheth was found, David restored all of Saul's land to him and granted him a seat from that day forward at his table (2 Sam. 9:7-13). Today, God is still looking for those who have compassionate hearts. In fact, compassion is to be a characteristic of all Christians. Peter wrote,

Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing (1 Peter 3:8-9).

David The Sovereign: A Chosen Heart

David did not appoint himself king; nor, did he steal the throne from another. He waited for God to crown him (1 Sam. 16:13). On several occasions, David had the opportunity to slay Saul and to take the throne. However, he would not do so. Although Saul was trying to slay him out of jealousy, David would not lift his hand against God's anointed or chosen (1 Sam. 24:6, 10; 26:9, 11, 16; 26:23). David prepared himself to be "a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use" (2 Tim. 2:21), and then he waited on God to use him where He saw fit. Like David, we have been chosen by God. We are a "chosen generation" (1 Peter 2:9). Through the gospel, God has called us to a place in His kingdom (2 Thess. 2:14; Col. 1:13-14). We may presently be in a position

under others. We must submit to those who are over us in the Lord (Heb. 13:17). We must not usurp authority (1 Tim. 2:12; 3 John 9). Our job is to prepare ourselves for the Master's use. In time, He may lift us up to serve in a greater capacity (James 4:10).

David The Sinner: A Contrite Heart

Although David was a great man, he was not without his faults. The Scriptures record several of his sins, including the sins of adultery and murder (2 Sam. 11). As you recall, he stole the wife of one of his bravest soldiers and then had the man murdered in battle to cover his tracks. It really doesn't get any more calloused and cold than that. David deserved to die for what he did. However, by the grace of God, he didn't die (2 Sam. 12:13). However, he did pay dearly for his sins. Through those within his own family, he felt the pain of adultery and the pain of losing a loved one first hand (2 Sam. 12:10-14). While David's sins were contemptible, the penitence that he showed afterwards was commendable. When Nathan pointed the finger of condemnation at his friend, David plainly and penitently confessed his sin (1 Sam. 12:13). To his credit, David didn't make excuses for his actions or blame the messenger. He took responsibility for his sin and sought forgiveness for it (Psa. 51:1-4). Things could have been, and likely would have been much worse for David, had he not possessed a contrite spirit (Psa. 34:18; Isa. 57:15). In the fifty-first psalm, he declared, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psa. 51:17). Like David, we must be willing to confess our sins and to turn from them (1 John 1:7-10). We must rend our hearts and turn to God for mercy when we sin (Joel 2:12-13).

David The Singer: A Cheerful Heart

David is described in Scripture as “the sweet psalmist of Israel” (2 Sam. 23:1). This description is certainly appropriate when you consider that David penned the largest part of Psalms, Israel’s songbook. Although the psalms of David reflect many emotions, including negative emotions like anger and disillusionment, the overall tone of the psalms is one of joy. In the fifth psalm, David declared,

But let all those that put their trust in thee
rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because
thou defendest them: let them also that love
thy name be joyful in thee (5:11).

In like manner, in the forty-second psalm, he wrote,

When I remember these things, I pour out my
soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude,
I went with them to the house of God, with
the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude
that kept holyday (Psa. 42:4; cf. 16:11).

For a time in his life, due to sin, David lost his song or his joy. However, David wasn’t content to dwell in the dumps. He was determined to get his song back. From the depths of his heart, he pleaded with God to “restore” unto him the joy of salvation (Psa. 51:12). Like David, we can lose our song. However, God doesn’t want us to do so. He wants His people to be filled with joy (John 15:11) and to burst forth with song (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). If God’s joy dwells within us, it will come forth in song. After all, those who are merry sing (James 5:13). If we have lost our joy because of sin or something else, we need to ask God to restore it to us. A merry heart will do us good like a medicine (Prov. 17:22).

David The Soulmate: A Committed Heart

It would be hard to find a greater friendship than

that which existed between David and Jonathan. They were knit together with one heart and they loved each other with one soul (1 Sam. 18:1, 3; 19:2; 20:17). Upon hearing of Jonathan's death, David spoke of how the love of his friend surpassed that of women (2 Sam. 1:26). David's heart was so committed to his friend that not even death could sever it. In remembrance of his friend, David sought out the only surviving heir of Saul's house that he might show kindness unto him for Jonathan's sake (2 Sam. 9). Likely, the friendship shared by Jonathan and David was the model from which Solomon drew many of his observations about friendship. Consider the following proverbs and see if they don't remind you of the friendship that Solomon's father shared with Jonathan:

- "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Prov. 17:17).

- "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24).

- "Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off" (Prov. 27:10).

- "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend" (Prov. 27:17).

David and Jonathan possessed committed hearts. They refused to let anything pull them apart. Of course, Jonathan was not David's only friend. Nathan and his mighty men were also loyal friends. Sadly, not all of David's friends were faithful. Ahithophel, David's counselor and friend, betrayed him and broke his heart (Psa. 41:9). Like David, we are likely to have both true and false friends. Hopefully, the true ones will outnumber the false ones, as was the case with David. When we do find true friends, we need to be committed in heart to

them. If they are right, we need to fight for them. If they are wrong, we need to lovingly correct and restore them as Nathan did David.

David The Seer: A Controlled Heart

On one occasion, David declared, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2). David was blessed by God to see and record many things about the future. He was especially blessed to reveal and record things about the coming Messiah and His kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12-16; 1 Kings 9:5; Psa. 2). Rather than resisting the spirit, as some of his descendants would later do (Acts 7:51), David submitted to it. Like other holy men, he spake as he was "moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). David allowed himself to be a pen in the hand of God. He allowed God to use him in writing His inspired word. Today, the sacred canon is complete. David's work, and the work of other inspired men, is finished (Rev. 22:18-19). While our heart does not need to be controlled in the sense of writing God's word, it does need to be controlled in the sense of letting God direct our lives through His word (Jer. 10:23; Prov. 3:6; 2 Thess. 3:5).

David The Servant: A Compliant Heart

Throughout the Old Testament, God refers to David as His servant (2 Sam. 7:20-21, 25-26; 1 Kings 9:4-5; 11:4, 6, 38; 14:8; 15:5; 2 Kings 8:19; 20:5; 22:2; 2 Chron. 6:15-17; 8:14; 28:1; 29:2; 34:2; Neh. 12:24; Psa. 89:3, 20; Ezek. 34:23). It is clear from a study of David's life that he had the heart of a servant. His heart was compliant or submissive to the will of God. A good example of David's submission to God is in the matter of building the temple. David deeply desired to build a house for God. Solomon declared,

Now it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. But the LORD said to David my father, Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart: Notwithstanding thou shalt not build the house; but thy son which shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house for my name. The LORD therefore hath performed his word that he hath spoken: for I am risen up in the room of David my father, and am set on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built the house for the name of the LORD God of Israel (2 Chron. 6:7-10; cf. 1 Chron. 28:3).

Please note that it was in David's heart to build God a house. However, when God prohibited him from doing so, he submitted to the will of God. His heart was compliant to the will of God. Although he couldn't build it, he could and did aid his son by laying up the supplies that would be needed. Like David, our hearts need to be compliant to the will of God (James 4:7). We need to be constantly on guard against our hearts becoming hardened or resistant to God's will (Heb. 3:8, 15; 4:7).

God's search for a man after His own heart stopped with David. From that day forward, men have known David by that description and for that characteristic. Hopefully, we now have a better understanding of the man that David was, and the man that God wants each of us to be.



**David, The Soldier:
A
Courageous Heart**

CHAPTER 2

David And Goliath: The Slingshot Heard Round The World

Paul Sain

Of the many great stories in the Holy Bible, the account of young David and the giant Goliath is amazing, intriguing, inspiring and one of the favorites of young and old! There have been many great battles, remembered and oft mentioned (Waterloo, Alamo, Desert Storm, Iraq, etc.). But none are more frequently discussed and taught than David and Goliath. History speaks of a “shot heard round the world” - today we examine “the slingshot heard round the world”.

Let’s briefly note foundational information: David was the youngest of the eight sons of Jesse (1 Sam. 16:1-11). His relatives included Obed (grandfather), Boaz (great-grandfather), Ruth (great-grandmother). David was a keeper of sheep (1 Sam. 16:11). God sent Samuel to the house of Jesse, specifically selecting David to be anointed king.

Whether in Bible classes and sermons, it is wise to approach a study of inspired text **through the eyes** of the writer, or **through the eyes** of the one to whom it was written. We should not always view matters through twenty-first century glasses. So, for our study of the young boy standing tall against the giant, let’s look **through the eyes** of each one.

Through The Eyes Of David's Father (Jesse)

Jesse was concerned about his three older sons who were in Saul's army, in battle against the Philistines. He sent David, the younger son who had remained home and had been tending his sheep, to take provisions for his sons in battle, as well as to see how they were doing (1 Sam. 17:13-18, hereafter only the chapter and verses given).

Through The Eyes Of Young David

When David went to see his brothers, at the instruction of his father, he heard the raging challenge of Goliath. This giant of a man was spewing out sarcastic and slanderous words toward David's brothers and fellow-soldiers. There was none to accept the challenge. David immediately realized the humiliation and disgrace being brought upon Israel (and this disgrace further reflected upon Jehovah God).

I have stood at the base of the Gateway Arch (St. Louis, MO). The structure is six hundred thirty tall and six hundred thirty feet across. With thousands of tons of concrete and its stainless steel exterior, it is overwhelming to a small human! Can we remember when we were but a small child and looking up to the full size adult? Consider a flea's perspective of a large dog. Without doubt, the tall giant seemed as a monster to the young lad David!

We can not know for certain the age of David at this time. Often we think of him as a young teen, a lad. Likely he was older than often considered, but still a young man in comparison. We do know he was able to put on the king's armor, and that the king was a man of significant stature.

Goliath was an awesome, overpowering man - nine feet and nine inches tall (to as small [?] as eight feet, five

inches, with the smaller measurement of a cubit)! His armor was huge – the mail coat (metal shirt, as scales of a fish) weighed 5,000 shekels (approximately 160 pounds). The head (staff) of his spear (17:7) weighed 600 shekels (about 25 pounds). There were none to compare to this giant. When viewed through his physical size and strength, he was without compare and when considered through mere human strength against human strength - Goliath would be victorious.

But David could not allow such a barbarian to go unchallenged and continue to hurl such ridicule upon God's people. Goliath had defied (cast scorn on) the people of God. David believed Israel and Jehovah were dishonored by not accepting his challenge (17:8).

The young man of faith remembered when he had faced beasts of great power and strength and yet was victorious (lion and a bear). Thus, within his heart burned an unusual and confident faith. An additional fact worthy of note: men from Bethlehem were skilled in the use of a sling. In Judges 20:16 we read there were hundreds of Benjaminites who could, *"sling stones at a hair's breath and not miss."* David ultimately chose the weapon of his skillful choice.

David also was interested in the *"reward"* offered to the one who would fight this champion of the Philistines. He asked of the men, and of the people, what the victor would receive (17:24-27). He may have been also motivated for personal reasons.

Through The Eyes Of The Giant Goliath

Goliath was a survivor of the well-known race of Anak (Num. 13:28). His home was Gath (one of the chief cities of the Philistines).

Goliath followed the custom of the Arabic fighters to vaunt their own prowess as they insulted their enemies.

He was aggressive, militant, challenging. The Philistines had advanced their troops into Judah. As in the garden of Eden, Satan (and his ministering servants) has always been the one behind the temptation to do evil or be involved in evil action.

Goliath tall and strong! He likely had grown accustomed to being the daunting powerful force for the Philistines. One-on-one, he was supreme. He believed he would be victorious for his people.

When David appeared before Goliath, he was angry. It was insulting for such a young man to stand before him. He was so tall, muscles bulging from carrying such heavy armor, in full armor he appeared overwhelming to other soldiers, much less little David.

Through The Eyes Of David's Brothers

The Philistines gathered for battle against Israel (17:1). There was reason for concern by everyone in Israel regarding the Philistine conflict.

Tragically the mistakes and misdeeds that led to this present time in history included their failure to trust Jehovah. They were alienated from Him. Their lives demonstrated blatant disobedience. Their faithless leader begat faithless followers.

David's brothers were fearful of Goliath. Even King Saul was greatly afraid. They were paralysed when Goliath of Gath (17:4) appeared and spewed forth his boastful, defiant, contemptuous challenges. For forty days, morning and evening, Goliath had regularly issued an antagonistic, terrifying challenge. Matthew Henry wrote, "*He arose, and came, and drew nigh, like a stalking mountain, overlaid with brass and iron.*" The mail-clad champion likely came from the west through the low corn, close enough to be seen and heard. Consistently the men of Israel had "*fled*" (17:23), drew back in haste from even the edge of the

trench (valley), rejected even the possibility of fighting him. He was strong and tall. They felt they would not have a chance of victory against him. Israel was “dismayed” (demoralized).

The men saw only through the eyes of man, not God. They did not even consider their faith and trust in Almighty God.

David’s brothers were insulted by David’s actions. He shamed them for their lack of responding to the giant’s challenge. He said, *“Is there not a cause?”* David realized that action was immediately necessary and this reflected negatively on his brothers.

Eliab’s, one of David’s brother, anger was kindled against David (17:28-29). For days these men of war had heard the giant’s challenge and had become more and more depressed and discouraged. Now, Eliab felt no doubt, how dare my baby brother come along and say he would fight the giant! He slurred David by asking him in whose care he had left the few sheep that he had been tending. Maybe he thought David was not content with his lowly calling as a young shepherd and wanted to be a hero at war. Eliab accused David with being wicked at heart – that which the accuser was guilty.

Through The Eyes Of Observers

The setting of the possible battle is intriguing. The battle was in the land belonging to the tribe of Judah. The heathen Philistines were on one mountain and the armies of God were on the other. There was a valley (deep trench with vertical sides, [17:2-3]) between the two mountains. The trench was filled with rounded, water-worn pebbles. A natural barrier existed between the two hosts where neither could cross without certain defeat. A stalemate had developed when a champion for the Philistines came forth and issued a challenge of a one-

on-one battle to settle once and for all the dominion of one over the other. It seemed the logical way to decide the victor was with a single combat.

There was not the slightest “fellowship” between the two camps. They served two opposing masters. An additional note: do we see the hand (providence) of God gradually introducing young David, preparing him for what was yet to come?

Compare the distinct lines between God’s people and the world of darkness. Separation should exist these two opposite extremes. We must NOT extend fellowship to the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11; 2 Cor. 6:14-18).

Through The Eyes Of The King

The king’s men had rejected the possibility of fighting against Goliath. The king obviously was aware of this enemy’s threats, and the seemingly hopeless condition. The king had enticed the men, any of the men, to fight Goliath by offering a sizeable reward:

And the men of Israel said, Have ye seen this man that is come up? surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father’s house free in Israel (1 Sam. 17:25).

David asks the men close to him, what is that will happen to the one who kills this giant and takes away the reproach from Israel? He was informed of the exact rewards that would be bestowed upon the victor.

As David stands, before the king, as one willing and ready to fight the mighty champion, the king expressed his doubt that this shepherd boy is able, because he is but

a youth and Goliath was a man of war from his youth.

David offers the argument of his past accomplishments as one who had killed a lion and a bear, and then he adds that this *“uncircumcised Philistine”* would be as the lion and the bear. To call Goliath an uncircumcised Philistine was to his cast negatively upon his heritage, as one not being under the covenant of God. David’s words cut to the heart.

David then offered the *“knockout punch”* of all arguments. He boldly asserted that the God that made it possible to defeat the lion and bear would deliver him from the Philistine! Saul then told David to go and *“the Lord be with thee”* (17:37). Obviously, there is no better wish that we could offer to another who is about to approach a dangerous situation (or even for day to day activities).

King Saul armed David with his armor - a helmet of brass and the coat of mail, along with his sword. David said he could not go with this armor, he had not proved them. He was not at all accustomed to this type of armor. David has been accustomed to weapons of rural use. It is also quite possible, as David was a man of humility, that he did not feel worthy to wear the king’s armor.

Through The Eyes Of The Enemy Soldiers

The soldiers in the Philistine army thought they had a sure thing. They believed none would be able to go against Goliath and be victorious. Can you imagine how they boasted, gloried and arrogantly flaunted.

Through The Eyes Of Young David As He Meets Goliath

Goliath, the gigantic champion, arrogant and proud of his strength had defied the armies of the living God.

When David came unto him, the giant was disgusted and astonished. He asked, "*Am I a dog*"? He was saying, do you think you can come up against me with mere sticks? The dog was an animal held in great aversion in the East.

The giant verbally attacks David (1 Sam. 17:42). He says he will feed David's flesh to the birds of the air (17:44).

David responds with unyielding faith. He knew that God would enable and give him the strength to be more than conquerors, for the battle is the Lord's! His reaction and actions were not for David's glory, but for the honor of God. David tells Goliath:

Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands (1 Sam. 17:45-47).

David was absolutely confident. He knew the God in whom he had placed his trust and that He (Jehovah) was all-powerful.

He RAN toward the giant (17:48). He was not timid, fearful, and did not hesitate approaching this monster. David reached into his bag, took out a single stone and slang it, hitting the Philistine champion in his forehead. The giant fell down before them, face to the earth. The

arrogant, boastful, challenger was down.

It is noteworthy that the inspired Scripture not only states that David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, but *“there was no sword in the hand of David.”* It was not with the weapons of carnal battle that gave David the victory. It absolutely was an extraordinary victory! It was Jehovah’s battle! It was Jehovah’s victory!

David took Goliath’s sword and cut off his head (17:51). When the Philistines realized what had happened, they fled. The men of Israel arose, shouted, and chased after the Philistines all the way to the gates of Ekron. David took the head of Goliath to Jerusalem, likely to show his complete contempt for anyone who would dare defy the armies of the living God.

Sadly, the story does not cease here. King Saul ultimately became so jealous of David, as the people sang his praises. They would chant *“Saul hath killed his thousands, but David his ten thousands.”* The victor over the giant, a powerful force for Israel, becomes the enemy of the King.

Practical And Valuable Lessons

Paul’s words in Romans 15:4 (the things written aforetime were written for our learning) remind us of the treasured records of the events of the past.

1. God’s people can be victorious even against great challenges. At times the battle seems overwhelming, impossible for victory to be enjoyed. If David viewed this enemy through carnal and physical eyes, he would have known for certain that defeat was inevitable. But mountains can be moved (Mark 11:23), things impossible for man are possible with God (Luke 18:27).

2. God’s people will always have enemies. Some enemies will be small and some great, some powerful and

some not as powerful, some visible and some invisible. From the beginning in the Garden of Eden, Satan has sought to seduce and destroy man. Satan has ministering servants (2 Cor. 11:15f). The god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4) is the father of all liars (John 8:44).

3. God and “one” make a majority. David knew he was not alone. He did not defeat the lion and the bear by his sheer physical strength. He knew it was Jehovah whom the giant had defied, and that Jehovah would be the power that would defeat the heathen champion.

4. There have been and will always be negative, pessimistic, “can’t-do-it” people, even in the church. King Saul said David would not be able to go against the giant. The king did not know David’s power - Jehovah. He did not understand that it was not mere physical strength, nor military prowess that would defeat the champion of the Philistines. Even today there are many nay-sayers who declare something has never been done that way, people will not hear nor obey, it will cost too much, we don’t have the time for it, etc. The faithful of God must press on (Phil. 3:12f), not growing weary in well doing (Gal. 6:9), and one day they will receive the promised crown (Rev. 2:10).

5. Threats of the enemy are nothing more than “threats”. When God is on our side, no one nor any thing is powerful enough to defeat us (Rom. 8:31). Nothing can separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:35-39). Our enemies may threaten us, persecute us, say all manner of evil against us falsely, but our Lord tells us what our attitude and course of action should be:

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice,

and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven ... But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:10-12; 44-45a).

We are not to fear them that have even the power to kill us (Matt. 10:28), but those who might destroy us spiritually.

6. Do not try to put on someone else's armor. Use the equipment you have, with which you are skilled, to the glory of God. Saul's armor was not David's armor. He did not know how to use the javelin, sword or body armor. We should use our talents and abilities, not trying to be someone or something we are not. Though it is not specifically what Paul was teaching, in 1 Corinthians 10:12, the basic lesson is not to compare ourselves to ourselves or others may be observed.

7. Remember your past victories, and the One who made them possible. David had knowledge and fact of the power of the Father (17:34-37; Hebrews 10:32-35). Unless we use our talents and abilities everyday for God, we cannot face big projects or obstacles (Luke 9:23). Likewise, we can draw from past experiences of others or ourselves. Walk through the hall of faith (Heb. 11) and benefit from those who died in faith (Heb. 11:13) because they obeyed and fully followed the will of their Creator. These "*witnesses*" unto us (Heb. 12:1ff). They can lift, strengthen, edify, build us up. They were human and made mistakes, but they died as a faithful servant of the Lord.

8. Victory may come from the most unlikely source. Young David was not a mighty man of war. He was not in Saul's army. He had not been a man of

war from his youth (as Goliath). Yet, this man of faith, confidence and trust (in God) was ready, willing and able. For a moment, compare Paul in Romans 1 when he said he was debtor, ready and not ashamed. David knew in whom he believed and was ready and willing to fight for the "*cause*."

9. Tragically, opposition often comes from within.

When David was ready to go against the enemy, it was his own brethren who opposed him. While Eliab was unwilling to fight the giant, he did not hesitate to oppose David's desire to fight, accusing him of taking action for the wrong reason. King Saul responded to David's offer by telling him he did not think there was any way he would prevail, even though there was not another who had been willing to take on this enemy. The apostle Paul often spent valuable time in resolving internal matters (strife, envy, sexual immorality, preacheritis, etc.) instead of evangelistically reaching the lost and dying. Satan will employ any means possible to wreck havoc in the work of God, whether from those within or without.

10. "Is there not a cause?" David knew there was a CAUSE for his action. He was compelled to take action. The name, reputation and honor of Almighty God was being tarnished.

Today, God's faithful have a "*cause*" for evangelistically spreading the precious saving powerful gospel. There is a "*cause*" for standing against the various and diverse false doctrines of men. There is a "*cause*" for living a righteous, holy and godly life in a sinful and perverse world (Titus 2:11-12; Acts 2:40), as demanded by a just and holy God.

11. The Lord saveth not with a sword. We can read the end of the Book and know how the story ends. The victory is ours (1 Cor. 15:57). The Lord will victoriously triumph over Satan (the god of this world), and the devil

and his angels will be condemned to eternal punishment (Matt. 25:41). Our fight as a follower of the Saviour is not carnal, but spiritual (2 Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:10-18). The kingdom of our Master is not of this world (John 18:36); our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). Let us place our complete faith and trust in God, not ourselves, nor things of this world.

12. By this victory, the world knew "there is a God in Israel" and "the Lord saveth not with sword and spear" (vs. 46-47). As a result, the enemy fled. As Satan left Jesus Christ (Matt. 4) after the Son of God rebuffed him time after time, so the devil will flee from Christians when we resist him (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8). The world will know of Almighty God through our lives, as we are earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7), read of all men (2 Cor. 3:2). We prove our loyalty and faith by our actions (James 2:14-26).

Summary

May we realize we are at war. Christ is our commander-in-chief. We have the power to resist Satan, to stand against the wiles of this vicious enemy, to be victorious even against seemingly insurmountable odds. May we fully and completely have faith, trust and confidence in our Creator. As C. H. Spurgeon said,

I would recommend you either believe God up to the hilt, or else not to believe at all. Believe this book of God, every letter of it, or else reject it. There is no logical standing place between the two. Be satisfied with nothing less than a faith that swims in the deeps of divine revelation; a faith that paddles about the edge of the water is poor faith at best. It is little better than a dry-land faith, and is not good for much.

May our faith increase (Luke 17:5), our complete trust in the power of our Creator, and His assistance He will provide His faithful (1 Cor. 3:6, 9), that we may stand in the power of His might (Eph. 6:10) and be victorious conquerors (Rom. 8:37).

CHAPTER 3

David's Mighty Men: *Courage Begets Courage*

Cliff Goodwin

Everything God has provided in the Bible is needful for man. As one reads and studies God's Word, he will likely come across passages and accounts that, at first glance, may seem extraneous or unneeded. The Bible student may occasionally find himself asking, "Why is this in here? Why did God see fit to record this in His Word?" (The various genealogies recorded in Scripture come to mind in this regard). Yet the faithful and diligent Bible student would do well to remember one profound fact along these lines: the Holy Spirit did not reveal anything in Scripture needlessly or even randomly. What man possesses in the Bible is the revelation of all spiritual truth necessary for salvation (John 16:13; 2 Peter 1:3)—an unspeakable treasure! The Bible is not only able to save man (James 1:21), but it also equips man as needed for his proper spiritual service before God (2 Tim. 3:16-17, NKJV). It contains not only doctrines to be believed and sins to be shunned, but also examples to be followed, principles to be applied, and illustrations to be utilized. Taken as a whole, the Word of God is man's all-sufficient resource Book—a Book to be studied and restudied; ingested and digested; contemplated and meditated. The life of the truth-seeker will be one in which the Bible is mined tirelessly for all it's worth!

It is from this view of Scripture that the present study is offered concerning "David's Mighty Men." Upon first glance, the casual Bible student might fail to realize the helpfulness and pertinence of the inspired, historical record concerning these men. After all, modern man does not live in the same civilization as did David and his loyal warriors. So much has changed through the centuries—from customs to combat! Yet God is more than capable of providing man with a revelation that is timeless and perennially relevant. What He has revealed in relation to David's mighty men is rich in spiritual principles that need to be learned and applied, even as one strives to live the Christian life some 3000 years later.

David's Ascent To The Throne

David could not have known what a tumultuous life lay in store for him, when as a shepherd youth, he was anointed by Samuel to be king over God's people (1 Sam. 16:13). In fact, David would be anointed no less than three times before being recognized as king over all of Israel. He was anointed first by God (through Samuel); secondly, he was anointed by the tribe of Judah (2 Sam. 2:10-11); and finally, he was anointed by all the elders of Israel (2 Sam. 5:1-5). The first of these anointings obviously occurred while Saul was still alive and still reigning over all of Israel. The die had been cast by God, so to speak, but there would still be the unfolding of many events before David solely ruled the monarchy.

Ironically, it seems to have been a song—or perhaps more of a chant—that aroused Saul's envy and hatred of David. Earlier, as recorded in First Samuel 16:14-23, David had made music for Saul, in order to comfort him during bouts of depression, or melancholy (Conley 31-32). Following the death of Goliath and the rout of the

Philistines, however, it was the women's singing that displeased Saul and made him very angry.

And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward (1 Sam. 18:6-9).

As the inspired historian recorded, Saul "eyed" David from that day forward; and so would begin David's flight from Saul throughout much of Canaan (cf. 1 Sam. 21-26). Later in the same chapter, following David's marriage to Saul's daughter, the Bible says, "And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually," (1 Sam. 18:29). As a fugitive fleeing the wrath of the king, David would come to the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. 22:1).

This seems to be the time and the place at which David really began to amass his forces. Along with his brethren and all his father's house, Scripture records that the first four hundred men who joined themselves to David also included those in distress, those in debt, and those discontented (1 Sam. 22:2). Wiersbe comments, "Many others saw in David the only hope for a successful kingdom, so they came to him as well: those who were in distress because of Saul, those in debt, and those discontented because of the way Saul was ruining the nation" (266). Smith adds, "Had Saul's government been

just and upright, David would have had no followers... The Israelites had in him [Saul, CG] the very king they desired, but they found that a brave general might at home be a ruthless tyrant" (410). King Saul's personal unfaithfulness had not only affected him, but it was obviously a detriment to the nation as a whole. It is extremely difficult for people to rise above the plane of poor leadership. The men who initially flocked to David would have been disdained in society, but history bears out the success of their cause. "David's little band of rejects represented the future of the nation, and God's blessing was with them" (Wiersbe 266).

During the course of David's exile, his fighting force soon grew to six hundred men (1 Sam. 23:13; cf. 25:13; 27:2). "During these times, David had put together a crack fighting team of six hundred men, made up basically of last-chance type characters – tough, but loyal and dedicated to their powerful commander" (Winters 5). It was while David stayed in mountain strongholds that he was joined by those from Gad, as well as others from Benjamin and Judah (1 Chr. 12:8-18). As David stayed in varying caves and strongholds during his flight, it is difficult to discern whether these defections occurred at Adullam or some other hideout. Regardless, they were only the beginning of many more to come. The inspired chronicler also recorded the defection of warriors from Manasseh and more, still, from Benjamin. These specifically came near the end of David's exile, while he was residing in Ziklag (1 Chr. 12:1-7, 19-21). "For at that time day by day there came to David to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God," (1 Chr. 12:22).

Appreciating David's flight from Saul and realizing how his earliest warriors came to his aid are very helpful in beginning to understand the loyalty that was forged

between David and his soldiers. As time went on certain soldiers distinguished themselves—not only by their courage and valor, but by their devotion and loyalty as well. These elite warriors became known as David’s mighty men. As a whole, they were heroic in battle and unfailing in loyalty, even remaining at David’s side during the rebellions of Absalom (2 Sam. 16:6; cf. 17:8) and Adonijah (1 Kings 1:8-10). According to the account in Second Samuel, there were thirty-seven of David’s mighty men in all (2 Sam. 23:39). The chronicler, however, records at least fifty (1 Chr. 11:10-47). One commentator offers this helpful observation:

Though the spellings of several of the names differ in the corresponding list in 1 Chronicles 11:11-47, the names can usually be equated. The chronicler does, however, add names beyond the 37 in 2 Samuel. Perhaps they were men of lower ranks than those listed in Samuel or perhaps they replaced others (already listed) who had fallen in battle (Merrill 481).

Numbering & Classing The Mighty Men

Though fifty or so names are enumerated as belonging to David’s mighty men, inspiration saw fit to elaborate only on a handful of these. The specific exploits of five men are recorded in Second Samuel 23. This record is paralleled in First Chronicles 11, though one of the five is not specifically named in the latter account (i.e. Shammah). Some commentators believe that these five men comprised two higher orders—orders that were superior to the mighty men in general, that is, “the thirty” (cf. 2 Sam. 23:13, 23-24). This view supposes “the thirty” to be a code name or technical term for David’s elite soldiers, or captains (cf. 1 Chr. 11:15). Such a designation would be similar to the apostles’ being called

“the twelve” in the New Testament (cf. John 20:24; 1 Cor. 15:5). It is interesting to note that after the “premier” five are elaborated, there are thirty-two other names listed (2 Sam. 23:24-39).

The two superior orders under consideration were actually triads, or threesomes. The first and highest triad consisted of Adino, Eleazar and Shammah (2 Sam. 23:8-17). The second triad supposedly consisted of Abishai, Benaiah and an unnamed third warrior. The following verses seem to support this view, suggesting a second threesome that was inferior to the first.

Was he [Abishai, CG] not most honorable of three? therefore he was their captain: howbeit he attained not unto the first three (2 Sam. 23:19).

These things did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name among three mighty men. He was more honorable than the thirty, but he attained not to the first three. And David set him over his guard (2 Sam. 23:22-23).

Of the three, he [Abishai, CG] was more honorable than the two; for he was their captain: howbeit he attained not to the first three (1 Chr. 11:21).

Presuming this “dual triad” view to be correct brings up an inevitable question: Why is a third soldier not named in the second triad? Theories can be arbitrary and speculative, but one of the most plausible supposes that the unnamed warrior had been guilty of treason—perhaps during Absalom’s rebellion (Smith 572).

The texts in both Second Samuel and First Chronicles have their difficulties, and the foregoing perspective does not answer all the questions that arise. However, an in-depth study of the two accounts does conclude

that the “dual triad” view has its merits. Therefore, if this understanding is accurate, the upper hierarchy of David’s military forces would have been broken down in somewhat the following fashion.

JoabCommander-in-chief (2 Sam. 20:23;
cf. 1 Chr. 19:8; 27:34)

Adino
EleazarFirst Triad (chiefs among the
Shammah mighty men)

Abishai
BenaiahSecond Triad (distinguished, but not
(unnamed warrior) not as the first)

30 or more captainsThe Mighty Men (without further
distinction)

Merrill offers a chart of David’s mighty men that is most helpful, as it parallels the two accounts in Samuel and Chronicles (478-479). The balance of this study will follow the account in Second Samuel 23:8-23, focusing particularly on the “premier” five—the named warriors who comprised the two triads.

Lessons From The “Premier Five”

Adino - Who Did So Much, With So Little

“These be the names of the mighty men whom David had: The Tachmonite that sat in the seat, chief among the captains; the same was Adino the Eznite: he lifted up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time,” (2 Sam. 23:8). Commentators are divided as to whether or not Adino slew eight hundred enemies by himself, or if he led a much smaller force in the vanquishing of eight hundred enemies. In light of the text’s wording and the distinction given to Adino, it is the opinion of this writer

that Adino slew eight hundred by himself. Though the word "spear" is italicized in Second Samuel (and thus supplied by the King James translators), it does actually occur in the text of First Chronicles 11:11. One spear is little, indeed, when a soldier finds himself beset by eight hundred foes. Nonetheless, Adino can be forever remembered as he who did so much, with so little.

What man sees as small, God may see as great. With God's help Adino's spear was more than enough to overcome the enemy. If he is not careful, man will often perceive limitations and handicaps that, with God's help, simply are not there. In Zerubbabel's day, the Jewish people snubbed and discounted the rebuilt temple because it could not compare in grandeur and richness with that of Solomon. This was to be expected. After all, Solomon was a king—perhaps the richest king in the history of the world—and yet Zerubbabel was merely a governor over returned exiles! God's servant, Zechariah, pointed out that the people's attitude was wrong, "For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth," (Zech. 4:10). God rejoiced to see the temples being rebuilt, regardless of its earthly extravagance or lack thereof. He knew that the rebuilding of the temple was essential to the people's restoration and a vital step toward the coming of the Messiah. What was small in the eyes of men, was great in the eyes of God!

Another example of this concept is found in the New Testament. As Jesus was watching people deposit their gifts into the temple treasury, He noted a widow who cast in two mites—mere cents, if that (Luke 21:1-4). In people's eyes, this gift would likely have meant nothing. Christ, however, had a different perspective.

“And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all:” (Luke 21:3). The poor widow cast in all the living that she had; thus, her gift was deemed greater than the vast sums cast in by others. The lesson should be clear: God often looks at things much differently than people do. Because of this, what is small in the eyes of men, may be great in the eyes of God!

It is God who provides both the power and the opportunity. So many things in life are accomplished at the junction of power (ability) and opportunity. The text in Second Samuel does not indicate whether or not Adino sought the opportunity to face eight hundred enemies, but he had such an opportunity just the same! The good news lies in the fact that the same God who provides the opportunities also provides the necessary power for such occasions. Once again, when God provides such things, so much can be accomplished with so little! The church of Christ in ancient Philadelphia serves as a great example of this. Jesus acknowledged that they were little in strength, yet He promised to set before them an open door that no man could shut (Rev. 3:7-8). Man’s own strength and size are basically inconsequential once he has determined in his heart that he will perform God’s will. He then trusts in God’s Providence for the needed opportunities of service and in God’s Word for the needed spiritual power. The following verses are helpful along these lines.

Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord (2 Cor. 2:12).

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:16).

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (1 Thes. 2:13).

With such a combination as Scripture and Providence, man can do so much with seemingly so little! Victory and success are assured, as long as one is faithfully wielding the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17).

Little is much, when God is in it. At the burning bush God asked Moses, "What is that in thine hand?" Moses simply replied, "A rod" (Exod. 4:2). A shepherd's rod must have seemed inadequate, indeed, when Moses was faced with the necessity of convincing God's people to follow him out of Egypt. What if God had asked Adino, as he stared down eight hundred of the enemy, "What is that in thine hand?" Adino could not have replied "A machine gun" or "A rocket-launcher." All he could have said was "A spear." That, too, might have seemed a bit inadequate for the task at hand. Nonetheless, as both accounts attest, little is much when God is in it.

This lesson is also learned from the Biblical account of Gideon and his deliverance of God's people from the Midianites (Judg. 7:1-25). God refused Gideon's force of 32,000 men and even of 10,000. Only when the army was reduced to three hundred soldiers did God say, "By the three hundred men that lapped [water, CG] will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place," (Judg. 7:7). Gideon would go on to lead God's people in victory against a much larger Midianite force—the number of which is described with the following words. "And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for

multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude," (Judg. 7:12). Like Adino, Gideon was able to do so much with so little; after all, little is much when God is in it!

Perhaps the most striking demonstration of this concept in all the Bible is found in John 6:1-14. Truly, Jesus did so much with so very little, when He fed the five thousand men (besides women and children!). One must note that Jesus used a little boy, who had little fishes and little wafers, to feed such a numerous multitude (John 6:9).

The only food known to be available was that of a little boy (so the Greek term suggests) who had brought along his lunch consisting of five loaves of barley bread and two fish, an exceedingly small amount, the bread being of the type still seen around that region, thin, flat portions, little more than soda crackers; and the fish are said to have been "small" (KJV), usually about the size of sardines (Woods 117).

Does any other passage demonstrate so vividly the truth that little is much when God is in it? Man can do so much more than his perceived limitations would suggest – if he is doing the will of God. As the apostle Paul penned, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

Eleazar – Who Fought Unrelentingly

And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines that were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away: He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand cleaved unto the sword: and the LORD wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil (2 Sam. 23:9-10).

Many commentators, in keeping with the King James translation, believe that Eleazar fought alone after the retreat of his countrymen. This view is possible, however, the Hebrew text might be better rendered in another fashion. Young's Literal Translation renders the original language of Second Samuel 23:9-10 as follows:

And after him is Eleazar son of Dodo, son of Ahohi, of the three mighty men with David; in their exposing themselves among the Philistines—they have been gathered there to battle, and the men of Israel go up—he hath arisen, and smiteth among the Philistines till that his hand hath been weary, and his hand cleaveth unto the sword, and Jehovah worketh a great salvation on that day, and the people turn back after him only to strip off.

This view suggests that Eleazar led God's people in a rout of the Philistines, and that the Israelites turned back from following their champion (Eleazar) only to strip the spoils of victory from the bodies of the slain. At any rate, Eleazar swung his sword so hard and so long that his hand cramped around it. He fought unrelentingly that day, and through him, God wrought a great victory for His people.

Past mistakes must not impede one's future service. Unlike Eleazar, some of God's people today give up the fight because of discouragement or guilt arising from mistakes in their past. With the grace of God that is afforded in Jesus Christ (cf. Eph. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:1), this should never be the case. When a person truly repents of past sins, those sins are washed away by the blood of Christ (cf. Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38). God has said in His Word, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more," (Heb. 8:12). Why does man sometimes insist on

remembering what God has forgotten? If the apostle Peter had done this, surely New Testament history would read very differently today. Peter denied the Lord three times in the course of one night, even after having been warned by Jesus Himself (Matt. 26:69-75; cf. v. 34). When he realized what he had done, he went out and wept bitterly (Matt. 26:75). Peter was crushed by the enormity of his sin and personal weakness—but he didn't give up! Some fifty or so days later he would be standing before the masses on Pentecost, preaching the Gospel of his risen Lord (Acts 2:14-40). Like Eleazar, Peter fought unrelentingly, even having to overcome his own mistakes.

Negative circumstances cannot be used as an excuse. Some today fight like Eleazar; that is, until circumstances change for the worse. Then, when faced with unexpected hardship or crisis, they give up the fight like so many others. God has not promised His faithful that life would be “a bed of roses.” In fact, the opposite is true. Paul wrote, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,” (2 Tim. 3:12). Jesus told the apostles that they would have tribulation in the world (John 16:33). The fact is that darkness hates the light (cf. John 3:20), and thus, the world hates and strives against God's children of light (John 15:18; 1 John 3:13; cf. Eph. 5:8). God's children are to expect adversities and trials, and even to rejoice in them (James 1:2; 1 Peter 4:16).

The apostle Paul stands out as one who served God faithfully and diligently, even under negative circumstances. He came to Rome as a prisoner (Acts 28:16) and spent two whole years essentially under “house arrest” (Acts 28:30-31). Some of God's children would have “thrown in the towel” right then and there—but not Paul! Even as a prisoner he kept preaching and teaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He fought unrelentingly the good fight of faith (cf. 1 Tim. 6:12) while he was in Rome,

and his efforts were rewarded. His own writings indicate that the Gospel had been received by some in Caesar's household. "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household," (Phil. 4:22; cf. 1:13).

Worldly distractions must not pull one away from Christ. Many give up the fight simply because they do not have time for it. Their time, energy, money—their lives—are consumed by things of this world. Jesus described such individuals using the figure of the thorny soil, "And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection," (Luke 8:14). Nothing can be permitted to take priority over Christ, His church, and the eternal values (cf. 2 Cor. 4:18). The New Testament is replete with warnings along these lines. Here are some examples.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matt. 6:19-21).

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth (Col. 3:1-2).

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world

passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever (1 John 2:15-17).

If one is to follow in the steps of Eleazar, fighting the good fight unrelentingly, then he must not allow himself to become encumbered or distracted with the things of this world. The child of God must ever seek first “the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33).

Shammah – Who Stood His Ground

And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentils: and the people fled from the Philistines. But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the LORD wrought a great victory (2 Sam. 23:11-12).

It was not uncommon in ancient times for military forces to raid or vandalize the crops of their enemies. If they did not steal the crops for themselves, they might simply burn the crops to the ground. Earlier in Hebrew history, Samson had done this to the Philistines (Judg. 15:4-5). Later, in Shammah’s day, the Philistine enemies came upon an Israelite field. Obviously, this crop was vital to his people, so Shammah stood in the midst of the field and defended it from the Philistines. He literally stood his ground, and God wrought a great victory through him.

There is no compromising the Gospel plan of salvation. The Lord’s church today needs many modern-day “Shammahs.” These would be Christian leaders who stand their ground on issues vital to the church. Foremost among these issues is that of salvation—one that affects the very identity of the church (cf. Acts 2:47)! The Lord

adds all the saved to the church, leaving not one saved person outside the church (cf. Eph. 5:23). How imperative it is that God's people stand foursquare on the Biblical requisites for salvation! The Bible clearly teaches that a soul must hear and believe the unadulterated Gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15-16; cf. Rom. 10:17; Gal. 1:6-9). Upon believing the Good News of salvation, one must repent of his sins (Acts 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9). The Bible teaches that such an one is then ready to confess the name of Christ and to be baptized for the remission of his sins (Acts 8:37-38; cf. Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 22:16). It is in the culminating act of baptism that one enters into Christ (Gal. 3:27), into His death (Rom. 6:3-4), into His church (1 Cor. 12:13), and into His salvation (1 Peter 3:21; cf. 2 Tim. 2:10).

One who has obeyed the Gospel by compliance to the foregoing steps is added to the one true church spoken of in the New Testament (Acts 2:38, 41, 47). God's people today must be like Shammah of old when it comes to the identity and singularity of the church. Jesus never promised to build but one church (Matt. 16:18; cf. Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4), and as the Bridegroom to the church, Jesus would be a spiritual adulterer if He were wed to more than one bride (cf. John 3:28-30; Rom. 7:4; 2 Cor. 11:2-3; Eph. 5:22-33). Christ's one church belongs to Him, and as any respectful bride would do, she honors Him by wearing His name and His name alone (Acts 4:12; 11:26b; cf. Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 1:10-13). In the day of denominationalism and ecumenicalism, New Testament Christians must stand their ground when it comes to the church.

The worship of God must not be tainted or perverted. There are all too often those today who would alter and pervert the worship of God. Worship is both a duty and a privilege, and God has revealed Divine guidelines that must be followed. Jesus Himself said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in

truth," (John 4:24). One coming before God in worship is a creature coming before his Creator—one infinitely inferior approaching One infinitely superior. Utmost care must be taken in such an undertaking; approaching God is not like approaching the neighbor next door! The fact that Jesus used the word "must" in the above passage is proof that man is obligated to worship God according to the Divine will, not man's own inclinations (cf. Matt. 15:9; Col. 2:20-23).

Cain is sadly the first example of will-worship in the Bible. In contrast to his brother, Abel, Cain worshipped God in a manner that was not "by faith" (Heb. 11:4; cf. Gen. 4:1-7). Faith toward God comes only from hearing and heeding His Word (Rom. 10:17); this, obviously, Abel had done. Cain, on the other hand, worshipped God in a manner that was not compliant to the directives of God's revelation. This disobedience initiated a murderous turn of events, and Cain's tragic story is related throughout the Bible (cf. 1 John 3:12; Jude 11). Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, are two more examples of the disastrous effects of perverting God's worship. As priests before God, they burned incense before God—an acceptable act under the Law of Moses (cf. 1 Chr. 23:13). However, the Pentateuch records that Nadab and Abihu burned strange fire before the Lord, that is, unauthorized fire (Lev. 10:1-2). Worship is clearly seen to be of utmost importance to God when one considers that even the fire of old had to meet certain requirements. Like Shammah, may God's children today stand their ground when it comes to the worship of God.

The world's false "morality" must not be adopted. It is obvious that what God has deemed as right and wrong is not congruent to the world's ideas of such. Lying, cheating, gambling, drinking, adultery, and even homosexuality are becoming increasingly acceptable in the eyes of the world. All of these, however, are

condemned in God's Word (cf. Gal. 5:19-21; et al.). The world's "morality" is really found to be no "morality" at all. Even worse, such laxity and lewdness have made inroads into the church! There are congregations that no longer stand where Jesus stands on the moral issue of marriage-divorce-and-remarriage (cf. Matt. 19:3-9). In many congregations immodesty is not at all censored, but openly tolerated (cf. 1 Tim. 2:9-10).

The lines of holiness have all too often been blurred when it comes to morality and the world. Often God's people cannot be distinguished from the devil's people—not in dress, not in speech, nor in conduct. Instead of being transformed by the Word of God, far too many are conformed to the mold of this world (cf. Rom. 12:1-2). James' admonition to "keep [oneself, CG] unspotted from the world" goes unheeded (James 1:27b). Preachers demur when it comes to "touchy" moral subjects, and elderships refuse to hold their respective flocks up to God's standard. Men like Shammah are needed in the church today—men who will stand their ground when it comes to matters of right and wrong!

Abishai – Who Was Great, Though Not The Greatest
And Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief among three. And he lifted up his spear against three hundred, and slew them, and had the name among three. Was he not most honorable of three? therefore he was their captain: howbeit he attained not unto the first three (2 Sam. 23:18-19).

In holding to the "dual triad" view presented earlier, Abishai would be understood as the chief of the second triad. He is noted in the present passage for slaying three hundred enemies with his spear. This would have been quite a feat in its own right, but understandably it would not compare to Adino's slaying eight hundred

(cf. 2 Sam. 23:8). Inspiration was careful to point out Abishai's greatness, but in comparison to the greatness of the first triad—whose greatness was greater! Surely there are some lessons to be gleaned from this kind of comparison.

There is a need in God's work for role players. A well-rounded basketball team has not only one or two star players, but a number of key role players as well. It is good to have one who can score thirty or more points a game, but it is better to have another who can get the ball to such a scorer! Sure, the one making the assists will not get the fanfare or headlines that the star will receive, but he will be an essential part of the team just the same. It is much the same in the Lord's work. There are jobs and positions that are continually in the spotlight, often receiving a great deal of attention. At the same time, there are countless tasks that go on "behind the scenes." Brothers and sisters labor quietly and diligently, with their labors seldom being noticed. However, if these "unseen" jobs were to go undone, it would not be long before their absence would be felt. One can rest assured that God knows what is done, and that He is faithful not to forget such labor (cf. Heb. 6:10).

There are a number of "unsung heroes" in the New Testament. These labored as faithfully as any other, but for whatever reason their lives and labors are not as well-known. The apostle Andrew is a wonderful example along these lines. He actually followed the Lord first, before his brother, Simon Peter. In fact, it was Andrew who brought Peter to the Lord (John 1:35-42). From that point onward, however, it would be Peter more or less in the spotlight. Peter's sermon is recorded from the day of Pentecost, not Andrew's. Peter penned two general epistles in the New Testament canon, not Andrew. Does this mean that Andrew wasn't great? Of course not. His role was simply different from Peter's. The obscure Onesiphorus serves as

another great example of this concept. His name appears only twice in Scripture—and perhaps posthumously at that (2 Tim. 1:15-18; 4:19). Though he is little known to the modern Bible reader, it is clear from Scripture that he was well-known and well-beloved by the apostle Paul. Even more, Onesiphorus was and is well-known to the Godhead (cf. John 10:27). God blesses each of His children with different abilities, different resources, and different opportunities; He expects each one to do the best he can with what he has been given. In doing so, a person may not be esteemed as the greatest in the eyes of men; nonetheless, he fills his respective role faithfully and thereby can be great in the eyes of God.

Greatness in God's eyes is what matters. One cannot be enamored with the estimation of men. So often men deem that great which God lightly esteems. God looks on the heart (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7) and is thereby able to judge one's motives and intentions. Man may be deceived by hypocrisy and pretense, but God never is. Man is limited in his knowledge of both people and circumstances; God is not. Man equates greatness with power and authority. God measures greatness in terms of humility and service (Matt. 20:25-28). In so many ways man's estimation is inferior to God's. This should be remembered by the faithful servant who is most concerned with the glory going to God (cf. Eph. 3:21; 1 Peter 2:9). Much like Abishai, one can be great in the eyes of God without necessarily being the greatest in the eyes of men.

Benaiah – Who Accomplished The Difficult

And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts, he slew two lionlike men of Moab: he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow: And he slew an Egyptian, a goodly man: and the Egyptian had a spear in

his hand; but he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear. These things did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name among three mighty men. He was more honorable than the thirty, but he attained not to the first three. And David set him over his guard (2 Sam. 23:20-23).

More is recorded in this context about the specific exploits of Benaiah than of any other mighty man. Instead of one notable act being related, the Holy Spirit saw fit to record three. First, Benaiah killed two "lion-like" men of Moab. These are the only two warriors so described in all of Scripture. They must have been extraordinary warriors, but they were no match for Benaiah. Second, he killed an actual lion in the snow – down in a pit! More will be said about this specific exploit later. Third, Benaiah slew an Egyptian – a true "specimen" among warriors – who measured about seven and one-half feet tall (cf. 1 Chr. 11:23). Though the Egyptian wielded a spear, Benaiah confronted him with only a staff. He took the spear away and killed the Egyptian with his own weapon. There is no way of knowing how many people had been killed by the two Moabite warriors, the Egyptian, and the lion, but Benaiah dispatched them all. It seems there was no order too tall for Benaiah. He can well be remembered as he who accomplished the difficult.

The worst of circumstances can bring out the best in people. Too many works are shunned because of their inherent difficulty. More servants like Benaiah are needed in the Lord's kingdom today. Boreham (Wiersbe 381) observed that Benaiah faced the worst of enemies (a lion), in the worst of places (a pit), under the worst of conditions (in the snow). All these factors combined did not deter Benaiah from what he set out to do. It is very likely that this lion had terrorized God's people.

The pit was possibly a defunct cistern where the lion had taken up “residence.” From this lair he could pounce upon unsuspecting passersby. In spite of the danger and difficulty, Benaiah killed this beast and delivered God’s people from such peril. Sometimes God’s people are benefited the most when someone has the courage and devotion to tackle the difficult problems—the problems nobody else wants to address.

God expects results, not excuses. On Judgment Day God will not be accepting excuses as to why individuals did not obey His will. Someone has well said, “An excuse is a lie stuffed into the skin of a reason.” There are no legitimate reasons for one’s disobeying God, only excuses (cf. 1 John 5:3). It is true that Christians face the worst of enemies, Satan (1 Peter 5:8), but it is also true that the One in them is greater than the one in the world (1 John 4:4). In a sense, it is also true that Christians face their enemy in the worst of places, the world (1 John 5:19). On the other hand, Christians have been delivered from this present evil world (Gal. 1:4; cf. Eph. 1:3). It is up to the child of God to decide whether to transform or conform (Rom. 12:2). Further, instead of a Christian’s facing the enemy under the worst of conditions, he actually faces the devil under the BEST of conditions: with God on his side (Rom. 8:31; 1 Peter 3:13)! God has promised that He will not leave nor forsake His children (Heb. 13:5). With God on his side, one can accomplish even the difficult things in life—much like Benaiah.

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CHAPTER 4

Joab: David's Military Captain Who Had His Own Agenda

B. J. Clarke

Commendation

I am much honored to be a participant in the 16th Annual POWER lectureship. As a former director of these lectures I have a keen sense of appreciation for the tremendous amount of work involved in such an endeavor—from the start to the finish. What a tremendous job brother Wade Webster has done in planning the theme and carefully choosing the topics that would help develop the theme! I am appreciative for the opportunity to contribute to this lectureship, and I am so impressed with the other men who have been selected to faithfully and effectively communicate, by both their pens and their tongues, the inspired story of David. From the moment I saw the scheduled topics and speakers I thought that this lectureship was going to be one of the finest ever conducted. I believe that this book will be a “must have” in the libraries of preachers and teachers who wish to study the life of David.

Introduction

Ask the average man on the street to name some of the most famous personalities in Bible history and it

will not be long until someone utters the name of David. Without question, David is among the most well-known characters of the Bible. It should be remembered, however, that David did not live his life in a vacuum. The story of David is largely the story of his interaction with other personalities of his time.

One of the most prominent and influential personalities of David's time was the man named Joab ("Jehovah is Father"). According to 1 Chronicles 2:16, Joab was one of the three sons of David's sister Zeruah. His brothers were Abishai and Asahel. Scripture does not supply us with the name of Joab's father although, for what it is worth, the historian Josephus calls him "Suri" (Antiquities, 7.11). We do know that Joab's father was buried in a sepulcher in Bethlehem (2 Sam. 2:32). Beyond this we are left with many unanswered questions concerning Joab. We know nothing about his early childhood and youth. Due to his close family connections with David it is reasonable to conclude that he would have been aware of some of David's exploits during his youth, such as his victory over Goliath. We do not know exactly how Joab came to occupy such an influential position in David's kingdom, but we do know that he played a prominent role in the administration of King David.

Joab's Military Accomplishments

According to Scripture, "Joab the son of Zeruah was over the host" of King David's military (2 Sam. 8:16). The pathway he took to get to this position tells us much about Joab as a person. Unquestionably, Joab was a man of great ambition. He most certainly had aspirations of greatness. When David became king he sought to conquer the city of Jebus (later known as Jerusalem). He said to his soldiers, "Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites first shall

be chief and captain" (1 Chron. 11:6). The text continues, "So Joab the son of Zeruiah went first up, and was chief" (1 Chron. 11:6). While we appreciate Joab's courage and initiative, the rest of the story of his life reveals that Joab's actions were almost always inseparably connected with his desire to be chief! Joab had an agenda and it was one of self-promotion!

His ambition to be first was advanced by the keen military skills which he possessed. Joab was quite an accomplished soldier and military strategist. While he and the servants of David assembled at the pool of Gibeon, he was challenged to a fight by the leader of Saul's army, one named Abner (2 Sam. 2:13-14). Joab agreed, and his men soundly defeated Abner's men (2 Sam. 2:13-17). When all was said and done he lost twenty soldiers while Abner lost 360 men (2 Sam. 2:30-31). During David's campaign into Edomite territory (2 Sam. 8:13-14), Joab spent six months cutting off every male in Edom except for those who escaped (1 Kings 11:15-16).

On another occasion the Ammonites had humiliated some of David's soldiers by shaving off one half of their beards, and by cutting their garments down the middle thus revealing their backsides. Fearing retaliation from David, the Ammonites allied themselves with the Syrians as a defensive measure. When David heard of this "he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men" (2 Sam. 10:7). Joab was definitely up to the task. When he saw that the battle was against him "before and behind," he decided on the strategy of taking "all the choice men of Israel, and put them in array against the Syrians:" (2 Sam. 10:9). This was a brilliant military strategy; Joab knew that if he could cause the Syrians to retreat, the Ammonites, who did not have the courage or might to fight on their own, would soon follow suit. Thus he put the best soldiers he had in the fray against the Syrians.

The rest of the soldiers he put under the command of his brother, Abishai.

Before going out to battle, Joab wisely told his brother, "If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee" (2 Sam. 10:11). Joab's next statement to Abishai demonstrated courage, a concern for other people, and a confidence in the providence of God: "Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the LORD do that which seemeth him good" (2 Sam. 10:12).

When the battle finally commenced, the plan worked brilliantly. He brought the battle to the Syrians and "they fled before him. And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, then fled they also before Abishai, and entered into the city" (2 Sam. 10:13-14). Joab returned to Jerusalem as a war-hero "and it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem" (2 Sam. 11:1). David never had any doubts about Joab's ability to lead his army into battle. On the other hand, David would discover that there were plenty of reasons to doubt Joab's motives and methods.

Joab's Main Agenda

David learned that for all of Joab's military accomplishments there was the underlying problem of Joab's hidden agenda. As talented as Joab was, he was driven first and foremost by an agenda of self-promotion. He was not about to let anyone or anything stop him from carrying out this agenda, even if it meant bloodshed! Episode after episode in Joab's life proves this to be so.

1. *The Murder of Abner.* After the death of Saul, the men of Judah anointed David as king in Hebron. Meanwhile, Abner, the son of Ner, who had been captain of Saul's military, took Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, to Mahanaim and "made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel" (2 Sam. 5:1-9). For two years Ishbosheth reigned over Israel while David ruled over all of Judah.

One day the servants of Saul (with Abner as their commander) and the servants of David (with Joab as their commander) assembled at the same time at the pool of Gibeon. Abner suggested to Joab a contest between the soldiers from both sides. The exact nature of the contest is unclear but Joab agreed and twelve men were selected to represent each side. Apparently, the contest ended in a mutual massacre because the text records that "they caught every one his fellow by the head, and thrust his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together" (2 Sam. 2:16). Both armies reacted and "there was a very sore battle that day; and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David" (2 Sam. 2:17). This time there was a clear victor! Abner lost 360 men while David lost only 20 soldiers, but one of the casualties was Joab's brother, Asahel. His death set in motion a series of events that would strain the relationship between David and Joab all of their days.

As Abner fled from the battle scene, Asahel, who was as swift on his feet as a gazelle, pursued after him (2 Sam. 2:18-19). As Abner looked back at his pursuer, he recognized him and urged him to fight one of the young inexperienced soldiers instead of chasing him. Asahel, though quicker than Abner, was not a seasoned soldier. Abner knew that Asahel was no match for him in hand to hand combat and he did not want to have to kill him.

He also knew that Joab would come after him to avenge the death of his brother, and Abner wanted no part of this confrontation. He beckoned Asahel to "back off" at least twice (2 Sam. 2:21-22) but Asahel would not retreat. Given no choice but to defend himself Abner waited until Asahel was right behind him and then thrust the other end of his spear backwards into Asahel's mid-section. The force of the collision sent the spear (which was sharpened to a point even on the hinder end) through Asahel's body, literally stopping him dead in his tracks (2 Sam. 2:23)!

As anticipated, Joab and his brother Abishai chased after Abner but were unable to catch him before the sun went down (2 Sam. 2:24). By the time they did catch up to him he had been able to secure reinforcements from Benjamin. However, Abner had no desire to fight, and so he offered Joab a truce. Perhaps seeing that battle conditions were not as favorable now, Joab consented to a cease-fire, but this did not diminish his hostility toward Abner.

The cease-fire did not last long between the forces of Saul and David. The text declares that "there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker" (2 Sam. 3:1). Abner remained loyal to Saul's son (2 Sam. 3:6) until Ishbosheth falsely accused him of going in unto one of his father's concubines (2 Sam. 3:7). Abner was so hurt by Ishbosheth's words that he vowed to transfer his allegiance to David (2 Sam. 3:8-9). He pledged to "translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba" (2 Sam. 3:10).

Abner sent messengers to notify David of his change of heart and to seek an alliance together. He promised David that he would help turn all Israel unto him (2 Sam.

3:12). David agreed to the alliance on the condition that Abner would deliver his wife Michal, Saul's daughter, back unto him (2 Sam. 3:13). Perhaps David thought that having her by his side would strengthen his case for reigning over Saul's kingdom.

Abner met David's condition and began persuading the men of Israel to seize the opportunity to have David as their king. Abner came to Hebron with twenty of his men to have a personal meeting with David. King David treated them graciously and prepared a feast for them. The meeting ended peacefully with David sending Abner away to accomplish the task of gathering Israel unto David (2 Sam. 3:17-21).

Meanwhile, Joab returned victoriously to Hebron from the battlefield, bringing "a great spoil" (2 Sam. 3:22). His mood soured quickly when he learned that Abner had enjoyed a great feast with David and that he had left in peace. What a perfect opportunity for vengeance David had wasted! At least that's the way Joab saw it. "Then Joab came to the king, and said, What hast thou done? behold, Abner came unto thee; why is it that thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone?" (2 Sam. 3:24). Joab scolded David for not being bright enough to discern that Abner was nothing more than a deceiver and a spy (2 Sam. 3:25).

We are not told in the text what David said in response to Joab but it is obvious that he was unconvinced by his assertions. This is evidenced by what Joab did next. "And when Joab was come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, which brought him again from the well of Sirah: but David knew it not. And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother" (2 Sam. 3:26-27). Joab's actions reveal that

David had no intentions of doing anything to Abner. Notwithstanding this, Joab decided to ignore the authority of the king and take matters into his own hands. He had an agenda to carry out and if it was different than the king's agenda then so be it.

In Joab's actions we can see some of the common tactics of how those with an agenda go about to accomplish their aims. First, those with an agenda are not hesitant to rebel against those in authority to accomplish their purposes. When Joab sent messengers to call Abner back to Hebron he did so behind the back of the one in authority ("but David knew it not"). He knew that he could never get permission from David to do what he wanted to do, so he decided just to do it himself.

Second, those with an agenda often are willing to use deceit to accomplish their goals. What did the messengers of Joab say to Abner to cause him to return to Hebron? Perhaps they told him that David had thought of something else he wished to discuss with him. Or perhaps they told him that David had decided that he wanted Abner to meet with Joab to discuss the transition. Who knows what Joab told them to tell Abner, but whatever they told him accomplished their goal of getting him to return.

Third, those with an agenda are willing to destroy others to get what they want. In this case, Joab wanted Abner dead. It might be argued that this was justifiable because Abner had murdered his brother Asahel. However, Abner killed Asahel in self-defense, not in a premeditated cold-blooded murder. Even if Joab thought that Abner deserved punishment for what he did to Asahel he did not have the authority to carry out his own version of vigilante justice.

The text clearly indicates that Joab's primary reason for killing Abner was to exact vengeance for the death

of his brother Asahel (2 Sam. 3:27, 30). However, it is not impossible that Joab had a secondary agenda for murdering Abner that went beyond gaining a measure of retribution over his brother's death. Joab was David's military commander but he saw Abner, a grizzled military commander in his own right, drawing ever nearer to David. There is every reason to believe that Joab saw Abner as potential threat and rival for the position of commander over David's army. In Joab's world of self-promotion there was no room for qualified men like Abner to be at the king's fingertips. He already hated Abner for what he did to Asahel and now Joab had one more reason to want to do away with him.

When David learned that Joab and his brother Abishai had killed Abner he was appalled. He publicized that he and his kingdom were guiltless in this action and that all responsibility for such should "rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house" (2 Sam. 3:29). David went on to say, "Let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread" (2 Sam. 3:29).

David commanded Joab and all the people with him at least to have the courtesy to rend their clothes, wear sackcloth and mourn before Abner (2 Sam. 3:31). At Abner's funeral, David expressed his grief that Abner had fallen before "wicked men" (2 Sam. 3:34), thus indicating David's assessment of Joab and Abishai. On the other hand, he said of Abner that "a prince and a great man" had fallen in Israel (2 Sam. 3:38). He also declared that "these men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me" and he reminded the people that "the Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness" (2 Sam. 3:39). Regrettably, this would not be the last time Joab would shed blood to advance his agenda, and even more tragic

is the fact that David would exploit this characteristic of Joab for his own selfish purposes.

2. *An Accomplice To The Murder of Uriah The Hittite.* While Joab and the armies of Israel went out to the battlefield, "David tarried still at Jerusalem" (2 Sam. 11:1). Of course, the rest is history, and a rather infamous history, to say the least. It started with a lustful look, which led to adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. When Bathsheba informed David that she was with child, "David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David" (2 Sam. 11:6). David tried to get Uriah to spend the night with Bathsheba so that everyone would think Uriah was the father of the child she was carrying. However, David underestimated Uriah's integrity. Uriah was unwilling to spend the night in a comfortable bed when all of his comrades were sleeping out in open fields. As "Plan B," David tried to get Uriah drunk so that he might lose his inhibitions and spend the night with Bathsheba. When this plan also failed, David engineered a hidden agenda of his own. He gave a letter to Uriah and instructed him to hand deliver it to Joab. The letter instructed Joab, "Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten and die" (2 Sam. 11:15).

How did Joab respond to such a request? Did he fire off a letter condemning David for such a suggestion? Did he send word back to David refusing to be an accomplice to murder? On the contrary, "Joab observed the city" and "assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men were" (2 Sam. 11:16). As planned, Uriah the Hittite died in the battle and Joab sent a messenger back to David to tell him many things, including the fact that "Uriah the Hittite is dead also" (2 Sam. 11:21-24).

It is fair to ask why Joab was so willing to participate

in the murder of an innocent man. Perhaps the answer lies in the root of Joab's obsession to be in a position of prominence and power. Joab was bright enough to know that a scandal in David's kingdom could cost David his throne. If David was no longer on the throne then it was very likely that Joab would no longer be the military captain. A new king might have someone else in mind for the job. As far as Joab was concerned it was in his best interest to keep David on the throne. Moreover, Joab would now possess a powerful piece of information about David that he might be able to use to manipulate David in time to come. People with hidden agendas are always looking for tools they can use to accomplish their purposes! Thus, Joab's participation in the murder of Uriah the Hittite was not necessarily a favor to David as much as it was an act of selfishness on the part of Joab! Joab was always concerned with how something would either help him or hurt him personally!

3. *The Murder of Absalom*. Even before his part in the murder of Absalom, Joab was scheming and meddling in the affairs of Absalom's life for his own personal benefit. After Absalom ordered the murder of his brother Amnon, for raping their sister Tamar, he fled to Geshur and was alienated from his father and Jerusalem for three years (2 Sam. 13:38). Joab was personally interested in effecting a reconciliation between David and Absalom for at least two reasons. In the first place, Joab knew that David longed to be reconciled to his son. If Joab could make it happen he would appear to be the hero in David's eyes thus gaining capital for a long-term relationship with David. Joab knew that David was not happy with his murder of Abner and occasionally he looked for ways to "smooth out" the rough edges of their relationship. For instance, after crippling the city of Rabbah, Joab sent messengers to David encouraging him to "encamp against

the city, and take it: lest I take the city, and it be called after my name" (2 Sam. 12:28). It would be nice to view this as nothing more than a magnanimous gesture on Joab's part but his perpetual self-centeredness in other episodes of his life force us to wonder whether it was otherwise. The same can be said for Joab's motivation in bringing about the reconciliation of David and Absalom. It appears to have been a means to the end of courting David's favor.

In the second place, if David and Absalom could once again be on good terms, then Absalom would almost certainly be the next king. Joab knew that "in all Israel there was none so much to be praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him" (2 Sam. 14:25). Physical attractiveness and positions of power often go hand in hand. Absalom's physical attractiveness would make him a very popular choice among the people to be the next king. Anticipating this possibility, Joab's agenda was to be on good terms with Absalom so that if and when Absalom became king he would retain Joab as his military leader.

Not surprisingly, Joab employed deception in initiating his agenda of restoring Absalom to David's good graces. He persuaded a woman from Tekoah to put on garments of grief and come to king David, pretending to be in mourning. Joab even "put the words in her mouth" that she should say to the king (2 Sam. 14:2-3). She told David that her husband was dead and that one of her sons had killed her other son while fighting in the field. Moreover, she told David that her entire family was trying to get her to turn over the son who had killed her other son so that they might punish him to death. She claimed that she was reluctant to do this because it would completely extinguish her offspring from the earth (2 Sam. 14:4-7).

She asked David to see to it that none of the revengers of blood would destroy her son. David responded, "As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth" (2 Sam. 14:11). Upon hearing this, the woman charged David with being inconsistent. She said, "For the king doth speak this thing as one that is faulty, in that the king does not fetch home again his banished" (2 Sam. 14:13).

Hearing these words, David sensed that Joab had put her up to this charade. Thus he asked, "Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this?" She confessed that Joab "bade me, and he put all these words in the mouth of thine handmaid" (2 Sam. 14:19). It is very interesting to observe that those who have an agenda often hide behind the work of others to get what they want! Those who have an agenda often put words in the mouths of others and lurk in the shadows while others do "their dirty work" for them!

David gave in to Joab's tactics, although what his son Absalom had done to Amnon was not really parallel with the woman's story about her two sons. In her story the death of her son was not premeditated. Absalom most certainly premeditated the murder of his brother Amnon. Although his servants actually killed Amnon it was because Absalom had commanded them to do so. It was first degree murder! Nevertheless, "the king said unto Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again" (2 Sam. 14:21).

Joab's response evidences the fact that his main agenda in doing all of this was to once again feel the warmth of the king's favor. The record reveals that "Joab fell to the ground on his face, and bowed himself, and thanked the king: and Joab said, Today thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his

servant. So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem" (2 Sam. 14:22-23).

Although Absalom returned to Jerusalem he did not see his father's face for two full years (2 Sam. 14:28). When Absalom sent for Joab to come to him, Joab refused to come. He sent for Joab a second time but again "he would not come" (2 Sam. 14:29). Joab's refusal to come to Absalom seems to strengthen the idea that he wasn't nearly as concerned about Absalom as he had pretended to be before Absalom came back to Jerusalem. At this point in time he was more concerned about David who was in power than in Absalom who had not yet ascended to power.

Nevertheless, Absalom found a way to get Joab's attention—he set his fields on fire. This motivated Joab to have a meeting with Absalom during which Absalom pressed Joab to arrange a face to face meeting with his father David. After five long years of separation Absalom finally "came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom" (2 Sam. 14:33). Sadly, Absalom's apparent humility before the king masked a hidden agenda of his own, namely that of stealing away the hearts of the men of Israel away from his father David (2 Sam. 15:1-6). Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron" (2 Sam. 15:10). Absalom's actions forced David to flee the city and to dwell "in a place that was far off" (2 Sam. 15:17).

Absalom chose Amasa, another nephew of David and cousin to Joab (2 Sam. 17:25; 1 Chron. 2:17), to be his military captain instead of Joab. In the meantime, David divided the men that were with him into thirds, with a third under Joab, a third under Abishai, and a third under Ittai, the Gittite (2 Sam. 18:2). Anticipating the

battle to come, David had some very special instructions for Joab and Abishai and Ittai. In the presence of all the people, he ordered them, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom" (2 Sam. 18:5).

The battle commenced and "there was a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men" with David's servants gaining the upper hand (2 Sam. 18:6-7). Incredibly, as Absalom rode upon a mule, his head became caught in the thick branches of a great oak. Perhaps it was that famously thick hair of his (2 Sam. 14:26) that got entangled in the branches. Josephus affirmed that it was, and it is not hard to imagine, but however he was caught, he was unable to extricate himself. The mule upon which he had been riding kept going and left Absalom hanging in the branches, suspended "between heaven and earth" (2 Sam. 18:9).

A certain man who came upon Absalom in this helpless condition informed Joab of what he had seen. Joab replied, "And behold, thou sawest him, and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground? And I would have given thee ten shekels of silver, and a girdle" (2 Sam. 18:11). Joab's words clearly reveal that he was still more interested in accomplishing his agenda than that of the king. The man responded to Joab by saying that he wouldn't harm Absalom for a thousand shekels of silver "for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none touch the young man Absalom" (2 Sam. 18:12). If only Joab had possessed a respect for authority as this man did! In Joab's actions we see that those who have a personal agenda can progress (or should we say digress) to the point that they publicize their lack of respect for authority. Joab was aware that David's orders regarding Absalom had been made in public, but Joab did not care! He was going to do what he wanted to do, no matter what!

Joab dismissed his informant as unworthy of any more of his time and then “took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak. And ten young men that bare Joab’s armour compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him” (2 Sam. 18:14-15). There was nothing “gentle” about the way that Absalom died. It’s almost as if Joab went out of his way to do the opposite of what David had said. David did not say “Deal cruelly” with Absalom, but that is precisely what Joab did. Essentially, he tortured Absalom. From his actions we observe that those who have a personal agenda are often cruel in the accomplishment thereof. They don’t care who they hurt (or how much they hurt others) as long as they achieve their personal goals. Their sense of ambition overrides any sense of compassion!

We also learn from Joab’s actions that those who have a personal agenda are not bashful about recruiting others to help them carry it out. Not content to flout the authority of the king by himself, Joab influenced the ten young men with him also to violate the king’s orders. These ten men did not “deal gently” with Absalom when they “ganged up” on a wounded, defenseless man and smote him to death. Admittedly, Absalom was not an innocent man, but they could have brought him to the one in authority, King David, and allowed him to decide his punishment. But that would not have satisfied Joab, and in Joab’s world that was all that really mattered – his personal self-promotion and self-satisfaction.

With Absalom now dead, Joab blew the trumpet to call an end to the hostilities (2 Sam. 18:16). Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok, requested permission from Joab to run and tell David the great news of victory over the opposition. Based upon Joab’s response, it appears that Ahimaaz was usually commissioned as a messenger when there was good news to bear. The military victory was good news

but Joab knew that David would be most interested in what happened to Absalom. He also knew that David had sometimes put to death messengers who brought him news that they thought he would celebrate, only to find that he was not so impressed. Perhaps because he did not want to risk losing Ahimaaz, Joab instructed Cush (probably an Ethiopian and possibly Joab's slave) to run and inform the king. Imagine being the one who had to tell David about what had happened to his son! And who put Cush in the position of having to bear such news? It was Joab's fault! Thus we learn that those who have an agenda create unnecessary burdens that other people have to bear!

After Cush bowed himself to Joab and began running to bear the tidings of the day, Ahimaaz requested permission to run after him. Joab tried to dissuade Ahimaaz from going but he said to Joab "let me run" (2 Sam. 18:23). Perhaps because he thought that Cush had enough of a head start, Joab granted Ahimaaz's petition and he took off. Running on level land, he actually overtook Cush.

As David waited anxiously for news, the watchman announced that he saw two men running toward the city. The first man, he said, ran like Ahimaaz. Hearing this gave David hope that the news was good (2 Sam. 18:27). Ahimaaz informed David of the victory and then David asked, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" (2 Sam. 18:29). Ahimaaz either did not know the answer, or deliberately evaded answering David's question. When Cush arrived, David asked him the same question regarding Absalom. Cush responded, "The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is" (2 Sam. 18:32). Upon hearing this, "the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I

had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! (2 Sam. 18:33).

When Joab returned it was told him, "Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom" (2 Sam. 19:1). Moreover, Joab saw that "the victory that day was turned into mourning unto all the people: for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son" (2 Sam. 19:2). In the midst of David's cries of grief, "Joab came into the house to the king, and said, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines;" (2 Sam. 19:5). As if these words weren't stinging enough, Joab went on to say, "In that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends. For thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants: for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well" (2 Sam. 19:6).

A number of commentators praise Joab for this "pep talk" to David but this author is not so impressed. Just because Joab was a cold-hearted, compassionless, "I'm only in it for me" kind of guy doesn't mean that David had to be. The fact that David was mourning the loss of his son does not mean that he was unappreciative of the soldiers who had fought to protect him and the rest of his family. Should David have been thankful that his family and his kingdom were spared? Absolutely, and there is no proof that he wasn't thankful. It was completely unfair for Joab to accuse David of loving his enemies and hating his friends merely because David was anguished over the loss of his son. How hypocritical for Joab, the very one who precipitated David's tears by his murder of Absalom, to start hurling accusations at the one against whom he had rebelled! It wasn't David's fault that Absalom had been tortured to death! Indeed, those

who have an agenda are very quick to blame and accuse others for problems they themselves have caused.

The text does not record what David said in response to Joab, if he said anything at all. He did recognize that Joab was right about one thing, namely, the people's need to know that the nation was not without leadership. Hence, David appeared before the people and reassured them of his presence as their leader (2 Sam. 19:8-9).

4. *The Murder of Amasa.* In the aftermath of Absalom's murder and David's reappearance among the people, Joab probably thought that his plan had worked and that his position as David's military commander was secure. He was in for a rude awakening! David told Zadok and Abiathar, his priests, to relay a message to his nephew Amasa. They were to tell him that David said, "Art thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually in the room of Joab" (2 Sam. 19:13). No reason is stated explicitly in the text as to David's reason for this decision but it isn't hard to imagine why. Perhaps David thought that appointing someone from among the men of Judah would help to heal the rift that had developed between David and the men who had followed after Absalom. Moreover, Joab's tirade of false accusations against David and his total lack of compassion may have brought David near the breaking point. Last, but certainly not least, it is possible that David had learned by this time of Joab's involvement in the murder of Absalom. Whatever the reason(s), David had had it with Joab!

A new conspiracy arose against David and his throne and this time the culprit was a man named Sheba. David saw this as a serious threat, one that needed to be stopped right away. However, David did not call for Joab to quell the uprising. He called for his new commander, Amasa, instructing him to gather the troops together and to report back within three days (2 Sam. 20:4). When

Amasa did not arrive at the appointed time, David decided to proceed without him. Yet, again he did not call for Joab. He called for Abishai, the brother of Joab, and commanded him to take care of the problem with Sheba. Somehow, perhaps by his brother Abishai, Joab became aware of the conflict and he and his men joined in the search for Sheba.

On their journey they happened to meet Amasa at Gibeon, five miles north of Jerusalem. As Joab came to greet Amasa his sword fell out of its sheath. Although Joab apparently had planned this, it must have looked like an accident to Amasa. Besides, Joab was his cousin (1 Chron. 2:16-17), someone he need not fear! Joab appeared to show warmth and affection when he said to Amasa, "Art thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him" (2 Sam. 20:9). Amasa never saw it coming, but Joab took the sword in his other hand and with one swift well-aimed stroke "smote him therewith in the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again; and he died" (2 Sam. 20:10).

It is amazing to read numerous commentators who attempt to justify Joab's actions in killing Amasa. Some suggest that he only did this to punish Amasa for not showing up on time to lead the troops. Still others have commented that David was unwise to replace a veteran commander like Joab with an inefficient Amasa in the first place, and thus Joab was only doing what was best for the nation. The truth of the matter is that Joab did what he did, not for noble purposes but for the purpose of benefitting Joab. Although he was a brilliant military commander, and probably a much better one than Amasa, Joab did not kill Amasa for the good of the nation as much as he did for the good of Joab. Amasa had the position Joab had formerly held, and the position that Joab still wanted, and thus Amasa had to go. Joab's willingness

to kill his own cousin shows us that those who have a personal agenda will go so far as to turn on their own relatives to achieve their personal goals.

With Amasa soaking in his own blood, Joab took charge of the military as if he had never been demoted. One of Joab's men drew a line in the sand and insisted that anyone loyal to David would also be loyal to Joab, and vice versa (2 Sam. 20:11). The error of his words is obvious enough—David had removed Joab from being commander and thus to be truly loyal to David would have included a rejection of Joab as military commander. The suggestion that loyalty to David necessitated loyalty to Joab was thus untrue, but it was an effective way to put pressure on those who wanted to be loyal to David to also feel the necessity of following after Joab in order to do so. Thus, we should not be surprised that those who seek to promote a particular agenda will often recruit their supporters by implying that faithfulness to God necessitates embracing their personal agenda.

Once they removed Amasa's blood-soaked body out of the way, the men did follow Joab and Abishai. They located Sheba in Abel of Bethmaachah and began battering down the walls of the city. A wise woman from inside the city knew that something had to be done. She called out to Joab and asked him to please listen to what she had to say (2 Sam. 20:14-16). She had determined that it would be better for the residents of the city to behead Sheba and throw his head over the wall than to harbor him as a fugitive and get caught up in the conflict. Thus she pleaded for peace and asked Joab not to swallow up the city (2 Sam. 20:17-19).

Joab's response to her is remarkable. He said, "Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy" (2 Sam. 20:20). While it is true that Joab may have had no intention of swallowing up and destroying the city of Bethmaachah, his statement leaves the impression

that "swallowing up and destroying" just wasn't in his character. Having studied the life of Joab we know that it is not far-fetched to imagine him swallowing up and destroying human life. He certainly swallowed up and destroyed the lives of Abner, Uriah the Hittite, Absalom and Amasa! Yet, Joab has the audacity to say, "Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy." How ironic that the thing Joab said was far from him is the very thing for which he is remembered the most! This just goes to show that those who have a personal agenda are often self-deceived and do not see themselves as they really are.

After the residents of the city cut off the head of Sheba and cast it out to Joab, "he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city, every man to his tent. And Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king" (2 Sam. 20:22). What an interesting meeting this must have been between David and Joab. David was no doubt glad to hear that Sheba no longer posed a threat to the unity of the kingdom, but he must have allowed Joab to continue as military commander with a great degree of reluctance. The next verse tells us that "Joab was over all the host of Israel: and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and over the Pelethites:" (2 Sam. 20:23).

In view of the many times when Joab ignored David's agenda to advance his own, one wonders why David would allow Joab to have anything at all to do with commanding his armies. Perhaps it was because for all of Joab's faults he was an effective and experienced military leader. With Amasa now gone, David needed someone to lead his military, someone with knowledge and experience. Furthermore, Joab was David's nephew and it is very possible that David allowed this family connection to impair his judgment. Finally, Joab possessed some very damaging information about David's involvement in the murder of Uriah the Hittite. Although Nathan had

confronted David with his sins we are not informed as to how widely known the whole sordid tale was to the general public. Furthermore, even if the full extent of David's sins had become well known by this time, Joab may have constantly reminded David of how much he owed him for keeping it from being known even sooner. Whatever the reasons, David allowed Joab to resume his role as military commander, although it is interesting to note that he appointed Benaiah to command the Cherethites and the Pelethites (2 Sam. 20:23). Perhaps he was grooming Benaiah for the job of military commander the next time Joab did something outrageous and rebellious.

Joab continued to serve in King David's administration for the rest of David's days and we even find him in the unusual position of giving good counsel to David concerning whether they should number the people from Dan to Beersheba (2 Sam. 24:2). Joab must have known that something about David's motive or manner of carrying out the census was contrary to God's will for he tried to persuade David not to follow through with it (2 Sam. 24:3; 1 Chron. 21:3).

What motivated Joab to suddenly stand up for the right instead of doing the wrong? We would love to say that finally he had been converted to respecting the Word of God in all things. However, a couple of other possibilities must be considered. Some people are doctrinally sound in one or more areas but liberal in other areas. Some are doctrinally sound in what they believe academically, but morally reprobate in how they live. Perhaps Joab was just being inconsistent.

Knowing Joab's tendency to be self-centered, there is another possibility. It is not inconceivable that Joab's reasons for objecting to the census were more self-serving than spiritual. Joab was well aware that God's anger against Israel for David's census might very well come

in the form of defeat on the battlefield (Josh. 7:1-16; 2 Sam. 24:13), a matter which would affect him personally. Furthermore, if God's anger against David cost David the kingdom this would also affect Joab personally. Maybe this is the reason for Joab's opposition to David's plan to number the people. Whatever the case, we learn another valuable lesson. Those who have a reputation for advancing their own personal agenda cause people to wonder what their motives are even when they promote what is right.

Irrespective of Joab's motives for opposing David, "notwithstanding, the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the host. And Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel" (2 Sam. 24:4). It is somewhat ironic to consider the many occasions in the past when Joab did not verbally disagree with the king's agenda but went out and deliberately disobeyed David's orders. Yet, on this occasion, Joab justifiably disagreed with David's plans but went out and obeyed his orders, at least for awhile. He did refuse to count Levi and Benjamin "for the king's word was abominable unto Joab" (1 Chron. 21:6).

Joab's Mandated Assassination

Time marched on and David "was old and stricken in years" (1 Kings 1:1). As the end of his life drew nigh, his son Adonijah, whose mother Haggith was also the mother of Absalom, "exalted himself, saying, I will be king" (1 Kings 1:5). The record reveals that Adonijah "conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they following Adonijah helped him" (1 Kings 1:7).

Not everyone supported Adonijah's quest for the throne. "Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet, and Shimei, and Rei,

and the mighty men which belonged to David, were not with Adonijah" (1 Kings 1:8). This, however, did not stop Adonijah from scheduling an invitation only feast to inaugurate his reign. "But Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, he called not" (1 Kings 1:10).

Nathan was aware that God had decreed that Solomon would be the next king (1 Chron. 22:9-10) and thus he expressed his concerns to Bathsheba about the actions of Adonijah. Together, Bathsheba and Nathan approached king David and got him to reaffirm both his will and God's will that Solomon be the next king (1 Kings 1:11-31). David charged Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, the next military commander, to anoint Solomon as king at Gihon. "Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save king Solomon" (1 Kings 1:39). The people celebrated so loudly "that the earth rent with the sound of them" (1 Kings 1:40).

Meanwhile, the guests at Adonijah's celebratory feast heard all of this commotion and "when Joab heard the sound of the trumpet, he said, Wherefore is this noise of the city being in an uproar?" (1 Kings 1:41). The answer was not long in coming. While Joab was still speaking, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came and said to Adonijah, "Verily our lord king David hath made Solomon king" (1 Kings 1:43). This news certainly ruined the atmosphere at Adonijah's party! The guests with Adonijah "were afraid, and rose up, and went every man his way. And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar" (1 Kings 49-50). **The Believer's Bible Commentary** explains:

Among all nations the altar was a place of asylum for criminals deserving of death,

but in Israel it was intended originally for unintentional manslaughter (Exo. 21:14). 'By grasping the horns of the altar, the culprit placed himself under the protection of the saving and helping grace of God, which wipes away sin, and therefore abolishes punishment' (Keil, p. 25).

Solomon granted Adonijah a conditional pardon and sent him on his way (1 Kings 1:53).

As David's life ebbed away he called Solomon to give him some last words. A significant portion of what he said had to do with Joab. He told Solomon,

Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet. Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace (1 Kings 2:5-6).

David's words indicate what he truly thought of Joab. Joab's time of grace had run out. Perhaps David realized on his deathbed that he should have done something about Joab long ago. Nevertheless, David did not want Solomon to experience the same grief of having to deal with Joab that David had experienced. Therefore, he counseled Solomon to use his wisdom to find the right time to punish Joab to death.

Adonijah did not honor his agreement to go to his own house and leave the kingdom to Solomon. Instead, he tried to manipulate Bathsheba to arrange a marriage between him and Abishag the Shunnamite (1 Kings 2:13-24). Apparently, Adonijah wanted to use this woman who had been so influential in David's last days to legitimize

his claim to the throne. He would never get the chance because Solomon sent Benaiah to put him to death (1 Kings 2:25). Solomon also thrust out Abiathar from being priest (1 Kings 2:27).

When Joab heard what had happened to Adonijah and Abiathar he could read the writing on the wall. Anticipating that he was next, he “fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD, and caught hold on the horns of the altar” (1 Kings 2:28). Solomon was informed of what Joab had done and ordered Benaiah to assassinate Joab. When Benaiah ordered Joab to come forth away from the altar, he refused and said, “Nay; but I will die here” (1 Kings 2:30). Possibly, Joab held out hope that as long as he clung to the altar they would never shed his blood in such a holy place.

In fact, Benaiah was reluctant to kill Joab while he clutched the horns of the altar and thus he returned to tell Solomon of Joab’s refusal to come out. Solomon was not about to be held hostage by Joab’s desperate tactic and so he mandated Joab’s assassination even if Joab remained at the altar. He told Benaiah “to fall upon him, and bury him; that thou mayest take away the innocent blood, which Joab shed, from me, and from the house of my father” (1 Kings 2:31). Having received his orders, “Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up, and fell upon him, and slew him: and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness. And the king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his room over the host” (1 Kings 2:34-35).

From the last actions of Joab’s life we learn that those who have a personal agenda often give themselves false hope because of their misinterpretation of Scripture. Joab knew that the Law of Moses offered pardon to those who fled to the altar, but if Joab had read the Law more carefully he would have known that Exodus 21:13-14 did not apply to the man who deliberately murdered someone. Furthermore, Deuteronomy 19:10-13 taught clearly that

the one guilty of deliberately shedding blood should not be exempted from punishment!

A final lesson is seen in just how quickly and easily Joab was replaced by Benaiah. Those who spend their lives promoting a personal agenda often become self-inflated with the importance of their agenda and their contributions to carrying out such an agenda. We must learn that there is no indispensable man and the only indispensable agenda is the plan God has set forth for us to follow!

Modern Applications

Joab was by no means the last man to push his personal agenda to the point of destroying others. Judas had a personal agenda of getting rich even at the expense of the life of Jesus. From the time that he covenanted with the chief priests for thirty pieces of silver "he sought opportunity to betray him" (Matt. 26:16). That was his agenda!

The apostle Paul noted that some preachers of his day were more motivated by an agenda of self-promotion than a sincere desire to preach the good news of Christ. They sought to make things harder for Paul so that they might be personally exalted. Their selfish agenda created envy and strife (Phil. 1:15-16).

The agenda of Diotrephes is spelled out clearly enough for us in the book of 3 John. His agenda was to be the boss, no matter who it hurt or how much it hurt the church! He loved to have "the preeminence" (3 John 9)! He had no respect for the apostolic authority of John for he spoke malicious words against him (3 John 10). He had no respect for the authority of Christ as evidenced by the fact that he acted as if he were the sole standard for determining which brethren should be received and which brethren should be rejected and cast out of the church (3 John 10).

Sadly, it is still true today that certain brethren are obsessed with advancing their own agendas to the detriment of the local church and the brotherhood as a whole. Their modus operandi is strikingly similar to that of Joab.

1. They do not hesitate to rebel against those in authority to accomplish their purposes. Modern day change agents are not bashful to rebel against the will of godly elderships in order to do their own will. They do not like to be governed! They do not want to submit (Heb. 13:7, 17) and so they threaten the elders with withdrawing their contributions or membership if the eldership refuses to allow such things as choirs, dramatic skits, or even instrumental music.

2. They are willing to use deceit to accomplish their goals. Brethren who have an agenda will distort the truth if they deem it necessary to turn brethren against other brethren. This happens in our brotherhood when faithful brethren are falsely accused in certain brotherhood papers of things they have not actually said or done.

It can also happen in the local church. This author knows of a situation where an "associate minister" confessed to the "pulpit minister" that he had been telling lies to the eldership about him in an attempt to elevate himself in their eyes. He said, "Every time you stood in the pulpit to preach I seethed inside because you had what I wanted. So, I amplified your faults and lied to the elders about you in hopes that it would bring you down and elevate me in their eyes." The pulpit minister was shocked by these admissions because the associate had always been so nice and warm to his face. As he warmly clasped his brother's right hand of fellowship, he was unaware of the dagger in the brother's other hand!

3. They are willing to destroy others/the church to get what they want. How sad that some are more concerned about their personal advancement, or retaliating

against those who have hurt their feelings, than they are concerned with the peace and harmony of the local church/brotherhood. Like Joab, they become assassins, not by literally shedding blood but by engaging in character assassination!

4. They are always looking for information that they can use against others so that they might manipulate them into doing what they want them to do. They are constantly in the fault-finding mode because they can use these faults as ammunition to turn people against brethren who don't share their same agenda.

5. They often hide behind the work of others to get what they want! They often put words in the mouths of others and lurk in the shadows while others do "their dirty work" for them! They will plant seeds of doubt in other people's minds about one or more of the elders. They will constantly find negative things to say about the preacher, hoping to turn other brethren against him. Sadly, sometimes the most vocal critic of another elder is a fellow elder. Sometimes the most vocal critic of a preacher is a fellow preacher in the same congregation. But instead of speaking face to face with the objects of their criticisms these critics would rather stir things up behind the scenes. They don't have the courage to talk to the elder(s) face to face. They don't have the brotherly love to go directly to the preacher and talk to him face to face. They would rather talk about him behind his back until others get so worked up that they go to the elders and suggest/demand his removal.

6. They often progress (or should we say digress) to the point that they publicize their lack of respect for authority. If working quietly in the background doesn't get the job done then those who have an agenda will often go public with their rebellion. By going public, they create a "line in the sand" moment when brethren feel

compelled to choose a side. This almost always leads to a church/brotherhood split!

7. They are often cruel in the advancement of their personal agenda. It has been said that brethren often treat one another worse than people in the world treat one another. Some of the most cruel and heartless behavior imaginable is seen in those who are supposed to be brethren!

8. They are not bashful about recruiting others to help them carry it out. If some brethren would work as hard evangelizing as they do in proselytizing others to assist them in their selfish agendas, the church would be growing instead of dying.

9. They create unnecessary burdens that other people have to bear! How many unnecessary problems exist in the local church/brotherhood all because of someone's personal agenda? How many lost sheep would shepherds be able to find if they were not so busy trying to keep someone's personal agenda from splitting the church? How much help could certain members of the church offer to the elders in looking for lost sheep if these members were more interested in souls than self? How much work could be done by our brotherhood if we were not threatened with division by those who are more interested in self-promotion than spiritual devotion?

10. They are very quick to blame and accuse others for problems they themselves have caused. Ahab blamed Elijah for being the troubler of Israel when it was really the other way around (1 Kings 18:17-18). Joab blamed David's grief over Absalom as the cause of unrest in the nation, not bothering to realize that he himself had brought this about in the first place by murdering Absalom. Likewise, some brethren cause division in the local church and then blame the elders and preachers for the existence of division in the local church. Some lament the division in the brotherhood without bothering

to realize that they contributed to this division by their character assassination of certain innocent brethren.

11. They will sometimes turn on their own relatives to achieve their personal goals. We have often noted that some have too much loyalty to their relatives and not enough loyalty to Christ (Matt. 10:34-37). On the other hand, there are times when brethren have been enticed into following another brother's personal agenda and have turned against other family members who refused to follow. Additionally, some family members selfishly insist on pursuing their personal agenda of living like they want to live even if it destroys their relationship with family members who still love God and the Bible.

12. They will often recruit their supporters by implying that faithfulness to God necessitates embracing their personal agenda. Sometimes brethren get their feelings hurt and want to lash out at those who have hurt them. They want others to sympathize with them but they do not want to appear petty by recruiting followers solely on the basis of their hurt feelings. Therefore, they look for something that would legitimize their opposition to a certain brother/sister as a matter of doctrine and not just a matter of hurt feelings. Before you know it, what started out as a personal matter between brethren has now been exalted to a matter of faith! Although it is not stated in these exact words, the impression left by some brethren is that in order for you to be on the Lord's side you must be on my side! This would be no problem if we are talking truly about a matter of faith, but in too many instances brethren are pressured to take sides over what is nothing more than a personal vendetta against another brother or brethren!

13. They are often self-deceived and do not see themselves as they really are. Some brethren have genuinely deceived themselves into believing that they are doing the local church/brotherhood a service by pushing

their private agenda. In fact, some of them have convinced themselves that they are doing God a service by pushing their personal agenda. Jesus told His apostles that the time would come when those who killed them would think that they were doing God a service (John 16:2). Saul of Tarsus was sincerely convinced that he ought to do many things that were contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 26:9). He thought he was right but he was wrong!

Likewise, those who push personal agendas to the point of assassinating the character of certain brethren may think that they are doing God a service. They may think that they ought to do what they are doing, but that doesn't mean that they are right. Saul of Tarsus awoke to see the error of his ways. Our prayer is that those who are driven to carry out their own agendas to the detriment of the body of Christ would also "see the light."

14. Those who have a reputation for advancing their own personal agenda cause people to wonder what their motives are even when they promote what is right. One of the unfortunate byproducts of having a reputation for self-promotion is that even when you promote the right things people are suspicious as to your motives. Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20). A brother or sister in the church may have a good suggestion, or may even have a justifiable objection to a decision made by the eldership. However, if this brother/sister/couple has a reputation for always seeking their own way at the expense of the church, then their credibility is severely damaged even when they are promoting the right way.

15. They often possess a false sense of security because of their ignorance/misinterpretation of Scripture. The Pharisees knew a lot of Scriptures but they often misapplied them. Furthermore, there were other Scriptures that they did not know or give enough weight to in their

teaching and practice. They viewed themselves as God's faithful servants but Jesus painted a different picture. Jesus told the multitude and His disciples to follow their teaching insofar as it was a true representation of the Law of Moses, but He also told them not to imitate the behavior of the Pharisees (Matt. 23:1-3).

Like Joab, the Pharisees were very much interested in self-promotion. It was all about them! They had to have the chief seats, and they loved to wear religious titles that drew attention to their positions of prominence (Matt. 23:5-9). They had an agenda but it did not come from God! Like Diotrefes they viewed themselves as the sole determiners of who would and would not enter into the kingdom (Matt. 23:13). When it was their interest to do so they would reject the authority of God and try to create loopholes in the Law of Moses so that they could do things their own way (Matt. 23:16-22).

Because they were doing some of the little things right they were deceived into thinking they were alright. However, Jesus informed them that they had omitted some of the weightier matters of the law: judgment, mercy and faith (Matt. 23:23). Outwardly, they appeared righteous. Inwardly, they were filthy and dirty (Matt. 23:25-28). They did not see themselves as they really were. They claimed that they would never have participated in shedding the blood of God's prophets, like their fathers had done (Matt. 23:29-30). Yet, Jesus told them that they themselves would kill, scourge and crucify some of the very prophets sent to them in their day (Matt. 23:34-35). Like Joab, they would be responsible for shedding the blood of innocent men! And like Joab, their chief problem was wanting to be chief! It was their pride that fueled their agenda! The same is true of brethren today who have an agenda. They become self-inflated with the importance of their agenda and how important they are to carrying out such an agenda. They know what is best and they

know how it should best be done. If you don't believe it, just ask them!

Conclusion

Instead of advancing our own personal agenda let us deny ourselves and pursue God's agenda for our lives. Let us take up the cross and follow Him daily (Luke 9:23). Let us make it our agenda to let our lights so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify the Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16). May our only agenda be to fear God and keep His commandments (Eccl. 12:13). Let us make it our agenda to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58). May our only agenda be to work the work of the Lord (1 Cor. 16:10) and to be addicted to the ministry of the saints (1 Cor. 16:15). Above all, let our main agenda be to love God with all of our hearts (Matt. 22:37), to love our neighbors as we love ourselves (Matt. 22:39) and to let all that we do be done in love (1 Cor. 16:14)!

CHAPTER 5

Thou Art But A Youth

Robert Hatfield

Five smooth stones were chosen to go into the skilled shepherd's sling, but only one would be necessary. David had come to the war ground to check on his brothers, not to combat in war, but now he found himself at the front of the battle. He was called to be the champion (literally, the middle man) of the Israelites, which was a task that no man around him was willing to accomplish. The chosen champion loaded that first stone in the sling and skillfully hurled it into the giant's forehead. Goliath immediately fell to the ground in defeat. David won neither with a sword or shield, but with a mere sling, shepherd's staff and stones.

Who would have thought that this great warrior depicted in 1 Samuel 17:48-50 was but a youth?! However, an examination of 1 Samuel 17 will quickly draw the reader's attention to David's age. In fact, David's youth is emphasized six times in this great chapter (17:14, 33, 42, 55, 56, 58). Is God using David's age to teach an important lesson (cf. Rom. 15:4)?

How Old Was David?

Think back to a song that is often taught to young children:

Only a little boy David,
And only a babbling brook.

Only a little boy David,
And five little stones he took ...

While there seems to be no harm done by the song, the Scriptures depict David in an older light, likely in his early adult years, around 20 to 25 years old.

One may arrive at this approximate age by looking at secular, history coupled with Biblical chronology. Scholars suggest (but obviously cannot be sure) that David died around 1015 B.C. at 70 years of age. With this information one may work backward to the time of David and Goliath. The Bible states that David reigned for 40 years (33 over the nation of Israel and seven and a half over Judah). If David died at 70 years old, then he would have been 30 years old when he began his reign in Hebron over Judah. Prior to that time David was fleeing for his life from Saul; one might estimate that period of time to have lasted approximately ten years. If that were the case, David would have been about 20 years old when he faced Goliath. This estimated age would coincide with the Hebrew scholars who suggest that the original text indicates that David had reached a stage of sexual maturity.

Guesses and estimates are interesting, but Biblical context provides interesting facts concerning David's age. Consider for a moment the following evidence from the context of 1 Samuel 17.

Spiritual Outrage. When David heard Goliath's words, righteous indignation was excited within him. David could not allow an "*uncircumcised Philistine*" to "*defy the armies of the living God*" (17:26)! The Israelite armies turned into groups of cowards when they heard the words of Goliath taunting them morning and night for forty days (17:11, 16, 24), but David took Goliath's words as a threat to the God of Israel; he could not idly stand and let the heathen rage upon God's chosen people! The state of personal responsibility to which David is enacted is a sign

of his age. David does not sound like a young boy here.

Personal Ambition. Spiritual outrage unquestionably served as David's prime motivation to fight against Goliath, but David showed significant interest in the personal benefits that were offered to the man who killed the Philistine.

And the men of Israel said ... it shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel. And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, **What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine**, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? ... And the people answered him after this manner, saying, **So shall it be done to the man that killeth him** (1 Sam. 17:25-27, emp mine, RH).

The one who killed the giant would be rich, marry the king's daughter and his father's house would be tax-free. Notice David's interest in these things as he asks for the people to repeat what was said: "*What shall be done...?*" (17:26). David realizes the value of Saul's promises to the one who kills Goliath. David is not a child; he is a handsome, red-headed post-teen; perhaps looked like a member of your college-aged youth group. He is old enough to make vitally important decisions for himself, and has developed a deeply-rooted faith and trust in God. David is old enough and spiritually strong enough to confidently approach the Philistine giant.

While David was older than many people think, he was still a young man, thus he was viewed as inexperienced and immature. Saul said:

Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: **for thou art but a youth**, and he a man of war from his youth (1 Sam. 17:33, emp mine, RH).

David was young, courageous and extraordinarily brave, and Saul hesitated to send him to battle with the stakes as high as they were (cf. 17:8-10). David's example speaks today about the value of young people, and the great things they can do for the Lord.

David Used His Past To Get To His Future

King Saul received word that David was willing to be Israel's champion, and the king sent for David. When Saul questions David's ability because of his youth, David answers by reflecting on his past. He refers to the time when a lion and a bear came and took one of the sheep for which he was responsible. David "*caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him*" (1 Sam. 17:35). David was confident that God would deliver him from the Philistine, just as He had delivered David from the paws of the lion and the bear.

Notice that David did not try to hide from Saul the fact that he was a shepherd. Instead of finding shame in his lowly occupation, David used his previous experiences to help him learn to face the future. The experiences from David's past were now motivating him to face the giant Goliath!

How many young people today would do well to learn from their past decision – whether they were good or bad! There is no doubt but what David's past inspired him toward a greater trust and reliance upon Jehovah, and such can be the same with every person, whether young or old. Paul seemed to believe in the power of learning from the past.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope (Rom. 15:4).

Whatever one may do in life, he or she can better

himself or herself as a person by learning from previous mistakes and/or previous moments of righteousness to inspire faith, trust and obedience for the future.

David Used His Own Skills To Accomplish The Great Task

The hand of God is evident throughout this story. If nothing else, this writer believes in the power of providence that guided David through his previous experiences to get him to the point where he could confidently face Goliath. However, Bible students must not discount David's own skills which helped him to defeat Goliath. Rather than accepting the armor of king Saul himself (which surely would have brought much honor and prestige), David chose to fight the best way he knew how – with a sling and stones. He had mastered the art (and it really was an art) of fighting with the sling. Adam Clarke noted:

[W]e are assured by ancient writers that scarcely any thing could resist the force of the sling (p 265).

In fact, could it not be possible that David was as skilled in the use of the sling as were the Benjamites who could sling at a hairs-breadth and not miss (Judg. 20:16)?

Christians today must not discount their own talents and abilities when yielding service to God. Individuals are designed to be different; they have different personalities, preferences and potential. *Everyone* can do *something* in service to God. David's example shows that one does not have to aim at what might be considered the "highest mark" to serve God; many may have viewed the opportunity of wearing Saul's personal armor as a coveted honor, but such armor would have done David no good. Serve God in the best way YOU can and to the best of YOUR ability! The main thing is that you serve God!

David Gave God The Glory

Despite his skill and ability, David took no credit for himself, but attributed his successes and previous triumphs to God. This glory was due to God, who gave to David all of his great talents. Even as he faced Goliath, the Israelite champion gave the glory to God:

I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand ... that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands (1 Sam. 17:45-47).

David, through the glorification of God, showed that all the world should know that there is one true, living God, and that **God** is the One who saves – not the sword, spear or any other instrument of man (cf. Psa. 44:6-7; Hosea 1:7; Zech. 4:6; 2 Chron. 20:15).

Christians may do all sorts of great things, but they are to give the glory to their deserving Father. Paul said he had nothing in which to glory, *“for necessity is laid upon me”* (1 Cor. 9:16; cf. Matt. 5:16; John 17:4; Rom. 15:6; 1 Peter 4:11).

David Proved Himself Through Obedience

When commanded by his father, Jesse, to go to the war ground to see his brothers, David not only obeyed, but *“rose up early in the morning ... and went, as Jesse had commanded him”* (1 Sam. 17:20). David eagerly obeyed his father, and proved, by his obedience, that he was properly qualified to handle great responsibility.

In the parable of the talents, Jesus said, *“thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things”* (Matt. 25:21, 23). Those who show proper submission to

the Master are those who are qualified for the honor and privilege of leadership in the Lord's Kingdom (cf. elders, 1 Tim. 3:6).

David Suffered Persecution

David's own brother chastised him for setting foot on the battle field, even though David was there on orders from Jesse (17:28-30). This youngest brother handled the persecution with incredible patience and admirable resolution. He had right and reason on his side, and knew it, and therefore did not render railing for railing. Additionally, Goliath persecuted David as they faced each other in battle (17:42-44). David looked to God for strength to see him through the persecution to the ultimate victory.

David Had Rock-Solid Faith

Actually, it seems as if David had a stronger faith than any other Israelite! He stood up to Goliath when even king Saul was "*dismayed and greatly afraid*" (17:11). Saul's questions of fear were answered with incredible faith (17:33-37). David stood before Goliath with an outstanding faith in God which made him *confident* in the victory.

David Confidently Faced The Giant

And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David **hasted**, and **ran** toward the army to meet the Philistine (1 Sam. 17:48, emp mine, RH).

David did not cower in fear in the heat of the moment; he confidently "*hasted, and ran!*" He knew that he was the anointed of God (cf. 1 Sam. 16:12-13), therefore nothing was going to happen to him. He was on God's side! Additionally, David had been blessed with previous experiences (i.e. the lion and the bear, standing up to his brother, Eliab, etc.)

that helped him to learn physical courage – even before he stood before the Philistines!

Conclusion

Five smooth stones were placed into that shepherd's bag, as the Israelite champion skillfully wielded his weapon. David was young, but he did not let his age stand in the way of fulfilling an important role in service to God.

What stands between young people today and faithful, dedicated service to the Master? Why are congregations not filled with modern-day "David's" who confidently and victoriously combat Satan? There is no excuse. David is an excellent Old Testament example of this New Testament concept:

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. (1 Tim. 4:12).

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**David,
The Sovereign:
A Chosen Heart**

CHAPTER 6

David: A Man After God's Own Heart

Keith A. Mosher, Sr.

Introduction

The title of this essay is taken from Acts (KJV). During the apostle Paul's first missionary tour, he and his fellow-companions came to Antioch in Pisidia where Paul was invited to speak (Acts 13:1-15). The essence of that oration was from Jewish history and included the following:

And when he had removed him (Saul, K.M.), he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, (emphasis mine, K.M.) which shall fulfil all my will (Acts 13:22).

God sought a man "after" His own heart when Saul, the first monarch of Israel, disobeyed:

And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept

that which the Lord commanded thee (1 Sam. 13:13-14).

David, the second king of united Israel, evidently was a very complex individual. As a young man, he could slay a giant soldier, but as he got older he could not fight off the "giant" sins of fornication and murder (1 Sam. 17; 2 Sam. 11-12). David showed great mercy to the household of Saul, but also ordered a man's death (2 Sam. 9:1-12:31). David's task as king was to enforce the terms of the covenant with God (c.f. Deut. 17:14-20); but he, himself, grossly violated the covenant! Given the foregoing complexities and sins of David, how can it be said that he was a man after God's own heart?

In order to attempt answers to the above question, several areas of discussion were chosen: (1) A brief biography of David is first-overviewed. (2) The timing of the statement in Acts 13:22 and why such a study is needed will be discussed. (3) What it means to be "after" God's "own" heart will be reviewed. (4) Applications of the lessons learned from this study will be made.

Biography

The complex life of king David is recorded in 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 1 Chronicles. One wrote:

After the death of Saul, David settled in Hebron, the center of his own tribe, Judah. He was crowned by the elders of Judah, who had not accepted the monarchy until then. Within a few years he ruled over the rest of the tribes of Israel (II Sam. 5:5), which accepted his authority especially after Eshbaal's failure to establish his kingdom in Transjordan. At about the same time David captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites, converting it into the capital of the kingdom and the estate of the Davidic dynasty. This conquest

revealed David's far-reaching ambitions and statesmanship, for Jerusalem in Israelite hands served as the desired unifying bond between the southern tribes, Simeon and Judah, and their brothers in the north. The new capital stood at the very heart of the kingdom, yet because it was outside the Israelite territory it did not serve as a focal point of strife among the tribes or lead to charges of favoritism (Revin, 33).

David was the youngest son of Jesse, of the tribe of Judah, and was initially appointed to be court musician and armor-bearer for King Saul (1 Sam. 16:14-23). That shepherd "boy" would eventually slay a Philistine giant during battle and LaSor adds:

Goliath's challenge to the Israelites (1 Sam. 17:4-16) is an instance of representative warfare, a custom attested in antiquity. The battle was to be decided by a contest between a representative of each side. Perhaps the principle of corporate personality, in which the power of a tribe or family could be summed up in one member, helped foster this practice. David's victory over Goliath elevated him to a position of responsibility in Saul's army and endeared him to Saul's son, Jonathan (1 Sam. 18:1-5). When David's popular appeal began to exceed Saul's, the king became jealous and suspicious and tried to kill him (1 Sam. 18:6-11). Though David still had access to the court, his acceptance by Saul faded as the king's behavior became more and more turbulent (239).

David's victory over Goliath of Gath aroused jealousy in Saul (1 Sam. 18:8-9). The young David would eventually have to flee for his life, but he will escape, triumph, and succeed Saul as king (1 Sam. 19:18ff.; 21:1-27:12). David's life, in fact, is so amazing that:

Western art and literature evince an enormous fascination with the figure of King David. The trend begins with the Bible itself, which devotes more literature to David than to any other character (including Moses and Jesus!), and continues to the present. The last decade has witnessed the publication of at least six books...and a heated debate on the question of his very existence (McKenzie, 1).

David did exist. He was born in Bethlehem around 1040 B.C. and died about 962 B.C. Around 922 B.C., upon Saul's decline, David was anointed king of Israel (2 Sam. 1:1–4:12). David would lament Saul's death, which mourning reflects David's character at that time and David's rebuke of the Amalekite messengers who joyfully reported Saul's demise further indicates David's deep feelings for the former king (2 Sam. 1:1-27). David's heart seems, at that time, to be compassionate.

David, however, did not rise to the throne of Israel very easily:

David's triumphal return from his sojourn in Ziklag resulted in his acclamation as king of Judah in Hebron (2 Sam. 2:1-4). That ancient town, rich with memories of Abraham's day, was his capital for seven and a half years (5:5). Meanwhile, Saul's family still was to be contended with. At the instigation of Abner, Saul's crafty general, Ishbosheth (more correctly, Eshbaal), Saul's son, had been made king of the other tribes, including those fragments of the nation dwelling in Transjordan. Nothing indicates that Ishbosheth's government gained extensive popular support. That its capital was in Transjordan greatly curtailed its influence among the tribes, who apparently looked increasingly to David as leader. After about two years of skirmishes between the two

contestants for the throne (2 Sam. 2:10; 3:1), Ishbosheth angered Abner by accusing him of intimacy with Saul's concubine (2 Sam. 3:6-11). If true, this probably would suggest that Abner was himself ambitious for the crown. Sexual union with one of Saul's partners would have been interpreted as one credential for kingship. This break with the king forced Abner to make overtures to David (2 Sam. 3:12-16), who responded by demanding that Saul's daughter Michal be restored to him as wife. The political reason behind this request (granted by Ishbosheth) is apparent: a son by Michal would help consolidate under David those factions loyal to Saul. The turncoat Abner spearheaded David's drive to unite the nation by traveling through the land to confer with the elders of the tribes (2 Sam. 3:17-19). Apparently jealousy and desire for revenge goaded David's general, Joab, to slay his rival who, overtly at least, had become his ally. Abner's death both grieved David and dismayed Ishbosheth, who shortly afterwards was assassinated by two cutthroats who previously had served Saul (2 Sam. 4:2f.). This did not please David, and he summarily slew the murderers who had sought to impress him by their deed (LaSor, 145).

But then, as noted above, with his rival gone, David is hailed as king of all Israel which event took place in the village of Hebron (2 Sam. 5:1-18). The tribe of Judah (inclusive of some Simeonites, Calebites, Othmelites, and Jerahmeelites, and Kenites-1 Samuel 27:10 and 30:29) was united with the northern tribes.

But, the Canaanite stronghold of Jerusalem was still not under David's control (2 Sam. 5:6-16). Jerusalem (c.f. Gen. 14:18) was ideally situated as David's capital because it lay between the two halves of his kingdom and would be a neutral, unifying location. David conquered the city,

the details of which capture are not given in scripture (2 Sam. 5:7).

While king, David enacted a number of religious reforms seeking to promote and perpetuate the law of Moses (2 Sam. 6:1-7:29). An act of great insight further solidified David's role as political and spiritual king. He brought the ark to Jerusalem and established it in a new tent (2 Sam. 6:17). David danced during the dedication ceremonies and his participation displeased his wife, Michal (2 Sam. 6:16, 20). David's "dance," however, actually was indicative of his heart, at that time, toward God (2 Sam. 6:21).

David, in his early years as king, was interested in the details of worship, even to the point of appointing priests (2 Sam. 8:17; c.f. 1 Chron. 23:1-29:30). David's efforts found fruition in the temple his son built.

Military success also characterized David's reign (2 Sam. 8:1-18). His prowess in this area would ban him from building the temple (2 Sam. 7), but he did defeat the Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, and the city-states of Syria (Damascus, Zobah, and Hamath). Israel's borders then stretched from "the desert to the Mediterranean, and from the Gulf of Aqabah to the outskirts of Hamath on the Orontes" (LaSor, 248). North to south and east to west, Israel was free from Philistine strangulation and from a great deal of idolatrous influence.

David also revamped his leadership structure (2 Sam. 8:15-18; 20:23-26). God's Word does not detail how elaborate such restructuring became, but David did install a chief commander (Joab) over the army; two new priests (see above); and two officers responsible for keeping records. Bright argues that David's administration was patterned after Egyptian models:

Lacking native precedent, David patterned his bureaucracy, at least in part, on Egyptian models

(which he may have learned of through the city-states of Canaan, which he had absorbed, or directly). Aside from...(officers mentioned in scripture, K.M.)...there were, of course, lesser officials of the court and elsewhere in the land, as well as governors and other personnel in conquered territories. But of their number, function, and organization, we know nothing (201).

Bright admits that he knows nothing about “lesser” officials. But, what knowledge does he have that David patterned his government after Egyptian models? Bright has the same evidence for his opinion about the sources for David’s administration as he had for his knowledge of lesser officials—none. The Bible record is that the Lord “preserved David” (a man after God’s own heart at that time) “withersoever he went” (2 Sam. 8:14b). The Bible record also is that David did not allow independent authority for any of the officials for “David reigned over all Israel” (2 Sam. 8:15).

The king of Israel, David, could be kind to some (2 Sam. 9:1-13) and yet commit adultery and murder (2 Sam. 11:1-27). The stern prophet, Nathan, rebuked the king for his sins and David collapsed before the righteous indictment of God (2 Sam. 12:1-15). Only God’s mercy spared David, although his sins caused the death of Bathsheba’s son and he had to watch his own sons lose their lives (2 Sam. 13:1-39). Schoenberg notes:

David’s personal strife continued when his son Amnon raped Tamar, Amnon’s half-sister. Absalom, who was David’s son and Tamar’s brother, then killed Amnon...(Absalom eventually revolted, K.M.)...David gathered his troops and then killed 20,000 of Absalom’s Israelite soldiers including Absalom himself. David returned to power (3).

The sins of the king resulted in numerous rebellions in his kingdom and personal defeats in David's own family. When, then, was David a "man after God's own heart?"

Acts 13:22

Interestingly the statement that David was a "man after God's own heart" is not found in the Old Testament but is in the New Testament, Acts 13:22, which was quoted in the introduction above. The phrase comes from 1 Samuel 13:14, which statement was made before David was chosen to succeed Saul. Bruce notes that the two quotations in the Old and New Testaments are joined (in reference to David) in 1 Clement 18:1, an apocryphal writing, and that Clement was obviously influenced by the Acts passage (265).

The phrase, "a man after God's own heart" has "troubled men because of the gross sins which marred David's life, notably the adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah the Hittite" (Coffman, 265). Coffman finds the harmony with the phrase and the sins in the following concept:

Despite his sins, however, David never lost his love of God. He repented of his sins, acknowledged them, seeking and receiving God's forgiveness. Therefore, what is affirmed here (Acts 13:22, K.M.) is not David's sinless perfection, but his continuity in covenant relationship with God (265).

McGarvey adds:

The words, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who shall do all my will," express a thought gathered from Psa. 81:20, "I have found my servant David;" and 1 Sam. 13:14, "The Lord hath sought him

a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath appointed him to be prince over his people." These words are not spoken concerning the whole life of David, in which there were some things not at all after God's own heart; but they had reference to David's character when chosen to be the successor of Saul; he was to do all God's will in those particulars in which Saul had failed (Acts 16).

Both Coffman and McGarvey seem to understand that David, eventually, returned to the ethic that he demonstrated prior to his various sins, although Coffman thinks that what is meant is that David never lost his love for God.

Certainly one would be correct in reasoning that during those times when David sinned that such activity was not "after God's own heart." And, the reference found in Acts 13:22 was the record of a time before David became king. But, one would also have to remember that David did repent when he recognized his sin, for he told the prophet Nathan: "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Sam. 12:13b).

Why be concerned about when David was a "man after God's own heart?" Because some might get the impression that one could commit any sin and still be approved by God. David sinned, but he had enough love for God to confess such and return to Jehovah (c.f. Psa. 51). Also, if David had not been so very important in Messianic history, one might not be concerned about when he was a "man after God's own heart." Note the following:

In estimating the character of David, it is generally allowed that he is the most gifted and versatile personage in Israelitish history; that he is surpassed in ethical greatness and general importance only by Moses; that he completed

what Moses began; that he created out of Israel a nation and raised it to its highest eminence; and that in spite of all his human frailties, he was a genuinely pious man, an ideal ruler, a lover of righteousness and peace and the only man of his age who appreciated Israel's religious destiny...David was a soldier, shepherd, poet, statesman, prophet, king, romantic friend, chivalrous leader, and devoted father—all in one (Robinson, 797A).

There are minor disagreements, to be sure, with Robinson's (above) estimation of David, for he was not very devoted as a father and he was a war-like king more than a "lover of righteousness and peace;" but, David is of tremendous importance in Israel's history and in God's scheme to save man (2 Sam. 7:11-12; Psa. 89). Therefore, what is said about David gives cause for all to ponder on such statements; for he was a man who was after God's own heart.

"After" God's Heart

What does it mean to be a man after God's own heart? First of all, the term "after" is *kata* in the original (Acts 13:22). The word following *kata*, "heart," is in the accusative case (the direct object in English, K.M.) and thus *kata* has the sense of "extension in space" and is so used ninety-one times in the New Testament (Bauer, 406). For example, *kata* is translated "throughout" at Luke 8:39 and at Luke 15:14. Bauer also ascribes the meanings, along, over, and upon for *kata* when used with the accusative but does not translate the term as after in the English sense of the word (406). All of the latter information indicates that one could translate the phrase in Acts 13:22 as: "A man who is, throughout, one with God's own heart." David was sometimes ungodly in his actions, but he always found his way back to God.

The real “heart” problem with David’s reign over Israel is that the nation wanted a “king over us; that we may be like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:19b-20a). Pagan kings of that era, some of whom thought they were gods, had dictator-like holds on their peoples. Those kings would take lives, make wars, rape women, and generally practice evil. When Jehovah’s people asked for a king to judge them in the manner in which pagan kings ruled; Israel got such kings, including David, who imagined they could do anything they pleased. And, it is not the case that wanting a king was the problem. Israel could have a king, but he must be God’s man:

When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shall dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: That his heart be not lifted up above

his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel (Deut. 17:14-20).

The kings of Israel, generally, were not godly men. Some of them would attempt to restore Israel to a theocracy, but their attempts always fell short and the people would often be punished when the king sinned. For example, during David's reign, he ordered a census in order to build up his armies (2 Sam. 24:1-14). God reacted to David's efforts with legal anger and "sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed; and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men" (2 Sam. 24:15). Why did God punish the people? They were the ones who asked for a king like the nations; and when Israel's kings acted in a pagan, war-like manner, the people also suffered.

David, the "man after God's own heart," reacted to the plague upon the people by saying to the angel of the Lord who brought and stopped the pestilence: "I (emphasis added, K.M.) have done wickedly: but these sheep, (the people of Israel, K.M.) what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me and against my father's house" (2 Sam. 24:17). Even king David seemed unable to see the connection between his acting as a pagan and the people's desire for such a king. David's repentance, however, led him back to God and to the removal of the death angel (2 Sam. 24:18ff).

David's conscience in the matter of the census was pained from the start, even before the deadly plague came upon Israel. The Bible record is: "And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have

done: and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly" (2 Sam. 24:10). Evidently, those in harmony with God's "heart," even when they sin, are quick to repent. The apostle John was inspired to remind God's people that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Smith adds:

It appears from 1 Chronicles 27:24 that the census was not completed and, though Joab had visited Judah, he had not even begun to enroll the names of the tribe of Benjamin (1 Chron. 21:6). It appears also that the displeasure of God was manifesting itself before David repented (1 Chron. 21:7; 27:24). Some sign of this, either in public trouble, or in the brooding of the pestilential miasma over the land, brought home to David's mind the conviction of sin (598).

The complexities of David's life, his reign, and his sins make the study of the phrase, "a man after God's own heart" difficult indeed. But, there are some good things to be learned from the multi-faceted psyche of that ancient king.

Lessons

In the first place, David belonged to the foremost tribe of Israel-Judah. David's ancestor, Nahshon, was the initial "prince" of the tribe (Num. 2:3; 7:12). Another ancestor, Salmon, married Rahab who received the Israeli spies (Matt. 1:5). Of course Boaz, Ruth, Jesse (David's father and sire of eight sons, the youngest of whom was David; 2 Sam. 7:25) and a host of others of David's immediate family are in the seed-line of Christ (Matt. 1:4ff). Smith noted that David's mother (whose name has not been recorded) was a 'handmaid of Jehovah' (Psa.

86:116). In reference to the foregoing Psalm passages, Smith further notes that:

How much David owed her we cannot doubt. The memory of it abode with him through all the trials and all the splendors of his subsequent career; and hence, whilst nowhere does he mention his father, he seems in these passages to appeal to the memory of his mother's goodness, as at once a special token of the Divine favour to himself, and an additional reason that he should prove himself the servant of God (305).

What a tremendous blessing a mother is to any child, but especially to one who, as an adult, is in tune with God's heart. Would that every son or daughter could say, as did David, that: "O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thy handmaid" (Psa. 86:16). And then, how wonderful it would be if every child would be able to claim: "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds" (Psa. 116:16).

In the second place, being a "man after God's own heart" not only is benefited by coming from a good family as did David, but learning to correct the errors into which all commonly fall is part of such an attitude. David did sin, but he always repented. Chapman relates that:

The adoption of an imperfect standard of human worth (such as) outward appearance,...wealth, cleverness, education, (etcetera)...are (things) not to be despised, but they may exist while the chief thing is wanting - a right state of heart (308).

In the third place, one learns from studying David's life that the heart of every soul lies open to God's inspection. Contained in God's instructions to the prophet

Samuel concerning the choosing of a successor to king Saul is the following statement: "But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). God beholds the deepest motives of the human heart and only a right condition, based on God's truth, can meet His approval. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Prov. 3:5).

In the fourth place, one learns here that obligations to God and others ought diligently to be fulfilled and that one should supremely seek to keep one's own heart right. The former efforts require much self-examination, self-control, and prayer (Psa. 51:10; 139:23-24).

In the fifth place, a very important lesson for all is that God never is without resource. When Saul failed, another was chosen. In fact there was a better man (David) in training to be the next king. David knew not that he was being prepared, but God did. Those who constantly fret about "this wicked generation" or "financial collapse," or "governmental corruption" or "what they shall eat, or wear; or where they shall live" have forgotten the most basic truth of all and that is, God is in charge, and in control. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5).

Congregations of God's people often live in fear of failing-finances. Good works are hindered because Christians depend on their own strengths instead of on God's resources. And even, as David, men who claim to be "after God's own heart" give up preaching, teaching, and eldering. Sisters in Christ stop teaching; families are

torn by immorality, divorce, and indifference to God's instructions; and unlike David who could repent, a host of God's children leave the church and never return. God does not fail here; people do.

In the sixth and last place for this essay, one recalls that the "man after God's own heart" was a type of Christ. In fact, the shepherd's, prophet's, and king in Israel's name was used by Ezekiel as synonymous with the future (then) Messiah's.

And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace... (Ezek. 34:23-25a).

Since Ezekiel lived subsequent to David's time, the prophet was necessarily pointing to a future "David" who would shepherd God's people. Jesus identified Himself as that one: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

It was appropriate that Ezekiel prefigure the coming Messiah as David. The Israelite king had been promised: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers. I will set up thy seed after thee...and I will establish his kingdom" (2 Sam. 7:12). God's message to David was a covenant promise concerning Messiah:

I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations (Psa. 89:3-4). The psalmist added: My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for

ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven (Psa. 89:34-37).

The One now sitting on David's throne in heaven is the Christ. "Therefore being a prophet (referring to David, K.M.), and knowing that God had sworn an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne" (Acts 2:30). The "man after God's own heart" had a replacement. The new King on the Davidic throne had, not only the heart of God, but was sinless while in the flesh (Heb. 4:15). But note, a penitent king was used by God to foreshadow a perfect Christ. God can use men and women who will realize that the "Sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psa. 51:17).

Conclusion

David is forever remembered in history as the "man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22b). Yet, David's sins, and his complexities, when studied; contain great lessons for God's people. There is a sense in which David was always in tune with God in that, when confronted with his sin, he repented. A man who tries to stay close to God, even though that man is imperfect, will always feel the deep sorrow when that one disappoints the Almighty.

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CHAPTER 7

Saul: The King Who Lost His Kingdom To A Neighbor Better Than He

Chuck Webster

It was a sad day in Saul's earthly sojourn when Samuel stood before him and declared,

The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou (1 Sam. 15:28).

At the start, Saul seemed to be the perfect selection for Israel's first king. After all, he looked like a king. He was "a choice young man" "a goodly person," and "from his shoulders and upward...was higher than any of the people" (1 Sam. 9:2). He was someone that all Israel could look up to as king. Although he had the height to be king, time proved that he didn't have the heart. His heart was lifted up with pride and he rebelled against God. Eventually, God rejected him as king and took the kingdom from him. As a replacement for Saul, God sought a man after his own heart (1 Sam. 13:14). David, the youngest son of Jesse, was selected to be Israel's second king. Although David was small and ruddy, he had the heart to be king.

In this study, we want to examine Saul's journey away from God. We want to see why God took the kingdom from him and gave it to a neighbor better than

he. Let's remember as we start this study that Saul's life is recorded for our learning (Rom. 15:4). If we will learn from his mistakes, we will not lose the kingdom that has been given to us.

Saul Went From Humble To Haughty

At the time of his selection Saul was extremely humble. When Samuel informed him that the desire of all Israel was upon him and his father's house, he responded,

Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me? (1 Sam. 9:21).

Notice the humility with which Saul spoke of his pedigree. Later, when his uncle asked him about his conversation with Samuel, Saul told him about the asses being found, but not about his being crowned (1 Sam. 10:15-16). Most of us would not have possessed the self-control to stay silent. However, Saul did. When all Israel was gathered before Samuel for the selection of a new king, and the lot fell on Saul, he could not be found (1 Sam. 10:21). When they enquired of the Lord concerning his whereabouts, God revealed that he was hiding "among the stuff" (1 Sam. 10:22). Most of us would have been easy to find, but not Saul. He was humbly hesitant to take the throne. At this time, he was little in his own sight (1 Sam. 15:17). Sadly, the day would come when Saul would think more highly of himself than he should have (Rom. 12:3). For example, when the Philistines amassed against Israel, and Samuel was delayed in coming, Saul took it upon himself to offer the sacrifice (1 Sam. 13:8-14). Because Saul foolishly and presumptuously disobeyed the Lord in this way, his kingdom would not continue (1 Sam. 13:13-14). If he had obeyed the Lord, God would have established

his kingdom forever. Later, Saul would again haughtily disobey the Lord in the matter of Agag and the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:3-9). Because he rejected the word of the Lord, God rejected him from being king (1 Sam. 15:23). Truly, "a haughty spirit goeth before a fall" (Prov. 16:18; cf. 18:12; 29:23; 2 Chron. 32:25-26; 1 Peter 5:5). Those that God has selected to lead His people today must be on constant guard against pride. They must continue to be little in their own eyes (Eph. 3:8; John 13:1-15).

Saul Went From Fearless To Fearful

Early on in his reign as king, Saul was fearless. On one occasion, we see him putting the people into three companies and slaying the Ammonite host until two of them were not left together (1 Sam. 11:11). He was full of faith and fearless at this time. However, later on, he would not gird his sword when one man stood before him and defied Almighty God (1 Sam. 17). While it is true that the man that stood before him was a giant named Goliath, there was no reason for fear. After all, a small shepherd boy named David, armed only with a sling, would defeat him with the help of Almighty God. As you know, this shepherd boy would one day sit in Saul's seat. God does not want His servants to have a "spirit of fear." He wants them to have a "spirit of power" (2 Tim. 1:7). Individuals that allow fear to keep them from serving God are sure to be rejected as Saul was (Matt. 25:25-26; Rev. 21:8). Those that God has selected to lead His people today must "be strong and very courageous" (Josh. 1:7). They must boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13:6).

Saul Went From Merry To Miserable

"Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly,"

when he was crowned king in Gilgal (1 Sam. 11:15). However, Saul's merriness soon gave way to misery. The Spirit of the Lord departed from him and an evil spirit descended upon him (1 Sam. 16:14). The evil spirit so troubled Saul that his servants sought something to soothe him. Thinking that music might soothe the savage beast, a young Bethlehemite named David was suggested and summoned (1 Sam. 16:15-20). David's harp was just what the doctor, or in this case, the king ordered. David's playing soothed and refreshed Saul's spirit (1 Sam. 16:23). Sadly, the sweet music of David's harp only treated the symptoms of Saul's malady. The melancholy spirit that filled Saul's soul remained. It should be noted that before Saul lost his kingdom, he lost his joy. Envy eroded it from within (Prov. 14:30). Those that God has selected to lead His people today must maintain their joy. They must not let the evil spirit of bitterness or resentment rest within them. God's kingdom is to be known for "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17; cf. Gal. 5:22-23).

Saul Went From Under Control To Out Of Control

At the beginning of his reign, Saul possessed great self-control. When some refused to recognize and receive him as king, "he held his peace" (1 Sam. 10:27). Later, however, when women sang of David's exploits as being greater than his own, his heart was enraged and he sought to erase the one he perceived to be his enemy (1 Sam. 18:7-8). Of course, Saul did not have a more loyal servant in his kingdom than David. Eventually, Saul's envy would become so great that he would attempt to kill his own son for befriending David (1 Sam. 20:30-34). Although David and Jonathan narrowly escaped Saul's wrath, the priests of Nob did not. They were slaughtered

by Saul for helping David (1 Sam. 22). Saul lost control of his spirit and with it the kingdom (Prov. 16:32; 25:28). Those that have been selected to lead God's people today must maintain control of their emotions so that they will not fall like Saul (2 Peter 1:5-11; cf. Gal. 5:22-23).

Saul Went From Banishing Error To Befriending It

During the early years of his reign, Saul put those that had familiar spirits out of the land (1 Sam. 28:3, 9). However, at the end of his reign, he asked his servants to find a woman that had a familiar spirit that he might enquire of her (1 Sam. 28:7). Saul's servants found a woman in Endor and the wayward king went in unto her. His departure from God and God's departure from Him was now complete (1 Sam. 28:15-18). Death stood at the door (1 Sam. 28:19). Those who have been selected to lead God's people today must not fellowship the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11). If they do, then they will lose the fellowship of God (2 John 9-11).

Saul's reign started with great promise, but ended in great failure. Because he walked in the counsels of his own heart instead of hearkening to God, he "went backward, and not forward" (Jer. 7:24; 15:6). The kingdom that was given to him at the beginning was taken from him at the end. Saul's mistakes should serve as a warning to us. We too can lose the kingdom that has been given to us.

CHAPTER 8

I Just Can't Wait To Be King: Resisting The Urge To Run Ahead Of God

Bobby Liddell

Introduction

What greater worldly honor could be afforded one than being king? God selected David to be the king of his people, but David had to wait until God's plan fully unfolded, and the time was right. He had to resist the urge to run ahead of God, for who would want to wait to be king, having been already selected and anointed? Most would not, or could not, wait, but David was different. For most of the millennia of man's existence (the first mention, in the Bible, of a "king" is in Genesis 14:1-2), men have desired this ultimate position of respect; that is, respect from the world's point of view.

David patiently prepared himself—instead of selfishly asserting himself. He courageously proved himself—instead of proudly promoting himself. He respected the one whom God had made his king—instead of trying to depose him. David faithfully followed his God—instead of running ahead of Him.

The Allure Of The Throne

The appeal of the power, inherent with the royal

throne, calls to those who would use it to do good, and those who would use it to do evil. The acclaim of the people draws men whose ambition to make a lasting name drives them. Truly, while billions have lived and died without so much as a single notation in the documented history of mankind, the names of kings are forever recorded, and the very mention of them kindles respect and memories of heroic deeds (or disgust and repulsion), even thousands of years later. Some so eagerly seek the glory of being king (cf. Isa. 8:7 [splendor, honor], and 10:12 [majesty, beauty]) that they are willing to forsake morals and ethics in order to fulfill their desires. Their goal is to be recognized as royalty, and to wield the absolute power afforded them, whether in a small kingdom or great; thus, to be, in their reign, beyond the question of any man, or, as some kings have supposed, of even God Himself (cf. Dan. 3:15; 4:30-37).

Unworthy of the honor of being ruler, unscrupulous men have deceived, bribed, and murdered in order to become king. Unlike David, many have taken the throne by force. They have not hesitated to kill the sitting king, rightful heirs to the throne, friends and counselors of the old king, or any other who stood in their way (cf. Judg. 9:1-6). Antiochus, declared himself to be Theos Epiphanes, the “manifest god.” Daniel wrote Antiochus would “come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries,” and “he shall work deceitfully” (Dan. 11:21-24). Whether enthroned by murder, or by flattery and deceit, to be king, at least to some, meant to be enabled and empowered as no other; thus, they would do anything to become king—but not David.

The Dangers Of The Throne

Being king offered the ultimate earthly power, riches, and reward, but could also bring sorrow, humiliation,

and death. Joshua hanged the king of Ai “on a tree until eventide,” and “commanded that they should take his carcass down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones” (Josh. 8:23-29). When the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon were brought before Joshua, he humiliated them, “And afterward Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees: and they were hanging upon the trees until the evening” (Josh. 10:22ff). When the army of Israel caught Adonibezek, king of Bezek, they “cut off his thumbs and his great toes” as he claimed to have done to seventy kings (Judg. 1:5-7). Ehud, the left-handed judge of Israel, told Eglon, the “very fat” king of Moab, “I have a message from God unto thee.” His message was a dagger, eighteen inches long, which he thrust into his belly (Judg. 3:15-22). Thus, many met their death.

A very real danger is the possibility of one’s doing as did Saul; that is, turning from humble service to selfish arrogance. Although the position of king conferred upon the one who sat upon the throne worldly honor, as ruler and leader of his people, it also carried with it the possibility of the greatest of shame. Regardless of the power and cunning of the one ruling, it is God’s intent that “the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men” (Dan. 4:17). Shamed by his sin, and rejected by his God, Saul desperately sought to maintain his position in spite of God’s declarations against him as king. God gave the kingdom to David, but David refused to run ahead of God.

The Call For A King To Reign Over Israel

Multiplied centuries passed, in which other nations had kings, before God anointed a king over Israel (cf.

Gen. 36:31). Before Israel ever came into the Promised Land, God foretold:

When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother (Deut. 17:14-15; cf. 28:36).

As God predicted, the day came when they desired a king, and “all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah” (1 Sam. 8:4).

And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them (1 Sam. 8:5-7).

After warning them of the price they would pay for having a king, and the demands he would make upon the people, Samuel said:

And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we also may

be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles (1 Sam. 8:18-20).

Later, the people of Israel, when confronted with their sins, acknowledged their wrong, and said unto Samuel, "Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king (1 Sam. 12:19; cf. Hos. 13:11).

The Rise And Fall Of Saul, Israel's First King

Samuel called the people together unto Mizpeh, and told them they had rejected God by desiring a king to be over them. As God directed, Samuel called the tribe of Benjamin, and the family of Matri, and Saul the son of Kish, to be king, but Saul had hid himself among the stuff.

And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king. Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house (1 Sam. 10:17-25).

Saul became the first king of Israel; the one who preceeded David, and who reigned for forty years (Acts 13:21). David also reigned for forty years (1 Kings 2:11), as did Solomon (1 Kings 11:42). Saul began his monarchy with humility (1 Sam. 15:17), obviously not seeking the position (1 Sam. 10:22). In time, his pride overcame him, his transgression spelled his doom, his period of rule came to an inglorious end, and David became king.

Saul lost his throne because he trusted in himself, instead of in God's promises. Fearful of the Philistine army, and thinking Samuel was not coming, Saul offered a burnt offering (1 Sam. 13:1ff).

And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee (1 Sam. 13:11-14).

Saul also disobeyed the Lord's command concerning the utter destruction of the Amalekites and their king, Agag (1 Sam. 15:1ff).

Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments....And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king....for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath

given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent (1 Sam. 15:10-29).

The Anointing Of David As Saul's Successor

Because of his rebellion and disobedience, the Lord rejected Saul as king, chose one better than Saul, one who was a man after God's own heart, and sent the prophet Samuel to anoint Saul's successor, one of the sons of Jesse the Bethlehemite.

And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons (1 Sam. 16:1).

In Bethlehem, at the house of Jesse, considering which of Jesse's sons would God select, Samuel

...looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD'S anointed is before him. But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart (1 Sam. 16:6-7).

Finally, Samuel, having seen all the other sons, learned the youngest was tending sheep, and instructed Jesse to:

Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither. And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and

anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward (1 Sam. 16:11-13).

David was anointed as king, but his reign would not begin immediately. Most commentators believe he was about fifteen years old when anointed by Samuel, but the Bible reveals that he was thirty when he began to reign (and that he reigned for forty years – seven years and six months in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem [2 Sam. 5:4; 1 Chron. 3:4]). Still, he did not run ahead of God, but waited on the Lord's timing and schedule.

Nearing the end, Saul once again transgressed the commands of God when, fearful of the host of the Philistines, he enquired of the woman of Endor who had a familiar spirit. More than any other, for she knew she did not have power to bring forth the dead, she was astonished at the sight of Samuel when he appeared (1 Sam. 28:5ff).

Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David: Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day. Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines (1 Sam. 28:16-19).

On the morrow, Saul ended his reign with suicide (1 Sam. 31), having been rejected by God as king, and

knowing that his successor, David, waited to replace him.

So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it; And enquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse (1 Chron. 10:13-14).

David's Refusal To Run Ahead Of God

If David were fifteen years old when anointed, and did not begin his reign until he was thirty, what did he do in the years between?

David patiently prepared himself – instead of selfishly asserting himself. David's life was one of preparation for greater future service, even before ever knowing of God's plan for him. As a shepherd, he learned to care for those in his keeping. He experienced the hardships and deprivations of long hours, days away from home, dangerous situations, treacherous terrain, severities of weather, and the threat from enemies of the sheep. When the young shepherd boy David heard the giant Goliath "defy the armies of the living God," he said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine" (1 Sam. 17:26-32). Saul did not believe David was able to fight the great Philistine warrior, but David knew he was ready for the challenge, for the events of his past had prepared him for this day, and replied:

Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by

his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God (1 Sam. 17:34-36).

Trusting in God, David was unafraid to face the foe, to fight the enemy of God. As he had come to know God, he had come to know himself. Reading the psalms David wrote, one learns of his fervent prayers, his tender pleadings, and his confident trust in God's never failing mercy and help. David had prepared himself spiritually, and his words revealed his utter dependence upon the Father in whom he believed, and to whom he prayed. A most important trait of a king is his fidelity to, and dependence upon, the God of heaven and earth.

Most rulers scoff at the idea of submission to God's will, or of seeking His guidance, or His blessings. They have not prepared themselves in the most basic of requirements, recognizing God as the ruler of their lives, much less that He rules in the kingdom of men. God offered opportunities, and presented challenging trials, to prepare David for the times when the opportunities would be even greater, but the challenges would also. David responded with faith and trust, and worked with God to prepare himself for greater service, but he did not think, just because he was prepared to rule, that he should remove the sitting king, whom he called "the Lord's anointed."

David courageously proved himself—instead of proudly promoting himself. David proved himself in the battle with the Philistines, when he defeated their champion. He believed there was "a cause" (1 Sam. 17:29); thus, he was prepared to fight the enemies of God (1 Sam. 17:32). Unlike the giant, David did not trust in great armor, impressive weapons, or large physical

stature. Nor did he trust in himself, and his strength or ability – without God – but he trusted in the Lord (1 Sam. 17:37), and fought “in the name of the Lord” (1 Sam. 17:45).

Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD’S, and he will give you into our hands (1 Sam. 17:45-47).

Not only did David show himself to be a man of courage (and faith) in slaying Goliath, he also continued to prove himself as the captain of Saul’s men, going out and coming in before the people, leading the armies of Israel in great victory against the nation’s enemies, for the Lord was with him.

Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him. Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them (1 Sam. 18:13-16).

All Israel and Judah loved him, and the women

sang about his prowess in war, to the chagrin of Saul.

And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward (1 Sam. 18:6-9).

Saul was afraid of David, was angry with him, and envied the attention he received. His jealous fear resulted in his suspicion of David and his opposition to him, even to the point of pursuing him to kill him. The people of Israel understood that, even in the days of Saul's reign, it was David whom the Lord appointed to be "a captain over Israel."

Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel (2 Sam. 5:1-2).

David's courage did not wane under persecution. His flight from Saul was a time of great hardship that tested the fiber of his character, but through it all, David persevered, and did so with respect for Saul's kingship. We should take note that David did not cite the attitude

and actions of Saul as reason for his doing wrong toward Saul. David did not whisper behind Saul's back in order to win followers to himself. He did not try to undermine Saul, or to depose him. His goal was not to usurp the throne, to belittle the king, or to complain about his being mistreated. His goal was to serve the God who had delivered him, and, even if he wondered about why things happened as they did, to wait upon God, and not run ahead of Him.

David respectfully served the one whom God had made his king—instead of trying to depose him. David's respect for "the Lord's anointed" repeatedly came to the fore, even in times when David could, with man's approval and encouragement, have taken advantage of the situation, and could have seized the throne. Saul's pursuit of David to the wilderness of Engedi offered an opportunity for David to slay him, but David would not put forth his hand against his lord (Saul), for he was the Lord's anointed.

And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi. Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. And he came to the sheepecotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily. And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. And he said unto his men, The

LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD. So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way. David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself. And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD'S anointed. Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it. The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea. The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand. And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And

Saul lifted up his voice, and wept. And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not. For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day. And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand. Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house. And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold (1 Sam. 24:1-22).

Again, when Saul pursued David to the wilderness of Ziph, David had opportunity to end his suffering, and Saul's life, to claim the throne—for which he had already been anointed, and to settle, once and for all, who should be king. Instead, he responded with mercy and spared Saul.

And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon? Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon, by the way. But David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness. David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed. And David

arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched: and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him. Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee. So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him. Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time. And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless? David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish. The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go. So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked: for they were all asleep; because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them. Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of an hill afar off; a great space being between them: And David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered and said, Who art thou that criest to

the king? And David said to Abner, Art not thou a valiant man? and who is like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord. This thing is not good that thou hast done. As the LORD liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the LORD'S anointed. And now see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster. And Saul knew David's voice, and said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And David said, It is my voice, my lord, O king. And he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil is in mine hand? Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the LORD; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods. Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD: for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains. Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly. And David answered and said, Behold the king's spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it. The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness: for the LORD delivered thee into my hand to day, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S anointed. And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in

the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation. Then Saul said to David, Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place (1 Sam. 26).

David faithfully followed his God—instead of running ahead of Him. We do not always know when we are being tested, tried by God (Gen. 22:1). Sometimes, what appears to be the “easy way” to reach what we desire, may pull us away from the course of true faith. The shortcut to our goals, even when the goals themselves may be worthy and good, most often leads us away from that which we should achieve—and can accomplish by continuing faithfully (Prov. 14:12). David refused to take shortcuts to the throne, but was unwavering in his trust in God, and in his faith that God would do as He had promised.

David did not run ahead of God. In God, he trusted, and on God, he waited. Even when Saul said, “And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand” (1 Sam. 24:20). David did not gloat, nor did he threaten. He respected the one whom God had made the first king over Israel, and he refused to seek his harm, or his demise. David looked upon himself as unimportant (cf. 1 Sam. 26:20), but not upon God’s will as unimportant, for he faithfully trusted in God’s plans for the future, knowing God would work them out to His glory, in His own good time.

When Saul looked upon David with envy (1 Sam. 18:6-9), when he connived against him, plotting David’s death (1 Sam. 18:17, 21), when he feared David’s influence, for the Lord was with David (1 Sam. 18:12, 29), when Saul became David’s enemy continually (1 Sam. 18:29; 19:10), when Saul sought to kill him (1 Sam. 19:1, 10;

20:33), and when David had to flee for his life, David still trusted in God's promises, believed in God's word, and followed God's way.

After Saul committed suicide on Mt. Gilboa, instead of rejoicing, David mourned for Saul with great lamentation (2 Sam. 1:11-12). He slew the Amalekite who claimed to be Saul's slayer (2 Sam. 1:13-16), and recognized Saul as the king over Israel, whom God had Samuel to anoint with oil (2 Sam. 1:21). Continuing in faith, David enquired of the Lord as to what he should do next, and followed the Lord's command (2 Sam. 2:1). He blessed the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead for burying Saul (2 Sam. 2:5-7), treated Saul's son, Ishbosheth, with respect (2 Sam. 4:1-12), and later showed kindness to Saul's son, Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 9).

Conclusion

Saul, David's enemy, had died at his own hand, and the promise made to David came to fruition. In Hebron, where the Lord had told him to go, David received all the tribes of Israel, and was anointed King over Israel (2 Sam. 5:1-5). Many years had passed since he was called from tending the sheep to receive Samuel's anointing. Finally, David was the King over all Israel—according to the word of the Lord! "Therefore came all the elders of Israel to the king to Hebron; and David made a covenant with them in Hebron before the LORD; and they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the LORD by Samuel" (1 Chron. 11:3). "And the days that David reigned over Israel were forty years: seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he in Jerusalem" (1 Kings 2:11). "And David perceived that the LORD had confirmed him king over Israel, for his kingdom was lifted up on high, because of his people Israel" (1 Chron. 14:2). God honored this man after his own heart, and blessed his kingdom.

When David's days on earth were drawing to a close, he gave a solemn charge to his son, Solomon, and to all Israel. A careful reading of the following reveals the great faith by which David lived, and in which he died, after having waited upon, and having followed God.

Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel (1 Kings 2:1-4).

Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore,

our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own. I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee. O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee: And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace, for the which I have made provision. And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the LORD your God. And all the congregation blessed the LORD God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the LORD, and the king. And they sacrificed sacrifices unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings unto the LORD, on the morrow after that day, even a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, with their drink offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel: And did eat and drink before the LORD on that day with great gladness. And they made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed him unto the LORD to be the chief governor,

and Zadok to be priest. Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him. And all the princes, and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David, submitted themselves unto Solomon the king. And the LORD magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel. Thus David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel. And the time that he reigned over Israel was forty years; seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he in Jerusalem. And he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour: and Solomon his son reigned in his stead. Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer, With all his reign and his might, and the times that went over him, and over Israel, and over all the kingdoms of the countries (1 Chron. 29:10-30).

The inspired words of Paul, recorded by Luke, show the impact of David's faith.

And afterward they desired a king; and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus (Acts 13:21-23).

CHAPTER 9

Shimei: An Enemy With Whom David Showed Great Self-Control

Curtis Cates

Introduction

The first king of Israel, the United Kingdom, was Saul, of the tribe of Benjamin (1 Sam. 9:1-2). Saul had many successes, but he also acted foolishly on occasion, the result of which being that Saul's house would not continue in the monarchy (13:13-14). He kept not God's commandments in assuming upon himself to offer sacrifices (13:8-12) and also not to perform God's commands regarding Amalek (15:1-35). David was anointed as king by Samuel (16:1-13).

"Now the Spirit of Jehovah departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from Jehovah troubled him" (16:14). Saul called for David to play the harp for Saul; the Bible states that David loved Saul greatly; the harp refreshed Saul, and "the evil spirit departed from him" (16:23). God blessed David to win the contest with Goliath, the Philistine; however, "Saul eyed David from that day and forward" (17:17-18:9), even repeatedly pursuing David and attempting to kill him; Jonathan, Saul's son, "strengthened his hand in God." Well did Jonathan know that David had been anointed as the next king over Israel (23:15-18).

On one occasion when Saul was pursuing David in the wilderness of Engedi, David had the opportunity

to kill Saul in a cave; however, David spared Saul's life and kept his men from killing Saul—for, Saul was the Lord's anointed. Confronting Saul outside the cave, David asked,

Wherefore harkenest thou to men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that Jehovah hath delivered thee today into my hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee, but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth my hand against my lord; for he is Jehovah's anointed...I have not sinned against thee, though thou huntest after my life to take it. Jehovah judge between me and thee, and Jehovah avenge me of thee; but my hand shall not be upon thee (24:1-12).

Saul replied to David,

Thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rendered unto me good, whereas I have rendered unto thee evil...And now, behold, I know that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thy hand. Swear now therefore unto me by Jehovah, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house. And David swore unto Saul (24:17-22).

Again, when Saul sought David's life, David spared Saul's life at Ziph (16:1-12).

Then said Saul, I have sinned: return my son David; for I will no more do thee harm, because my life was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly (26:21).

Sadly, Saul and his sons [including Jonathan, whose soul

“was knit with the soul of David” and who “loved him as his own soul” (18:1)] died in a battle with the Philistines (31:1-13). David lamented greatly upon hearing of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1:1-27).

David inquired of the Lord and at His instruction went up into Judah to Hebron, “And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David over the house of Judah” (2:1-4). For two years, Saul’s son Ishbosheth reigned over Israel (2:10).

Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: and David waxed stronger and stronger, but the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker (3:1).

The tribes of Israel came to David in Hebron, where they expressed loyalty to David, and “they anointed David king over Israel” (5:1-5). Wishing to be kind to “any that is left of the house of Saul,” to “show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake,” David made provisions for Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth; “he did eat continually at the king’s table” (9:1, 7, 13).

Some time later, King David sinned with Bathsheba, ignored the sin, and tried to cover it up (11:2-14). When Uriah would not go to be with his wife, David had him killed; she became David’s wife. “But the thing that David had done displeased Jehovah” (11:14-27). God sent Nathan, who confronted David with the severity of his sin, with which David had refused to level with himself. Compromise, excuses, or blaming it on one’s environment, or circumstances, or “human nature” does not excuse sin, nor does time excuse or cover-over sin. Confronting transgression and its guilt can save one’s soul. The longer one remains impenitent, the more sin dulls the soul’s sensitivity and the less touched one is by truth. When confronted by Nathan, David’s heart was tender to own up to and confess his evil:

I have sinned against Jehovah. And Nathan said unto David, Jehovah also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou has given great occasion to the enemies of Jehovah to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die (12:1-14).

In addition, because David had “despised the word of Jehovah,” Who had anointed David as king and had saved him when Saul sought his life, “therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house” (12:10).

“Absalom,” son of David, “stole the hearts of the men of Israel,” came with a conspiracy against the king, and David had to flee (15:1-14), weeping as he went (15:30). With this background and upon the occasion of David’s fleeing for his life (15:14) and of Absalom’s coming into Jerusalem (15:37), we are introduced to Shimei, “enemy” of David with whom the king showed great self-control. This study will examine the occasion of Shimei’s grievous, vicious, and evil cursings against “the Lord’s anointed,” of Shimei’s confession and plea for mercy, and of David’s death-bed words to Solomon as regards Shemei.

Shimei’s Cursings Against David (2 Sam. 16:5-13)

These were very dark days for king David (Spence, 2 Samuel, 399), as he flees from his own son Absalom.

And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, there came out thence a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera; he came out, and cursed still as he came (16:5).

Bahurim, meaning “a young man’s village,” is identified as a spot near the road which ran from Jerusalem to

Jericho. Ruins in the **Wade Ruwaby** have been identified as this spot" (Winter, 529). It was "just within the border of Benjamin" (M'Clintock, 684), and it was Shimei's home town. The name "Shimei" means "Jehovah is fame or famous," and was a popular name with the Hebrews, especially the Levites (Lockyer, 310). "He belonged to the family of the house of Saul, which had lost the kingship to David" (Mauch, 331), though the indication is that Shimei was not a "near relative of Saul, but that he was a member of the Mishpachah, the larger division of the tribe of Benjamin...But he was a strong partisan and so fanatical, as to care little for his life, if only he could annoy the usurper" (Spence, 2 Samuel, 397). Lockyer quoted Whyte, who termed Shimei, "A reptile of the royal house of Saul" (Lockyer, 310). Shimei is "associated with some of the most painful transactions of the reign of [David] and his successor" (M'Clintock, 684). Gera, meaning "a sojourner," was a popular name in Benjamin.

Being of this background Shimei was a champion of the house of Saul and happy to see any kind of misfortune come to David, since he viewed him as one who had usurped Saul's throne (Winter, 529).

Indeed, the "whole feeling of the clan of Benjamin burst forth without restraint in the person of Shimei" (M'Clintock, 684).

This man who lived to curse knew only too well that David had never shed a drop of Saul's blood, but it was not in his interest to admit the truth he knew. Because of his tribal and family connections it was natural for Shimei to be David's bitter enemy, and to heap his curses and insults upon the fugitive monarch (Lockyer, 310).

"Shimei bitterly opposed David, cursing him for the ruin

of Saul's house" (Elwell, 1954). "Shimei voiced the protest latent in some Benjamite quarters (see 2 Sam. 20:1) that David had supplanted the house of Saul, and he charged David with bloodguilt (cf. 1 Sam. 3:37; 4:11; see 21:1-14; also 1 Sam. 28-29)" (Mauch, 331). Indeed the evil deeds of Shimei "reflected the widespread hostility among the Benjamites toward the Davidic throne" (Bromiley, 479).

Parker observed, "There may be dignity in some cursing. There we do not pity king David. But in the sixth verse a new phrase is revealed of the bitterness of his humiliation" (Parker, 181).

And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left (16:6).

Evidently a small ravine separated the road from a ridge which ran parallel to it; from the ridge "Shimei was out of easy reach though within hearing, and within a stone's throw" (Cook, 424); he felt "it was safe to curse the fleeing king" (Purkiser, 317). Yes, David's humiliation was bitter, as one described: "This was right. Humble him still more; throw stones at him, spit upon him, mock him. It is right that society should thus take up the cause of dead men. David knew this" (Parker, 181). [This humiliation reminds the reader of the viciousness against Job and against Christ.] Very easily could David's loyal people and especially his mighty men have dispatched the rebellious enemy Shimei (Spence, 2 Samuel, 397).

Heaping even more humiliation and sorrow upon David, "And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Begone, begone, thou man of blood and base fellow" (16:7) or "Man of Belial." It denotes a "worthless...son of Satan" (Winter, 530). Shimei is demanding, "**out, out**; that is, get out, begone, begone, thou murderer and worthless man" (Spence, 2 Samuel, 398); "**Go out,**' viz., of the land, into

banishment, as Jer. xxix 16...**Get out** would be still more in the spirit of Shimei's abusive speech" (Cook, 424).

In verse seven and again in verse eight, Shimei accused David of being a "man of blood."

Jehovah hath returned unto thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and Jehovah hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son; and, behold, thou art taken in thine own mischief, because thou art a man of blood (16:8).

In the midst of a person's anger and extreme prejudice, vicious and outrageous charges can proceed from his mouth. "It seems to have been derived from the slaughter of the sons of Saul (ch. xxi), or generally perhaps from David's predatory, warlike life (comp. 1 Chron. xxii.8), M'Clintock stated (684). Cook observed,

Shimei probably put to David's account the death of Saul and Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Melchishua, slain in battle by the Philistines with whom David was in league; cf. Ish-bosheth slain in consequence of David's league with Abner; that of Abner himself, which he attributed to David's secret orders, and all the 360 slain in the battle between Joab and Abner (ii.31)...Shimei's hatred and virulence is an indication that the Benjamites resented the loss of royalty in their tribe, even in the palmist days of David's monarchy (424).

The reader will recall how that David had been very meticulous in his righteous treatment of Saul, the Lord's anointed.

Shimei blamed David for the demise of the house of Saul. Such a misconstruing of the facts demonstrates why David was so careful to prevent his being linked directly in any way

to the death of Saul. Even though David had slain the Amalekite who brought him word of Saul's death, and killed the two assassins of Ish-bosheth, some of the people still thought David was responsible for the fall of the house of Saul. Shimei viewed David as reigning where a son of Saul ought to be reigning. Shimei believed that God had brought a just penalty on David, and delivered the kingdom into the hands of Absalom, his son, as a punishment for David's having taken over the throne from Saul. In other words, Shimei was saying that it was good enough for David that he was driven out from Jerusalem (Winter, 530).

"Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king. Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head" (16:9). Being exceedingly angry, Abisha [as was Joab (16:10)] wanted to go across the ravine and tear or cut off Shimei's head (Cook, 425; M'Clintock, 684). Abishi, Joab and Asahel were sons of David's sister Zeruiah (2 Sam. 2:18; 1 Chron. 2:15-16). It was somewhat natural for them to have a strong resentment against Shimei. In addition,

He thought it terrible that he was cursing his king. He proposed to go over and behead the man. Such a proposal was typical of Abishai's spirit. It was Abishai who had suggested killing Saul as he lay sleeping as he and David slipped into his camp (1 Sam. 26:8). Abishai had also been involved in killing Abner at Hebron (2 Sam. 3:30) (Winter, 530).

What was king David's reaction to Abishai's proposal?

And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? Because he curseth,

and because Jehovah hath said unto him, Curse David; who then shall say, Wherefore hast thou done so (16:10)?

The events were very hurtful to the king and very distressing to his supporters with him; perhaps they wondered how the king could use such restraint.

But he was in a state of great mental distress and self-condemnation. He had borne sorrow after sorrow since the day when, by his own great sin, he had opened the floodgates of wickedness; and now the son whom he dearly loved, and who had first been put wrong by a crime which might never have been committed but for his own example, was seeking both his crown and his life, and had made his cup of sorrow full to the brim and running over. At such a time of agony it was even a relief to have outward affliction to bear; for it brought the consoling thought that the Divine chastisement had its merciful limit (Spence, 2 Samuel, 398).

“And David said unto Abishai, and to all the servants, Behold, my son, who came forth from my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more may this Benjamite now do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for Jehovah hath bidden him. It may be that Jehovah will look on the wrong done unto me, and that Jehovah will requite me good for his cursing of me this day” (16:11-12). Feeling that Joab and Abishai were “too anxious to put people to death,” David restrained them; he also thought God might have been involved in these events. Perhaps David’s conscience was troubling him; God had said that the sword would never depart from his house—though God did not cause Shimei’s actions. To say the least, God had permitted it to happen [as in the grievous pain and destruction brought by Satan upon Job (Job 2:3; 42:11)].

David believed that if injustices were being done to him in such matters as Shimei's cursing, then God would repay him with good things for all the evil things which were befalling him (Winter, 531).

"So David and his men went by the way; and Shimei went along on the hillside over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust" (16:13). From the "rib," or rim, possibly overhanging the road (Cook, 425), Shimei persisted in his humiliation of David, now casting dust upon him, which was "a nuisance and a sign of contempt" (Winter, 531). David was experiencing unimaginable grief and weeping in heart. But, in the midst, he showed great mercy upon Shimei—who had cursed "Jehovah's anointed" and had heaped upon him humiliation on top of humiliation. Way leads on to way with uncontrolled anger and vehemence!

Shimei's Confession And Plea For His Guilt Not To Be Reckoned To Him (2 Sam. 19:16-23)

The events following the ridiculing and railing of Shimei against the king caused the days of David to become even more dark. His beloved son Absalom was in rebellion against David. The king appealed to and "commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom" (18:5). Absalom's army was defeated by David's army! Joab thrust three darts "through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak. And ten young men that bare Joab's armor compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him" (18:6-15). When word reached David, he was overwhelmed with grief, being "much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I

had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (18:33). What powerful embodiment and disclosure of a generous, loving spirit! The tender tears from his heart's depths are again seen as he repeats his cry, "And the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (19:4).

When David was fleeing for his life, Shimei was cursing God's anointed king. Now that the king "arose and sat in the gate" (19:8), would he take vengeance upon his enemies? What would Shimei do now, as the king is returning to the Jordan, to Jerusalem, to his rightful place over the nation? "And Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjamite, who was of Behurim, hasted and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David" (19:16). "After Absalom's revolt failed, Shimei met David on his return" (Bromiley, 479).

And there were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went through the Jordan in the presence of the king (19:17).

Shimei may have used his influence to bring his fellow tribe members (those of Benjamin) to support David. Whereas David had secured the throne [thus the hope that Saul's heirs would receive the crown had not come to fruition, as the Benjamites (including Shimei) had hoped], "the public acts of Shimei and Ziba removed all fear of public disturbance on the part of Saul's friends" (Spence, 2 Samuel, 466). With the Jordan's evidently being in flood stage,

Shimei showed his hypocritical zeal and humility in the presence of the king by swimming across the river. He was a coward and wished to escape the punishment that he rightly should have suffered.

All these men must have come to the conclusion that it was useless for them to oppose David's claim to the throne. They should have known that it was God's will and that David had been anointed by Samuel to replace Saul, but their extreme sense of family loyalty and devotion had led them to foolish actions, epitomized in Shimei's cursing David when the king was driven out of Jerusalem. They were anxious to make restitution and to be included among the people welcoming David back to his throne (Winter, 565-566).

We should learn that family/friend loyalty should not take the precedence over truth, principle, and right.

And there went over a ferry-boat to bring over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, when he was come over the Jordan. And he said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart. For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore, behold I am come this day the first of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king (19:18-20).

"Precisely what we expected from the man when he cursed so loudly, and threw stones so recklessly at the Lord's anointed" (Parker, 186).

Shimei's course was not only the boldest, but also the wisest. For, in the first place, his prompt surrender would commend itself to David's generosity; and secondly, had Abishai's counsel been taken, it would have offended the thousand Benjamites who formed his escort,

and also all the warriors present there from Israel (see ver. 40). Trouble and discontent would certainly have followed... (Spence, 2 Samuel, 466).

Shimei claimed to represent the house of Joseph, whose two sons (Ephraim and Manasseh) were blessed by Jacob as his own sons (Gen. 48:1-5). Both Joseph and Benjamin were children of Jacob by Rachel, as the reader will recall. They encamped next to each other in the wilderness (Num. 2:18-24), and that relationship grew through the years (Winter, 566). Later, the "house of Joseph" stood for the tribes in the north (1 Chron. 5:1-2; Amos 5:6), thus pledging the allegiance of Israel (Spence, 2 Samuel, 466-467).

What was the reaction to Shimei's confession and plea?

But Abishai the son of Zeruah answered and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed Jehovah's anointed? And David said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? Shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? For do not I know that I am this day king over Israel? And the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the king sware unto him (19:21-23).

"Shimei repented of his shameful behavior, entreated David's forgiveness, and received the king's pardon" (Elwell, 1954). Lockyer termed it "a hypocritical repentance."

David accepted his apology and gave an oath that he would not put him to death. When further resistance was useless, Shimei feigned obedience to David, but in his heart was still bitterly opposed to him (Lockyer, 310).

“Abishai, who had earlier been willing to take off Shimei’s head, was now no less angry and would have put him to death; but David pardoned him and spared his life” (Purkiser, 321), “in consideration of the general jubilee and amnesty of the return” (M’Clintock, 684). Parker asks,

Was he not worth killing? Was he a sincere man? In a little time we shall see. Judgment overtook him, and crushed him, and he lives in history as a rebel and a liar. Let us not presume too much on God’s clemency...And then (after forgiveness and grace) we forget to pray and sing and do all the sweet duties of worship. But the Lord sitteth in the heavens; he will not willingly slay the children of men. He spares even blasphemers. But ‘kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.’ There is no escape from the final judgment. Shimei lives a day or two, but presently the fate he has invoked and deserved will swallow him up. ‘It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.’ ‘Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.’ There are threatenings as well as promises, and the threatenings are not the petulant words of defiance, but the seldom declarations of eternal righteousness (Parker, 187).

God had graciously restored David’s reign; he “with an oath granted royal clemency” to Shimei (Mauch, 331).

...once again, he was restraining Abishai’s unbridled desire for revenge. He had been unable to restrain Joab in the battle against Absalom, although he had strictly charged him not to harm Absalom. David had no taste for blood-shed, and he felt the day was one of

rejoicing and not a time for an execution of any kind (Winter, 567).

David's Death-Bed Warnings To Solomon (1 Kings 2:8-9, 36-46)

"Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son" (1 Kings 2:1). Among the charges given to king Solomon was,

And, behold, there is with thee Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjamite, of Bahurim, who cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim; but he came down to meet me at the Jordan, and I sware to him by Jehovah, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword. Now therefore hold him not guiltless, for thou art a wise man; and thou wilt know what thou oughtest to do unto him, and thou shalt bring his hoar head down to Sheol with blood (2:8-9).

As David is facing death, he is still keenly interested in the future of the nation of Israel and of his family. "Now there is no wrath in the king's tone, but a sense of duty makes it strong;" David is "handing the torch of truth and empire, which he has so long grasped, to another and younger man" (Parker, 262).

Remembering Shimei, "David gave Solomon instructions to deal with a situation that in the eyes of many had not been corrected" (Purkiser, 350). Evident also, "the king's suspicions were not set to rest by this submission" of Shimei to David (M'Clintock, 684). Cook, commenting on the charge "hold him not guiltless" stated,

'Do not treat him as an innocent man. Punish him as in thy wisdom thou deemest best. Not

capitally at once; but so that he may be likely to give thee in course of time a just occasion to slay him.' So, at least, Solomon seems to have understood the charge (491).

Mentioning his "hoary head" seems to indicate that much time had transpired since the cursing of Jehovah's anointed. Solomon is desired by David to be guided by "wisdom and justice, not malice or passion" (Spence, 1 Kings, 28).

Some aver that David's oath not to slay Shimei was not wise.

But in taking this hasty and inadvised oath, David had pardoned what he had no power to pardon, viz., a sin to which the Law of Moses attached the death penalty (Ex. 22:28). Shimei had yet to suffer the penalty for his crime, and in fact on two occasions he had had his life spared by order of the king, the one who was charged with upholding and enforcing the Law of God. As David lay in his death chamber, the guilt of this negligence weighed heavily upon his mind. David felt that his oath prevented him from taking action against Shimei. But Solomon was under no such obligation. Therefore, David exhorted his son not to hold Shimei guiltless, i.e., not leave him unpunished...

The morality of David's injunction concerning Shimei and Joab has been called into question. No hint of malice or vindictiveness is evident in this passage; he was not bequeathing to Solomon 'a dark legacy of hate' as one writer puts it... David is tacitly admitting to failure on his own part in enforcing the law (Smith, 101-102).

Spence and Ezell add that it was "for the safety of his people, for the security of his throne," also stating that "seldom has the voice of law spoken with greater dignity

and fidelity than by David in this dying charge" (Spence, 1 Kings, 28).

Solomon in his wisdom restricted Shimei to Jerusalem.

And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Build thee a house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and go not forth thence any whither. For on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, know thou for certain that thou shalt surely die: thy blood shall be upon thine own head. And Shimei said unto the king, The saying is good: as my lord the king hath said, so will thy servant do. And Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days (2:26-38).

"The object apparently was to keep Shimei under the immediate eye of the government...Solomon assumes that if he quits the city, it would probably be "across the Kidron toward Bahurim" (Cook, 494).

Three years later, Shimei violated his oath, to bring back two of his servants who had run away; he went to Gath to retrieve them. Did he not have respect for authority? "Shimei kept this arrangement for three years, then broke it on some trifling occasion and justly forfeited his life" (Lockyer, 310). Solomon was informed of his violation, and the king reviewed the agreement of Shimei not to leave the city under any circumstances (2:39-43). Smith feels that "Shimei appears to be a man who acted on impulse. Probably he never gave the terms of his probation a second thought until the day he was summoned to the palace" (Smith, 117). We should allow such thoughtlessness (if that was the situation) to be a lesson to us, especially as regards our eternal souls.

Solomon made a threefold charge against Shimei:

He has violated a solemn oath 'by the life of Jehovah,' and so has 'profaned the name of his

God' (Lev. xix.12). He has broken his parole and set at naught the king's commandment. He has defied and blasphemed the Lord's anointed. He must die...The king regards himself as merely the instrument and dispenser of the Divine Justice. According to him, it is God, not spite, demands and has brought about Shimei's execution (Spence, 1 Kings, 46).

Knowing, therefore, all this wickedness which he had done, Shimei was to understand also that "Jehovah shall return thy wickedness upon thine own head" (2:44-45).

So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he went out, and fell upon him, so that he died. And the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon (2:46).

Conclusion

Shimei has committed grievous offences against the Law of Moses. He had received grace from David and Solomon. If he had kept his parole, he would have continued to live. David—as well as Solomon—had shown great self-control toward him. But, Shimei broke his solemn oath.

May we humbly throw ourselves upon the mercy of God in faith and penitence, and upon confession of faith in Christ, submit to being baptized into Christ for the remission of alien sins. And, may we ever be faithful to our solemn resolve to be faithful unto death.

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CHAPTER 10

Absalom: Heart-Breaker & Kingdom-Taker

Kirk Talley

To the elders of the Southaven Church of Christ: I thank you for this lectureship. It has been a joy for so many preachers to hear the good, high caliber Gospel preaching that has come from this effort. I am sure you will be rewarded greatly for your work here. I also wish to thank Wade for this invitation. Being related to Wade (by marriage), has had its privileges. His encouragement to me and example for me has meant everything. I hope to do justice to the topic and help someone here become stronger through our study together. Because of time restraints, the panegyric will be foregone, and the lesson will now begin.

Some fourteen hours away from home and just before bedtime, I spoke with my mother. In tears, she handed the phone to my wife, Esther, who, in a broken voice, said, "Kirk, Alexa might have to have surgery." I responded by saying, "I don't know what to do. The church has given a lot of money for me to be here in Africa, and I don't want to upset them." "Kirk, I need you here with me," Esther replied. Nothing would then stop me from finding a plane or boat, if need be, and crossing the Atlantic Ocean and getting back to my family.

After a fourteen-hour flight, body trembling from

lack of sleep and overactive nerves, I approached the side of my three-week old daughter's NICU crib. There she lay with swollen abdomen, raised fever, and buried in what seemed to be a mile of wires which monitored her every breath and motion. It was then for the third time in the lives of our children that I wished I could change places and take the hurt that they were enduring. Although common sense said it was impossible to do, the heart screamed for the contrary.

I cannot sugarcoat what King David did. He reared a rebel for a child, a rebel who received his training from his father's lifestyle, who resented his father's tolerance toward sin, and a rebel who received what sin promises to deliver - death (Rom. 6:23; Matt. 26:52; Luke 21:24). Absalom's reprobate resume, at the conclusion of his life, included hatred (13:22), murder (13:29), evil surmising (15:1-6), slander (15:3,4), deception (15:7), adultery (16:22), lying (15:7) and theft (15:6). As all good parents do, David still loved his son Absalom. Even when Absalom would have taken everything that David had worked to attain, including his concubines and kingdom, David still commanded his troops (who were to go into battle against Absalom), "Deal gently for my sake with the young man..." (2 Sam. 18:5). After Absalom was slain in battle David cried out, "Absalom, Absalom, would God I had died for thee" (2 Sam. 18:33).

With this brief introduction to the love David had for his wicked son, we must explore our assigned topic of Absalom: Heart-breaker and Kingdom-taker. Let's study these appropriate adjectives by noticing 2 Samuel 13-19, making application at the conclusion of the message.

Absalom: Heart-breaker The Plan Conceived

As we all know, most children do not intend to

break the heart of their parents, but often the result of sin is just that. How we all wish we could rewind the record of life and go back to those occasions when our parents looked into our eyes with hurt and anger only to say, "You have disappointed me." It does not seem that Absalom set out to hurt his family, rather to hurt only Amnon for the sin he had committed. You see Amnon, Absalom's half-brother, had raped Absalom's sister, Tamar. In connection with this heinous crime, Absalom had to deal with his father David as he turned his back, as it were, to this horrible crime by not punishing Amnon. With this knowledge, fueled by anger and hatred (2 Sam. 13:22,23), Absalom conceived a plan to kill Amnon (2 Sam. 13:28,29). For two years he stored up rage toward Amnon and resentment toward his father. He spoke neither "good nor bad" (13:22) of Amnon for two years, meaning he let no one know of his anger (Gen. 24:50).

The Plan Concealed And Concluded

After the conclusion of this period Absalom invited King David and all his sons to a feast at Absalom's abode some eight miles outside of Jerusalem near Ephraim (2 Chron. 13:19). King David declined but allowed his sons to attend. The plan was set forth with Absalom saying, "Mark ye now when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon; then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you? be courageous and be valiant. And the servants of Absalom did unto Amnon as Absalom had commanded" (2 Sam. 13:28,29). Tamar was avenged; Amnon was dead; and when David heard the news, the king's heart was broken. 2 Samuel 13:29-33 records:

...Then all the king's sons arose, and every man gat him up upon his mule, and fled. And it came to pass, while they were in the way,

that tidings came to David, saying, Absalom hath slain all the king's sons, and there is not one of them left. Then the king arose, and tare his garments, and lay on the earth; and all his servants stood by with their clothes rent. And Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother, answered and said, Let not my lord suppose that they have slain all the young men the king's sons; for Amnon only is dead: for by the appointment of Absalom this hath been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar. Now therefore let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead: for Amnon only is dead.

There should be no doubt concerning the reasons David was so sad that day. He would first of all be saddened at the thought of losing all six of his sons that were born to Ahinoam. The devastation he experienced was one similar to that of Job on the day he received word that his children had attended a feast only to lose their lives to the wickedly devised storm of Satan (Job 1:19,20). David's tears were provoked as well at the news of this murderous deed being orchestrated by his other son Absalom. As Christian parents we are unsettled with the sin in the world but are become most downtrodden when the news comes that our own children have contributed to this world's demise. David's sadness was also strengthened with the knowledge that Absalom had committed this crime because of a lack of action on David's part to avenge Tamar, his daughter! Some would contest that David was leaning more toward patience with Amnon. Perhaps David thought that Amnon would repent of his wicked deed and attempt a truce with Tamar and Absalom. This period of patience posed too much though for Absalom's anger. David's sadness would also

be kindled with the knowledge that he allowed his sons to attend the feast rather than exercising better judgment. Since David allowed his sons to attend, it is uncertain whether he had any suspicion of foul play; but according to some scholars, the “long delay of the act of revenge would be quite in accordance with the spirit of the Eastern nations.” For many understandable reasons David’s heart was, if not completely broken, greatly damaged.

David’s highway of heart-break didn’t stop with murder but continued as he fled the severe scene to his grandfather’s palace in Geshur. His grandfather, Talmai, was his mother’s, Maacah, father and king of Geshur (2 Sam. 13:37-39). The law concerning premeditated murder extended him no hope for Absalom of staying near Jerusalem (Num. 35:21). Now the Bible says that Absalom fled to Geshur and remained there for three years (2 Sam. 13:37,38). As David sorrowed over Amnon’s death, his mind began to cope more easily with this harsh realization. And, as he no doubt realized that he had helped rear a monster in Absalom, his guilt for such teaching compelled him to go to Absalom (14:39).

While chapter thirteen ends with David’s longing to go forth unto Absalom and chapter fourteen begins with the phrase “his heart was toward Absalom,” dear reader do not be confused in thinking that it was automatically a desire in David’s heart to let bygones be bygones. The Hebrew word for “toward” in verse 39 is the same for “against” in 14:13 as well as in Daniel 11:28. Both in 14:13 of 2 Samuel and in Daniel 11:28 we have expressions of clear hostility. It would have been that David either decided for an immediate reconciliation or that he emphatically wanted nothing more to do with Absalom. It even seems to border on David’s wanting to exact punishment on Absalom for his crime, a punishment that was long overdue and that was according to the law

(Num. 35:30)! Whatever the meaning of the expression, Joab, David's servant, thought it best to bring these two separated sinners back together. David agreed to Joab's suggestion, and Absalom was retrieved to Jerusalem under one condition - he could not come face to face with David! Now surely David didn't think this would resolve anything!

Absalom: Kingdom-taker Division

Absalom began his role as kingdom-taker following his return home, yet divided from his father. He was now back under his father's distant care, in that their relationship remained estranged and he had two years to consider the ridiculous dealings of his father. David had spared Amnon from the law against rape because of his love for Amnon but now upheld, at least to a certain degree, the law to punish Absalom who, with a rogue spirit, upheld a law that was David's to keep in the first place! Absalom was brought back home but with no fellowship with the king, his own father!

Absalom called for a meeting with his father stating that, "...if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me" (14:32). Notice please the "if" of his grief. Not once did he ever admit that he was wrong in his lies, murder or deceit! Absalom was allowed to see David at which time Absalom bowed before David and received David's kiss as a token of pardon and reconciliation (14:33; Genesis 33:4; 45:15). Shortly after the great reunion, of sorts, Absalom "found means to ingratiate himself with the people, and raise a rebellion against his own father who had thus graciously pardoned him." Matthew Henry recorded:

Absalom is no sooner restored to his place at court than he aims to be in the throne. He that was unhumiliated under his troubles became

insufferably proud when they were over; and he cannot be content with the honour of being the king's son, and the prospect of being his successor, but he must be king now. His mother was a king's daughter; on that perhaps he valued himself, and despised his father, who was but the son of Jesse. She was the daughter of a heathen king, which made him the less concerned for the peace of Israel. David, in this unhappy issue of that marriage, smarted for his being unequally yoked with an unbeliever. When Absalom was restored to the king's favour, if he had had any sense of gratitude, he would have studied how to oblige his father, and make him easy; but, on the contrary, he meditates how to undermine him, by stealing the hearts of the people from him.

Absalom's Double-Dealing Had Now Begun

Absalom went daily to the gate, a place where judgments were passed, and dealt kindly with the people... telling them how busy his father was and promoting his own agenda to become king. Like many mud-slinging, dishonest and crooked politicians, he built his fan base and aimed for the throne. A sure victory would be secured if his father stayed "in the dark" concerning Absalom's plans; and in continuing his double-dealings, Absalom delved back into deception, again deceiving the very one who had deceived so many in the past - David.

The Deceiving Of David

Absalom reported that he had made a vow to God, and it needed to be fulfilled in Hebron. This was surely the true penitence David longed to see in Absalom. His leave was granted, and Absalom took his ignorant mass with him to step away geographically from Jerusalem but ever closer to the throne of David. When in Hebron

he petitioned the aid of Ahithophel, Bathsheba's father, who, no doubt would be willing to help bring down the man who stole his daughter and murdered his son-in-law. The announcement was made of Absalom's new kingdom, and David therefore took his devoted few and fled Jerusalem. Upon hearing this news, Absalom moved into his new place in Jerusalem; and to "seal the deal" of replacing his father, Absalom took all ten of David's concubines and, upon the rooftop of David's palace (possibly the same rooftop from which David eyed Bathsheba), he had physical relations with them (16:21,22). As the French author Emile Gaboriau wrote, "Revenge is a luscious fruit which you must leave to ripen." Was this part of the vow Absalom had made to God? Is it not strange that we vow to "get right" before the Lord and in doing so often justify doing wrong? Simply something to consider.

Absalom's final plan was now ready to be accomplished. His plan to kill Amnon had been conceived, concealed and concluded with Amnon's death. This brought about the heartache of many, ultimately David. His plan to become a kingdom-taker was built in division from David, strengthened by double-dealing with the people of Israel, carried out by deception, but would end in discord.

The Discord with David

Absalom's meager men and David's devoted army met in battle for the kingdom. Absalom wanted but one thing - the throne. David had but one command, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom" (18:5). David's love for his treacherous son of Satan compelled him to demand the safety of his son. The battle raged.

Absalom met the men of David and fled on his donkey getting his beautiful locks of hair caught in an oak tree (18:9). Joab, despite David's command, had Absalom killed and buried under a heap of stones in the woods. When the messengers reached the king it was twice asked, "Is the young man Absalom safe" (18:29,32)? When the truth had been told of Absalom's death, David went to his chamber and wept saying, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son" (18:33). We learn from 19:2 that Israel's victory that day had turned into a day of mourning.

With this brief account of Absalom's foolish life we, no doubt, are left having learned something of the account. It is now time for the difficult part - application. As God's Word is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16,17), it is only thus when applied in our lives. What lessons might we learn from such a fool as Absalom?

Lessons Learned

The Law Is To Be Obeyed And Upheld Evenly

As already stated, there was a law against rape. Deuteronomy 22:25-29 states:

But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die: But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death: for as when a man riseth against his neighbour, and slayeth him, even so is this matter: For he found her in the field, and the betrothed damsel cried, and there was none to save her.

If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days.

Had David applied the law, Amnon would have had two choices. He would have been put to death or forced to marry Tamar and never put her away. David's love for Amnon and Amnon's hatred for Tamar made these two choices unbearable. David's neglect for keeping the law in this area would make it seem that either the law was faulty in its regulations or that God's laws were merely up to individual interpretation. Neither of these were correct assumptions.

Brethren, the Lord's church needs to do a better job of upholding some of God's laws. We have no authority to make them, we but have every right and responsibility to make sure they are kept. This responsibility is given to elders and members alike. Just as we as members of the Lord's church are commanded to obey them that have the rule over us (Heb. 13:17), the elders are commanded to oversee the flock, the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-5). With this understanding, the forgotten command of withdrawing fellowship should be revisited. Having just delivered a message on the subject of fellowship, I (along with the congregation at Livingston), was reminded of God's strict circle of spiritual fellowship (Eph. 5:11; 1 John 1:3-7). Not only were we reminded of fellowship parameters but also of our role toward those who so choose to remove themselves, by way of sin, from that fellowship. How are we reacting toward those who have turned their proverbial backs to the Lord? Have we adapted the idea that members of the

Lord's church withdraw from the church rather than the church withdrawing from them? Have we allowed some David-like emotions to cloud our judgment as to what needs to be done with those who step away from our Lord? Will we save them now in the name of the Lord or allow them to get ever closer to hell's fires in the name of emotions? God's laws need to be upheld across the board - even at the risk of numbers!

Sin Unrecognized Is A Sin Unto Death

When Absalom was retrieved and as he begged for a meeting with King David, Absalom cried for death if he had committed any iniquity. Are you kidding me? What did he mean by if? If he had the intelligence to orchestrate the plan he did to kill Amnon which he certainly could have figured out that he was guilty of murder. Because Amnon was untrained in godly living he had a difficult time seeing the wrong in his actions. And, because he was unable to recognize his sin, he became even angrier with his father's unwillingness to forgive him.

Likewise brethren, when we fail to recognize sin in our own lives we fill our hearts with sin to present to God on the Judgment Day (Acts 17:30,31). As the Lord commands ALL men EVERYWHERE to repent today we must understand that it is not just for those outside the church of Christ. Being washed in the perfect, blessed and redemptive blood of Jesus does not free us from the occasional slip of the tongue (James 3:8), insincere action (Matt. 7:22,23), or faithless deed (Rom. 14:23). We, too, can fall and come in need of the forgiveness of sins (1 John 2:1,2). The difference between the Christian and the alien sinner is that the Christian has the Advocate. However, Christ does the Christian no good if the sins that can be forgiven by God are never brought to Him in prayer! If those sins are never confessed they are never forgiven

(James 5:16)! Weary are my preaching brothers of receiving handshake after handshake thanking us for eloquent speech and pointed lessons dealing with sins committed and unrepented of by the very hand shakers themselves. I cannot speak on behalf of my fellow Gospel preachers, but maybe they will silently “amen” my sentiment.

When We Forgive We Are To Forgive

If David truly desired to forgive Absalom for killing Amnon he had a strange way of proving it. He, by the hand of Joab, had Absalom returned to Jerusalem with one major condition – Absalom could have no fellowship with the king! It was as if David said, “I want you back son, but I don’t ever want to see your disgusting presence again.” How forgiving is that?

When a powerful, heart-pricking sermon is preached and a precious soul of God’s makes that long and difficult walk forward to confess wrong in their lives we rejoice. Not only is the congregation encouraged and sympathetic toward this penitent soul, but the Bible teaches that the angels in Heaven rejoice over this one who has returned (Luke 15). How often though, after one has repented, do we hear again of so-and-so and the sin they committed? “I can’t believe they didn’t,” someone might say weeks after a sin has been committed and forgiven. I sometimes feel that it’s easier to receive forgiveness from God than it is to receive it from my own brethren. It makes me truly thankful that He is there and we are here!

Biblical Insight To Character Provides A Shining Light For You And Me

For the sake of our study we did not venture too deeply into the sins of David. These have been discussed thoroughly already by these other fine brethren. While there are great similarities in David’s and Absalom’s sins,

there is one very clear difference on which we need to focus. The manner in which they faced their sins was gravely different.

When David sat at the feet of Nathan and listened to his sermon on stealing what belongs to others (Bathsheba), David, at the conclusion of the matter, said, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Sam. 12:12). David admitted his sin and later, in Psalm 51, wrote of his penitence for what he had done. The only thing that Absalom wrote concerning his sin against Ahinoam, David, Amnon's brothers, Maacah and Gad was a ticket to Hell! Due to his selfish pride he was unable to admit his wrong, and he and his family, suffered greatly for it.

God's Word Will Come To Pass

As we look at the panoramic view of Absalom's life, we cannot help but feel sympathy toward the heart of David. If only he had been warned that these things would come to pass and that he would have continued war and death in his family! Ah, but the warning was given. Notice 2 Samuel 12:9-12,

Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

Due to the disrespect David had for God's laws concerning marriage (Matt. 19:1-9), and the destruction David caused to the parties involved through his scheme to have Bathsheba, God pronounced a judgment upon David's house. God's word was that destruction and ruin would not depart from David's house.

Keep in mind that while we might become comfortable in our living for today that there will always be a tomorrow. However, that tomorrow might be filled with the judgment that all the world has coming to it (2 Cor. 5:10,17). While heaven and earth will pass away God's word will not, and it will be by this word that we will be judged (Matt. 24:36; John 12:48).

What Will Your Heritage Be?

While we are all amazed at Absalom's behavior, and no doubt sympathetic with David to have to deal with such a child, we cannot overlook the fact that every recorded sin that Absalom committed was also recorded as being committed by his father, David. Truly the apple did not fall far from the tree.

Absalom was born into a polygamist's home (2 Sam. 3:2-5). David was a man of war (1 Chron. 28:2,3). With parentage like his, it is no wonder Absalom was the wreck he is described as being.

Can I bring it home with one more point? As parents, we cannot go about doing what we want and think that we will not have to suffer the consequences. Consider the impact that David's lying, adultery, warfare and murder had in the life of Absalom. Absalom was merely being a "chip off the old block."

Conclusion

From this brief study of the life of Absalom we are certainly permitted to characterize him in many ways.

However, “Absalom: Heart-breaker and Kingdom-taker” are the most general and yet descriptive terms for his lifestyle. While I sympathize, as a parent, with David and Maacah, I also am aware that many parents dig their children’s graves by the way they live their own lives. Absalom was a product – a product of a broken, selfish and misguided home. Having stated this, it must be realized that Absalom made his own decisions; and while they were the antitype of his father’s print; they were still Absalom’s decisions. Therefore, shame on him for not serving God, and shame on us if we learn nothing from his mistakes. God bless you all.

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CHAPTER 11

Solomon: The Son Selected To Succeed David

Sam Willcut

Introduction

They were the worst seven days of his life. Sure, he had experienced some difficult times and strenuous occasions beforehand, but when this father stood by the bed of his dying infant son, he was going through emotions and experiencing feelings that he would not wish on his worst enemy. He could not eat. He prayed and prayed and prayed and prayed. He was so wore out and drained emotionally, that it affected him physically—he just lay there on the floor. On the seventh day, he saw the staff whispering and pointing in his direction, evidently afraid to tell him what he already knew—his son had died. The worst seven days of his life were now over. Obviously, God had another plan for his life, and so King David “arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat” (2 Sam. 12:20). His faith in the God who delivered him from the lion, the bear and the giant was able to deliver him from the suffering burden of the death of his son (2 Sam. 12:23).

Yet, the story does not end right here abruptly,

for the inspired text continues: “And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the Lord loved him” (2 Sam. 12:24). Of all the sons David had bore, this son would be special—he would be the son to succeed his father on the throne. Nevertheless, why was Solomon to succeed his father, David? He was definitely not the firstborn, for according to 1 Chronicles 3, he was son number ten on the list! In a time and culture in which fathers often gave the firstborn such rights and responsibilities, why was Solomon, son number ten, to succeed David as king? Thus, in keeping with our theme of David, let us notice some lessons we may learn in the succession of his son, Solomon, to be king after him.

The Setting

David is about the die. His health is waning; his physical strength is deteriorating. During the last days of David’s life, his fourth son, Adonijah, the son of Haggith, exalts himself to be king (1 Kings 1:5). The first and third sons, Amnon and Absalom are dead, and since we have no further record of the second son, Chileab (2 Sam. 3:3), also called Daniel (1 Chron. 3:1), the son of Abigail, we could presume that he may have also died by this time. Let us notice some lessons we may learn from the first chapter of the book of 1 Kings—a book that underscores principles of division.

First, we see a divided nation by a divisive son. As led by this fourth son, he begins the process of neglecting the orders of his father, David, and proceeds to divide the loyalties of the nation by conferring with some of David’s followers. Yet, Nathan quickly recognizes what is taking place, and with the help of Bathsheba, he is able to inform David of what is taking place, reminding him of what he had earlier established—Solomon would

succeed him on the throne (1 Chron. 22:7-10)—and they were quickly able to deal with this potential threat. Thus, Adonijah is the first of many examples in this book on the subject of division—it did not matter to him what God had said, he was going to do what he wanted to do. Such is always the case with those who also exalt themselves in their own pride. Concerning the prideful bunch of hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, Jesus said, “And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matt. 23:12). In other words, Jesus points out that the road to greatness begins and ends with humility (Matt. 18:1-4)! This is why the fundamental principle of Christianity is to deny ourselves (cf. Luke 9:23). We are to lower ourselves and lift up Christ. Nevertheless, so many through the years have had a problem with personal preeminence (3 John 1:9-10; cf. Col. 1:18), as Adonijah did.

Second, we see a divided home by a divided father. David never demonstrated discipline or taught submission to Adonijah at home (1 Kings 1:6). Oh, the number of homes in our society that resemble such trademarks is staggering! Yet, how could there be the family affection and needed discipline in a situation as his with the many wives of David and their divided loyalties and affections? The polygamy in his case only produced divided affections, rivalries, jealousies and hatred. On the other hand, there must be discipline in the home that begins by teaching children self-denial, because if a child does not learn self-denial in the home, it will be next to impossible for him to learn it when he leaves the nest of his home! A child begins to learn self-denial when he begins to submit to his parents (Exod. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-3). Absalom had a problem with this, and evidently, this did not occur with Adonijah either.

Third, we see a divided priesthood with a divided

religion. Adonijah is able to persuade Abiathar, the priest, to his side, but Zadok, the priest, sides with Solomon (1 Kings 1:7-8). Thus, we begin to see a picture of a divided priesthood that will actually later become political: "But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law" (Mal. 2:8-9). Mark it down—whenever the priesthood becomes corrupt, religion will also become corrupt. We saw it in the days of the Old Testament prophets. We saw it in the days of the New Testament Savior. We see it in the days of the church today. Since the church is a priesthood today (1 Peter 2:5, 9), whenever Christians become divided, we see religion becoming delusional and corrupted! Division is nothing more than a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). It is that for which Christians are to avoid at all costs (1 Cor. 1:10).

The Son

It is true that most of what we are in character is a result of what we pick up from our parents. It is as the old adage expresses, "Like father, like son." To a large degree, we see this in the father, David and the son, Solomon. Granted, they had their differences, but they also had their similarities. As noted before, while David had given birth to other sons in Hebron, David and Bathsheba bore a son together in the great city of Jerusalem, and they named him "Solomon," which means "peaceful." Now while it is true that we know of Solomon's reign for his long reign of peace (1 Chron. 22:9), the context of his name is associated with the infamous sin of David and Bathsheba. Thus, his name from David, no doubt, signified the peace he was able to enjoy with God on behalf of

Bathsheba. Nevertheless, while David and Bathsheba loved their son, God loved their son even more (2 Sam. 12:24-25), because he renamed him “Jedidiah,” which means, “Beloved of the Lord.” As we see the son who became king, let us notice his life in closer detail—both positive and negative.

First, we note his wickedness. After seeing God establishing his kingdom in First Kings 2, the first thing of which we read concerning his reign was a transgression of the Law of Moses—he made a treaty with Egypt by marrying an Egyptian (1 Kings 3:1). I realize that some have tried to make her out to be a proselyte, but there is no evidence for such, and 1 Kings 11 repeats this fact of his marriage to her in the context of further wickedness. Thus, we see the first step toward what will follow as the kingdom of Israel becoming political and drifting away from what God intended the nation to be—“...a peculiar treasure unto me above all people...a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exod. 19:5-6). He did not want them to make alliances with any other nation, but wanted them to remain separate, because their purpose and mission was different from any other nation. Making an alliance with Egypt showed his lack of faith in God providing for and protecting Israel and it opened the door for allowing these other nations to influence Israel until they finally would depart from their distinctive mission and purpose. Thus, the same is true for the church today—we are to be a distinct people (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). We see his wickedness illustrated by his divided heart—on one hand, he loved the Lord as did his father, David, but on the other hand, “he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places” (1 Kings 3:3). Jesus taught us plainly that we could not serve Him with a divided heart and with divided loyalties (Matt. 6:24), and this principle is quite fundamental (Exod. 20:3; Deut. 6:4-5; Matt. 22:34-40). However, instead of

following the Law of Moses and destroying these high places (Deut. 12:2-3), he participated in such, contributing to the slow disintegration of the nation and sowing the seeds of division in the nation, sprouting later with Jeroboam. Later, we see him gather horses and chariots (1 Kings 4:26-28)—another transgression of the Law of Moses (Deut. 17:14-16).

Second, we note his wisdom—probably the highlight of his life. When God asked him on one occasion for any desire, we see the proper aspiration of his heart in refusing such things as longevity of life, money or power and seeking godly understanding. We should ponder the question, “If God offered me whatever I desired, of what would I ask? What do I desire most in life? What would be my supreme request?” He recognized the difficult task that lay before him as king, the wishes of being as successful as his father and his humility in asking for wisdom (1 Kings 3:6-9). We not only see a glimpse of his wisdom demonstrated in 1 Kings 3:16-28, but we get to read of his inspired wisdom recorded in the many wonderful proverbs that he wrote (cf. 1 Kings 4:29-34). By such, his wisdom shows that he was as Christ, who is the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:30-31). Jesus declares such a marvelous lesson with an incident recorded for us concerning the great queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10; Matt. 12:38-42), showing the superiority of His wisdom versus the wisdom of Solomon. The problem with Solomon was not his wisdom per se, but in not heeding much of the wisdom he had, which is a great threat for us also.

Third, we note his worldly extravagancies. 1 Kings 4 shows us his extravagant lifestyle—a warning that the great prophet Samuel stated (1 Sam. 8:10-18). It seems as if this moved further into the temple that he built in 1 Kings 6. I realize that God would not allow David to build the temple because of his reign of violence, and

even gave the instructions for Solomon to build the temple (1 Chron. 28:11-21), but this more permanent structure in comparison with the tabernacle was quite extravagant—it was double in size and triple in height! Nevertheless, it was still the place for the presence of God to dwell among his people. The point is this—the time will come sooner than later when the children of Israel would think more about the actual physical structure of the temple than the purpose of the temple itself (cf. John 2:13-17)—a problem that was no doubt magnified by the sheer extravagancy of the structure. For example, Jeremiah decried against those who viewed the temple as a magic wand against the impending judgment from God (Jer. 7:4), and some who lived to see the former temple cried when they saw the inferior structure rebuilt in the days of Zerubbabel (Ezra 3:12-13). Now, add to this the fact that while he took seven years to build the temple, he took thirteen years to build his own house (1 Kings 7:1)—another example of his worldly extravagancies. All of these would play a part in leading the nation down to ruin, seen with the people pleading with Rehoboam to lighten their tax load (1 Kings 12).

Fourth, we note his worship. Once the temple is finished, he celebrated its opening with the greatest of grand openings this world has ever known, including many sacrifices and the longest recorded prayer in the Old Testament. In fact, to his credit, his prayer lays the groundwork for the spiritual qualities that God wanted attached to the temple (Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17). Thus, his worship in prayer shows the positive side of his emphasis in spiritual things. Ah, if only Solomon had remembered for what he prayed at this dedication, his life may have been completely different. The cloud symbolized the presence of God filling the temple, and Solomon expresses reverence and respect for God (1 Kings 8:14).

He refers in the past to the relationship of his God with his father, David (1 Kings 8:15-21), and he points out the distinctiveness of their covenant (1 Kings 8:22-53).

Fifth, we note his wives (1 Kings 11:1-8). For a man to be as smart (wise) as he is to be so dumb when it comes to women, I will never understand it! Nevertheless, many a man has fallen to the wink or sensual look of another of the opposite gender (cf. Prov. 6:25). Solomon not only married many wives, but many of them were intermarriages with the heathen, pagan nations, another transgression of the Law of Moses (Deut. 7:3-4).

Sixth, we note his wantonness. We may summarize this point with the entire book of Ecclesiastes. How tragic for one who was so wise to have to go through such experimentations as he did to find the true meaning of life! If only he had listened to his father, David, he could have spared himself from such things. Grasping for work, wealth and worldly wisdom did not attain contentment in spiritual values, but at least we can rejoice in the fact that he finally arrived at such in his conclusion (Eccl. 12:13-14).

Therefore, how sad for one who had so many opportunities as Solomon had and even gaining wisdom from God Himself to willfully do the things that God forbade as king! How sad that he would write, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23), but he would not heed its message. No wonder the nation of Israel began to lose its way under his reign (1 Kings 9:9-13).

The Symbolism

Certainly, the Bible is quite clear that it was the plan of God to have Solomon succeeding his father, David, as king (1 Chron. 22:7-10). Nevertheless, we may also see some implications in this that symbolize

some important lessons through the eyes of one we are studying—David.

First, his son, Solomon, who succeeded him as king, symbolized his remembrance of the past. No doubt, every time he looked at Solomon and realized that he was the offspring with Bathsheba, he would remember the great sin he committed with her as 2 Samuel 11-12 records. He would remember the covetousness he practiced by gazing on her as she bathed. He would remember the cruelty he demonstrated in sending her husband, Uriah, to his execution. He would remember the callousness he showed by bringing her into his household. He would remember the calamity of losing Solomon's infant brother as an immediate judgment on his actions, and the concern for the rest of his life in the other forms of judgment for his sin. In other words, every time he gazed into the eyes of his son, he would remember the expressions of confession from his heart as he poured out his soul to God begging for cleansing of the horrible sins of his past (Psa. 51).

Second, his son, Solomon, who succeeded him as king, symbolized his forgiveness in the present. While he suffered greatly because of the things he had done with Bathsheba, he would be able to know that their offspring, Solomon, was a demonstration of forgiveness for that which they had done together. Thus, we see the impact of the expression: "...and the Lord loved him" (2 Sam. 12:24). Knowing that the Lord loved their offspring, it offered him confidence in the reality of God's forgiveness, as Nathan would express: "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die" (2 Sam. 12:13). In other words, Solomon was a living, breathing demonstration of the forgiveness God gave to David and Bathsheba. However, a word of caution—some try in vain to use the scandalous affair of David and Bathsheba to

serve as a model for justifying the belief that adulterers are not required to repent of their adultery and to sever their adulterous relationships today. In other words, some contend that though David committed both adultery and murder, when he repented, God accepted him without requiring him to abandon Bathsheba. However, there is no parallel between the two cases, because David's eventual marriage to Bathsheba after Uriah's death technically was not adultery—however unethical or inexpedient it otherwise may have been. Add to the fact that David repented, but those who wish to remain in the relationship cannot repent as long as they remain in the relationship. Case in point—if the example of David and Bathsheba justifies continuing in an adulterous relationship, then one would have to conclude that he could also continue a life of deception and murder with approval from Jehovah. Such is absurd! "...But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (2 Sam. 11:27). Although God forgave David (2 Sam. 12:13), even giving Solomon as a son to show such, David paid dearly in the consequences for his sin. Jesus clarified what God desired in marriage "from the beginning" (Matt. 19:8-9).

Third, his son, Solomon, who succeeded him as king, symbolized his potential in the future. Of all the sons David had with his many wives, none had more potential than Solomon did. How great it is that no matter how bad or evil we may have been in our past, we serve a God who can see our potential. How refreshing to study the gospels and see our Lord look into the eyes of fishermen, tax collectors, religious zealots and such like and see their potential when He said to each of them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (cf. Matt. 4:19). He likewise looks in our eyes and sees potential for our good in the church today!

Therefore, let us make an application for today. Do

we not see these three things each Lord's Day when we worship God and specifically when we observe the Lord's Supper? Do we not remember the ugliness of the sins in our past that nailed our Savior to the tree? Do we not remember the beauty of the forgiveness that God is able to provide each day in the present? Do we not leave the communion feast considering the potential we have as servants of our Master to work in His vineyard?

Conclusion

For David to be known as the man after the heart of God (cf. Acts 13:22), his son turned out quite differently. If only he had heeded the careful last words of his dying father:

I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; And keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: That the Lord may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel (1 Kings 2:2-4).

Many times, sons disappoint fathers, and other times, sons actually excel. Nevertheless, it was in God's eternal plan for redeeming man and preserving the Messianic lineage of Abraham through Judah through David that Solomon would succeed his father as king. Truth be told, his life could resemble ours in many ways—a few triumphs and many disasters (cf. Rom. 3:23). May we all glean from his life the positive things that bring us closer to our

God and may we shun from his life those things that led him down a dark and different path than the one traveled by his father and all of the faithful fathers who have lived before us.

CHAPTER 12

Jesus Christ King Who Sprang From The Loins Of David

William Woodson

This study unites two very special Bible worthies: Jesus and David. They are linked by a pure bloodline over some 1,000 years—from David to Jesus. Through these centuries just one generation without a descendant from David would have prevented Christ from having a pure blood line to the ancient king. Yet, Paul affirmed Christ was “made of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Rom. 1:3). Additionally and more importantly, if possible, it would have aborted God’s promise to David concerning Christ, a promise repeated many times in the Old Testament.

This promised relationship was evidenced in the incarnation of Jesus and the exaltation of Christ to eternal glory. God fulfilled his promise to David in sending Christ into this world to prove His truthfulness and to make salvation possible to all men. Thus, God not only showed his love in sending Christ (Rom. 5:8); He also demonstrated the providential faithfulness that made His incarnation and exaltation possible according to the ancient promise to David. Below, consideration is given to four dimensions of this providential faithfulness of God.

1. David In His Kingdom

David's reign began in Hebron when he was anointed at age thirty; the reign lasted for forty years (2 Sam. 5:4-5; 1 Chron. 11:3). His life prior to his becoming king was virtually a charmed one, but space prohibits discussion thereof. The early years of his reign were occupied with wars against enemies of Israel such as the Philistines (2 Sam. 5:17-25); Moab (2 Sam. 8:2); Edom (1 Chron. 18:12), and other lesser foes. The increasing stability of his kingdom allowed David to establish his throne in Jerusalem. Despite Jebusite resistance, which was soon defeated, Jerusalem became known as "the city of David" (2 Sam. 5:5-6; 1 Chron. 11:4-7). A summary statement has it that "David waxed greater and greater; for the Lord of hosts *was* with him" (1 Chron. 11:9).

A tragic incident transpired when David attempted to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. En route, Uzziah put forth his hand to steady the ark, for which he was smitten of God and died (2 Sam. 6:1-8). While the ark remained for three months in the house of Obededom (2 Sam. 6:10-11), David reflected on the fact that "we sought him not after the due order" (1 Chron. 14:13). Subsequently, a second and successful effort was made. This second effort was conducted "as Moses commanded according to the word of the Lord" (1 Chron. 15:15). David placed this sacred object in a tent prepared especially for it (1 Chron. 16:1). The irony that David felt as he dwelt in the house of cedar while the ark remained "under curtains" resulted in the plan to build a proper house for it. In spite of his good intentions, God forbade his doing so. The reason was, said God, "thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood" (1 Chron. 28:3; cf. 22:8).

2. God's Prophetic Promise To David

Although God did not allow David to build the house the king proposed, he did enter into this important covenant with David:

Also the Lord telleth thee that he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which will proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men. But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David (2 Sam. 7:11-17).

This covenant, a prophetic promise, is most significant for this study and echoes again and again in the Old Testament. When Solomon sat on the throne of Israel one reads: "Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him" (1 Chron. 29:23). The Psalmist quoted the Lord:

I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations (Psa. 89:3-4).

It is of great importance to observe the covenant of God with David was conditional:

The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore. For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation...There will I make the horn of David to bud:¹ I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish (Psa. 132:11-13; 17-18).

The promised blessing to David, however, was bestowed provided the descendents of David would “keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them,” which unfortunately some of them failed to do, as will be seen. Space does not allow details, but the tragedy culminates in the reign of Jehoichin,² who reigned only three months (2 Kings 24:8). He was deposed, taken into captivity, and remained there for thirty-seven years before being released (Jer. 52:31). In spite of his short reign, it was said of him, “And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father had done” (2 Kings 24:9). Consequently, Jeremiah, using the name “Coniah,” wrote concerning Jechoniah:

Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah (Jer. 22:30).

In a remarkably pertinent exposition, Victor P. Hamilton wrote as follows:

‘Childless’ may be understood nonliterally. Jehoichin was to be called ‘childless’ (Jer. 22:30), not because he never fathered any children (in fact, he was the father of seven children,

1 Chron. 3:17-18)³..., but because none of his offspring would ever succeed him as king of Judah. (Here Hamilton inserts the word 'Possibly,' with which I do not agree, W.W.) Possibly Jeremiah's prophecy was motivated by his conviction that it was not Yahweh's plan to permit a descendant of Jehoiachin to assume the throne of David. When Jehoiachin's grandson Zerubbabel (1 Chron. 3:19) returned from the Exile, he returned not as King but as governor in postexilic Jerusalem under the Persian emperor.⁴

J. Gordon McConville, alluding to the import of 2 Kings 22-23 and Jeremiah 22:30 and the release of Jehoiachin as noted above, gives these thoughts:

This can hardly imply a hope that salvation lies in the restoration of the monarchy, in view of [Jer.] 22:30. The hope of a Davidic Messiah is held out, therefore, but it is postponed until a later time ('the days are coming' Jer. 23:5), and can hardly be thought to have found fulfillment in the release of Jehoiachin from prison (in view of 22:30). Rather, the messianic hope is bound up with that of the new covenant.⁵

3. The Promise To David During The Ministry Of Christ

The book of Matthew begins with these words: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1). Luke's account of the genealogy Christ continues: "Which was the *son* of Melea, which was the *son* of Menan, which was the *son* of Mattatha, which was the *son* of Nathan, which was the *son* of David" (Luke 1:31).

Gabriel told Mary of the birth of Jesus in these words:

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end (Luke 1:29-33).

Schmitz's summary expressed the significance of this statement:

The throne of David in Luke 1:32 is the throne of the Messianic king. God has granted it to the Son of Mary as the throne of David, His father, that He may exercise eternal dominion over the house of Jacob, according to the prophecy of 2 Sam. 7:12ff (cf. Isa. 9:6), which is referred to Him in Acts 2:30. There is also reference to the throne of the king of the last days in Psa. 45:6a, which is used in Heb. 1:8 to prove the superiority of the Son over the angels. What is meant is the sovereign majesty of Him who sits on the throne with God (cf. 1:3). Here the idea of the Davidic monarchy achieves its definitive realisation.⁶

Jesus put to silence Pharisees who controverted His words by asking:

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?

And no man was able to answer him a word,
neither durst any man from that day forth ask
him any more questions (Matt. 22:41-44).

The twin assertions that the (Greek text has the article, *ww*; cf. ASV) Christ is the son of David and David called his son Lord, could not be denied by His opponents. The import of these twin assertions—requiring the divine/human characteristics Jesus possessed and displayed—could not be admitted by His opponents without surrendering their opposition to Jesus as the Christ.

Affirmations stated again and again throughout His earthly ministry evidenced the fact Jesus was the son of David and the Son of God. Perhaps the most decisive statement was written by Paul when he affirmed that Jesus,

was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:3-4).

4. The Fulfillment Of God's Promise To David In Christ

The culmination of the covenant promise to David concerning his son reigning on his throne was a major theme off the sermon by Peter on Pentecost. Only significant facts relevant to this theme will be discussed from the well known second chapter of Acts.

Peter used the same basic argument Jesus had earlier used in His discussion with the Pharisees as noted in Matthew 22.

The crucial issue on this day was the resurrection of Jesus—prove that and the conclusion that Jesus is the Christ was certain. Peter began his defense by citing Psalm 16:8-20 to the effect the Lord would not allow the

buried flesh of the one designated in the psalm to “see corruption” (Acts 2:25-28). Further, he showed the tomb of David “is with us unto this day” (2:29); hence, the psalmist did not refer to the body of David.

J.W. McGarvey⁷ stated the heart of the argument in showing that when David spoke in the first person in Psalms he was habitually prophesying of the Christ. Also, when the passage(s) could not properly apply to David himself, the reference was understood to refer to the Messiah. Therefore Peter concluded:

Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, **he would raise up Christ to sit on his** (David’s) **throne** (bold added, ww); He **seeing this before** spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses (Acts 2:30-32).

The argument was beyond refutation. The evidence was beyond doubt; Peter drew two mighty conclusions, both introduced by “therefore” (v. 33, 36), i.e., Jesus, now at the right hand of God, has sent the Holy Spirit as shown by what was being seen and heard, and is to be known with certainty that he is “both Lord and Christ” (2:36).

Here the plumb line of prophetic truth about David and Jesus remains straight and true. To deny it is folly! One might refer in addition to other verses in Acts (13:21-23), Romans (1:3-4), and the book of Revelation (5:5; 22:16). The conclusion will always be the same: Jesus, who according to the flesh descended from David, now reigns on His divine throne that was foretold in the Old Testament and now is fulfilled in the Messiahship of Jesus.

What may one properly and confidently conclude

from this array of Biblical truth on the subject discussed? We offer the following:

- God was planning for the salvation of mankind centuries before those plans were fully known. The “fullness of the time” (Gal. 4:4) slowly rolled forward from Eden to David, from David to Christ. The fullness of time came as God intended, and He acted.
- The words spoken to David that a descendant of his would reign on his throne, however obscure that ultimate fulfillment might have seemed at the time, came to pass as Gabriel spoke to Mary.
- The surety of the specific promise to David and the exact fulfillment thereof in Christ rests on and demonstrates the truthfulness of the word of God.
- The physical lineage of the descendants of David as king came to an end with the aborted reign of Jechoniah. Afterward, no descendant of Jechoniah, and thus of David, was to rule any more in Judah.
- However wearily readers of these relevant Old Testament passages must have pondered the end of the fleshly rulers over Israel who were descendants of David, one whose lineage was of David as well as the Son of God came into the world.
- No earthly descendant of David after Jechoniah was to rule over the nation of Israel. How completely this one fact demolishes the theory of a supposed thousand year reign of Christ on earth become more evident the more it is studied.
- The kingdom over which Jesus now reigns was and is in its planning and provision and perfection the work of God and glorious beyond description.

How blessed one is to be privileged to be a servant therein!

- How precious is the thought that we, who add the virtues set forth by the apostle who used the keys of the kingdom on Pentecost when this wondrous kingdom was established, may be God's abundant grace have ministered to us an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

References

1 G. Rawlinson provides this beautiful summary of this reading as related to the thought of the horn of David budding:

There will I make the horn of David to bud.

The 'horn of David' budded most gloriously when 'a rod came forth out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch grew out of his roots, and the Spirit of the Lord rested upon him' (Isa. 11:1-2)—in other words, when Messiah appeared, and re-established the Davidian kingdom, which thenceforth has endured, and will endure for ever. I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. The metaphor is changed; but the idea is the same. Christ's coming shed a glory on David's house, and on the temple, and on David himself, such as had never previously illumined them. David is often promised 'a lamp' (1 Kings 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kings 8:19; 2 Chron. 21:7). In Christ the lamp was given.

Pulpit Commentary (n.d.) on Psalm 132:17-18.

2 Also called Jechoniah (Jer. 24:1; 27:20) and Coniah (Jer. 22:24; 37:1).

3 "And the sons of Jeconiah; Assir, Salathiel his son, Malchiram also, and Pedaiah, and Shenazar, Jecamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah" (1 Chron. 3:17-18).

4 **New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis** (Zondervan, 1996), 3:534-535.

5 *Ibid.*, 4:762, 766.

6 **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament**, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976), 3:164.

7 J.W. McGarvey, **New Commentary on Acts of Apostles** (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., n.d.), I, 33.



**David, The Seer:
A
Controlled Heart**

CHAPTER 13

The Kingdom That David Saw

Eric L. Owens

Abraham heard the message of the kingdom. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed (Gal. 3:8). Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up, "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple" (Isa. 6:1). These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him (John 12:41).

Daniel saw many things pertaining to the king and His kingdom, among the most awe inspiring was the crowning of the king.

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (Dan. 7:13-14).

David typified the coming king. Therefore, it is reasonable that he would see him and things pertaining

to his kingdom. David is likely best known for being a King, a man after God's own heart and for his sin with Bathsheba. Often people overlook that he was also a prophet. While prophets (formerly seers) foretold of things within their lifetimes they also forth told of things that would happen hundreds sometimes thousands of years after their deaths.

There is wide agreement in the religious world that David saw a coming kingdom. However, there is great disagreement over the nature of that kingdom. Was the coming kingdom a physical, earthly, material kingdom? Or was the coming kingdom a heavenly, eternal, spiritual kingdom? We will let the Bible tell us which option best describes the kingdom David saw.

To understand the kingdom that David saw you must first understand something about the nature of revelation. You must understand how God revealed Himself to man and how we are to interpret that revelation. Additionally, you must understand something about prophecy. God spoke in many different ways while revealing His message (Heb. 1:1).

How Revelation Works

In the first two chapters of First Corinthians, Paul through inspiration contrasts the wisdom of the world with the wisdom of God. He declares God's wisdom is the cross of Christ. The Jews stumbled at the cross and the Greeks thought it foolish. He declared that he preached God's wisdom and not human wisdom. He testified that he preached a mystery, the hidden things of God. It is here in 1 Corinthians 2:7-11 that Paul explains a very important aspect of God's revelation.

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery,
even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained
before the world unto our glory: Which none

of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

The important point is that no one knew what God was doing but God. It was hidden in His mind and when He decided He revealed it to man by the Holy Spirit. To understand this in practical terms just start reading your Bible. Begin at Genesis and the further forward you go the more revelation is unveiled. Like a good mystery movie, the first few minutes are not as clearly understood as the last five minutes. As the story moves forward, our understanding of past events become clearer, and in the end the author reveals the mystery and it is understood.

Try this and see how it works. Genesis 14 records a meeting between Abraham and Melchizedek. Read the few verses at the end of that chapter and try to make application of its significance. It would be impossible to understand, were it not for the book of Hebrews (Heb. 5-9). Did you read that the events of that meeting demonstrate the superiority of Christ's priesthood over Aarons? It does. This is impossible to know from reading Genesis 14. However, with the revelation of the epistle of Hebrews we understand. Hebrews is essential to our understanding of this meeting between Abraham and Melchizedek.

This is how God revealed His mystery to men.

Adam knew some things but he is so early in the story he does not know much as it relates the amount of material to come. Noah had more revelation than Adam. Abraham had more revelation than Noah. Moses had more revelation than Abraham. David had more revelation than Moses and Isaiah had more than David. God revealed His mystery this way throughout the Old and New Testaments. Concerning revelation and the mystery, Paul wrote to the Ephesians,

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him (Eph. 3:3-12).

When we understand how God's revelation works, we are better able to understand what David saw. David's

knowledge of the kingdom is necessarily limited because of the way God revealed Himself to man. One cannot read the prophets and allege they had the same knowledge as the New Testament writers. The prophets wrote the Old Testament in types, shadows, and figures. The apostles and prophets of the New Testament wrote the reality. When the New Testament writers explain prophecy that then must be our understanding of that prophecy. So let us begin by looking at Old Testament passages that tell us what David saw. Then let us allow the New Testament writers to explain what those passages meant. The New Testament writers present the kingdom as heavenly, spiritual, eternal, not earthly, physical and temporal.

Prophecies Of The Kingdom David Saw

Several pertinent passages relate to the kingdom David saw, we will note three.

And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David (2 Sam. 7:12-17).

From this prophecy, we learn that David's seed would build God's house. David's seed would be the son of

David and the son of God. His seed would be king upon his throne; and David would sleep with his fathers, when this kingdom is established.

Another important passage is Psalm 16 verses 8-11 specifically.

I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

According to this prophecy, the Lord is at the speaker's right hand. His heart rests in hope. His flesh will not see corruption and God will not leave his soul in hell. Rather he will have fulness of joy in God's presence.

Another important prophecy pertaining to the kingdom David saw is Psalm 110.

A Psalm of David. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

In this prophecy, David's Lord is at the right hand of God. The right hand demonstrates power and authority. He reigns until the putting down of His enemies. He rules in the midst of His enemies. Another feature of the one who is reigning is His priesthood. The Lord swore His priesthood. It will be after the order of Melchizedek. This one will be a king and a priest upon His throne. He will also judge among the heathens.

Having read the passages we must ask, what did the New Testament writers say these passages meant?

Peter Explains What David Saw

Acts 2 is first gospel sermon ever preached, and the support for that sermon is prophecy. Prophecies from Joel concerning the Holy Spirit, and prophecies from David about the king and kingdom he saw. The Holy Spirit was outpoured and the apostles spoke in tongues (Acts 2:1-11). Peter and the apostles were accused of drunkenness (Acts 2:12-13). Peter attributed the amazing events of the apostles to the Holy Spirit not drunkenness (Acts 2:14-21).

Having sufficiently answered their folly, Peter then preached Christ unto them in these words (Acts 2:22-35).

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on

my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Peter uses David's prophecies as recorded in 2 Samuel 7, Psalm 16 and Psalm 110 and preaches that they apply to Christ. Therefore, there is no doubt that God established the kingdom David saw on the first Pentecost after the Lord's resurrection. The best explanation of scripture is from an inspired preacher not from uninspired men claiming the exact opposite of what Peter preached.

Peter quoted Joel as an explanation of fulfilled

prophecy (Acts 2:4-16). There is no way to get plainer than an inspired man, quoting another inspired man and saying "this is that!" Peter said that then quoted Joel and charged his audience to hear him about Jesus of Nazareth. God approved of Jesus, by miracles, signs and wonders. His audience knew these things for they saw them. God's plan, foreknowledge and counsel delivered Jesus. Still, they crucified Christ with wicked hands. God raised that same Christ because death could not hold him. Peter's point so far has been that God intended for Jesus to die, be buried, and to rise from the dead. It was not enough for Peter just to say this, he had to prove it. His proof was prophecy, the prophet was David!

David Spake Of Christ

For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoyce, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

Peter accused his audience of murdering the Christ, their Messiah. David confirmed Peter's words for he prophesied of these very things. Peter desires his audience to understand the subject of what David saw. For David speaketh concerning him. David the great king, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, and a prophet spoke of the one we murdered a few days ago. The audience is now confronted with the knowledge that David spoke as Christ! Maybe at this moment the words of Christ came back to their minds. Ye search the scripture for in them ye think ye have eternal life and they are they which testify of me

(John 8:31). They heard it but maybe they disagreed.

J.W. McGarvey well captures the scene when he says, "...In the words quoted, David speaks in the first person, and this might lead some to object, that he was speaking of himself, and not of the Messiah. If, however, it be proved that he did not speak of himself, they would readily admit that he spoke in the name of the Christ. Peter proves this in these words."

David Foresaw Christ Raised

Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption (Acts 2:29-31).

David was dead and buried and his sepulcher with him. His body saw corruption. But the king raised to sit on His throne was different. His soul was not left in hell neither did His flesh see corruption. J.W. McGarvey's comments on Christ's soul, His flesh, and hades are insightful.

The term hades designates the place of disembodied spirits. It is as its etymology indicates,...the unseen. The Greeks were good at giving names to things. When they watched a friend sinking into the arms of death, they could see, by the motion of the frame and the light of the eye, the continued presence of the soul, until at last, the muscles were all motionless, and the eye fixed and leaden. They could still see the body, and after it had been deposited in the grave they could revisit it and

see it again. But where is the soul? You see it no longer. There are no signs of its presence. It is gone; and its invisible abode they call hades, the unseen. That the soul of Jesus entered hades is undeniable. That it returned again to the body at the resurrection is asserted by Peter; and it is this return which was predicted by the prophet, and which caused the exultation both of himself and the apostle.

Peter connects this prophecy to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Some few days before Pentecost this audience murdered Jesus. According to Peter the same Jesus they crucified is raised from the dead. The promise to David is Christ. Peter quotes 2 Samuel 7 and applies the language to Christ. This is what the prophecy meant. This is what David saw. God resurrected Christ to sit on David's throne. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on His throne...McGarvey is on point when he observes,

This brief argument not only refuted the supposed objection, but opened the minds of his hearers to an entirely new conception of the prophetic throne of David, and of the Messiah who was to occupy it; showing, that instead of being the ruler of an earthly kingdom, however glorious, he was to sit upon the throne of the whole universe.

David Saw Christ Exalted

Peter continues to drive his point home to his hearers. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witness. Still explaining what David saw he says,

He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither

his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

It did not matter what the Jews thought these prophecies meant. It did not matter what David thought the prophecies meant. Neither does it matter what anyone today thinks they mean. The inspired apostle tells us that David spoke of Christ's resurrection. That is what Peter preached and that is what happened. Another proof not seen by David but connected to his seed was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Though nothing is said about the outpouring of the Spirit in the prophecies of David there is an important point to make. Peter connects the outpouring of the Spirit with the exalted King. Notice; "this Jesus hath God raised, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

Christ rose from the dead, and was exalted. Being exalted He shed forth what they saw and heard. It is easy to understand and hard to misunderstand. When the Spirit was outpoured (the proof of which was the speaking in tongues they heard) the Christ was exalted. To look at it, the other way when Christ was exalted the Spirit was outpoured. Since the outpouring occurred, the exaltation had occurred.

David Saw Christ Enthroned

For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house

of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

David's prophecy does not stop at Christ's exaltation; it continues to His throne. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool." In the kingdom David saw the king reigns in heaven, not on earth. The Lord is sitting on the right hand of God. David is in the tomb, his body saw corruption. The prophecy said when David slept with his fathers, God would raise up his seed. Peter declares the prophecy fulfilled. Christ rose from the dead, and ascended into the heavens exalted, enthroned and ruling over His kingdom.

He reigns in heaven till His foes are made His footstool. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. Peter draws his powerful, inspired, prophetic explanatory sermon to a close with these words. "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." He ends where he begins. Jesus is the anointed of God to whom all belong.

Application Today- The Kingdom Has Come

David foresaw a kingdom. Peter and the other apostles preached that David spoke of Christ. During the ministry of John, the kingdom was at hand (Matt. 3:1-2). During the ministry of Jesus, the kingdom was at hand (Matt. 4:17). Jesus promised those in His midst they would not taste of death until they saw the kingdom come with power (Mark 9:1). Acts 2 tells us the when the power came. The Holy Spirit endued the apostles with power from on high. Peter and the eleven began to speak

in tongues fulfilling Joel's prophecy. The outpouring of the Spirit was an indication that the kingdom had come. Jesus sent the Spirit as He had promised. Joel's prophecy ushered in the coming kingdom. After Acts 2 the kingdom is always spoken of as existing. Colossians 1:13 Paul and the saints at Colosse were in the kingdom. God delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear son. John also said he was in the kingdom (Rev. 1:9). The recipients of Hebrews were receiving the kingdom (Heb. 12:28).

The King Now Reigns

Every prophet spoke of the same kingdom. Our topic dealt only with what David saw. There are so many prophecies that enable us to further appreciate that our King now reigns and rules. Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords (2 Tim. 6:15-16). Christ has all authority in heaven and in earth (Matt. 28:19). Christ is seated at the right hand of God, principalities and powers being subject unto Him (1 Peter 3:22). When they brought Christ to the Ancient of Days there was given Him dominion, glory, honor and a kingdom (Dan. 7:13-14). Therefore when He returns He will not start His reign He will end it. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power" (1 Cor. 15:24). He delivers up the kingdom, because He now reigns over the kingdom.

It Is A Spiritual Kingdom

The Lord's kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). Our warfare is not with flesh and blood (Eph. 6:10-17). The kingdom has no earthly headquarters. The kingdom is not a physical, material, earthly, kingdom. Our king was exalted to heaven. He sits on the right hand of God. We

enjoy spiritual fellowship with our king (1 Cor. 10:16).

We walk in the light with our Lord and Savior (1 John 1:7). The like precious faith is spiritual. All physical differences and distinctions are done away in Christ (Gal. 3:27-29). There is no advantage to the Jew over the Gentile. Both need the gospel of Christ to save them from their sins (Rom. 1:16-17). We offer up spiritual worship and service to God (1 Peter 2:5, 1 Peter 2:9).

The Church And The Kingdom Are The Same

The church of our Lord is not an afterthought or stop-gap measure. Jesus came to earth to die for the sins of the world. In His death He purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28). In doing so, He carried out the eternal purpose of God, that is the church (Eph. 3:9-11). In His earthly ministry, before His death He promised to build His church and gave the apostles the keys to the kingdom (Matt. 16:18-19, Matt. 18:18). Entrance into the kingdom is the same as entrance into the church. One must hear the gospel and believe, repent of his sins, confess the name of Christ and be baptized for the remission of his sins. Then one is born again of the water and of the Spirit (John 3:3-5). As well as being added to the church of Christ or the body of Christ (Acts 2:38-47; Eph. 1:22-23). David's seed would build God's house. The church is the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15-16).

Benefits Of Being A Citizen

When one is a citizen in the kingdom, he is a child in the family, he is a brick in the building, and a member of the church. He is granted access to all spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph. 1:3). He has a worldwide family. The Lord promised fathers, and mothers, and sisters and brothers, houses and lands in this life (Mark 10:29-30). His family extends into heaven. Paul speaks of the whole family in

heaven and earth (Eph. 3:14-21). He is welcomed and received not because he has great wealth, fame, honor, or physical might. Rather it is because he shares a like precious faith (2 Peter 2:1-4). There is no greater kingdom than the Lord's kingdom and no greater King than our Lord.

It Is A Kingdom Of Peace

Our Lord is our peace. He provides peace between God and man. He provides peace between man and man. "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh" (Eph. 2:14-17). There is no nationalism in this kingdom. There is no war in the kingdom of God and Christ. Isaiah aptly describes it (Isa. 2:4-5).

Our King Overcame Sin and Death

Sin is a universal problem. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). When Adam and Eve sinned death passed upon all man (Rom. 5:12). Humanity had and continues to have no solution for the problem of sin and death. Death reigned until our Lord and Savior came. His death, burial, and resurrection is the single most important event in human history. It is not simply that He died, it is that He rose from the dead. He destroyed death in His death and him that had the power of death. And He delivered them who through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage (Heb. 2:14-15).

Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:51-58).

Because Jesus rose from the dead, we know we will rise one day. Death is defeated. Those in the kingdom no longer fear death. The resurrection is the answer to the problems of life. The resurrection gives meaning to life. Whatever one encounters in this life, whatever problem one has, when compared to the resurrection becomes light. That is Paul's sentiment concerning the suffering he endured (2 Cor. 4:8-18; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; 2 Cor. 11:23-33).

CHAPTER 14

“The Spirit Of The Lord Spake By Me”

2 Samuel 23:2

Eddy Gilpin

Introduction

David stands as one of the prominent characters of the Old Testament. Although his death is not recorded until the second chapter of Second Kings, the words in the context of Second Samuel 23 (as indicated in the first verse) represent the last given to and presented by David, “the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel” (all citations from the King James Version). Unlike his predecessor, Saul, David was one of pliable heart and tender conscience. At his appointment to the monarchy he was said to be a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). Although not perfect, David was conscious of his wrongdoings, willing to hear rebuke (cf. 2 Sam. 12) and penitent in his attitude when he had committed wrong (cf. 2 Sam. 12:13; 24:10; Psa. 51). His words in Second Samuel 23:2 form perhaps the definitive statement for inspiration in Scripture. He stated, “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His Word was in my tongue.” In this statement we find the true Source for all Scripture, the means used to convey truth to man and the intricate method employed to reveal such truth.

The Source Of The Scriptures

The first phrase of this passage designates the Giver and Source of all Scripture: “The Spirit of the Lord...”. It was the Holy Spirit that moved men to pen the words of inspiration. Paul plainly revealed, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). Deity thus conveyed to man the words of God. The Lord promised His apostles that even though He would shortly leave their presence He would send the Holy Spirit to them (cf. John 14:25). Among other things, He would teach them all things and bring to their remembrance everything that Jesus had said (John 14:26). The Spirit would guide them into all Truth (John 16:13). They were assured that in their hour of trial the Spirit of God would direct their minds and mouths. Jesus promised, “But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you” (Matt. 10:19-20).

Peter made it plain that although it was man who presented the message, it was Deity Who provided the message. He stated, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). The statement “moved by the Holy Ghost” literally means that they were borne or carried along by the Spirit. As Warfield stated:

What is ‘borne’ is taken up by the ‘bearer,’ and conveyed by the bearer’s power, not its own, to the bearer’s goal, not its own. The men who spoke from God are here declared, therefore, to have been taken up by the Holy Spirit and brought by His power to the goal

of His choosing. The things which they spoke under this operation of the Spirit were therefore His things, not theirs....Though spoken through the instrumentality of men, it is by virtue of the fact that these men spoke 'as borne by the Holy Spirit,' an immediately Divine word (qtd. in Hackworth 83-84).

Paul declared the words he spoke to have originated with the Lord: "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11-12). It was not given to him in any fashion by man. He did not obtain it through the ordinary instructive means. It was provided to him directly and supernaturally by God.

The Holy Spirit was Himself the avenue through Whom God revealed His Will to man. This He did formerly in different fashions, but in the Christian dispensation exclusively through His Son. The Hebrews writer confirms, "God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Heb. 1:1-2). Paul illustrated this principle to the Corinthians: "But as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:9-11). In other words, no man knows what another is thinking unless those thoughts are revealed to him. Only the mind of a man fully knows his own thoughts,

ideas and impressions. Another can know these if they are communicated to him (generally through words). In the same fashion, no man can know the mind of God unless God reveals His mind to man. This He has done through the Spirit by revealing His Will through words given to certain men.

With the simple yet profound statement, “the Spirit of the Lord spake by me,” David joins this cavalcade of individuals who claimed not themselves as the originators of their message, but who gave due credit to the Spirit of God for its origin.

The Transmission Of The Truth

In the second phrase of this passage David reveals himself to have been the instrument through whom the Spirit of God spoke: “...spake by me...” (2 Sam. 23:2). Like all men thus inspired, David was not the one who originated the message, but rather merely the mortal vessel used to deliver the words of God. Other penmen maintained this same truth. Paul penned these words regarding such matters: “How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Eph. 3:3-5). Credit was thus given to the Spirit for revealing these truths; but, the apostles and prophets are seen as being the means the Spirit used to reveal these truths to all men. Paul also told the Corinthians that “God hath revealed them [the details of the gospel-1 Cor. 2:9] unto us [inspired men] by his Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:10). Later, he informed them that the things he had written were “the commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37), and thus were not his own. In commenting about Paul’s writings,

Peter spoke of the divine wisdom given to him and implied that Paul's writings were Scripture, on an equal level with all other Scripture. He stated: "And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:15-16).

These "apostles and prophets" served as mouthpieces of God, as the Bible itself affirms. "Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21). The great prophet Jeremiah spoke often of the fact that the words he delivered were the very words of God. He had to contend with numerous false prophets and made it clear that those men spoke from their own hearts, whereas he served as a spokesman for God. He revealed: "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord" (Jer. 23:16). The obvious implication is that Jeremiah was speaking words "out of the mouth of the Lord." He also stated: "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings" (Jer. 23:21-22). Obviously, God wanted men who would speak for Him and not for themselves.

David was the human penman for many of the Psalms. Although not credited to him either within the

text or in the uninspired ascription which precedes it, Psalm 119 is considered by many to be Davidic. It speaks often and reverently always of the Word of God. Although there are many personal references by the writer (i.e. “my ways,” “my heart,” “mine eye,” etc.), there are over 170 references to the Word of God in some fashion (i.e. “the law of the Lord,” “thy statutes,” “thy judgments,” etc.). In each of these instances it is spoken of as being God’s and in no way insinuated that it originated with man. As with all others who recorded God’s Word, David’s was the mouth through which God spoke and the hand through which He wrote. Paul stated it in this fashion, “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thess. 2:13).

The Method For The Message

A third major aspect of David’s statement demonstrates the intricate detail of inspiration. David said, “...His word was in my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:2). Referring again to Peter’s statement regarding inspired men we find that “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). As seen, the literal meaning of this statement is that men were ‘borne along’ by the Holy Spirit. Thayer wrote that it means “to be moved inwardly, prompted” (650). Zodhiates stated that it means “to be borne away or actuated by the Holy Spirit” (964). Inspired men were thus provided with what God wanted them to reveal. Contrary to the thoughts of many, and as indicated by the words of David here, the very words themselves were given to these men by the Spirit. It is the case that “God ‘moved’ and the prophet ‘mouthed;’ God ‘revealed’ and the prophet ‘recorded’” (Mosher 31).

The truth that every word was inspired by God is maintained by numerous passages and writers. Jeremiah, for one, mentioned this fact on several occasions. He stated, "Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth" (Jer. 1:9). In contrasting the false prophets of his day with Jeremiah, the Lord told him, "And the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them: thus shall it be done unto them. Wherefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, because ye speak this word, behold, I will make My words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them" (Jer. 5:11-14). You will notice that God speaks of His words being in Jeremiah's mouth. Also, these prophets would have been true prophets only by revealing God's words to the people. God later spoke of them in this fashion: "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings" (Jer. 23:21-22). Jeremiah was further instructed, "Thus saith the Lord; Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word" (Jer. 26:2). He was given every word that God wanted delivered. For him to detract from the message by even a word was prohibited by God. His recording of God's commands, promises and condemnations likewise involved the detail of every word. He was told, "Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. It may be that the house

of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin. Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book” (Jer. 36:2-4). Interestingly, the words that Baruch had penned which were delivered from Jeremiah’s mouth were still said to be “the words of the Lord.” Thus, a correct translation is in fact the Word of God.

Ezekiel likewise revealed the fact that God was particular about and gave to him the very words that were to be delivered. He was told, “And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious” (Ezek. 2:7). He was further instructed, “But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbear, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house” (Ezek. 3:27). “The careful Bible student will note from this passage that God did the ‘talking’ and used Ezekiel’s mouth to do it” (Mosher 11). Ezekiel was instructed to say with all authority “thus saith the Lord.”

The prohibition against adding to the words God has given to man is found in three prominent passages- near the beginning, middle and end of the Bible. Interestingly, each of these condemns modifying the very words which God has given. Deuteronomy 4:2 states: “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.” Proverbs 30:6 reads: “Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.” Revelation 22:18-19 reveals: “For I testify unto every man that heareth

the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." God was very particular about the words He used to direct man; and, He is very particular about the way man handles these words. The liberties taken by many modern-speech translations and commentaries show a blatant disregard for this Biblical principle.

The Bible itself claims to be the Word of God. "Either directly or indirectly we find some fifteen hundred statements that claim its divine origin" (Lutzer 43). However, with the exception of the tables of stone given to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exod. 31:18), nothing within its pages is said to have been directly written by God's hand. Penmen of the Divine record, however, often spoke for God in the first person (cf. 1 Kings 20:13; 2 Kings 17:13; 2 Chron. 12:5). Although David penned the second Psalm, when it is quoted in Acts 4 it is stated that the words were the words of God delivered through the mouth (and thus the pen) of David (Acts 4:25). Likewise, the words of David from Psalm 41, when referenced by Peter in Acts 1:16, are said to be those of the Holy Spirit: "Men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus." The Law of Moses placed the death penalty upon one who would presume to speak words for God when God had not spoken to him. "But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die" (Deut. 18:20). Truly, God took (and takes) seriously the

words He has given to man. And, since every word that proceeds from Him is essential for man (Matt. 4:4), man would do well to respect those words and handle them with great care (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15).

Paul made clear this method God used for proclaiming His message to man in his words to the Corinthians. He said of himself and other inspired men, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor. 2:12-13). “Take note of the apostle’s progression of thought: (1) We speak; (2) we speak in words; (3) we speak not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth; (4) we speak in words which the Spirit teacheth” (Highers 238). Thus Paul could later claim with all confidence, “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37). As was true with all who spoke by inspiration, every word given by Paul was the very word given by God. As Guy N. Woods stated:

If they were dependent on their fallible, human judgment in the selection of these words, in any instance in which their judgment was in error, it is not possible for us today to discover what the Holy Spirit intended. One wrong word might obscure, or strike out, a truth essential to our salvation! The words are all we have. If there is no guarantee that the words of the Bible are the ones the Lord intended, then we have no way of determining what the thought is. If the words of the Bible are the words of men, and not the words of the Holy Spirit, then it is not possible to know which of the

thoughts therein expressed are the thoughts of God and which are the thoughts of men, since any error of judgment, in the selection of a word, would extend to the thought, thus corrupting it (284).

For those who would contend for mere “thought inspiration” and not verbal inspiration, consider this question by Rene Pache: “If some people find it difficult to imagine how God guided the authors in the choice of words of the Scriptures, is it any easier for them to explain how He inspired the thoughts?” (qtd. in Hackworth 86). Jim Laws stated: “The God of the universe who gave us the Word also gave us the words” (15). Those who would affirm the former but deny the latter are inconsistent, as seen by Woods’ words:

Those who subscribe to ‘thought’ inspiration cannot properly ascribe inspiration to THE BOOK at all. They are logically estopped [sic] from referring to the Bible as the ‘inspired WORD of God,’ inasmuch as they did not believe that it is inspired in WORD at all. The truth is, if it is not inspired IN WORD, it is not inspired at all, since it is composed of words (Woods 285).

The words given by God through inspired men and recorded in God’s Book provide all things needful to man for a godly life here and an eternal life with Him hereafter (2 Peter 1:3). “The sixty-six books speak with a consistent voice that these are the words of God” (Lutzer 43). “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple” (Psa. 19:7) When one reads the inspired Word he is able to comprehend what God wants him to know. Paul told the Ephesians, “How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby,

when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Eph. 3:3-5). Thus, in reading they could understand these matters. Sadly, however, as George Whitefield stated, “God has condescended to become an author, and yet people will not read His writings” (qtd. in Lutzer 32).

It is only in obeying the words given by God that one obeys God. Jesus told His apostles, “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you” (John 15:3). He stated, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). After prophesying of the coming kingdom of God and “the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:3), Isaiah encouraged obedience from God’s people by stating, “O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord” (Isa. 2:5). The Psalmist revealed, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psa. 119:105). Thus, in order to walk “in the light of the Lord” they would have to obey His words. In addition, Peter stated, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:22-23). These two verses are parallel. That is, they teach the same thing but just use different wording for emphasis. Notice that he said in verse 22, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth.” The parallel statement in verse 23 is: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible.” Again, verse 22 reveals that purification of the soul in obedience occurs “through the Spirit.” The parallel thought in verse 23 is such a new birth comes “by the word of God.” Thus, “through the Spirit” and

“by the word of God” are equivalent statements. So, when one obeys the Word of God one obeys the Spirit of God Who gave that Word. In like manner Paul informed the Corinthians that “by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13). That is, through the teachings (words) of the Spirit we are told about and come to be obedient in baptism.

Words are vitally important. They are the vehicles of thought, the transporters of truth and the means for understandable communication. It is only through knowing truth that man is made free (John 8:32). As stated by David and confirmed by so many others, the very words of God were delivered to and revealed by inspired men.

Conclusion

Truly, “Every word of God is pure” (Prov. 30:5) and “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16). David’s words provide us with the very essence of Inspiration’s work and the detail involved in every aspect of it. “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his Word was in my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:2). From these words we find the Source of the Scriptures, the Transmission of the Truth and the Method of the Message.

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**David, The Singer:
A
Cheerful Heart**

CHAPTER 15

The Sweet Singer Of Israel

Tom Holland

God's people are a singing people, they always have been, they always will be. When God delivered people from the bondage of Egypt, God's people sang. When the army of Pharaoh had been destroyed by the waters of the sea, Moses would write, "Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians..." (Exod. 14:30). What was the initial reaction of the saved Israelites? "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord" (Exod. 15:1).

In the glory days of the kingdom of David singing was very prominent. Someone said, "The living spirit of any religion shines through most clearly in its hymns."¹ At the close of David's life he was identified as the "sweet psalmist of Israel" (2 Sam. 23:1), or, "the favorite of the songs of Israel" (ft.note in ESV).

David was certainly qualified to be the "sweet psalmist" because he was a man "after God's own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22).

David was a man of deep feeling and of imperial imagination. Think of his love for Jonathan, his grateful appreciation of every exploit done in his behalf by his mighty men, his fondness for Absalom, His successful generalship would argue for imagination, as well as the vivid

imagery of elegy. David was an enthusiastic worshipper of Jehovah. All the records of his life agree in representing him as devoted to Israel's God.²

More important than the personal qualifications of be the "sweet psalmist of Israel" is the reality of his being inspired by the Holy Spirit to write Psalms. In the closing days of His life on earth, Jesus was teaching in the temple and responding to various questions, some of which were designed to put the Savior in a dilemma. Jesus presented to His critics a dilemma.

Jesus said, "How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David?" when David had called the Christ, Lord. Jesus quoted from Psalm 110. But note the One Jesus identified as the real source of David's Psalm 110. The Savior declared, "For David himself by the Holy Ghost (Spirit)," "The Lord said unto my Lord...David therefore himself calleth him, Lord; and whence is he then his son?" (Mark 12:35-37). According to Matthew Jesus' question ended the questioning to which He had been subjected (Matt. 22:46).

Not only did Jesus attribute David's Psalms to the Holy Spirit, the apostle Peter also identified the Holy Spirit as the ultimate Source of what David wrote. In the days between our Lord's ascension and the day of Pentecost, the apostles were involved in selecting a successor to Judas. Peter said,

Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus (Acts 1:16 quoted from Psa. 69:25 and Psa. 109:8).

The inspired writer also identified the Holy Spirit as the author of Psalms. In warning Christians of the danger of "departing from the living God" (Heb. 3:12),

the example of Israel is given from Psalm 95. The source of the Psalm is the Holy Spirit. The Hebrews writer said, "Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts..." (Heb. 3:7-8).

David was a man "after God's own heart" that "the God of Israel had anointed king over his people, and on the other hand as 'the lovely one in Israel's songs of praise, i.e., the man whom God had enabled to sing lovely songs of praise in celebration of His grace and glory."³

As Keil and Delitzsch observed:

As David on the one hand had firmly established the kingdom of God in an earthly and political respect as the anointed of Jehovah, i.e., as king, so had he on the other, as the composer of Israel's songs of praise, promoted the spiritual edification of the kingdom.⁴

There are different approaches to the classification of the Psalms. In G.T. Manley's **New Bible Handbook**, he gives eleven different themes of the Psalms (see pp. 197-198). In Henry H. Halley's **Bible Handbook** the Psalms are classified as "Five Books: Psalms 1-41; Psalms 42-72; Psalms 73-89; Psalms 90-106; Psalms 107-150." (p. 248). This presentation will key on: Songs of Praise to God; Songs of Prophecy; Songs of Penitence; Songs of Prayers.

Songs Of Praise

While it is true, as Keil and Delitzsch observed, "the Psalms for the most part are hardly hymns...the majority are didactic...they all partake of the nature of the hymn, to wit the purpose of the hymn, the glorifying of God."⁵

The eighth Psalm exalts the majestic name of the Lord. The glory of God is honored, the universe is attributed to the creative power of God: "the heavens, the moon and stars, mankind, the animals, birds and

fish and the paths of the seas” are all the results of the Creation of God. Hebrews chapter 2 quotes from this Psalm (Heb. 2:6-8).

The recognition of God as Creator continues in Psalm 19, where God is also honored for the giving of His perfect law, which converts the soul, but He is also honored for His testimony that is “sure, making wise the simple” (Psalm 19:7).

Not only were these Psalms sung, they also have impressed song writers such as Joseph Addison who lived from 1672-1719, and wrote these words:

The spacious firmament on high, With all the
blue, ethereal sky, and spangled heav’ns, a
shining frame, Their great Original proclaim:
Th’unwearied sun from day to day Does his
Creator’s pow’r display, And publishes to every
land The work of an almighty hand.

Two more stanzas of this song of praise continue the theme of the creation honoring God and the song ends with the profound declaration of God’s creation: “The hand that made us is divine” (**Sacred Songs of The Church**, 193).

The song, “Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah!” closely follows Psalm 148. This Psalm also honors God as Creator and calls upon His creation, including the angels, to proclaim His praise. The final stanza calls on kings, princes, young men, maidens, aged men and children small to give praises to Jehovah.

Psalms 81, 92 and Psalms 95-100 are also Psalms of praise. God’s people are urged to make a “joyful noise” to the Lord as they “come before His presence with singing.” God our Creator (Psalm 100:3) is to receive the praise and thanksgiving of His people, “the sheep of His pasture,” for “the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations” (Psa. 100:3-5).

God's people under the New Covenant of God's Son are exhorted to sing psalms (Col. 3:16). Some of David's Psalms of praise we can and do sing.

Songs Of Prophecy

The apostle Peter identified David as a prophet (Acts 2:30). The Old Testament prophets were God's spokesmen. As Peter, in his second epistle declared, "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2:21).

Vine, commenting on the word translated "moved" in 2 Peter 1:21, explains the word as meaning: "to bear, carry, is rendered 'being moved' in 2 Peter 1:21, signifying that they were 'borne along,' or impelled by the Holy Spirit's power, not acting according to their own wills, or simply expressing their own thoughts, but expressing the mind of God in words provided and ministered by Him."⁶

The prophet David had a message for His day. His songs could be sung then. However, there are predictive elements in some of David's Psalms, the denials and rejections of skeptics and some liberal theologians notwithstanding.

Anyone familiar with the events connected to the crucifixion of our Savior and who knows Psalm 22 can see a prophecy of the crucifixion including some of the very words Jesus uttered from the cross, such as the first verse of Psalm 22. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46).

The prediction that men would cast lots for His garments, was fulfilled at Golgotha (John 19:23-24). The four writers who penned the song, "Robe of Calvary" were evidently familiar with Psalm 22. A line in the song states, "Soldiers gambled for His garments while the sun turned dark above; But the men who crucified Him were forgiven by His love."

The Hebrews writer in proving that the Lord Jesus Christ is greater than the angels quoted from Psalm 104, "Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flame of fire" (verse 4; Heb. 1:7).

When the intimidation and threatening efforts of the Sadducees were to no avail they let the apostles Peter and John go free. They went to the disciples and reported what the "chief priests and elders had said to them." They all immediately prayed to God and in the prayer quoted the first part of Psalm 2. The quotation began with a recognition of David's inspiration and after honoring God as Creator they prayed, "Who by the mouth of thy servant David said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?" (Acts 4:23-30; Psa. 2).

In the Roman letter the apostle Paul quoted David to emphasize salvation made available to humanity by God's grace and forgiveness. Paul quoted from Psalm 32.

Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are thy whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin (Rom. 4:6-8; Psa. 32:1-2).

We sing songs which echo David's theme of forgiveness. One example is the old, but loved song, "Christ Receiveth Sinful Men." The first line states, "Sinners Jesus will receive; Sound this word of grace to all who the heavenly pathway leave, all who linger, all who fall." The last line gives assurance. "Christ receiveth sinful men, even me with all my sin; purged from every spot and stain, heav'n with Him I enter in."

Songs Of Penitence

Although David was a man "after God's own heart," there were times when David failed God. David

committed adultery with a man's wife and then had the man killed. However, when confronted with his sin, David acknowledged his moral failure. He went beyond the realization of failure, he repented and threw his soul on the mercy of God. His penitent plea is clearly seen in Psalm 51. David knew his sin was basically against God. He had sinned against Uriah, he had sinned against Bathsheba, He had sinned against the people of God, but beyond all that tragedy, David had sinned against the God who had brought him from a sheepfold to a king's throne. So David confessed, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (Psa. 51:4).

David's confession of sin is followed with a plea of forgiveness. "Purge me...wash me...hide thy face from my sins, and blot out mine iniquities...Cast me not away from thy presence...Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me...Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation" (Psa. 51:7-12).

Psalm 32, as already noted, is both a realization of the blessing of forgiveness, and a confession of sin, and therefore, the need for forgiveness. David said, "I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid" (verse 5).

Like David, we sing songs of penitence as we plead in song for forgiveness. For example, Frances R. Havergal's hymn, "I Bring My Sins To Thee." The first stanza says, "I bring my sins to Thee, The sins I cannot count, That all my cleansing be in Thy once opened fount: I bring them, Savior, all to Thee; The burden is too great for me, The burden is too great for me."

Another penitent hymn is John G. Whittier's, "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind." Our plea in this hymn begins: "Dear Lord and Father of mankind, forgive our foolish ways; reclothe us in our rightful mind, in purer lives Thy service find, in deeper reverence, praise."

Consider the well-known and much-loved invitation song, "Just As I Am." We sing these moving words, "Just as I am! without one plea, But that thy blood was shed for me, and that thou bidd'st me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!"

Songs Of Prayers

David wrote several prayer Psalms. An example of a prayer Psalm is Psalm 141 in which David prayed, "Lord, I cry out to you; make haste to me! Give ear to my voice when I cry out to you. Let my prayer be set before You as incense. The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (verses 1-2, NKJV).

David continued the prayer by asking the Lord to "set a guard over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips" (verse 3).

He further asked that his heart would be protected from "any evil thing" (verse 4).

Near the end of this Psalm of prayer David said, "But my eyes are upon You, O God the Lord; In You I take refuge; do not leave my soul destitute" (verse 8).

Another Psalm identified by the heading, "A Psalm of David," begins with a supplication for the Lord to hear his prayer. He said, "Hear my prayer, O Lord, Give ear to my supplication! In your faithfulness answer me, and in your righteous" (Psa. 142:1-2).

In this prayer Psalm David pleads for a speedy answer from the Lord (verse 7); he continued by praying that the Lord would deliver him from his enemies (verse 9).

Psalm 136 is an informative and interesting prayer Psalm in which God's people are exhorted to "give thanks to the Lord, the God of gods, the Lord of lords, for His enduring mercy. This attribute of God is declared twenty six times in the twenty six verses of this Psalm.

The prayer Psalm includes petitions for forgiveness (Psa. 51, 32), supplications for deliverance from enemies, evil and violent men, thanksgiving and praise.

We sing prayer songs such as T.O. Chisholm's "Be With Me Lord," and John Edmeston's beautiful prayer, "Savior, breathe an evening blessing ere repose our spirits seal, sin and want we come confessing: Thou canst save and Thou canst heal." The next two stanzas are similar to some of David's Psalms that ask God for protection from dangers and they also recognize God as One who protects and provides. The closing part of the prayer-song asks for an awakening in heaven, "clad in bright and deathless bloom."

Grace Glenn wrote a beautiful prayer-song, "Savior, Grant Me Rest And Peace." The first two stanzas of this hymn are petitions to the Savior for "rest and peace" and for assurance that "all is well." The third stanza expresses a desire that the "hourly labors" will tell that the one praying may know that he/she belongs to the Lord and that "all is well."

The songs of David not only provide the words that can be sung, such as Psalm 23, there are many expressions of adoration, honor, and praise to God that can encourage song writers today.

Many attributes of God are emphasized in David's songs: God's goodness, His mercy, His faithfulness, His word, His testimonies, His power manifested in creation, His reality, His love, and His holiness.

God's people are a singing people. The songs of David provide beautiful words God's people can still sing. The Holy Spirit, through Paul's inspired pen, exhorted the churches in Ephesus and Colosse to "speak to one another" in the singing of Psalms; to "teach and admonish one another" in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. The speaking and teaching in songs should be accompanied

by the human heart (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

Marvin R. Vincent, commenting on Colossians 3:16, stated that "in the New Testament phraseology, is an Old Testament psalm, or a composition having that character."⁷

As stated earlier, God's people have always been a singing people and they always will be singing. The apostle John saw a vision of God's people who had won "the victory over the beast" and they sang "the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" (Rev. 15:3-4). Coffman said, "The group here assembled is clearly the host of the redeemed from the earth...the song is that of redemption."⁸

Concerning the song sung by the Lord's victorious people, Kistenmaker wrote, "the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb are not two different hymns but one and the same song" (15:3-4). It is the Lamb who is working through Moses, the servant of God (Exod. 14:31; Heb. 3:5). Moses was a servant in the household of God, but Christ is a Son over that household and is therefore the greater of the two.⁹

God's singing people can receive vital information about singing and they can receive encouragement to sing from the "sweet singer of Israel."

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CHAPTER 16

When David Lost His Song

Robert H. Jefferies, Jr.

Appreciation

Words cannot express my appreciation for the Southaven Church of Christ. It is a blessing beyond description to be associated with this wonderful congregation. At the time of this writing, my wife and I have labored with this congregation for nearly four months. Although, our time here has been brief, we have seen so much. We have seen: two shepherds who are truly men of God and take their roles very seriously as they oversee the flock; a group of deacons who diligently work in their respected areas; two secretaries who work very hard daily, and have assisted me in everything I ask of them; a man in the pulpit who works tirelessly to keep a proper balance in his church work and his family life; and a membership who truly loves the Lord and demonstrates that attitude by their service and example. As you can see the future of the church at Southaven is very bright. We are so privileged to work with such a fine group of people.

I am so thankful for my co-worker here at Southaven. Wade Webster is a very studious man. I have been so impressed with the balance he displays in the pulpit on a weekly basis. He has chosen an excellent topic for this year's POWER lectureship. I appreciate all he does in

the Lord's kingdom, and I look forward to many years of working side by side with him.

Introduction

Psalm 51 is one of the few psalms where we are given the historical background. Although the inscription is uninspired it seemingly sets forth the tone of this psalm and the very stance of its sentiments of sorrow and remorse. It states, "A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba." This identifies clearly for us the incident out of which this psalm arose. The background for this psalm is found in 1 Samuel chapters eleven and twelve. It was the time when David became involved in the double sin of adultery and murder while he was king. He had walked with God for many years. He had gained a reputation as a man who understood the deep things of God. He had also established himself as the long time spiritual leader of his people, and was truly a man after God's own heart. Then suddenly, toward the end of his reign, he became involved in this terrible sin.

The interesting thing is that David himself records this sin for us. It must have been a painfully humiliating experience for the king. David was on his palace roof one day and saw a beautiful woman next door bathing herself. His passions were aroused and he sent over messengers and ordered her to be brought to him. He entered into an adulterous relationship with her. All the while, her husband, a soldier in David's army, was away fighting for his king. Later, when David learned that she was expecting a child, he panicked and tried to cover up his actions. He ordered the husband, Uriah, to be sent home from battle, hoping that he would be with his wife and the child would then be accepted as his own. However, Uriah was a faithful soldier and committed to

battle along with his fellow soldiers. He did not go into his own house, but slept with the soldiers at the palace and returned to the battle the following day. David knew that ultimately his sin would be found out so he took another step. Isn't that what sin always does? It seems to lead us deeper and deeper, farther and farther than we ever intended to go. Before the king knew it he found himself forced into a desperate attempt to cover up his sin. He ordered Uriah to be put in the forefront of the battle where he would most certainly be killed. Certainly once David heard the news of Uriah's death he must have felt as if he was off the hook because he had safely covered his sin.

However, Nathan as a messenger of God, would confront David with a parable in regards to his sin. He told David, "Thou art the man." Once David was confronted and convicted of this terrible sin he had committed, he fell on his face before God and out of that experience of confession, comes this beautiful fifty-first Psalm. In this chapter David would also plea for pardon and ask God for a clean heart. One great student of the Bible wrote, "this psalm is the brightest gem in the whole book, and contains instruction so large, and doctrine so precious, that the tongue of angels could not do it justice to the full development" (Guy N. Woods, *G. A. Adult Quarterly*, August 13, 1972, p. 31). In this chapter we are going to see three basic pleas from David: 1) David wanted his song back, 2) David recognizes the chords of his song are out of tune with the chords of the Father, and 3) David asks for God's help in righting the song to be in harmony with God.

David Wanted His Song Back

In May of 2003 a man by the name of Aron Ralston does the unthinkable. Mr. Ralston was an avid

outdoorsman who lived in Colorado. He was scheduled to take a hiking trip with his buddies on a Saturday, however his plan changed. So he decided he was going to take a one day trip to Canyonlands National Park in Southeastern Utah to hike and do some repelling. He began his journey by riding his bicycle fifteen miles south along Maze-Robbers Roost Road until he reached a shortcut leading to the head of Bluejohn Canyon's main fork. He then proceeded into a solo descent into the deep, narrow slot of Bluejohn Canyon. Along the way he would pass over and under numerous boulders. As he began a ten foot drop between two ledges and eight hundred pound boulder shifted above him. He snapped his left hand out of its path in time, but his right hand was smashed between the rock and the sandstone wall. Ralston was trapped, alone in a remote canyon. Rescue was unlikely: He had neglected to inform anyone of where he was going, which he later acknowledged is "something I almost always do but I failed to do this time." Accompanied with him was a twenty-five pound backpack that had some supplies and food in it, he thought to himself, "It is Saturday I have enough supplies to last me a little while." As time lingered he realized that no one seemed to be coming to the rescue. He took out his knife and tried to chisel away, but nothing was working. He was definitely between a rock and a hard place. By Tuesday he began to run out of water. He started to make plans about how he would remove himself from these two boulders. On Wednesday, he went through a mock trial. He thought about where he could cut, and how he would break the bones in his arm. Aron was going to amputate his arm in order to save his life. Thursday morning came and Aron executed the plan. It took him one hour to break his arm in two different areas and then to amputate his arm. Once he freed himself, he

then repelled sixty feet, and hike six miles until he found another hiker who was able to provide him with food and water. They managed to flag down a chopper, and he was taken to the hospital.

The point of this story is, we all have things in our life that we have to cut away to live as a Christian. If we have the idea that the Christian life is an easy life, then we have been fooled. Christianity is not an easy life by any means. In order for one to be a faithful Christian, sometimes we have to repent and cut away those things that keep us from being loyal to God. If David was going to get his song back, and be once again known as “the man after God’s own heart” there would have to be some cutting away.

In Psalm fifty one, David acknowledges that he has made some serious mistakes in his life. David, in a manner of speaking, is saying, “Lord I amputated my arm, I have made my journey back to thee, I was once away, but now I am back.” Notice the plea that David is making,

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew
a right spirit within me. Cast me not away
from thy presence; and take not thy holy
spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy
salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit
(Psa. 51:10-12).

As righteous people we are never perfect, but we must realize righteous people always want to come back to God.

David was guilty of adultery and murder (2 Sam. 11). However, it seems that he had convinced himself that he had done nothing wrong. Have you ever done something wrong, and then convinced yourself that it was not? In order for the joy of salvation to be restored, we must realize and be convicted of what sin is.

David was such a good man. However, David was not above temptation to sin, and neither are we. He did not right this wrong immediately, and so Nathan confronted him about his sin.

And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul (2 Sam. 12:1-7).

If this had been any other king, Nathan may have lost his head. However, David was very receptive. Hopefully, if we go astray, we can have a friend like Nathan someday also.

Until now, David was blinded but now he recognized his sin. May we recognize that sin is deadly, and it can keep us from God. David wanted his song back.

David Recognized The Chords Of His Song Were Out Of Tune With God's

Sin had caused David's life to be out of tune with God's direction. David had come to the realization that his relationship with God had been severed because of sin.

Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear (Isa. 59:1-2).

How many of us really want to hurt or sever our relationship with God? Psalm 51 is such a rich passage.

Notice David's plea once again, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit" (Psa. 51:10-12). More than anything David wanted that great relationship restored once again. The word restore means, "to return to a former condition." It carries with it the idea of restoring a car or a piece of furniture. Once the restoration is complete, it literally is as good as new. David is saying, God I want you to take that which is old and make it new again. David could remember what it used to be like to be close to God, and based on his plea, that is what he wants again.

Some who have gone astray can remember what it used to be like to be close with God. "I remember what it was like when I was faithful, but now I have all of this guilt." Sin and the guilt of sin can wear down a good life. More than anything, David wanted that joy back.

In order for the restoration process to come to fruition, David needed to recognize how terrible sin was. Notice the words he uses to describe his wrongs.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me (Psa. 51:1-3).

The first word David uses is transgression. John wrote, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). To transgress means to "go beyond." It has the idea of two boys drawing a line in the dirt and when one crosses over that line, it is time to fight. The Lord has given us boundaries for our own good to keep us in His fortress of safety; however, when we cross those boundaries we enter into the danger zone where Satan is prowling.

The second word he uses is iniquity. Iniquity means "to pollute, to pervert." Imagine a hot summer day where you have been working in the yard and your spouse brings a glass of ice cold water. Right before they hand it to you they put three small drops of motor oil in it. Would you still want it? Of course not. David lived a great life of service to God, but polluted his life by sin. His vision had become blinded, and his life marred by the pollutions of sin.

The last word he uses is sin. Sin means "to miss the mark." Imagine being at a shooting range, only to see that when the target is brought close to you that you have missed the target. David has come to a complete sense of total ruin because of sin. Once David recognized the tune of his song he makes a plea towards God.

David Asks For God's Help In Righting The Song To Be In Harmony With God

Now that David has come to an acknowledgement

of his sins, and fully comes to the realization that he wanted his song back after stepping out of tune with the song of God, he now seeks the only true source of righting this wrong in his life.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest (Psa. 51:1-4).

He makes his plea known to God. Because he realizes God is the one whom he sinned against, and needed his slate wiped clean.

Notice the wording David chooses. First he begs, "blot out my transgressions," to blot out carries with it the idea of an eraser. An eraser is designed to take away the mistakes. David wanted his mistakes to be erased.

Second he pleads, "wash me thoroughly." This washing carries with it the idea of washing cloth on an old wash board, where the clothes would be trampled upon with water and soap. David wanted his iniquity to be trampled out.

Third he implores, "cleans me from my sin." The closest idea we have for this cleansing is to "un sin." "It is like asking; "God, I have a lot of ruin in me, can you unruin me? Please give me a clean heart and allow me to come in." To be truly cleansed means that we have to repent and move that sin completely out of our life,

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so

easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1-2).

When we sin, we allow our life to be contaminated with sin. If it is not taken care of, we then can become totally ruined. Notice the words of Peter,

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 2:20-22).

With the illustration of the two animals we see the Bible being lived out on how disgusting sin is in the mind of God.

How serious is sin? When James writes about it he speaks of death,

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren (James 1:14-16).

When we start playing with sin and reason in our minds that a particular sin cannot hurt me is when we start

lending our ear to the father of lies, the devil;

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:44).

When we play and dabble with sin we are in as much danger as an innocent child playing with a highly venomous snake. In order for David to have help in righting his song again, he needed to submit to the hands of the song writer, God.

Conclusion

David wanted his song back more than anything, and did whatever it took to have the harmony restored to be in tune with God. In order for David to understand his sin, his heart needed to be pricked. May we have the heart of David and drop to our knees with penitence and sorrow when sin enters our life. There are going to be times when we fail our Heavenly Father, but let us make sure that we desire to come back. David saw sin for what it was, and realized that he did not like where he was, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit" (Psa. 51:10-12). Something truly is wrong when sin no longer bothers us. Notice the way David begins to draw this Psalm to a close,

For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise (Psa. 51:16-17).

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CHAPTER 17

David And His Harp

Patrick Morrison

It is a great honor and privilege to be a part of the Power Lectureship. I am grateful to the Southaven congregation for her reputation of soundness and her many labors of love on behalf of the cause of Christ. The elders are to be commended for their willingness to bless the brotherhood through these special studies each year. The selected theme is one that will no doubt generate much interest and spark further study into the life of David. This great man of faith has blessed our lives by his example and through the many stories we recall of his life from our youth upward. Our lesson will deal with David the musician, and specifically we will examine the way in which many attempt to justify the usage of mechanical instruments of music in worship today by appealing to the usage of the same in Old Testament worship. David becomes part of the discussion in that he appointed singers and musicians in the worship of Jehovah, and also because God used him to pen so many of the psalms, some of which encourage the usage of instruments to praise God. We must affirm the truth of God's word in regard to the kind of music He has specified in worship. Generation after generation must be taught and re-taught the simplicity and import of New Testament worship. Is our insistence on vocal music only in worship merely a matter of heritage among

churches of Christ, or are our objections to the usage of mechanical instruments of music in the worship of the Almighty warranted? Let us examine these thoughts in greater detail.

Was David Authorized To Appoint Singers And Musicians In The Worship Of God?

The Bible records that “these are they whom David set over the service of song in the house of the Lord, after that the ark had rest” (1 Chron. 6:31). We read also of a host who had been appointed to offer prophecy and praise with a number of instruments of music:

All these were under the hands of their father for song in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, for the service of the house of God, according to the king’s (David, SPM) order to Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman (1 Chron. 25:6).

Solomon honored this arrangement of the singers and musicians that had been given “according to the commandment of David” (2 Chron. 35:15) after he successfully completed the construction of the temple. David himself was an accomplished musician (1 Sam. 16:16, 23), and no doubt enjoyed beautiful music and singing. From the passages cited above, is it the case that David took it upon himself to appoint singers and players of musical instruments in the worship of Almighty God? Was David acting upon Divine injunction when he appointed these to serve in the worship of Jehovah? Some interesting thoughts come out of consideration of either of these questions, which we will note below.

First of all, is it possible that David was allowed to designate certain of the Levites to serve as singers and/or players of instruments apart from Divine authorization? It is the case that God tolerated certain things in Old

Testament times that He did not condone nor explicitly authorize. Polygamy was one of those areas wherein God allowed that which was not His original intention. Many of the great champions of faith in the Old Testament had numerous wives, yet God intended from the very beginning that one man and one woman be joined in marriage for life (Gen. 2:24). The writing of divorcement was another area wherein God made allowances that were not part of His original plan for marriage and the home. Jesus tells us that it was for the hardness of man's heart that God allowed divorce, but that "from the beginning it was not so" (Matt. 19:8). The appointing of a king to rule over the people of Israel was yet another area wherein God showed tolerance, though such was not His desire for His people. Warning had been given to Israel regarding what would happen should they choose an earthly king to rule over them (1 Sam. 8:5-20), but they would have it no other way than to have a king like all the nations round about them. Why did God tolerate these behaviors when He did not approve of them nor authorize such? We really have no way of determining the reason God allowed these things to be done. It might best be summed up by the words of Paul, when he said, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at ("overlooked", ASV); but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). Might it be that God tolerated the usage of instruments of music in worship as David had appointed, though He Himself had not authorized it to be so? Certainly the possibility exists, but it is not very probable.

The Almighty has always viewed worship as a very serious and solemn exercise. God's law regarding worship must always be respected, and we dare not think that we can change or improve upon the avenues by which we offer our worship to the Lord. The seriousness of the matter of worship can be seen from the very beginning

of creation. According to Genesis 4, in the process of time Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. Abel, his brother, brought of the firstlings of his flock as an offering to God. "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect" (Gen. 4:4-5). Some would have us to believe that the reason Cain's sacrifice was rejected was because of his attitude, not because he failed to abide by God's law concerning worship. However, we know that such is not the case:

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts (Heb. 11:4).

Abel's offering was by faith, and "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Therefore, Abel offered based upon the revealed will of God, while Cain did not do so. Cain's offering was rejected because it was not of faith. The gravity of abiding by God's will for worship can also be seen in the account of Nadab and Abihu:

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange ("unauthorized," ESV) fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Lev. 10:1-2).

It is quite evident from these two examples that in regard to worship God says what He means, and means what He says. God has always specified what He desires from man in worship, whether it be in the patriarchal dispensation, the Mosaic dispensation, or the Christian dispensation. For this reason, we must reject the notion

that God merely tolerated the introduction of instrumental music into worship by David.

Given the many specific instructions God gave regarding worship under the Old Covenant, and the severity with which transgressions of these laws were punished, it must follow that David appointed singers and players of musical instruments in the worship of God based upon Divine authority. The question may arise, "If David appointed these singers and musicians by God's approval, why then did God wait until such time to command that this be done when He had opportunity in the giving of the laws regarding worship to Moses?" We cannot give answer to that question with any degree of certainty, for it is not revealed as to why God would wait until the days of David to command that the singers and musicians be set in order for service in the worship of God. However, it does seem likely that David appointed these to serve in this way in preparation for the service of God at the temple, which would be completed under the reign of David's son Solomon. The usage of the instrument in worship to God is befitting of the nature of Old Testament worship. While we would not seek to denigrate the offerings of those under the Old Law, the worship connected with that covenant was in many respects much more sensual in nature than the worship of the New Testament church. Imagine the scene at the temple in the course of a typical day in the life of God's people: Thousands of animals can be heard bleating all around. The smell of burning hair and scorched flesh fill the air, along with the faint scent of incense wafting in the breeze. The priests are arrayed in fine linen ephods as worshippers press toward the temple with sacrifices and offerings in hand. Melodious tones from a symphony of instruments are sounded out, accompanying the chosen singers as they lift up their voices in praise to

God. The sights, sounds, and smells must have been almost overwhelming as these sincere seekers came to pay homage to Jehovah. Under the New Covenant, man engages in worship that appeals more to the inward man. No longer does the aroma of those animals offered for sin upon the altar fill the room of worship, for one sacrifice has been made for sin for all time—the spotless Lamb of God was offered to take away the sins of the world (Eph. 5:2; Heb. 10:12; John 1:29). No more is incense burned that it might drift into the Holy of Holies, for our prayers are the sweet-smelling odor which rises up before the very throne of the Almighty (Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4). It is no longer necessary for the priestly class to dress in costly and delicate array symbolizing holiness and purity, for we are clothed with Christ (Gal. 3:27) and have been washed in His blood that we might be pure and holy (1 Cor. 6:11). No longer do we need the sound of harp, viol, psaltery, and cymbal to accompany a distinguished class of singers in their praises to God in order to excite the senses, for all have the required instrument within themselves by which praise and adoration is to be sounded out to and bestowed upon Jehovah—the human heart (Eph. 5:19; Heb. 13:15). It may be naiveté on my part, but the worship of the New Testament church, though simple in its outward observance when compared to the complexities of Old Testament worship, seems much more meaningful and much more appealing to the spiritual man.

Using David To Justify Instrumental Music In Worship Today

In an attempt to justify the use of mechanical instruments of music in the worship of Almighty God today, many will appeal to the account of David appointing the singers and musicians in Old Testament worship, or to the use of instruments in conjunction with

the Psalms, essentially arguing that what was allowed in praise to God under the Old Covenant holds true even under the New. Aside from reasoning that God did not expressly forbid the usage of mechanical instruments of music in worship, and apart from man's obstinate desire to have what he wants without regard to Bible authority, the "they used it in the Old Testament" argument is the sugar-stick of those who wish to use the man-made instrument in worship. There are a number of flaws with this reasoning, which we now consider.

First of all, those who appeal to David and/or the Psalms as justification for the usage of mechanical instruments of music in worship in the New Testament church exhibit a gross misunderstanding of the nature of the two covenants as well as an inability to ascertain a proper division between the Old and New Testaments. The death of Jesus upon the cross forever closed the way to God based upon the Law of Moses (Heb. 10:8-9), and forever opened the way to God through the great High Priest (Heb. 10:19-22; John 14:6). The very fact that there is a new covenant (Matt. 26:28) implies that there is an old covenant. As law goes, the new will supersede the old. So it is, that Jesus took the Old Law out of the way, thereby ushering in the New Testament:

Blotting out **the handwriting of ordinances** that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, **nailed it to his cross** (Col. 2:14, emphasis mine, SPM).

Lest we misunderstand the import and meaning of the previous passage, consider its parallel:

Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even **the law of commandments contained in ordinances**; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body

by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby
(Eph. 2:15-16, emphasis mine, SPM).

A proper handling of the word of God necessitates a knowledge of the two covenants and the differences between them (2 Tim. 2:15). The New Testament church is governed by the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2), and must abide by His will as revealed on the pages of the last will and testament of our Lord Jesus Christ. To make an appeal to the Old Law for matters of faith and practice in religion is to reject the rule of Christ in His church and in our lives. The seriousness of such an attitude toward the New Testament cannot be overstated, for Jesus Himself said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

Second, those who would look to the Old Testament to rationalize the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God today have admitted (whether knowingly or not) that they have no New Testament authority for such a practice. This is extremely significant! Since there is no authority in the New Testament for mechanical instruments of music in worship, those who desire to have such must look elsewhere for approval. It is important to note that many who use and/or desire to use the mechanical instrument of music in worship today still realize the need for Biblical authority. We must have the authority of Jesus to teach and practice anything in religion: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17). While God spoke in times past through Moses and the prophets, His word has been fully delivered to us through Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-2; Jude 3). Those who would justify the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship in going to the Old Testament for authorization and approval bring

such a practice into the worship of God today without the authority of Christ! Let those who wish to use the man-made instrument in worship come forth with New Testament authority for it, and we will drop our objections to it; yea, we will embrace mechanical instruments of music in worship if it is authorized in the New Testament! The purveyors of this doctrine of men cannot put a "thus saith the Lord" to the usage of mechanical instruments of music in worship without leaving the New Testament to do so. Until such time as they are able to find New Testament authority for this practice, the words of Jesus should ring in the ears of those who would refuse to seek His authorization: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

Third, one who reverts to the Law of Moses to enjoin any element of that former covenant upon the church is obligated to enjoin every precept and practice of the Old Law. To the Judaizing teachers in the church at Galatia who were attempting to require Gentile converts to be circumcised Paul would write, "For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law" (Gal. 5:3). If they were going to require this part of the Law to be observed, then they must require all of it to be observed. Such holds true in regard to mechanical instruments of music in worship to God today. Anyone who would reach over into the Old Testament and take out of it the worship of God in praise with musical accompaniment must bring forth every element of the Old Law into our worship assemblies today. In order to have mechanical instruments of music during worship, we must also restore animal sacrifice, the burning of incense, the holy furniture found in the tabernacle and temple, and so forth and so on. Of course, none are willing to accept this logical conclusion of their reasoning. Instead, many attempt to enjoy "cafeteria style religion," picking

and choosing those elements of Divine service they prefer, while ignoring and avoiding those they consider less "palatable." No one desires to implement every facet of the Old Testament with regard to worship, but according to the word of God to practice or enjoin any part of it is to be required to practice or enjoin the entirety of it! Those who desire that we use mechanical instruments of music in worship to God today based upon their usage in the worship of the Old Covenant need to have their feet held to the fire concerning the ultimate end of their own logic. Anyone who would turn back to the Old Testament for authorization for any religious practice finds himself in very dangerous territory: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law [the Law of Moses, SPM]; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4). Justification for what we preach and practice in religion today can be found only in the New Testament of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Thoughts Regarding The Instrumental Music Question

We dare not think that because there are fewer regulations regarding worship in the New Testament that God has left us to do as we please as we strive to pay homage to Him. Certainly God can, and has, communicated His will to us, including what He expects of us in worship. Nine passages in the New Testament speak concerning the music of the law of Christ, and each of them are devoid of any other type of music other than singing with the human voice (those passages are Matt. 26:30, Mark 14:26, Acts 16:25, Rom. 15:9, 1 Cor. 14:15, Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16, Heb. 2:12, and James 5:13). Had God desired that we praise Him with the accompaniment of mechanical instruments of music, He certainly would have given us instruction in this regard. If the use of

the instrument in worship was either commanded or condoned in New Testament worship, we would expect to find evidence of its use among congregations of the Lord's church from the earliest of times. However, we find no evidence of the usage of mechanical instruments of music in the church until the seventh century AD! Most in the denominational world merely assume that the use of the instrument in worship is a practice as old as the particular denomination of which they are members. It would come as a great surprise to our denominational friends and neighbors for them to realize that the introduction of the instrument into the various churches has always been met with great resistance. The opposition to bringing in mechanical instruments of music into the worship of the church came out of respect for the authority of the New Testament. The argument generally held even among the denominations was that there was simply no authority for the use of the instrument in worship. The desire to compromise caused the denominations to abandon their stance on the instrument issue, though the authority argument was never (nor will it ever be!) answered. Brethren and friends, we stand where the majority of the religious world once stood! We dare not come down to the plain of Ono and compromise with the Devil!

We stand upon solid ground in our insistence that we use only vocal music in praise to God. Singing without the aid of musical accompaniment is the way that is right and cannot be wrong as it pertains to the worship of God in song. The use of mechanical instruments of music in the worship of God, aside from all other considerations, is questionable at best. Why risk the soul over something that is at best questionable, when we have a way to praise God in song that we know is right beyond all doubt? Not only does the New Testament demand vocal music in praise to God, but there are also some other innovations

in regard to worshipping God in song that are answered in these passages concerning singing. Paul wrote,

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord (Eph. 5:19).

In the parallel to this passage we read,

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord (Col. 3:16).

First of all, these passages are commands written to the church, meaning that every child of God is under obligation to follow the instructions of these scriptures. The worship of God in song requires the participation of every Christian, without exception. This necessarily eliminates the use of solos, quartets, choirs, and the like. Second, praising God requires the use of intelligible language. As we sing, we also speak to one another, and teach and admonish one another. Mimicking the sounds of instruments with the voice, humming, or the “bee-bopping” that is becoming more prevalent in worship do not fit these commands. Third, we are instructed as to what we are to sing—psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Much of what is offered as worship in song could not be classified as psalms, hymns or spiritual songs. We stand staunchly opposed to the preaching of error; we must take that same stand against the singing of error as well. Also, we must make sure that our songs are spiritual in nature, not that they just contain some casual reference to God or things spiritual. Fourth, the verses above teach us the instrument that is to be used in praising God in song—the heart. When we sing, the chords of the heart are strummed (“making melody” is translated from the

Greek *psallo*, meaning “to pluck or play”) in praise to God. There are those who would argue that the word *psallo* in Ephesians 5:19 authorizes the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship, since it came to denote the playing of an instrument. However, if we follow this course of reasoning, then there are a few problems that the instrumentalist has to face. Whatever these verses entail, they are commands that must be obeyed, not merely suggestions to be tolerated. If indeed *psallo* is intended to mean the playing of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God, then it is not a matter of opinion; we must use the instrument or else be in violation of God’s command. Also, since the verse is reciprocal in nature, and requires the participation of every Christian, then all would be required to play a mechanical instrument in worship if *psallo* demands or approves the instrument! The fact is, the instrument to which the word *psallo* points is clearly specified in the verse. The instrument that every child of God is capable of using, and must use, in singing God’s praise is the heart.

Perhaps the most used argument in favor of mechanical instruments of music in worship is that God did not forbid their usage. To those of such mindset, the silence of God’s word is permissive rather than prohibitive. In other words, where God has not spoken, do we have liberty to act as we please, or do we view His silence as restricting what we are allowed to do? It is truly a matter of Biblical authority. A Bible illustration may help us understand this idea more fully. When God commanded Noah to build the ark, He specified that the ark be constructed of gopher wood (Gen. 6:14). By virtue of the specific command to use gopher wood God eliminated the use of any other kind of wood. What would have become of the ark had Noah reasoned that God’s silence regarding other types of wood granted permission for

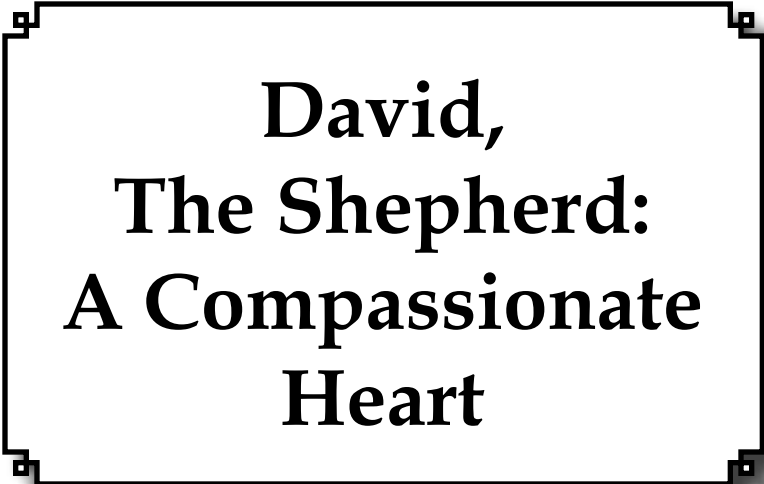
him to use such? It stands to reason that the ark never would have risen above the flood waters had Noah not obeyed God in constructing the ark of gopher wood. The same reasoning follows in the case of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-2). God did not have to tell them every source from which they could not get fire; He had only to tell them where to get the fire for the burning of incense, and all other sources were eliminated from consideration. God has specified the kind of music He desires of us in worship. He commanded us to sing. Here is a specific type of music. Playing is another. Singing and playing is yet another. The specific command to sing eliminates any other form or kind of music in worship to God. We echo the words of the old country preacher who was known to say regarding mechanical instruments of music in worship, "There ain't no Bible fer it."

Conclusion

David was a man who truly sought the heart of God (Acts 13:22). His skill with the harp led God to use him to compose some of the most profound and touching verses in all of Scripture. The tender heart of David, combined with his proficiency with the harp and his desire to praise God in song, likely account for God authorizing him to set in order the singers and musicians for worship in the tabernacle/temple. David's longing to worship Jehovah (Psa. 122:1) and to seek Him after the due order (1 Chron. 15:13) attuned him to the very heart of his Creator. David's harp should be viewed as a symbol of one who yearned to praise and worship God, an emblem of one who was determined for his life to be in keeping with the will of God so that his worship might always be acceptable. It is sad that some have prostituted the harp of David, and have taken it as their ensign of rebellion and self-will as they champion

their cause of mechanical instruments of music in the worship of the Almighty. May we ever exhibit the heart of a true worshipper, and bring our offerings according to His matchless and Divine will from thankful hearts as we give Him all the praise, the honor, and the glory!

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**David,
The Shepherd:
A Compassionate
Heart**

CHAPTER 18

David In The Sheepfolds: Preparation For Greater Service

Neal Pollard

It is somewhat ironic that the very nation by which David first achieved notoriety and the status of heroism was the one that brought about an ignominious end to his predecessor, Saul. 1 Chronicles 10 recounts the death of Saul and his sons, which brought on the fearful retreat of a nation. Reviewing this, the divinely inspired penman says,

So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it; And enquired not of the Lord: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse. Then all Israel gathered themselves to David unto Hebron, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. And moreover in time past, even when Saul was king, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the Lord thy God said unto thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be ruler over my people Israel, and thou shalt be ruler over my people Israel (10:13–11:2).

The New American Standard version renders “feed my people” as “shepherd my people” (1 Chron. 11:2).

The Hebrew word “_____ (r____(h))” means “be a shepherd, i.e., care for any needs that flocks of small mammals have, and so act, as a herdsman, with a focus on providing grazing pasture for the flock and moving the flocks around to the grazing grounds.” Swanson goes on to say that this idea includes not only care and tending of sheep, but authority and rule over them, too. Is it not interesting that God chose to speak of David’s kingship in these terms? This is the man that is introduced in scripture as a shepherd, even before he is mentioned by name (cf. 1 Sam. 16:11). His life revolved around caring for the sheep, and from the details of his unfolding life it seems that it prepared him for a reign that was in some ways the zenith of Israelite history. What was it in the occupation of his youth that prepared him to serve in such mighty ways, and what application can be gleaned from this for God’s shepherds today?

David learned relationship in the sheepfolds (1 Sam. 16:11). Twice in 1 Samuel 16 David is to be found keeping the sheep. He is “with the flock” even after he is anointed king by Samuel and summoned by Saul. When one studies the nature of sheep herding in ancient times, he finds that intimacy between shepherd and sheep was common. David’s inspired, tender words give testimony to this relationship. Drawing no doubt on his own experience, David depicts the Lord as the perfect shepherd in Psalm twenty-three with such ideas as being led to lie down in lush pastures, led beside still waters, restored, comforted, fed, anointed, and sheltered. No better picture of this intimacy is seen, however, than that phrase in the middle of the psalm: “You are with me” (4). As moved by the Holy Spirit to write but using concepts and imagery in line with his own personal background, David reveals what this relationship should look like. It was one of togetherness.

God's shepherds today are men whose success depends upon the depth and breadth of their relationships. In their private lives there must exist a healthy relationship with spouse and children (1 Tim. 3:4-5), having his domestic life as a demonstration of how he leads and relates to those who know him best and see him in his most unguarded moments. A man who is distant from his wife and detached from his children is not a man who has had success with this important relationship. Yet, this ability and willingness to relate should also be present in his dealings with other Christians. Concerning the word "hospitable" in 1 Timothy 3:2, it has been said, "He who must teach others and take care of and exercise oversight over them must be open and loving to them." Elders have open hearts and open doors, which makes them appear approachable to the sheep. Elders who do not know the members—not just their faces and names, but their lives—have not spent sufficient time "with the flock" (cf. 1 Sam. 16:19). There is no New Testament example of elderships meeting behind closed doors in a sort of "boardroom meeting" setting, but there are texts and examples of a good shepherd being so a part of the sheep's lives that "the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers" (John 10:4b-5, NKJV). Ezekiel 34 is a stern warning against the shepherds of Israel who failed to reach out and try to establish that intimate rapport with those in need of their care (cf. 2-10). Instead, there should be a spirit of eager volunteerism to be there among the flock (1 Peter 5:2). It is a wise eldership that makes time to be "with the flock," in fellowship activities, in their homes, through visitation, in hospitals and nursing homes, at births, weddings, and funerals, at activities involving members

and their children, and wherever they can create opportunities to be among the sheepfold. A congregation filled with good, godly members will respond to such an approach to shepherding, and they will give, work, attend, and appreciate their elders better.

David learned faithfulness in the sheepfolds (1 Sam. 17:15). In this context, the Bible says,

Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem Judah, whose name was Jesse, and who had eight sons. And the man was old, advanced in years, in the days of Saul. The three oldest sons of Jesse had gone to follow Saul to the battle. The names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. David was the youngest. And the three oldest followed Saul. But David occasionally went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem.

By this time, David was refreshing King Saul with his harp (1 Sam. 16:23) and thus frequently found himself in the king's court. However, shepherding was apparently always near to his heart. What compelled him, unlike his brothers mentioned in 1 Samuel seventeen, to return to Bethlehem to shepherd? He was accustomed to having the rod and staff in his hand, as well as the harp. Shepherding was very much a part of his life. When he did leave the sheep to carry food to his brothers in the camp, he made sure that the sheep were cared for by a "keeper" (1 Sam. 17:20). This dedication to feeding and caring for the sheep was seen in David's life once he occupied the throne of Israel. He was protective of God's anointed (1 Sam. 23:21; 26:23) as well as those who were defenseless (2 Sam. 9:10) and poor (cf. 2 Sam. 12:5-6). He cared about the poor and fatherless, the afflicted and needy (Psa. 82:3ff). Sheep require time, attention,

provision, and protection, and neglect was tantamount to poor stewardship of them.

Men who would shepherd the flock today must learn the lesson of faithfulness learned by David in the sheepfold. They must be aware of the wolves not sparing the flock and drawing away disciples (cf. Acts 20:29-30). Leaving the sheep to the preacher is not faithful shepherding. Neglecting the sheep by failing to take needed stands on matters of doctrine is not faithful shepherding. Giving no direction and having no vision are ways in which shepherds can do their work unfaithfully. Being personally unaware of the problems and needs of the sheep is not faithful shepherding. Faithful shepherding requires those commodities for which there are no substitutes—time, attention, provision and protection.

David learned handling criticism in the sheepfolds (1 Sam. 17:28ff). David must have felt like the only man among an army of mice, though he was “but a youth” at the time (1 Sam. 17:33). He came upon a scene that no doubt embarrassed and infuriated him, soldiers fleeing and fearful (1 Sam. 17:24). He speaks from righteous indignation (1 Sam. 17:26) and is ready to volunteer for service when no one else wants to do the difficult task at hand. Along comes David’s brother, Eliab, whose anger burns against the shepherd boy. He scorns,

Why did you come down here? And with whom
have you left those few sheep in the wilderness?
I know your pride and the insolence of your
heart, for you have come down to see the battle
(1 Sam. 17:28).

Observe several things about this criticism. First, it came from one close to him, his own brother. Criticism often comes from unexpected places. Second, it was mixed with a glaring lack of kindness and charity. Not only was Eliab trying to tell him he was out of place, he demeaned

his work by noting “those few sheep in the wilderness.” Criticism is too often delivered with destructive cruelty rather than constructive kindness. Third, it was delivered through unrighteous judgment. How did Eliab know David’s heart? Inspiration proves Eliab’s assessment of David’s heart, as God had just told Samuel that He saw David’s heart and for that reason wanted him to be king over Israel (1 Sam. 16:7). In fact, Keil is astute in saying, “The very things with which he charged his brother—presumption and wickedness of heart—were most apparent in his scornful reproof.” Criticism is often born of unrighteous judgment and can be as far from the truth as daylight is from darkness. Fourth, it was compounded by the “mob mentality.” Others joined with Eliab in criticizing David (1 Sam. 17:30). Criticism is often made more severe through its leavening influence. The criticism of one, unchecked and unquenched, often leads to mounting and growing criticism.

No man, not even the preacher, knows the criticism like that faced by elders. This writer has likened this tendency to those water cooler wide receivers and La-Z-Boy linebackers known as arm-chair quarterbacks. He shouts at his TV with a mouthful of cheetos, “I can’t believe you! Four receivers open downfield and you throw it behind the line of scrimmage to a man who’s double covered! You’re pathetic. Must be nice to get millions of dollars to make awful decisions!” He then dusts crumbs off his potbelly with those trademark orange fingertips and limps into the kitchen, stiff from sitting three hours, to get another snack before the second half of the doubleheader. They do not actually suit up, strap it on, and sweat it out. They would crumble with fear if put on the same ball field with the athletes they so roundly criticize.

The same temptation can strike church members with regard to God’s shepherds. Whether their judgment

or a painstaking decision, their handling of a member's problems or needs, or their overall "job performance," elders get taken to task more often than they may realize by pewchair presbyters. They may criticize elders for what they did or did not do, for being too strict or too lenient, for showing favoritism or trying to please everyone, for being too conservative or too liberal—all with regard to the same single action taken or decision made.

Those who "can't" are apt to criticize those who can and do. It is far easier to question and condemn the actions taken by elders without the benefit (or angst) of wrangling with problems and decisions oneself. One can eloquently outline the plan of action he would take without the pressure and responsibility of being in the position.

How can elders prepare to handle the inevitable criticism from their own Eliabs? They can take note of how David handled criticism. David did defend himself (1 Sam. 17:29), but that was not nearly as successful as his decision to ignore it and let "wisdom [be] justified of all her children" (Luke 7:35). In other words, do like the moon when the little dogs are yipping at it. Keep on shining! David's performance against Goliath was far more convincing than Eliab and the people's prejudice against David. David would encounter criticism during his reign over Israel (1 Sam. 25:15ff; 2 Sam. 6:16ff), but he managed to continue shining. When criticism against him was justified (2 Sam. 12:1ff; 24:10ff), David humbly repented and amended his ways. God's shepherds today can expect an unfair share of criticism. The best way to combat that is to correct it when justified, but ignore it and show by their lives when it is not justified. It is significant that Peter, the elder, tells elders to be "examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3). That example, under the fire of criticism, can be so powerful!

W.T. Hamilton, in beautiful comments on Elihu's question—"Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?"—addresses words of comfort God's shepherds today can seize in times of criticism and discouragement. He wrote,

When there is no way to lay the burdens down, is there some way to be happy while carrying them? When problems have to be faced, and suffering has to be endured, can we find such meaning to life, and such faith in God, as to be able to adjust to them and still be happy? Can we find some song to sing in the night of despair, pain, bereavement, loneliness, frustration, slander, ridicule, hopelessness, or rejection?

Elders are never alone when facing unjust criticism. God supplies strength to His faithful servants, whatever the trial (cf. Phil. 4:19).

David learned courage and valor in the sheepfolds (1 Sam. 17:34ff). David faced lions and bears. Not only did he face them, he pursued them. Not only did he pursue them, he engaged them. Not only did he engage them, he attacked them. Not only did he attack them, he slaughtered them. These shepherding experiences equipped him for the ultimate defeat of a warrior who may have been greater than nine feet tall. It also surely served him well when leading Israel into battles as the greatest military hero God's physical nation ever knew. The shepherding business is not one for the faint of heart. Repeatedly, elders are admonished to be men of valor and bravery. They must not only feed the flock (Acts 20:28), they must be able to exhort and convict contradictors (Titus 1:9), stop the mouths of the insubordinate (Titus 1:10-11), and watch out for souls (Heb. 13:17). Given all that the Bible says about how false teachers operate,

God's shepherds must be prepared for "wolves" (cf. Matt. 7:15), "lions" (1 Peter 5:8), and "foxes" (cf. Song 2:15). The unruly may seek to intimidate and threaten God's shepherds (Rom. 16:17). The deceptive may seek to beguile God's shepherds (Rom. 16:18). The members may voice strong complaints against wise, necessary actions that elders must take, from church discipline to firing a preacher who is preaching a false message to voicing expectations of greater commitment from them (cf. Heb. 13:7,17). Having vision requires valiance, and calling for commitment takes courage. This does not mean that elders assume a boisterous, bullying posture, but that they must lovingly, but firmly, stand where God has spoken.

David learned faith in the sheepfolds (1 Sam. 17:37). Saul was concerned about David's safety, but after reviewing his own behavior as shepherd David concludes, "The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." This must have made for a remarkable picture. A young man not fitted with armor (17:39) and no doubt feet shorter than his opponent shows no signs of hesitation in going out to challenge Goliath. He did not see himself as a champion "slingshooter" or war hero, but instead he credits God as the one able to give the victory. His confidence is that "The Lord...will deliver me."

What matters test the faith of a church's shepherds today? One is finance. Budgets are often set based on what can be seen and produced by members, and a budget that truly challenges is rarely seen. Hebrews 11:1 reminds one that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Paul states that "hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?" (Rom. 8:24). Where are the elderships that will "launch out into the deep" (Luke 5:4)?

Where are the congregations whose sacrificial, faith-filled giving have created financial crises? No, God's promises and thus nature are at stake (2 Chron. 31:10; Mal. 3:10; Luke 6:38).

Another test of faith is fervor. No portion of the whole counsel of God can be withheld (cf. Acts 20:27), including those parts that even kindly and lovingly presented may be offensive to some. It takes faith on the part of elderships to stand behind, vocally commend, and enforce such preaching and teaching. An irrational fear of running off members or being "too narrow" (cf. Matt. 7:13-14) must be confronted through faith in God's power to deliver. Shepherds who know where they stand and "stand there" (cf. Eph. 6:13) show David-like faith!

An additional test of faith is fear. Fear cost Israel the Promised Land and ultimately their lives, and the root of that fear was lack of faith (Num. 13:31ff). God's leaders who are afraid to expand facilities when the need truly exists, to stand with a missionary unfairly maligned, to administer the discipline of a prominent or wealthy member, to take a public stand on a doctrinal issue that will draw community disapproval, or anything of the kind are failing their tests of faith. God will not simply excuse those who are fearful (Rev. 21:8). What an impact it will have upon the members on the pew where elders boldly stand up and say, "The Lord who delivered us in these past challenges will deliver us in this one, too!"

David learned resourcefulness in the sheepfolds (1 Sam. 17:40). What was it that David had at his side? Scripture says of David,

Then he took his staff in his hand; and he chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag, in a pouch which he had, and his sling was in his hand.

At least three tools or accessories mentioned in this passage are items brought with David “from the sheepfolds” – the staff, “a longer rod or pole upon which the shepherd could lean or with which he could guide the flock,” the sling, the weapon by which he would have fought off wild animals, and the bag or wallet, in which he would carry whatever he needed to care for the sheep and carry his food and other supplies. He places the stones in the bag and, dressed in the light and agile clothing of a shepherd rather than the heavy, bulky mail of a soldier, squares off against the giant.

Elders quickly learn that they must be men of ingenuity, knowing psychology, diplomacy, sociology, and economics. They must know how to handle people, “not quarrelsome” (1 Tim. 3:3), having “a good report among those who are outside” (1 Tim. 3:6), “not quick-tempered” and “not violent” (Titus 1:6). This necessitates not answering the surly, provocative, or intemperate in kind.

Mike Baskett tells the story of a sheep-raising farmer who lived next to another farmer, a man who was raising wheat, children, and very large dogs. The dogs were constantly scaring the sheep and the sheep farmer couldn’t figure out what to do. He could shoot the dogs when they came on his property or poison them...he could be nasty to his neighbor and he even considered taking him to court. Instead, he prayed about it.

As soon as some new lambs were born he gave each of his neighbor’s children one of the newly born lambs as a pet. The children were thrilled! But their father soon realized he couldn’t let the dogs run rampant as before. He built a large “dog run” for the sake of the pet lambs. The two farmers became friends. Kindness won.

Yet, additionally, they are men who equip themselves. That is why they must be men who know scripture (1

Tim. 3:2,6; Titus 1:9-11). Nothing is more important in an elder's "shepherd bag" than this spiritual sword! How often have elders led God's sheep astray because they were unfamiliar with the book of books?

Finally, they take steps to improve their service. There are so many opportunities geared toward helping already trained preachers continue and further that training. What about for God's overseers? Surely, they who watch for the everlasting souls of members need to keep their bag filled with the best resources to do their job well (cf. 1 Peter 5:4). Courses that help with counseling, mediating, listening, planning, and the like lead to improved pasturing!

Maybe David was but a youth when God began to use him in a great and public way (1 Sam. 17:33), but those lessons, both large and small, learned in the sheepfolds helped pave the way for perhaps his nation's greatest years until Christ came to earth. Each child of God is in some place or area where he or she can exert influence and help the church. It may not be visible, and it may never be visible. Yet, each day can be a proving ground and one day a launching pad to greater service. What we are doing right now, where we are with what we have, will shape us for the tasks that lie ahead for us. Remember David! His toil in the anonymity of pastures and fields, as he kept his heart and life in the way of the Lord, served him when those bigger responsibilities arrived.

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- 1 Swanson, J., (1997). **Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)** (electronic ed.) (DBLH 8286, #1). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Knight, G. W., (1992). **The Pastoral Epistles: A commentary on the Greek text** (159). Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

4 Add to that what 1 Samuel 13:14 and Acts 13:22 say about that matter, that David was a man after God's own heart!

5 Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F., (2002). **Commentary on the Old Testament.** (2:485). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

6 Hamilton, W.T., "**...Yet Trouble Came.**" Waxahatchie, TX: Nichols Bros. Pub. Co., 1969. p. 105.

7 Notice the application from the context in which Jesus tells the disciples, "Launch out into the deep." First, launch out into the deep, even if you have failed before and despite great effort (Luke 5:5). Then, launch out into the deep at the prompting of God's Word (Luke 5:5). Further, launch out into the deep and invite others with you (Luke 5:7). Finally, launch out into the deep and astonishing things can happen (Luke 5:9-11). Remember that this context is about spiritual fishing, not physical fishing (Luke 5:10). It certainly is applicable to faith and giving.

8 Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row, P., & Society of Biblical Literature, (1985). **Harper's Bible dictionary.** Includes index. (1st ed.) (874). San Francisco: Harper & Row.

9 "Together." Church bulletin of the **Broken Arrow church of Christ**, Broken Arrow, OK. March 23, 2008. p. 2.

CHAPTER 19

Amazing Grace: Mephiboseth's Place At The King's Table

Mike McDaniel

A British factory worker and his wife were excited when, after many years of marriage, they discovered they were going to have their first child. The man eagerly told his fellow workers that God had answered his prayers, but they made fun of him for asking God for a child. When the baby was born, he was diagnosed with Down's syndrome. As the father made his way to work for the first time after the birth, he wondered how to face his co-workers. "God, please give me wisdom," he prayed. Just as he feared, some mocked, "So, God gave you this child!" The new father stood for a long time, silently asking God for help. At last he said, "I'm glad the Lord gave this child to me and not to you" (Bread, Jan. 26). As this man accepted his disabled son as God's gift to him, so David was pleased to show kindness to Jonathan's son, who was "lame in his feet" (2 Sam. 9:3). Some may have disregarded Mephiboseth because he was lame, or because he was from Saul's household, but David's action showed that he valued him greatly as the son of his great friend Jonathan.

Our assigned text may be one of Scripture's richest illustrations of the grace and lovingkindness of God. Grace is unmerited favor. Grace is God snatching us from a

barren place - from a dry and desolate life of sin - and setting us at His table to partake from His bountiful blessings. That divine grace is illustrated to us in the story of a man after God's own heart who extended grace to another. That man was King David, and Mephiboseth was the recipient of his grace. Notice with me some key points about amazing grace derived from this wonderful Old Testament narrative.

(1) Grace Results From A Promise

In 2 Samuel 9:1, "And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" To understand the background for this statement, we must go back to First Samuel 20:13-16. When Jonathan first heard that David would succeed his father, King Saul, he asked his friend to spare the lives of his family. In that time, it was common for successors of a different family to execute others from the preceding royal family who might seek the throne. 1 Samuel 20:11-17 records,

And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field. And Jonathan said unto David, O Lord God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about to morrow any time, or the third day, and, behold, if there be good toward David, and I then send not unto thee, and shew it thee. The Lord do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the Lord be with thee, as he hath been with my father. And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not: But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the Lord

hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the Lord even require it at the hand of David's enemies. And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.

Later, King Saul also asked David to spare his family, and David made the same promise to him. "Swear now therefore unto me by the Lord, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house. And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold" (1 Sam. 24:21-22). David fully intended to keep the promises he had made. David knew that Saul's sons, Jonathan, Malchi-shua, and Abinadab were all slain in the battle on Mount Gilboa. Ish-bosheth's head had been brought to him by his assassins as a result of the opposition throne which he had set up, and this was the fourth member of Saul's house to die. Now he was wondering if there was anyone left of Saul's house to whom kindness could be extended as the result of his promises to Jonathan and his father.

David's earnestness to keep his promises provides us a noble example to do the same in our own lives. So many are failing to keep promises made to loved ones such as the vows of marriage they made to their spouse. When one takes the vows of marriage, he thereby commits his life to be joined with that of his partner until death parts them. What a forceful promise! God's rule is found in Matthew 19:6, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." God's one exception is found in Matthew 19:9,

Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another,

committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her
which is put away doth commit adultery.

When a husband or wife promises never-ending loyalty, God expects them to keep this promise.

Author and business leader Fred Smith writes: "One of my treasured memories comes from a doughnut shop in Grand Saline, Texas. There was a young farm couple sitting at the table next to mine. He was wearing overalls and she a gingham dress. After finishing their doughnuts, he got up to pay the bill, and I noticed she didn't get up to follow him. But then he came back and stood in front of her. She put her arms around his neck, and he lifted her up, revealing that she was wearing a full-body brace. He lifted her out of her chair and backed out the front door to the pickup truck with her hanging from his neck. As he gently put her into the truck, everyone in the shop watched. No one said anything until a waitress remarked, almost reverently, "He took his vows seriously." In Romans 1:30, in that list of 23 sins, among them is "covenant-breakers." David took his vows seriously. He was determined not to break the covenant he had made before God with his friend Jonathan. We need to keep our promises in keeping with the will of God (Eccl. 5:4).

This also reminds us of the fact that Christians reside in the sphere of God's grace today (Rom. 5:1-2) as the result of earlier promises. From the promise made in the Garden in Genesis 3:15 implying the virgin birth and the interposition of Christ to die vicariously for us to the promise made to Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3), we realize today that we are the recipients of these promises (Gal. 3:26-29). Just as David was a promise-keeping king, God is our promise-keeping Sovereign. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus

2:11). The grace we have received results from promises God earlier made.

(2) Grace Is Extended To Us Because Of Another

Again 2 Samuel 9:1 says, "And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" The soul of David continued to be touched by the memories of Jonathan's friendship. This shows us the kind of man David was. He could have been filled with bitterness due to the terrible mistreatment he had received from Saul. But instead of being consumed by that, he looked for an opportunity to do good, to help another for Jonathan's sake.

I grew up watching Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, the Lone Ranger, Gunsmoke, Big Valley, Bonanza, and High Chaparall and remain a fan of westerns. One of the greatest writers of Westerns is Louis L'Amour. He wrote a book in 1954 entitled, *Crossfire Trail*. It premiered as a TNT original movie in January of 2001 starring Tom Selleck as Rafael Covington. Covington's friend is shanghaied and beaten savagely, and in his deathbed, he asks his friend to take care of his wife and his ranch. Covington vows to do his best and travels hundreds of miles to the friend's small Wyoming town with two other friends. Why? He did this to keep his promise to his dying friend, to extend grace to someone because of another. Upon their arrival, they learn that the ranch has been abandoned, and the widow is living in town where she teaches school. The town, they soon learn, is under the control of an ambitious saloon owner (played by Mark Harmon) who wants the ranch and a confrontation ensues. At one point, the "bad guy" in the film laments that his plans are being destroyed by Covington and says, "What kind of dinosaur upends his whole life to keep his promise to a dying man?" Covington's love for his friend caused

him to extend his help to his friend's family.

Surely most of us can think back to someone who was kind and good to us, who helped us when we were most vulnerable, and who strengthened our hand in God as Jonathan did David. It may be that they have already passed from this life, and it is too late to express our gratitude to them. However, we could do the next best thing and do something for someone alive which can be a memorial to those we have lost. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).

Just as David's motivation for seeking a descendent of Saul was for Jonathan's sake, God's motivation for seeking to save us is for Jesus' sake. Ephesians 1:6 states, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Then Paul says later in Ephesians 4:32, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Grace is extended to us on behalf of another.

(3) Grace Is Extended To Those Undeserving

And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he. And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet (2 Sam. 9:2-3).

There were other descendants of Saul still living (2 Sam. 21:8), however, Saul's former servant mentioned only Jonathan's crippled son. I am not sure why this is the case. Here are some possibilities. (1) Perhaps Ziba only

knew of Mephibosheth and his whereabouts. (2) Ziba may have not trusted David's intentions despite what he had said. He may have been trying to protect the others from harm and thought that surely David would not consider Mephibosheth as a threat to the throne. He specifically mentions the fact that he was lame, perhaps to garner sympathy for him. (3) Ziba may have wanted to look out for himself and his own interests. He may have thought that Mephibosheth was not worthy of the king's generosity being disabled and that grace might have been extended to him instead. I believe the context indicates the latter view for reasons I shall reveal later.

The Bible reveals the reason for Mephibosheth's disability. Years ago, King Saul and Prince Jonathan had died in a terrible battle on the slopes of Mount Gilboa. A messenger rushed to the palace to tell the awful news. "And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that was lame of his feet. He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth" (2 Sam. 4:4). Thus, you might say that the cause of his lameness was due to fear of David. As a result of a fall from the hands of his nurse, he had been permanently disabled and had been living in hiding ever since.

David wanted to show the "kindness of God" to a descendent of Saul. The Hebrew word for "kindness" is *hesed*. Stephen D. Renn says, "this word constitutes one of the most significant theological terms in the Hebrew Scriptures...occurs around 250 times and is usually translated "mercy," "kindness," or "steadfast love" (often translated "lovingkindness" in the older English versions)"(Renn, 633-634). William Wilson in his *Old Testament Word Studies* gives this definition:

The general import of this word seems to be, the full flow of natural affection, corresponding to *storgé* in Greek. The Hebrew word for "stork," so remarkable for affection to her young, is derived from this word. The corresponding word in Arabic is used of the flowing of the mother's milk to the breasts, so nearly connected with affection for her offspring; hence has been derived, probably, the phrase, 'full of the milk of human kindness.' It is used of the goodness and abundant grace of God to his own people, his free favour and faithfulness; in man, it is expressive of kindness and gratitude in a high degree... (Wilson, 238).

The kindness which David desired to show Mephiboseth was undeserved. He had done nothing to deserve this kindness. He did not merit it. He could never begin to repay it. It was truly unmerited favor.

Likewise, the riches of God's grace bestowed upon us are undeserved by us. Paul said in Ephesians 1:7, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Brother Dan Winkler identified some of the gems or riches from the treasure chest of his grace as follows: (1) The gift of Jesus, (2) The word of God, (3) Justification, (4) Abundant living, (5) Prayer, (6) Hope, and (7) Salvation (Winkler, 2-3). Paul was fond of using the phrase "riches of" and used it again in connection with grace in Ephesians 2:7-9, "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast." The word "works" is used in different senses in the Bible. In Ephesians 2:9, Paul is speaking of works of human merit or goodness by which one might seek

to be saved apart from submission to the will of Christ and cleansing by the blood of Christ. Notice that after Paul said that salvation was not of works, he then stated, "lest any man should boast." Previously, he had stated in the passage that salvation was "not of yourselves." Clearly, the works here are deeds a man might do and then boast that he had saved himself, had earned God's grace, rather than receiving salvation as the gift of God's grace through faith.

You may do something nice for me and I, because of your kindness, react in gratitude and as we often say, "return the favor," and do something nice for you! This is not the case in the favor God does for us in providing salvation. His grace toward us is wholly unmerited. Romans 5:8 states, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." We did not deserve it. We cannot earn it. We cannot put God in our debt. Someone has said that grace is God's giving us what we do not deserve whereas mercy is God not giving us what we do deserve. There is nothing we can do that puts God under obligation, or in debt to us. We should remember this admonition of Jesus:

So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do (Luke 17:10).

(4) Grace Can Drive Away Our Fears

And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar. Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar (2 Sam. 9:3-4).

Ziba knew exactly where Mephibosheth was. He was in the house of Machir, a former friend of Saul. It would

appear from 2 Samuel 17:27 that he was a prominent and prosperous man and that his home was probably not far from Mahanaim which was beyond the Jordan River. The name of the place was Lo-debar which means "a barren place." This was a wilderness area, and it was probably a place where Mephibosheth could be hidden well. Family members of previous dynasties were often executed or they hid for the rest of their lives. You can just imagine his surprise and alarm when the messengers of David arrived. Mephibosheth must have thought that his life was over! His worse fears appeared to have become reality. He knew nothing of the covenant David had made with Jonathan. He is taken to Jerusalem and into the presence of the king himself and waited for the execution order to be given.

Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant! And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually (2 Sam. 9:5-7).

How frightened Mephibosheth must have been as he fell down before the king whose very word meant life or death. When David called his name, he mustered up the strength to humbly say, "Behold thy servant!" The next two words that he heard from the lips of King David must have filled him with unspeakable relief - "Fear not." David then informed Mephibosheth that he would show him kindness or grace for Jonathan's sake. He now knew that David was not his executioner but his protector and provider. David's grace drove away the fears of Mephibosheth in an instant.

The grace of God should help to drive away our fears. The writer of Hebrews admonishes us,

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me (Heb. 13:5-6).

How easy it is for us to be discontented Christians, but when Jesus is our king, we have all we need. He knows our needs and circumstances, and He has pledged to take care of us.

Hebrews 13:6 is a quotation from Psalm 118:6, "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" The Hebrews were facing persecution from family, friend, and foe alike. What was needed was courage in the face of persecution. Why may the Christian say boldly, "The Lord is my helper?" It is because God provides all the help that we need. The Hebrew writer also tells us how to obtain it. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). Knowing that grace and mercy are available helps to drive away our fears. Do you remember how David concluded Psalm 23? "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." (Psa. 23:6). What a help grace and mercy are in our time of need!

Too often we are like the apostles who were afraid in the storm. Jesus rebuked them saying, "Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" (Mark 4:40). We may think that was a strange question to ask men who had just been in danger of losing their lives, but we must remember that these men had the Son of God with them in the boat, the very one who made the worlds.

Their fear revealed a lack of faith. Did not our Lord say in John 14:1, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." Faith in the grace and mercy of God drives away our fear.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof (Psa. 46:1-3).

Grace can drive away our fears.

(5) Grace Should Be Humbly Accepted

And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am? (2 Sam. 9:8).

Mephibosheth did not regard David's actions as obligatory nor was he haughty in his acceptance of the king's offer...a dead dog is an object of disgust and contempt; thus, Mephibosheth expressed his sense of unworthiness of the honor bestowed by David (cf. 1 Sam. 24:14-15; 2 Sam. 16:9) (Liddell, 243).

Grace would not be forced upon Mephibosheth against his will. He could easily have been filled with bitterness and hatred due to the circumstances of his life and rejected the offer defiantly. Instead, he humbly accepted David's gracious offer. He knew he was as a dead dog. But due to David's kindness, an abundant life would be his.

Years ago, there was a young man who was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to life imprisonment in England. After several years, Queen Victoria granted his pardon. The world, however, had lost its attraction and

after a few days of freedom, he returned to prison and requested to be readmitted. His request was granted, and he remained at Halifax until the Maritime Penitentiary was built at Dorchester and the long-term prisoners removed there. When the prisoners were marched from the depot to the penitentiary, all but this man were handcuffed and strictly guarded. He followed the line at a little distance and requested a place in the new institution. By the grace of his sovereign, he could have been a free man, entitled upon request to a full suit of clothes, and the great prison gate would have opened for him as readily as it would for the warden himself. Yet, he had come to prefer prison life, so he submitted to prison discipline. He wore those gloomy, prison clothes. When the bell rang at six o'clock, he fell into line with the others to be satisfied with prison food. At the appointed hour, he would return to his cell where the iron door closed and locked behind him. While that story is almost unbelievable, it is a picture of many today who when offered freedom by the grace of God, choose rather to be enslaved by sin at the expense of final punishment!

Without Christ, we are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). "The Devil tries to call it life, and those who want to engage in a whirl of iniquity often say, let's go 'live it up.' However, they are not living it up; they are going down and bringing eternal death upon themselves. Life is in Christ, not in the deeds and dens of iniquity of this godless world" (Butler, 656-657). Only with Christ can we have an abundant life (John 10:10). However, we must comply with the conditions of His grace to be saved. The Bible teaches that man must do something in order to be saved (Acts 2:40; Matt. 7:21; Phil. 2:12). Salvation is by grace through faith, and not by grace only (Eph. 2:8-10). Also, God's grace has appeared to all men (Titus 2:11,12). If man is saved solely by grace, than all men

will be saved, but such is not the case because salvation is conditional. One must believe in Jesus (Acts 16:31), repent of sins (Luke 13:3), confess Christ (Rom. 10:10), and be baptized (Acts 2:38). When these conditions are met the gift of God's grace is received.

(6) Grace Grants Us A Place At The King's Table

Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house. Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master's son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat bread alway at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons. And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Micha. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 9:9-12).

David's words, "eat at my table," are found four times in this chapter (vv. 7, 10, 11, 13). To eat at the King's table was a sign of great honor and respect (cf. Jer. 52:31-34). Instead of being a fugitive in Lo-debar, Jonathan's son would now be treated like one of David's sons. David's continual grace is seen when the life of Mephibosheth was later spared from the hands of the Gibeonites because of his covenant with Jonathan (2 Sam. 21:7). Mephibosheth would be given the lands of Saul (2 Sam. 9:7), and Ziba and his large family and servants would become his servants and work the land for him.

A strange incident occurs latter regarding Ziba and Mephibosheth. Absalom had rebelled against David, and David had to flee Jerusalem. After Absalom was killed, the following incident occurred while David was returning home.

And when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred loaves of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine. And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these? And Ziba said, The asses be for the king's household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink. And the king said, And where is thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, Today shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father. Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee that I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king (2 Sam. 16:1-4).

Was Ziba honest on this occasion? Some commentators take Ziba's side in this matter and some take Mephibosheth's. It is my feeling that Ziba coveted what Mephibosheth had received—the grace extended by King David—and that he practiced deceit in order to obtain it. To substantiate this, observe what happened on the day when David arrived.

And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed

until the day he came again in peace [This appears to be an indication by the Holy Spirit of Mephibosheth's loyalty toward David and of his genuine sorrow over David's departure from Jerusalem - MRM.]. And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said unto him, Wherefore wentest not thou with me, Mephibosheth? And he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant is lame. And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king is as an angel of God: do therefore what is good in thine eyes. For all of my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king? And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land. And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house (2 Sam. 19:24-30).

I am of the opinion that Mephibosheth was innocent in the matter and that Ziba conspired to get the inheritance of Saul which he had desired all along. Mephibosheth lost half of everything to his deceitful servant, but he had not been consumed by materialism. What was of supreme importance to him was the security of his King for he looked upon him as "an angel of God." His relationship with his King was what he now valued most.

God has raised us up from our own "Lo-debar"-our place of barrenness and brokenness.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4-7).

He gives us the honor of communing with Christ at His table in the kingdom. "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29). We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ because of His grace (Rom. 8:17). It does not matter what our color is, what our abilities are, or what our disabilities are. Grace can give us a place at the King of King's table where God can supply all our needs according to "His riches in glory" (Phil. 4:19).

Julie Martin wrote the following poem. It is called:

"Grace In A Barren Place"

I was that Mephibosheth
Crippled by my twisted pride and
hiding from You in a barren place
where You could not find me
where You would not give me what I deserved
But somehow You found me and
I don't understand why but You
gave me what I do not deserve
You not only spared my desolate life but
You made it bountiful
And here at Your Table
I will thank you my
King (Swindoll, 98-99).

2 Samuel 9:12 says, "And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Micha." Did this occur after the events just recorded? It is interesting because the Hebrew name, Micha is a rhetorical question. It means: "who is like God?" Perhaps his child was given this name by Mephibosheth in appreciation for the amazing grace of God in his life.

It reminds me of something the prophet Micah said in Micah 7:18,

Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

A young woman refuses to believe that she could be forgiven of her sins because as she said, "God wouldn't want someone like me." She feels the guilt of her immoral conduct, but she doesn't realize the wonder of God's grace and the blessing of His forgiveness. The God of all grace has the ability to make saints out of the worst of sinners. In the words of the prophet Micah or as the name of Micha suggests, we can say with confidence and adoration, "Who is a God like unto thee?"

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CHAPTER 20

The Shepherd's Psalm

Kyle Butt

If it were possible to ascertain which verses of the Bible have been more often memorized, quoted, and read, surely the immortal words of the Holy Spirit spoken through David in the passage we refer to as the 23rd Psalm would be among them. For more than 3,000 years, the words of this Psalm have comforted those who have lost loved ones, encouraged those who were facing grueling life struggles, and enlightened those who were nearing the end of their time here on Earth. Which of us has not heard these words spoken in low, solemn tones by a minister standing beside the fresh dirt of a newly dug grave? What is it about this psalm that touches the deepest chords of the human heart? What in the psalm drives even the non-Christian and irreligious to recognize it as one of the greatest passages penned in all human history? Join me as we explore the Shepherd's Psalm.

The Lord Is My Shepherd

David and his fellow Israelites were surrounded by pagan idol worshipers. There were as many false gods as there were nations to imagine them. The worshipers of Molech sacrificed their children to their lord (Lev. 20:2-5). Baal worshipers engaged in sexual immorality during their religious ceremonies (Num. 25:1-2). Those

who worshiped Asherah, Beelzebub, the Sun and moon, and hundreds of other false gods committed shameful acts of murder, sexual perversions, drunkenness, lewdness, and all types of heinous immorality. This was because the “gods” of the nations were not gods at all, but only the mental concoctions of the sinful people who devised them. The ‘gods’ were simply a manifestation of man’s evil desire and sinfulness.

In contrast to the imaginary pagan gods, the Lord stood for David (and stands today, and will forever) as The Reality – not some meaningless mental re-creation that acquires its attributes from the feeble minds of men. Instead, the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting (Psa. 90:2). He reigns as the Almighty God (Gen. 17:1), Who is so mighty that He has all power and no purpose of His can be withheld from Him (Job 42:2).

The idols of the heathen were silver and gold. They had hands but they could not lift things. The idols had mouths, but they could not speak. They had feet and legs, but they could not walk, nor could they tell the things that had happened before them or the things that were to come. Their heavy, metal forms were a heavy burden carried on the shoulders of men or weighing down carts pulled by oxen. But the Lord is not one to be carried on an ox cart as though He needs man’s assistance. On the contrary, God is the living God who carries His children from their birth to their old age (Isa. 46). He is not a burden like a heavy metal statue, but instead He lifts and carries those who are burdened. For David, and for all who would seek lasting comfort, The Lord God is and there is no other (Isa. 46:9).

The Lord Is My Shepherd

Not only did David recognize the reality of the Lord, the only true God, but he also stated his own personal

commitment to that God. On numerous occasions in the Bible we are given glimpses of those whose mental acknowledgment of God's reality is never translated into faithful, personal action. James, the brother of Jesus, commented that the demons believe in the one true God, and they tremble (James 2:19). But those demons never converted their belief in God to faithful, personal action for God. John's gospel account relates the tragic facts that many of the Jewish rulers believed in Christ (the Lord), but were too afraid of the Pharisees to translate that belief into personal, faithful action (John 12:42).

How many people today are hoping that a mere mental assent to the reality of God will be enough to usher them into heaven. In their minds they live in a "Christian" nation, maybe they even attended "Christian" schools. Their wives or husbands or parents are Christians, and they hope that all of the "Christianness" that surrounds them will simply rub off on them enough to squeeze them through a crack in the pearly gate. We know that such is not the case. Only those who have made a personal commitment to be obedient to the words of the Lord will be saved (Matt. 7:21). As Joshua encouraged the Israelites before his death to choose which gods they would serve, he boldly declared: "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Judges 24:15). Only a personal relationship with the Lord is effective to open a person up to the comfort and peace found in the 23rd Psalm.

The Lord Is My Shepherd

By using the word "shepherd," David implies several very important characteristics of his relationship with the Lord. First, he implies that he does not belong to himself, but belongs to the Lord. He is the property of the Lord, and is excited about that fact. As a sheep, David recognizes that He is a follower and not the leader. He obeys and

does not command. He has completely given himself over to the fact that he is not the decision maker in the relationship, but instead he offers his complete compliance and obedience to the leadership of the Lord.

The Lord's ownership of David, and all who would truly apply the psalm to their lives, was not a fleeting, temporary arrangement, but a lifelong commitment. Phillip Keller, in his book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, discusses his first flock of 30 ewe lambs. After he purchased them, his friend handed him a razor sharp "killing" knife and told him it was time for Phillip to "put his mark" on the sheep. Phillip explained to the reader that each shepherd has a special mark that he cuts into the ear of each of his sheep, similar to a brand on a cow. He also told about the struggle to catch each ewe and the painful processes of notching her ear with the special mark. He then referred to the ancient Hebrew practice of piercing the ears of those slaves who decided they loved their masters and wanted to serve them forever (Exo. 21:1-6). He then applied that to the life of a Christian, whose mark is the cross. Jesus Christ has bought us with His blood and His ownership should be ever visible in our daily lives. [NOTE: Phillip Keller's book is very insightful. Many of the ideas and illustrations for this lesson were planted in my mind from his very interesting book.]

The Lord's ownership of His sheep did not come at a small price to Him. Jesus Christ explained that He is the good shepherd (John 10:7-18). His intent has always been to impart abundant life to His sheep. Because of His love for His sheep, He was willing to lay down His life for the sheep. Jesus' leadership, love, and ownership of His sheep stand in stark contrast to the tyrannical, cruel dictatorship of sin and living under Satan's command. Satan uses those under his control, drains them of their vital force, forsakes them, and ultimately consumes them.

He is the god of this world who is pictured in the New Testament as a raging lion seeking sheep to devour (1 Peter 5:8). Keller wrote of a farm beside his that was kept by a tenant farmer. The tenant farmer seemed to care nothing for his sheep. The grazing fields were dry and bare, and the sheep were malnourished and plagued by parasites and disease. Keller recalls how he watched the poor, ragged sheep of the negligent tenant farmer stand at the fence and gaze over into Keller's own, lush fields of green grass and well fed flocks. So it is with those in Satan's fold. They long to be healthy and cared for, but their master is a heartless tyrant who cares nothing for his sheep. The sinful lifestyles that involve fornication, greed, power, and lust that seem to promise so much, ultimately end in dissatisfaction, pain, and spiritual malnutrition. It is only when we decide to obey and belong to the Lord that we will escape the doomed fate of Satan's slaughter-bound flock.

Another paramount implication of David's acknowledgement of the Lord as his shepherd is the fact that sheep follow their shepherd, wherever the shepherd leads. Jesus said: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). Of course, following the Lord might be a course that might not seem, to the sheep, to be the best one to take at the time. For instance, when Jesus told His disciples of His plans to journey to Bethany and raise Lazarus from the dead, the disciples were frightened. They reminded Jesus that the Jews had recently attempted to kill Jesus. Yet, when they realized it was Jesus' firm determination to return to Judea, Thomas spoke up, saying: "Let us also go, that we may die with Him" (John 11:16). Such is the attitude of a faithful sheep—complete trust in the decisions of the shepherd regardless of the consequences.

Many Christians today need to be reminded of this

aspect of "sheephood." It is often the case that individuals and congregations follow the footsteps of Jesus only as long as those whose path leads them the way they want to go. When Jesus' teachings present an issue that these sheep don't like they turn aside and follow another shepherd. It is the sad case that many congregations have not followed the Lord in His commands to disfellowship wayward members because they simply feel like it is not the best thing to do. Others have forsaken Jesus' commands on marriage, divorce, and remarriage because they feel that Jesus' teachings on the subject are too stringent and counter-cultural. Still others have perverted their worship practices by introducing mechanical instruments because they feel like they know better than the Good Shepherd. They simply fail to realize that a sheep follows the shepherd, with full faith and confidence in the shepherd's ability. Only those who hear Jesus' voice and "follow" Him can be called His sheep.

I Shall Not Want

Imagine looking out into a lush, green rolling pasture full of fat, healthy sheep. You draw your attention to one particular sheep that is laying comfortably in the grass, completely unmolested by any outside danger, perfectly content, well-fed, with no desire to be anywhere but exactly where it is laying. It is not agitated or nervous, but calm, carefree and satisfied. Such is the picture that David paints with the phrase "I shall not want." Due to the shepherd's diligent care, love, and concern, David, as his sheep, realizes that there is no pasture greener, nor shepherd more able to care for his soul.

Yet, it must be understood that the peace and contentment that David feels is not based on his financial status or other fleeting, transient securities. David's life was full of struggles against the Philistines, King Saul,

his own son Absalom, and Satan. David fought giants, defended his own sheep from a lion and a bear, and battled tens of thousands of foreign enemies. His life was far from trouble-free. His statement "I shall not want" conveys the realization that there is no other place for his soul to be complete and whole apart from a relationship with his shepherd. The contentment he feels is a deep spiritual contentment that can't be shaken by outside turbulence. It is the understanding that only God's direction can fill the void in David's soul (Keller, p. 14-15).

In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon vividly recounts his own spiritual journey in search of the feeling of spiritual contentment. He retells how he sought fulfillment in worldly wisdom (Eccl. 1:13), drinking (2:3), and in amassing great wealth (2:4-9), but he summarized all his pursuits as "vanity and vexation of spirit." He was not content and could not say that his soul was satisfied. In the conclusion of the book, Solomon summarized his life's experiment:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:
Fear God and keep His commandments, for
this is the whole duty of man. For God will
bring every work into judgment, including
every secret thing, whether it is good or it is
bad (12:13-14).

Solomon realized that only by following the Lord as his shepherd would his soul ever be satisfied.

The apostle Paul clearly understood the sentiments in David's statement. He wrote to the Philippians:

Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have
learned in whatever state I am, to be content:
I know how to be abased, and I know how to
abound. Everywhere and in all things I have
learned both to be full and to be hungry, both
to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things
through Christ who strengthens me (4:11-13).

Paul understood that his outside circumstances did not determine his inward contentment. Paul could be content sitting in stocks with a bleeding back in a prison in Philippi. He could be content floating for a night and a day in the sea without knowing whether he would live or die. He could be content standing in chains before the emperor of Rome, all because he recognized that he was a sheep of the one true Shepherd. Thus, he could say with confidence:

For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day (2 Tim. 1:12).

Many today cannot join with David in saying that they are content. The joy of contentment has flown from their souls like a bird from its nest. They are ill content, not due to negligence on the shepherd's part, but due to their own desires to wander from the shepherd's care. They have searched for contentment in other things and have found nothing but vanity. Some have set their hearts on riches, thinking that more material possessions will fill the yearning in their hearts. They have worked 70, 80, or 90 hours a week, neglecting their families, friends, and their God, thinking that a bigger house, a nicer car, or more stocks and bonds would bring them satisfaction. Yet, all too late, they have realized while driving those cars or sitting lonely in their mansions, that something is still missing, their soul is still in want.

Others have pinned their soul's contentment on mundane, trivial aspirations such as their child's success at sports. They have taken their child to every available camp to hone his skills. They have signed him up to be on every team, traveling series, summer league, and fall ball tournament that could be found. They have

neglected worship to attend his ballgames, bought him the best, most expensive equipment, and treated his sports accomplishments like they are on a higher plain than moral, religious, or ethical success. But for all their pains, even if the child is as successful as any child can be at sports, they painfully realize that his success can't fill the void in their soul.

Still others find themselves addicted to things like television. The following poem is an accurate illustration of the implications of how many spend their time as it relates to television.

The 23rd Channel

The TV is my shepherd. I shall not want;
It makes me lie down on the sofa;
It leads me away from the faith; It destroys my soul.
It leads me in the paths of sex and
violence for the sponsor's sake.
Yea, though I walk in the shadow
of Christian responsibilities,
there will be no interruption for the TV is with me;
Its cable and remote control, they comfort me.
It prepares a commercial for me
in the presence of my worldliness;
It anoints my head with humanism and consumerism,
my coveting runneth over.
Surely, laziness and ignorance shall follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house watching TV forever.

The list could continue for hundreds of pages. Some have searched for contentment in the bottom of the alcohol bottle; others think it can be found on pornographic Web sites. Still others turn their attention to academic achievement, others to modern fashion and style, but all such pursuits ultimately lead to spiritual depression and

hopelessness. Only by following the Lord can a person truly say that he or she "does not want."

Phillip Keller illustrates the spirit of discontentment with a story about a sheep he once owned. He named her Mrs. Gad-about because she had an insatiable desire to leave his fold. He tells how, when she was put into a new area to graze, she would search all day, up and down the fence line, for a way to "escape." When she would successfully find a hole in the fence, she would get out and graze in other pastures. Keller mentioned that the other pastures often were brown, burnt and offered little nutrition. She was not leaving her shepherd because the "grass was greener," she simply had a rebellious, wandering spirit. Her antics spread to her lambs and eventually to other sheep in the flock. Keller recounts how she was a beautiful sheep and he did not want to get rid of her, but her infectious discontentment could not be allowed to disturb the tranquility of the flock, so he was forced to butcher her (pp. 20-22).

The ancient Israelites in the wilderness embodied the rebellious spirit of this wandering sheep. It did not matter what God gave them, they always wanted something more, or less, or different. They grumbled for food, so God gave them bread from heaven (Exod. 16). They became dissatisfied with manna so God provided quail (Num. 11:31-35). They recognized the land of Canaan was fruitful and fertile, but they bemoaned that they were too small and weak to take it, even though God promised to empower them (Num. 14). Whereas the apostle Paul had learned in whatever state he found himself to be content, the Israelites had determined to be discontent in whatever state they were in.

It is like the illustration of the twin brothers Jim and Tim. Jim was content regardless of his circumstances. He looked on the bright side of things. His glass was always

half-full, and he was determined to see the best in every person and every situation. His brother Tim was the exact opposite. Nothing was ever right for Tim. His clothes were too tight or too loose. His food was too hot or too cold. His glass was always half-empty, and he refused to be content regardless of his circumstances. The boys' parents decided they would try an experiment to see just how content or discontent each boy could be. They put Tim, the malcontent, in a room full of toys, candy, cakes, games, and everything that a little boy could want. They put Jim in a room full of horse manure. They left both boys in the rooms for one hour and returned to see how they were doing. Sure enough, nothing was right for Tim. The candy and cakes had caused his stomach to hurt because he ate too much, the toys quickly bored him and the games broke or were too complicated for him to play. The parents wondered if Jim had experienced an equally dismal hour. When they opened the door, they heard Jim laughing loudly and they saw horse manure flying in the air. They called to Jim and asked how he was getting along. He yelled back that he was having a great time. He said he figured with so much horse manure in one room, there had to be a pony somewhere and he was going to find it!

He Makes Me Lie Down In Green Pastures, He Leads Me Beside Still Waters

Sheep are completely dependent upon their shepherd for the basic necessities of life. They need food and water to live, and they often do not know where to look to find what they need. A diligent shepherd, especially in David's time, had to spend long hours looking for green pastures and beneficial sources of drinkable water. The shepherd had to plan his feeding schedule around the seasons, cold weather, and grass growth. If his preparation

was inadequate, his sheep would not have enough to eat and drink and they would die.

David recognized his dependence on God for all his basic needs. He realized that he was in God's care, and the loving shepherd would tend to all the needs, both spiritual and physical, of His flock. He did not need to worry, because God had (has) a plan for David's well being. Jesus expressed similar sentiments when He admonished His listeners:

Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

He Restores My Soul

Due to no fault of the diligent shepherd, it is the case that the sheep sometimes are troubled by their own wandering ways, or they are harassed by outside circumstances. These troubles can cause a person to be discouraged, depressed, and lonely. David realized that, not only would the Lord provide for his physical and spiritual needs, but the Lord would also comfort and support David in times of trouble, trial, and pain.

Keller illustrates this phrase memorably. He explains that often sheep can become "cast down." A cast down sheep is one that has accidentally rolled on its back, lost its center of gravity, and cannot get back up. Often, a cast down sheep's legs will stick up in the air while it frantically kicks and squirms trying to right itself. Yet, for all its effort, the helpless sheep cannot get up. This situation is extremely dangerous for the sheep and can prove fatal. Since the sheep is immobilized, it is a prime target for predators. In addition, if the sheep becomes cast down in the late spring or early summer when the weather is hot, digestive gases can build up, decreasing blood circulation, and the sheep can die in a matter of hours (Keller, 1970, pp. 49-60). Without the help of the shepherd, the plight of the cast down sheep is hopeless. But with a little help from the shepherd, the sheep can be back on its feet with the rest of the flock enjoying the healthy living of the green pastures and still waters.

So it is with the Christian, we often face times of despair, discouragement, depressions, and trials. Without the comfort that comes from the God of all comfort (2 Cor. 1:4), our plight would be hopeless. Aided by God's presence and His strength through Christ, however, our hopelessness is turned into confidence and spiritual restoration. As the apostle Paul stated:

For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves **but in God who raises the dead**, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us, you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many (1 Cor. 1:8-11, emp. added).

An excellent poem that captures the sense of God's care in troublesome times is titled:

Footprints In The Sand

One night a man had a dream.

He dreamed he was walking
along the beach with the Lord.

Across the sky flashed scenes from his life.

For each scene, he noticed two sets
of footprints in the sand;
one belonging to him,
and the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him,
he looked back at the footprints in the sand.

He noticed that many times along the path of his life
there was only one set of footprints.

He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest
and saddest times in his life.

This really bothered him and
he questioned the Lord about it.

"Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you,
you'd walk with me all the way.

But I have noticed that during the most
troublesome times in my life,
there is only one set of footprints.
I don't understand why when
I needed you most you would leave me."
The Lord replied, "My precious, precious child,
I love you and I would never leave you.
During your times of trial and suffering,
when you see only one set of footprints,
it was then that I carried you."

Author: Carolyn Joyce Carty

Yea, Though I Walk Through The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death, I Will Fear No Evil

This particular line in David's psalm is most likely the reason that the psalm is so popular. The sentiments contained in this line are often used to bring comfort to those grieving over loved ones. This line is probably the most often quoted statement verse at graveside services in nations that would call themselves "Christian". For those truly obedient to God, this verse expresses one of life's ultimate spiritual needs, the need to be unafraid of death.

For a sheep, long treks up dangerous mountains in search of green pastures included troublesome journeys through dark valleys. The potential dangers in these dreary vales were numerous and varied: avalanches, wild animals, difficult footing, violent storms, etc. As a helpless sheep, David recognized that only God's protection could see him through the dangers of this life, and ultimately lead him in peace to the next. Truly, it is only in the care of the Good Shepherd that we can be unafraid of passing on this life to the next. The Hebrews writer stated that without God's plan of salvation, the fear of death plagues all mankind (Heb. 2:15). Statements by the

inspired apostle Paul manifest the feelings of one who is unafraid of death, and confident in his Lord's care: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

Those who have not put their trust in the Lord find themselves terrified to face death. The humanistic thinking poet William Ernest Henley attempted to feign confidence in his humanistic philosophy in the face of death. He wrote the following poem titled *Invictus* in an attempt to "prove" he could face death "unafraid."

Invictus

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.

Notice Henley's statement that beyond this place of wrath and tears (this life) looms but the "horror of the shade." Henley and all who do not put their trust in the Good Shepherd can have nothing to look forward to in the next life except "horror."

I Will Dwell In The House Of The Lord Forever

Life on time's side of eternity is a probationary period during which God's human creations individually determine their own eternal destiny. Of course, it is not by an individual's own might that he or she is saved eternally, but it is by a person's decisions to trust and obey God or to deny and reject the ultimate spiritual care of his Creator that each individual's perpetual spiritual fate is sealed. All who have faithfully and truly lived out the implications of the Lord being their shepherd will forever be rewarded by eternal life in the presence of their Savior. All who have not rendered their obedience to the shepherd will be cast away from His presence into the lake of fire—the second death (Rev. 20:10).

In contrast to William Ernest Henley's humanistic poem, Dorothea Day penned a poem in response titled *My Captain*:

My Captain

Out of the night that dazzles me,
Bright as the sun from pole to pole,
I thank the God I know to be
For Christ the conqueror of my soul.
Since His the sway of circumstance,
I would not wince nor cry aloud.
Under that rule which men call chance
My head with joy is humbly bowed.
Beyond this place of sin and tears
That life with Him! And His the aid,

Despite the menace of the years,
Keeps, and shall keep me, unafraid.
I have no fear, though strait the gate,
He cleared from punishment the scroll.
Christ is the Master of my fate,
Christ is the Captain of my soul.

King David could honestly say that God was his Shepherd, his master, his captain, thus he could conclude his shepherds psalm with the confident assurance that he would dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Can you say that you have followed the good shepherd through the green pastures of life as well as through the dark valleys? Can you say you have sought and found contentment in His care without looking to the vacuous sinful pleasures of life? Can you say that Christ is the Master of your life, the Captain of your soul? If you can, then you can truly appreciate the Shepherd's Psalm.

CHAPTER 21

Sharing The Spoils: Remembering The Weak

Gary Williams

Introduction

During David's flight for his life from King Saul, he took shelter in Philistine territory with Achish king of Gath. Achish invited David and his men to go out with him to battle against the Israelites. When the princes of the Philistines realized David was with them, they were angry and demanded Achish send David back because they feared David would turn against them in battle. Achish assured David that he had done nothing wrong and that he was as an angel of God; but, he asked David to return home. Upon arriving back at Ziklag, David and his men found that their homes had been burned with fire and all their wives and children had been taken captive by the Amalekites. Certain men in the group wanted to stone David because of the disaster that had fallen upon them. David asked Abiathar the priest to inquire of God as to whether he should pursue after the Amalekites. Receiving God's blessing, David and his 600 men pursued. When they came to the brook Besor, 200 men were too weak to go further; thus, David left them there with the baggage. The Amalekites were overtaken and David and the 400 recovered all that had been carried away including their wives, children, and much spoil.

As they returned to the brook Besor, David saluted

the 200 who had stayed behind. Men of Belial quickly spoke up that the 200 deserved none of the spoil. They claimed the 200 should only have their families returned and then be driven away, no longer getting to be part of David's company. David instantly put down the wickedness and said "But as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike" (1 Sam. 30:24). In addition to sharing the spoils with the 200, when David returned home he sent gifts to many of his friends in several of the cities in the south of Judah.

From This Account Of David, We Learn About "Men of Belial"

"Men of Belial" was a common expression used for "worthless, wicked, ungodly men." David said in addition to the "wicked men" there were also "men of Belial" (1 Sam. 30:22). These evil men not only desired the spoils they deserved but they also wanted what should rightly go to others. Their ruthlessness is seen in the fact that they were willing to permit their families be returned unto them; but, then they were to be driven from their midst without even supplies to sustain them. This is not the first time in Scripture that spoils were divided with those other than the soldiers. In the war with the Midianites, Moses had ordered that half the spoil should belong to those who fought and half to the congregation who remained in the camp (Num. 31:27). During the days of Joshua, when the Reubenites, Gadites, and those of the half tribe of Manasseh were about to return back across the Jordan River because they had fulfilled their obligation to fight for Israel, Joshua told them to divide their spoils with their brethren (Josh. 22:8). When David planned to divide the spoils with the 200 who remained at the brook, he was not doing anything that had not

already been custom of the past.

Every large group of people will always have some in it who will eventually manifest that they are not good in their heart. When David sent his men to Nabal while Nabal was shearing his sheep at Mt. Carmel, David said he had restrained his men from stealing from Nabal's flocks as well as protected them from marauders. Nabal revealed the wickedness of his heart when he refused to send supplies to David and his men (1 Sam. 25). When Ahab, king of Northern Israel, desired Naboth's vineyard, his evil wife Jezebel plotted to dispose of Naboth so her husband could take possession of the land (1 Kings 21). During the days of Joshua, one man's evil desire for material things cost him his life as well as the lives of his wife, children, animals, and all his possessions were stoned and burned (Achan, Josh. 7). Joseph's brothers opted to sell Joseph out of greed (Gen. 37:23-28).

This attitude of selfishness, arrogance, and lack of consideration for others is seen even in the New Testament writings. In the chosen twelve, those who walked with Jesus during His three years of earthly ministry, there was Judas. Judas' heart manifested itself as being evil when he sold the Lord for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:15). In the parable of the Prodigal son, upon the prodigal's repentance and return, the elder brother was filled with wrath when he heard all that his father had done for his younger brother. The elder brother's heart was eaten up with jealousy and had no gladness for the transformation in his younger brother's life (Luke 15). Jesus told another parable about a certain rich man whose ground brought forth plentifully, to such a point that his barns could not hold it. The rich man's attitude was that he was the one responsible for all his prosperity and, thus, he would tear down his barns and build bigger ones; then, he would take his ease, eat, drink, and be merry (Luke 12:16-21).

God told him he was a fool and that his soul would be required of him that very night. Jesus concluded by saying "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21).

There will always be wicked men and "men of Belial" in the world until its destruction upon the Lord's return. Jesus says upon His return that He will "send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity" (Matt. 13:41). One should not be surprised when men reveal the evil within their hearts. The apostle Paul even said that Satan's servants could present themselves as "ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:15).

From This Account Of David, We Learn About The Significance Of Each Task

David stated that the 200 men who remained by the brook Besor played just as important a role as those who fought in battle. The men remaining behind, though faint and not able to continue, watched over the supplies the other soldiers left there so they could travel faster and fight unencumbered. Their task was just as vital to the success and recovery of their families and provisions as those who fought the battle. Thus, David said that all would share alike in the division of the spoils.

Numerous other examples demonstrate the value of what appears to be even the simplest of tasks. Elisha was sent to the house of a widow of Seraphath for God to sustain him during a famine in Israel. Although the widow's contribution seems extremely small, she just provided Elisha a place to sleep; it was a vital job in carrying out God's plan (1 Kings 17:8-16). During the first century, several Christians labored in carrying Paul's epistles to the different recipients as well as bringing him his cloak while he was in prison (Col. 4:16; 2 Tim. 4:13).

During World War II, the women of the United States of America went to work in the factories to produce supplies needed by the troops. Support was needed in England as well for their troops.

“During World War II, England needed to increase its production of coal. Winston Churchill called together labor leaders to enlist their support. At the end of his presentation he asked them to picture in their minds a parade which he knew would be held in Piccadilly Circus after the war. First, he said, would come the sailors who had kept the vital sea lanes open. Then would come the soldiers who had come home from Dunkirk and then gone on to defeat Rommel in Africa. Then would come the pilots who had driven the Luftwaffe from the sky. “Last of all, he said, would come a long line of sweat-stained, soot-streaked men in miner’s caps. Someone would cry from the crowd, “And where were you during the critical days of our struggle?” And from ten thousand throats would come the answer, “We were deep in the earth with our faces to the coal.”

In the Lord’s work, we sometimes forget there are more troops than just preachers, teachers, elders, deacons, and missionaries. Without the support of all the faithful at home who give generously to the work of the Lord, the majority of missionaries would not be able to go to foreign fields. Without Christians converting others to Christ, many ministers would be ought of having a congregation of whom to preach. It takes “more Indians than chiefs” for any group to be successful. Without support, numerous major tasks would not get done. The apostle Paul used the illustration of the human body to show how essential it is for every member to be active in the Lord’s work (1 Cor. 12:12-27). In the Lord’s church there are many

different tasks, all of which are important. In Ephesians 4:11, 12, Paul stated "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Yes, in immediate context, it refers to the miraculous; but, the principle is still the same. There are many different jobs that must be successfully manned in order for the Lord's church to be fruitful. During East Main's mission efforts to evangelize Brazil, several Brazilian women stay at the church building preparing meals for all those who door knock and conduct Bible studies. Although their job seems of inferior worth, it is a job that is essential in the success of the campaign. The people who prepare the Lord's Supper, take food to the sick, clean the church building, keep the baptistery clean and filled, are all faithful workers in the army of our Lord. You do not have to be on the "front lines" to be a soldier.

Jesus spoke a parable about laborers in a vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16). In the parable there were workers who labored twelve hours, nine hours, six hours, three hours, and one hour. When the master called the laborers to receive their wages, those who worked one hour received the same as those who worked for twelve hours. The laborers who had worked the majority of the day thought they deserved more than those who had done less. The master told them they had agreed to work the whole day for that wage and, thus, to go their way saying he had the right to do what he desired with that which was his own. Just as the wicked men of David's army, will we also stand before our Lord and cry out that we want more?

From This Account Of David, We Learn About The Source Of All Blessings

In 1 Samuel 30:22, the wicked men and men of Belial

said "We will not give them ought of the spoil that we have recovered." David quickly corrects them and said "Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us" (1 Sam. 30:23). David emphasizes that God gave them the ability to go up against the Amalekites and be victorious. David had already inquired through Abiathar, the priest, as to whether or not God would prosper them. The Lord's answer was "Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all" (1 Sam. 30:7, 8). David knew it was strictly by the grace of God that they had been triumphant and that all glory belonged to Him. In sending gifts to the elders of Judah and his friends, David sent word that it was "a present for you from the spoil of the enemies of the Lord" (1 Sam. 30:26). David did not call the Amalekites "his" enemies but he called them "God's" enemies. He credited God as the source of blessing.

It is evident from many of the Psalms that David credited God with all the blessings in his life. In Psalm 21:2, 3, 6, David cries out that God "hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness...For thou hast made him most blessed for ever." David told the Israelites that if they would trust in the Lord and do good then God would bless them richly. Psalm 37:3, 4 "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." David credited God as the source of all that made him successful. Psalm 18:1-3 "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised."

During the days of Ezekiel, the prophet spoke for God promising beautiful blessings on all the captives who returned from bondage. Ezekiel 34:26 "And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessings." Just as God promised outward peace and prosperity to the Israelites, the prophecy also gave hope to the coming of a higher and better covenant which would bring peace and good will unto men.

In the New Testament, Jesus said God would bless us with all our needs if we would seek Him first (Matt. 6:33). He told His disciples that God would give them whatever they asked (Matt. 7:7, 8) as long as they asked with the proper motive (James 4:3). In the beginning of James' epistle he stated "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (1:17). As a child of God, one must never lose sight that the source of all blessings is our heavenly Father. Christians are promised that "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28). Many things Christians suffer will contribute to our "good" even if it only refines our faith and strengthens our hope. In Christ, all people are equal and blessed by God. Romans 10:12: "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." If one remains faithful unto God, the blessings will continue for all eternity (Matt. 25:34).

From This Account Of David, We Learn About Compassion

The 200 who remained behind came out to meet David to congratulate him on the victory over the Amalekites as he approached the brook Besor (1 Sam.

30:21). Coming upon the men, “he saluted them,” that is, he spoke kindly to them inquiring about their welfare. When the men of Belial did not want to share the spoils, David’s compassion for the weak was evidenced as he saw the worth of their tasks and demands the spoils be divided equally. David was filled with kindness and generosity in watching over all. There would have been no spoils had God not first shown compassion and mercy on them. David’s heart was filled with compassion for all.

There are numerous examples of other leaders exhibiting great bowels of compassion for their people. Joseph was filled with compassion for his brothers who had sold him into slavery when they came to Egypt seeking grain years later. By this time, Joseph had risen to a very powerful position—second in command under Pharaoh. He had the power within his hands to readily punish his brothers severely; but, instead of condemning them, he blessed them (Gen. 42-47). Moses was seen to earnestly plead for the children of Israel during their wilderness wanderings when they sinned against God. On one occasion, as he made intercession for the Israelites, he went as far as to request that God take his name out of the book of life if God would not forgive them (Exo. 32:32). Esther put her life on the line for her countrymen by going uninvited before the king which could have resulted in her sure death (Esther 4:11). Ruth’s compassion toward Naomi motivated Ruth to leave her country, her friends, and her family to remain by her mother-in-law’s side (Ruth 1:16-18).

In the New Testament, our Lord had compassion on the multitudes because He saw that they were “scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matt. 9:36). Jesus was filled with compassion for the sick (Matt. 14:14), for the hungry (Matt. 15:32), for the blind (Matt. 20:34), for the

diseased (Mark 1:41), for the possessed (Mark 5:19), and for the bereaved (Luke 7:13). His holy compassion caused Him to remember the weak and to supply their needs. In the book of Acts, one reads of Joses, who was surnamed Barnabas by the apostles, because of his compassion and generosity (Acts 4:36, 37). Many early Christians were in need and Barnabas, filled with compassion for those in need, had land and sold it. He gave the money from the land sale to the apostles for distribution to the needy.

In the New Testament church, Christians must be filled with compassion for the weak. The warning against turning away those in need must be taken very seriously. James said "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" (2:15, 16). Jesus went as far as to say part of judgment will be based upon our compassion and as to whether we helped the weak and those in need (Matt. 25:35, 36). Christians have the responsibility to strive to help clothe the naked, feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, visit the sick, visit those in prison, and to provide shelter for the stranger. James says "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (1:27). How often in our efforts have we helped the individual needy one time and then basically told them "Now go on and be ye filled. We gave you bread today find someone else to get it from tomorrow"? Where is our Christian compassion in doing such? If Jesus is going to be our perfect example (1 Peter 2:21), and if we are going to strive to walk in His steps, then should not our hearts be filled with compassion for those upon whom Jesus showed compassion as well?

From This Account Of David, We Learn About Leadership

David revealed he had the traits of a great leader in dealing with the wicked men and men of Belial. He chose not to succumb to anger and argue with them; but, decided to use the opportunity to teach. First, David pointed out that they had not acquired the spoils by themselves; but, the spoils came as a blessing from God. He kept God's goodness at the forefront and gave credit to whom credit was due. David also showed his rational thinking in his response when he said, "For who will hearken unto you in this matter (1 Sam. 30:24)?" He basically told them "What wise man or just man would ever agree with such?" Thus, he showed them the irrationality of their thinking. One also sees the wisdom of David's leadership in his response. During the time of the uprising, David said, "Ye shall not do so, my brethren" (1 Sam. 30:23). He used his authority over them but responded with such sweetness. He reminded them that they were brothers, nationally, spiritually, and as fellow-soldiers.

The church needs men who will lead with the wisdom of David. One of the qualifications of an elder is that he is not to be quick tempered (1 Tim. 3:2). When trouble arises among the members, the wise elder will respond as David, without anger and with love. Solomon said in the book of Proverbs "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Prov. 15.1). Gentleness can possibly disarm the most furious grievances if one responds accordingly. When leaders care for those they lead and give honor even to the "that part which lacketh;" then there will be no schism in the body (1 Cor. 12:24, 25). David's wisdom in honoring the weak maintained great unity among his troops; likewise, leaders in the church today must strive to do the same.

Consideration for the weak reveals the strength of

the mature Christian's heart. In Romans, the apostle said "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Rom. 15.1). Not only should Christian leaders be reminded to care for the physically weak but most certainly for those who are weak spiritually. How often have you heard the adage "You are only as strong as your weakest link"? Well, does that not also account for the family of God when elders are shepherding the flock? All must be fed and brought closer to God. The spiritually strong have been given the responsibility to watch over the weak. Galatians 6:1 "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." David watched over the weak physically, may our leaders watch over them spiritually as well.

From This Account Of David, We Learn About Rewards

David rewarded all with spoils regardless of the role they played in the battle. He gave proportionately to those who stayed by the baggage as to those who physically fought the Amalekites. Likewise, one sees how David rewards the elders and his friends from trusted cities who had aided him and his men in their flight from Saul. David rewarded true friendship. Many folk want to be "friends" when one is wearing the crown, but the real friends are those who are friends when you are cast out. Just as interesting to note are two places which are not listed, the towns of Ziph and Keilah. The people of those two towns had a betrayer's heart and, thus, did not receive gifts, for friends they were not.

There is an occasion in the book of 2 Kings that is of interest at this point. In 2 Kings 6, Benhadad, the king of Syria, came up against Samaria and besieged it. The

prophet Elisha sent a message to the king of Samaria that God would deliver Samaria by the morrow. The city of Samaria stayed locked up tight. Four lepers, out of desperation, said they would go to the Syrians to see if they would spare their lives and provide food. Upon coming to the Syrian camp, the lepers found all the tents deserted, with even the horses and asses left behind. They feasted upon the bounty of food and carried off much silver, gold, and raiment. Then they said to themselves, "We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household" (2 Kings 7:9). The lepers felt it was wrong to hoard up the bounty while so many were starving. Here we have a case of the outcast of the society still understanding how it was everyone's responsibility to care for the weak. They sent word to those within the city who were suffering from severe famine and starvation to come enjoy the spoils. Even the most feared of society, those who had to walk about with their hands over their mouths calling out "Unclean, unclean" (Lev. 13:45), rewarded the weak.

There is a comparison that can be made between David rewarding those who befriended him and stood loyally by his side when he was not popular and between those who befriend Jesus and remain loyal to Him as well. Jesus promises eternal rewards for those who follow Him and remain faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). David rewarded the 200 regardless of how insignificant others saw their task. Likewise, Jesus rewards all according to their ability. In the parable of the talents, it is understood that there are five talent, two talent, and one talent men, for the master gave to each man "according to his several ability" (Matt. 25:15). The term "several" means "one's own." Thus, the master gave according to the ability

each servant had. When Christians stand in judgment, they will be held accountable as to whether they used their abilities in service to the Lord. The apostle Paul said "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). Jesus is coming to reward those who complete their tasks for the Lord and maintain their allegiance until the end.

Conclusion

David's generosity enabled him to use the blessings of God to bless all who were true. The compassionate marks of the next great king of Israel were quickly shaping up to usher him onto the throne. David's leadership ability and desire to be fair unto all would unite his kingdom during his reign and the reign of his son's to be the most glorious state Israel would experience. May all Christians be as generous as David in using God's blessings to help others and as concerned for the weak as was the future king.

CHAPTER 22

David Mourns For His Enemies

Randy Vaughn

Introduction

Ted Bundy, the infamous serial killer who brutally battered and killed somewhere between thirty and one-hundred women (no one knows for sure), was sentenced to be executed on January 24, 1989 by the electric chair in the state of Florida. While living in South Georgia near the state line, this author remembers listening to a DJ from a Jacksonville radio station on that day. He implored everyone to turn off all lights and electrical appliances to make sure there would be plenty of electricity during the moment of execution. It was recommended that car lights and horns celebrate that impending event. The sense of bitter retribution was heavy in the air that day.

A Principle Involved

The spirit of gloating in the name of justice is not a virtue. It is wickedness. Gloating denigrates justice to the level of villainy. For while justice demands a sense of fairness and equality, jeering justice turns it into a sense of superiority and haughtiness. There is a divine principle that teaches respect for everyone, even for an enemy. The virtue of quiet justice sets the godly person apart from the vulgar and vindictive person. Solomon says:

Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let
not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth:
Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him...
(Prov. 24:17-18).

Gentle justice was recommended in every dispensation of divine revelation. In the Patriarchal Age, rejoicing over an enemy's misfortune was thought to be a cruel evil. Job said,

This also were an iniquity to be punished...If
I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated
me, or lifted up myself when evil found him
(Job 31:28-29).

In the Mosaical Age, kindness to an enemy was a unique virtue that made Israel distinct from all the nations around them (cp. 1 Kings 20:31). The pagans were renowned for taunting their downfallen enemies. The Philistines were not satisfied with Samson's capture, they also had to make sport of him while he was downtrodden (Jud. 16:24-25). At Jerusalem's destruction, God said that He caused Babylon to rejoice over them (Lam. 2:17). The book of Obadiah condemns the Edomites for gloating at Israel.

But thou shouldest not have looked on the
day of thy brother in the day that he became
a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced
over the children of Judah in the day of their
destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken
proudly in the day of distress. Thou shouldest
not have entered into the gate of my people in
the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest
not have looked on their affliction in the day
of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their
substance in the day of their calamity; Neither
shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to
cut off those of his that did escape; neither
shouldest thou have delivered up those of his

that did remain in the day of distress. For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head (Obad. 1:12-15).

Micah said, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise..." (Micah 7:8). The pagans were known for their cruel mockery against their fallen rivals.

In contrast notice how David sang about how the troubles of his enemies affected him.

But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother (Psa. 35:13-14).

And of course in the Christian Age, Jesus teaches His disciples to love their enemies. This is one of the well-known characteristics of Christianity to this day (Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27-28, 34-35; 23:34; Rom. 12:20-21).

A Dichotomy Of The Principle

However, the Bible also teaches an opposite idea of how to regard an enemy. At times the Law of Moses recommended a feeling of hatred to an enemy. Israel was commanded to keep a national separation from the Canaanites (Deut. 7:16, 23-24). The commandments of "an eye for an eye" (Deut. 19:21) or "the avenger of blood" avenging his next of kin (Num. 35:19) seemed to teach that revenge was not only alright but even virtuous. Did God want Israel to love their enemies or hate them? Are these two ideas in conflict?

Also, the book of Psalms is filled with imprecations upon one's enemies, and these curses do not at all sound very charitable.

Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee?
and am not I grieved with those that rise up
against thee? **I hate them with perfect hatred**:
I count them mine enemies [emphasis RV] (Psa.
139:21-22).

Thus a dichotomy certainly seems to exist regarding enemies. On one hand Israel was to love their enemies and on the other hand they were to hate them.

The New Testament is also replete with imprecations. Consider Peter's words to Simon, the sorcerer, in Acts 8:20. In the original, the statement of Peter is in the optative mood. This is the mood of wish or desire. It is as though Peter said, "I wish your money would perish with you." Paul said, "I would they were even cut off which trouble you" (Gal. 5:12). He was referring to the Judaizers who compelled circumcision on the Gentiles. The phrase, "cut off" is literally the idea of castrated (Thayer 63). The woes of Jesus in Matthew 23 also carry the flare of anathemas. There were the executions of Ananias and Sapphira, or the blinding of Elymas, the sorcerer, and many other examples. Even the New Testament seems to indicate times when ill-will toward an enemy might be justified.

This dichotomy is also seen in the very nature of God. Looking into the heart of God as He has revealed Himself, the Bible shows that God loves His enemies to the point that He desires their best welfare (Isa. 53:6; Rom. 5:8). This is the very reason Jesus came into the world.

However in contrast, The Bible also says that God hates the wicked. "...thou hatest all workers of iniquity" (Psa. 5:5). "...the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth" (Psa. 11:5). It is not really accurate to say, "God hates the sin but loves the sinner" as the popular cliché states. When a person becomes an enemy of God,

there is an “enmity” or hatred (Eph. 2:15) that now exists between himself and God. Many do not realize just how serious it is to be an enemy to God (cp. James 4:4). The Bible simply does not teach that God is a God of unconditional love. His love is so great that it exceeds the understanding and abilities of humans, but there is a limit to His love.

How can these two ideas be harmonized? The study of the Bible doctrine of enemies has been sorely neglected. Understanding how to regard an enemy is essential to the entire Scheme of Redemption. Without understanding what exactly an enemy is and what effect he yields will definitely cloud our understanding of critical concepts like justice, mercy, love and many other ideas.

Definition And Types Of Enemies

The 1828 Webster’s dictionary gives four definitions to the word, “enemy.” (1) A foe; an adversary. (2) One who hates or dislikes. (3) In theology, the devil. (4) In military affairs, the opposing army or naval force in war (Webster).

There are at least two characteristics found in an enemy. An enemy hates and he hinders. But these two qualities may not always be found together. Not all enemies hate (e.g. in wartime an enemy may not even have a personal knowledge of his opponent). And not all enemies hinder (an enemy may never get personally involved with his rival). But hatred and hindrance seem to be two qualities whether together or separate that characterize an enemy.

It is amazing how much of the Bible’s literature deals with enemies. Who they are, what they do, and how they affect God’s people and even God Himself. As one author states:

The world of the Bible is populated with a wide variety of enemies. If a first-time reader of the Bible

were to begin with the thought that a “religious” book would be filled with sublime spirituality, remote from the realities of human existence, they would surely be surprised. If we were to extract the “enemies” from all of the Bible’s narratives, prophecies, psalms, proverbs, Gospels and letters, the text would be riddled with gaps and the story would be reduced to nonsense. Enemies are a problem for which God provides the solution (Ryken, Wilhoit, Longman, pp. 234-237).

David certainly had different reactions to his enemies. He would curse some and mourn for others. What made this difference? The difference was his relationship to his enemies. He reacted differently because he had different types of enemies. The Bible demonstrates many different kinds of enemies. Here are a few:

1) **National and Public Enemies** - Israel had national enemies. For example the Canaanites whom they dispossessed, the Gentiles who were outside conquerors or despots, the Samaritans and the Publicans in the New Testament. This type of enemy was a political or outside enemy.

2) **Legal Enemies** - Those who would take others to law and sue, change the landmarks or cheat the poor while using the law. Jesus made reference to this, “Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison” (Matt. 5:25).

3) **Hired Enemies** - These carry no personal grudge. They are only hired to do a job against their victims. Balaam was hired to curse Israel (Num. 22:16-17). There were false witnesses sought to accuse Christ (Matt. 26:59-60). Spies would be hired to acquire information (Luke 20:20). Or, mercenaries would be hired to fight against an opponent.

4) **Religious Enemies** - Those who resist on the basis of a religious disagreement. Israel had those neighbors who were immoral, idolaters and heretics. The danger was that these opponents could influence God's people into sin. Christians have also been warned of these kinds of influences.

5) **Enemies of God** - James 4:4 says, "...whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." God has enemies and when His children have enemies, He makes their enemies His enemies. Exodus 23:22 says, "I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries." This should also be our attitude. If anyone is against God, then we ought to be against them. You cannot be a companion to someone who is your enemy (2 Cor. 6:14-17).

6) **Betrayers** - usually from friends or family. Ahithophel betrayed David. Absalom rebelled against his father in spite of the leniency David showed him over the years. Judas was one of the twelve and betrayed Christ.

7) **Enemies that hate without just cause** - There are some people who have never been personally threatened but because of bitter feelings have set themselves up to be an enemy. Haman hated Mordecai and thereby all the Jews without just cause (Esther 3:5-6). Doeg and Sheba hated David, though there is no evidence that he had ever directly offended them.

8) **Invented Enemies** - There are innocent people who are regarded to be an enemy by others just because they are in their way, even though the victim may be ignorant of the malice directed at them. David set up Uriah as his enemy and Uriah knew nothing of it. Nabal considered David as his enemy when David had only done him good. Herod made John the Baptist his enemy because he told him things he did not want to hear.

9) **A man can be his own worst enemy** - This is the

case with anyone living a life of sin, making foolish life choices without God in their thinking (2 Tim. 2:25). A man's own mouth can condemn him (cp. Job 9:20; Luke 19:22).

This is by no means an exhaustive list. An enemy can be personal or impersonal. There are so many different types of enemies that it is possible for a man to have enemies and not even know it. It is possible to naively regard an enemy as if he was a bosom friend and trusted companion. "...the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Prov. 27:6). Jesus said, "...be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10:16). Many have been destroyed by those they thought were their friends but were really their enemies.

David's Enemies

The most hurtful and destructive enemies usually come from a man's friends or family. This would explain David's different reactions to his enemies. Some of them were very close to David and much cherished (e.g. Saul, Abner and Absalom). By these David was deeply hurt and showed great remorse and sorrow. On others he had no pity and did not hesitate to extol praying curses upon them or destroy them. For example:

1. Goliath of Gath, whose head he cut off (1 Sam. 17:51).
2. The young man who claimed to kill Saul, whom he commanded to be slain by sword (2 Sam. 1:13-14).
3. The Amalekites who attacked Ziklag, whom he chased and killed (1 Sam. 30:17).
4. The Moabites, whom he put into two lines and killed one side (2 Sam. 8:2).
5. And Nabal except for the intercession of Abigail (1 Sam. 25:34).

When studying the Old Testament, it is important to ask how a person became an enemy and to know if there

was a former relationship in order to fully understand why there was a difference in their treatments. Three of David's most dangerous enemies were related to him. Two had a filial connection and the other was related through marriage.

Saul

Saul was the first king of all the tribes of Israel. He ended the period of the rule of Judges and gave to Israel a sense of government. Because of several bad choices he made, God had turned away from him and promised the kingdom to another. A deep depression set in when Saul finally realized God's abandonment (1 Sam. 16:14). This set the stage for the introduction of David. David's music consoled Saul when he was in his dark moods (1 Sam. 16:16-20).

David eventually married into the family of Saul. At first he was promised Saul's older daughter, Merab (1 Sam. 18:17), but she was given to Adriel the Meholathite (18:19). As a second attempt to allure, Saul gave his daughter Michal to David (18:21). He was setting a snare for David. But as far as David was concerned it was a great honor (18:23). The newly wedded couple really loved each other at first. This made David a son-in-law to the king. He was now in the royal family with all of its connections. When David spoke of Saul he was speaking of his own father-in-law. He sat at Saul's table. He was privy to family decisions and other things. David respected Saul as God's anointed and he loved him. Though Saul treated David as his enemy, David never considered Saul as his enemy.

When Saul died David wrote and sang a dirge before Israel. In it one can see the great passion David had for Saul.

And David lamented with this lamentation over
Saul and over Jonathan his son:...The beauty of

Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil. From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty. Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel...How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished! (2 Sam. 1:17-27).

This song was placed into the Holy Scriptures to be immortalized for all ages and into eternity. What a great honor for Saul. A great man, but behold how sin brought him low!

Abner

Abner was Saul's cousin (1 Sam. 14:50). He commanded Saul's army. He was to Saul what Joab was to David. Because of his marriage to Michal, David would have been related to Abner also. It is interesting to note that the Bible says nothing about Abner's part in the battle of Mount Gilboa that killed Saul and Jonathan. Surely as captain of the army of Israel he must have been there. How did he survive when the king and the princes were killed?

After Saul's death, Abner made Saul's son, Ishbosheth

to be king of the northern tribes of Israel. This was in open defiance of God's will. There is danger in interfering with God's work. David ruled in Judah at Hebron. For seven and a half years Abner refused to submit to David's rule (2 Sam. 2:11). If everyone had put God's will first, a lot of bloodshed could have been avoided.

In time David's kingdom grew stronger while the remnant of Saul's kingdom grew weaker (2 Sam. 3:1). Abner's self-pleasing pursuit of political power was his downfall. Three murders would occur before David becomes king of all Israel: Asahel's (2 Sam. 2), Abner's (2 Sam. 3) and Ishbosheth's (2 Sam. 4) (Wiersbe).

After an argument with Ishbosheth, Abner deserts him. He tries to ally with David, meeting in Hebron to consult terms of peace (2 Sam. 3:20). Abner then leaves David at Hebron, and Joab, who was absent at the time, came to Hebron a little later. Hearing news of this alliance Joab quickly sends messengers to bring Abner back to Hebron. Abner unwittingly comes, and there Joab murders him for the life of his brother Asahel. Joab claimed to be an avenger of blood. But Hebron was a city of refuge. Joab did not have the right to slay Abner there.

David's way of life was reconciliation. He was a peacemaker. But Abner and Joab lived by retaliation. "... all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matt. 26:52).

Once again, in sorrow David sings an inspired dirge for Abner placed into the Bible for all generations to see.

And the king lamented over Abner, and said,
Died Abner as a fool dieth? 34 Thy hands
were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters:
as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest
thou. And all the people wept again over him
(2 Sam. 3:33-34).

To be immortalized in the Word of God is no small measure of honor. Saul and Abner were both given a great tribute by David. For all the wrongs they did to him, David did not seek revenge. Truly, he was a man after God's own heart.

Absalom

According to 2 Samuel 3:3 and 1 Chronicles 3:2, Absalom was the third son of David. He was born in Hebron when David ruled Judah for seven and a half years. It is interesting to note that Absalom's mother was Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur (2 Sam. 3:3). Geshur was one of the Canaanite cities left unconquered during the conquest of Canaan (Joshua 13:2, 13). It was a small kingdom bordering Philistia to the south; not to be confused with the Geshur on the Trans-Jordan side (Joshua 13:11 cp. Judges 1:10). This means that Absalom's mother was a Canaanite princess. David probably made this unfortunate connection during his invasion in 1 Samuel 27:8. The marriage to Maacah was a breach of God's law (Deut. 7:3; Joshua 23:12-13). Certainly Absalom's Canaanite mother and grandfather had a strong influence on his character growing up. This foreign marriage would sow bitter fruits in David's future.

Absalom was a very vain fellow (2 Sam. 14:25-26; 15:1). The Latin phrase well describes him, "pulcherrimus corpore, alterrimus mente," handsome of body, dark of mind. Or as one writer put it, "fair without, and foul within." (Trapp) After God's chastisement of David for his sin with Bathsheba, it did not take long before the whirlwind of unrest came upon David's family. The loss of the child, the fruit of their adultery, was only the beginning of sorrows. The family skeletons were coming out of the closet into the public eye. It started with the

incest of Amnon forcing his sister Tamar. "And Absalom spake unto his brother Amnon neither good nor bad: for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar" (2 Sam. 13:22). Fratricide and a fugitive son for three years (13:38) was the next trouble. Returning to Jerusalem Absalom was not allowed to see David for two years (14:28). His heart grew calloused and bitter. The son now sets himself up to be the enemy of the father. A rebellion ensues; David is cast out of his city and forced to retreat across the Jordan. Absalom usurping power adulterates himself with his father's concubines (16:21-22).

With all of this happening David's heart still yearns for his son. One of the saddest verses in the Bible is David's lament over his beloved son:

And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son (18:33)!

Even Joab was confused by David's reaction to the death of his son, his enemy. He made this statement:

In that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends...for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well (19:6).

David did not hate his friends, but he did love his enemies. Those who made themselves enemies, he still loved dearly.

Conclusion

What makes someone an enemy? The Old Testament often demonstrated ill-will toward an enemy. But not always, even in those harsh days of old, tender feelings

could be shown by the righteous to their enemies who shared a close tie with them in some way or another.

The tenor of the New Testament is certainly not the spirit of retribution, but of genuine concern for another.

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:17-21).

On the other hand, there may be the tendency today to pity what should not be pitied (Matt. 18:17; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; Eph. 5:11). Some want to treat sin as if it does not matter. There should be a balance in us between avoidance of sin and concern for the lost. Jesus did not say to ignore our enemies but to love them. Truly the malice and bitterness that is so often seen in the world should have no place in Christ's church.

A study of enemies and how we relate to them is a greatly needed study in the church today. Perhaps if we could see the common relations that we bear to our enemies, we could have a better sense of gentle justice. He is my brother, my sister, my mother, my father. All of us have been enemies of God. Sin separates but God reconciles. Like David, we too should mourn for our enemies!

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**David,
The Soul-Mate:
A Committed Heart**

CHAPTER 23

Jonathan Supported David Even In Opposition To His Father

Jeff Clark

One of the most familiar accounts in the Old Testament is that of the friendship between Jonathan and David. To quote Matthew Henry, “David was anointed to the crown to take it out of Saul’s hand, and over Jonathan’s head, and yet” here we find a friendship like few others (Matthew Henry’s **Commentary on the Whole Bible; New Modern Edition**, 1 Sam. 18:1). Generations have been raised on the advice that “to have a friend you have to be a friend” based on Solomon’s words in Proverbs 18:24. He learned the importance and effectiveness of this in his own life. The text for this discussion is rather long, but please note it with care. Nowhere in the Old Testament will you find a more pertinent pattern of how to treat others. Jonathan was true to David even in the face of his father’s opposition.

And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David (1 Sam. 18:1-4).

The idea here is that their souls were literally interwoven. They became part of each other. Similar to the bond that existed between Jesus and the three disciples

Peter, James and John. This bond is what would guide all of the other events and decisions that they would face.

“And Jonathan loved him as his own soul.” What greater statement about love could be made. This is the essence of the Golden Rule (Matt. 7:12) that we paraphrase, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” That starts with identification, consideration and determination to truly love another.

And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father’s house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that (was) upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

Jonathan’s regard for David has “rubbed off” on his father, Saul. Since Jonathan has decided to treat David with honor, respect and consideration, his father follows suit. “Either at this time of his conversation with him or immediately afterwards, Saul told David to remain with him, i.e., in his service” (Keil & Delitzsch, **Commentary on the Old Testament**, New Updated Edition, 1 Sam. 18:1-2).

And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David. But Jonathan Saul’s son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret (place), and hide thyself: And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou (art), and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee (1 Sam. 19:1-7).

Notice that though circumstances had changed and feelings had been altered in the heart of Saul, Jonathan did not allow that to sway him in his devotion to his friend. As the discussion turns to “love” later it will be noted that one of the qualities included there is “believeth all things.” Jonathan understood this. So that in spite of what his father said, he continued to believe in David. So much was this the case that Jonathan develops that plan to David to hide close by,

not that he might hear the conversation in his hiding place, but that Jonathan might immediately report to him the result of his conversation, without there being any necessity for going far away from his father, so as to excite suspicion that he was in league with David (Keil & Delitzsch).

And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works (have been) to theeward very good: For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest (it), and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?

Reminiscent of the apostle Paul with Onesimus and Philemon, Jonathan rehearses David’s “worth” in the ears of king Saul. This is done in a hostile environment, and in the face of potential repercussion. But such is the way of devotion and commitment. Though difficult and uncomfortable, it is possible. “I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13).

And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, (As) the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain. And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past.

Again, Jonathan's efforts prove fruitful. His zeal is contagious, his spirit irresistible. A thousand years later Jesus would command to "let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). Jonathan was "ahead of his time."

And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what (is) mine iniquity? and what (is) my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life? And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it (is) not (so). And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly (as) the Lord liveth, and (as) thy soul liveth, (there is) but a step between me and death (1 Sam. 20:1-42).

Quite often the "worst case scenario" comes about in spite of our valiant efforts to prevent it. There is evil in the world that will not respond to goodness and light lest it be condemned by so doing. Saul's hatred of David was as strong as Jonathan's love for him. Flight was eventually inevitable. As the psalms written during this period will attest, David knows he is "right," but suffers still. "Yea and all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" anyway (2 Tim. 3:12).

Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do (it) for thee. And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, to morrow (is) the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third (day) at even. If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked (leave) of me that he might run to Bethlehem his city: for (there is) a yearly sacrifice there for all the family. If he say thus, (It is) well, thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, (then) be sure that evil is determined by him. Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the Lord with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself; for why shouldest thou bring me to thy father? And Jonathan said, far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee? Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what (if) thy father answer thee roughly? And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field.

As the situation worsens, assurance is needed even more. David realizes that the climate is deteriorating and that Saul is on a downward slide in his opinion of him. "What will I do now? How can this work? Is it possible that I am wrong? Tell me if so. If I am to blame, if all of this is my fault—you take me in yourself! Okay?" Ever been there? Even the best of men and women can begin to doubt themselves when the time comes that they hear their good spoken of as evil. Read the book of Job, even that great man was almost worn down by the incessant challenges of his well meaning but ignorant friends.

And Jonathan said unto David, O Lord God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about to morrow any time, (or) the third (day), and, behold, (if there be) good toward David, and I then send not unto thee, and shew it thee; The Lord do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father (to do) thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the Lord be with thee, as hath been with my father. And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not: But (also) thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. So Jonathan made (a covenant) with the house of David, (saying), Let the Lord even require (it) at the hand of David's enemies.

As will be discussed below, Jonathan's confidence in David's success and survival never wavered. He can see God on David's side even when David himself cannot. Jonathan's faith should serve as an eye opener for David. Like Elisha's servant, Jonathan could "see" the hand of God protecting David. For this cause he wants the connection between them to extend even beyond the borders of death itself. He longs for assurance that "when," not "if," David is victorious he (Jonathan) will be remembered.

And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul. Then Jonathan said to David, To morrow (is) the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty. And (when) thou hast stayed three days, (then) thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was (in hand), and shalt remain by

the stone Ezel. And I will shoot three arrows on the side (thereof), as though I shot at a mark. And behold, I will send a lad (saying), Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows (are) on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for (there is) peace to thee, and no hurt; (as) the Lord liveth. But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows (are) beyond thee; go thy way: for the Lord hath sent thee away. And (as touching) the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the Lord (be) between thee and me for ever.

Provision and planning are a part of the package of friendship. Jonathan is once more operating by the standard of the Golden Rule. "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24), and such is illustrated by these two.

So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat. And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, [even] upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty. Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that day: for he thought, Something hath befallen him, he [is] not clean; surely he [is] not clean. And it came to pass on the morrow, [which was] the second [day] of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to day? And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked [leave] of me [to go] to Bethlehem: And he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me [to be there]: and now, if I have found favour

in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table. Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious [woman], do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die. And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done? And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David. So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

Family is a strange blessing. As Jonathan carries out his part of the deal he is met with anything but an encouraging response. As Saul's anger is kindled and his true intentions are unquestionably revealed, Jonathan's own humanity is touched. "How can he have come from the loins of this man? How can a person be so illogical and unjust? How can he continue to respect one with so little honor? Did his father actually throw a javelin at his own son? What kind of 'father' would do such a thing?" He wrestles with these thoughts as he departs from his father's table.

And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him. And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. [And] as the lad ran,

he shot an arrow beyond him. And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, [Is] not the arrow beyond thee? And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master. But the lad knew not any thing: only Jonathan and David knew the matter. And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry [them] to the city.

Jonathan was as good as his word. With faithfulness and honor, he does just as he had promised his friend. Who could ask for more? What more could he possibly do? He has made a choice to do what he should. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" Jesus would say centuries later, with no condemnation of this gentle, loving, faithful man.

[And] as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of [a place] toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded. And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.

They would be connected by a bond that would transcend time, distance and circumstances. This is a very common experience even today. When one has true friends great separations of time and geography can pass, but when a reunion is enjoyed it is as though they were never separated. Such is true camaraderie, and such is what was known by these two. Their love for each other exceeded

the love of women. There is nothing perverted about that. Their “Phileo” (friendship love) was stronger than the “Eros” (sexual love) that characterizes “the love of women.”

I. Jonathan’s Actions Demonstrate FAITH...

A. ...in GOD.

1. Hebrews 11:6: “But without faith, it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”
2. Jonathan’s commitment to David sprang from his belief that God does indeed reward those who “diligently seek him.” Repeatedly he refers to God and God’s will in his conversations with David. Assured that if they both do right, all will be well.

B. ...in DAVID.

1. The cursory reading impresses the reader with the fact that David is trusting Jonathan with his very life—and such is surely true. But it is equally true that Jonathan is placing his own life on the line for David. Were Saul to discover the subterfuge in which his son was engaged death would surely follow shortly, as the throwing of the javelin will prove. But Jonathan believed in David so much that he felt it was worth the risk.
2. Such faith in another is truly refreshing.

C. ...in HIMSELF.

1. To accept the challenge that Jonathan has accepted, he must truly believe that he can withstand the pressures and live up to the expectations that are his.
2. Again, this type of confidence (faith) comes best from God (Josh. 1; Exo. 3; et al).

D. ...in SAUL.

1. Though there was no reason for Jonathan to think that Saul would ever act in an honourable way, he gave him every chance anyway. To the bitter end and beyond the bounds of family fidelity, he gives it every effort.
2. Jonathan literally had no reason for regret, though there was no way he could feel “good” about the outcome of the situation.

II. Jonathan’s Actions Demonstrate COMMITMENT.

A. ...to RIGHT.

1. The admonition to “seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matt. 6:33) had not been uttered yet, but Jonathan understood and obeyed it nonetheless.
2. If only people on this side of the cross would demonstrate such faith, what a world/church this would be.

B. ...to FRIENDSHIP.

1. Much has already been said in the above comments about this.
2. Is it even possible to think of Jonathan without an immediate reflection on the concept of friendship?

C. ...to FUTURE.

1. Would it not have been easy for Jonathan to give up on any future? Considering how disappointed he must have been in his father, who could blame him if he did?
2. “...I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is a” future for me! These are the words that could easily have been spoken by Jonathan.

III. Jonathan's Actions Demonstrate COURAGE.

A. Instead of Fear.

1. A lesser man would have crumbled under the understandably great pressures.
2. But Jonathan's fortitude was in a class occupied by few.

B. In spite of Fear.

1. To be realistic, it must be acknowledged that Jonathan's heart had to have been pierced by arrows, though the javelin missed him.
2. An anonymous thinker said, "Courage is not the absence of fear, but doing what one should even though afraid."

IV. Jonathan's Actions Demonstrate LOVE.

A. 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 ~ "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become [as] sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have [the gift of] prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed [the poor], and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, [and] is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether [there be] prophecies, they shall fail; whether [there be] tongues, they shall cease; whether [there be] knowledge, it shall vanish away."

B. Matthew 22:35-40 ~ "Then one of them, [which was] a lawyer, asked [him a question], tempting him, and

saying, Master, which [is] the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second [is] like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

C. Luke 10:30-37 ~ "And Jesus answering said, A certain [man] went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded [him], and departed, leaving [him] half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked [on him], and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion [on him], And went to [him], and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave [them] to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise."

Conclusion

Jay Kesler is quoted as saying, "One of my goals in life is to wind up with eight men who are willing to carry one of my handles" (**Being Holy, Being Human**). With Jonathan, David would have been willing to have carried the coffin by himself. How do you "repay" friendship like that? How do you satisfy the longing to make one

who has saved your life feel what you feel? In reality, you cannot.

By turning his back on everyone and everything else to do right for David, Jonathan has left a legacy that all would do well to emulate. Only Jesus' loyalty surpasses the story of this friend of friends. May we all strive to live as well.

CHAPTER 24

Nathan: Who Loves His Friend Enough To Tell Him The Truth

James E. Rogers

Introduction

The account to be studied at this time presupposes a knowledge of David's sin with Bathsheba recorded in 2 Samuel 11. The lead-in to chapter twelve is found in 11:27, "But the thing that David had done displeased Jehovah." It was as a result of that statement that 12:1 reads, "And Jehovah sent Nathan unto David." We will begin where that study ended. Our study, however, will be limited to the above title. As we learn valuable truths from this record of Nathan's visit with David, let us be bold enough to apply those truths to our own lives. While the limitations of a study like this will prohibit us from mentioning everything we would like, we trust those things which will be mentioned will provoke the student to deeper study.

Nathan's Position: A Spokesman

The Words Used To Identify The Prophet.

When we are introduced to Nathan in 2 Samuel 7:2, he is called "Nathan the prophet." "Prophet" is from "nabiy' (nawbee')...a prophet or (generally) inspired man" (Biblesoft).

In the Greek, "prophet" is from prophetes, "one who speaks forth or openly...a proclaimer of a divine message...in the Sept. it is the translation of the word roeh, a seer; 1 Sam. 9:9, indicating that the prophet was one who had immediate intercourse with God. It also translates the word nabhi, meaning either one in whom the message from God springs forth or one to whom anything is secretly communicated. Hence, in general, the prophet was one upon whom the Spirit of God rested, Numb. 11:17-29, one, to whom and through whom God speaks, Numb. 12:2; Amos 3:7,8" (Vine 3:222).

"The basic and common Hebrew word for prophet in the Old Testament is nabhi" (Freeman 37).

Two other terms which appear to be synonyms for nabhi, 'prophet,' are roeh and hozeh, both translated as 'seer.' Their verbal roots mean 'to see.' 1 Samuel 9:9 indicates that the office of prophet and seer were substantially identical... The other term, hozeh, is more frequent... Amos...7:12...In 1 Chronicles 29:29 all three terms are used together: 'Now the acts of David the king...are written in the history of Samuel the seer [roeh], and in the history of Nathan the prophet [nabhi], and in the history of Gad the seer [hozeh]' (Freeman 40).

Nathan is always called nabhi (prophet) and not ro'eh or hozeh (seer).

The prophet is also referred to in the Scriptures as "Man of God" (1 Sam. 9:6). "This was a common and general term for the prophet of Israel which emphasized his holy calling, moral character and divine ministry" (Freeman 41). Prophets were also called "Servants" (Jer. 25:4). "This title stresses the close and holy relationship between God and His faithful messengers" (Freeman 41).

Still another term to designate the prophet is "Messenger" (2 Chron. 36:15,16). "The same Hebrew term (malak) is used for both messenger and angel. As the angels of the Lord are His spiritual messengers, so too His prophets were the messengers of His revealed word" (Freeman 41). A final designation of the prophet is "Watchman" (Ezek. 33:7).

The Work Of The Prophet

"A PROPHET...in both the Old and the New Testament, is one who, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, speaks the words and the thoughts of God, whether they relate to the past, to the present, or to the future" (Milligan 298). This may be seen by studying the Scriptures (Exo. 4:16; 7:1,2; Deut. 18:9-22; 2 Sam. 23:2; Jer. 23:9-32; Ezek. 13:1-23; Amos 3:7,8).

'With the completion of the canon of Scripture prophecy apparently passed away, 1 Cor. 13:8,9. In his measure the teacher has taken the place of the prophet, cp. the significant change in 2 Pet. 2:1. The difference is that, whereas the message of the prophet was a direct revelation of the mind of God for the occasion, the message of the teacher is gathered from the completed revelation contained in the Scriptures' (Vine 3:221).

Some of the defining marks of the work of the prophet are (1) He was uncompromising and not bound by public opinion; (2) He was conscious of his divine call and task as God's mouthpiece; (3) He is a bearer of precious messages from the Throne of God to man; (4) He boldly proclaims God's message even in the face of stiff opposition; (5) He is backed by God's authority as he stands for truth; (6) He is a man who is lonely but in his loneliness keeps in touch with God; (7) He is clean in his life and character; (8) He is a critic of evil even when the guilty are kings, priests, princes, nobles and

judges and (9) He reveals the future to the people.

The prophet is of great value as a historian of God's people.

In the history we have ordinarily the hull—nothing more...But if we turn and read the prophets of those times...They give us the inside of history, and make us to know...as we never could know...in any other way...In the interpretation of prophecy especially, it is of great importance to be well acquainted with the fact of history (Dungan 373, 213).

When Nathan came to David, he did so as Jehovah's spokesman (2 Sam. 12:1). This illustrates Jehovah's great love for sinners. He seeks the salvation of those who are lost in sin (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8,9; 1 John 4:9,10). A study of the passages concerning Nathan's relationship with David prior to this time will also suggest that Nathan was more than Jehovah's representative to David, he was David's friend (2 Sam. 7:2-4,17). Observe that Nathan did not act until he was told to act by Jehovah. There is a time to reprove our friends when they are wrong, but we do not jump at the opportunity to point out someone's error from any kind of pleasure derived therefrom. Caution should be exercised in this matter. One observed, "In this matter men are apt to run before they are sent" (Spence and Exell 4:2 Sam. 301).

Nathan's Presentation: A Story

Since David had not sent for Nathan, Nathan's approach to David would require great wisdom. He would operate from the perspective that

a word fitly spoken Is like apples of gold in network of silver. As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, So is a wise reprovor upon an obedient ear (Prov. 25:11-12).

In his presentation he would confront David with his sin and the guilt and consequences of that sin. He would, further, remind David of God's forgiveness following repentance. This Nathan did with great success. "This story is a masterpiece of pathos and power" (Little 2:1102). Blaikie observed,

'It is one of those little gems of Divinity that are scattered so plentifully through the sacred Scriptures, that sparkle with a lustre, pure and brilliant as the light of heaven, and attest the sacred origin of the wonderful book that contains them' (Spence and Exell 303).

Baldwin noted that Nathan outlined his case to David "in sixty-one carefully chosen words" (236).

Not only do we see Nathan's wisdom in approaching David, but we also see his willingness to put himself in danger's way in order to tell his friend the truth. One observed that

we must not, because he was wise and skilful, refuse Nathan our fullest admiration for his manly courage. It is a very dangerous thing to tell princes of their sins, and especially when that prince is an absolute monarch, and his sins adultery and murder. But the position which Nathan held in David's court made it his duty so to do, and there is no stronger testimony to the power of religion and of God's grace than that it makes men so brave in doing their duty (Spence and Exell 287).

Nathan is willing to fulfill his duty to God even if it costs him his friendship with David or causes him to suffer arrest or death.

Nathan's Presentation (12:1-4)

Nathan presented a civil case for David's consideration

(2 Sam. 12:1-6). This would allow David to use all his abilities as a civil ruler in considering the facts of the case presented to him. He would weigh the evidence presented and not be swayed by any personal interest. While there is no doubt that Nathan stands before David in his official capacity as a spokesman of Jehovah, it is interesting that Nathan did not begin his story with the customary "thus saith Jehovah" (2 Sam. 7:5). There will also be an appeal to David's sense of fairness and compassion. "In dealing with men we ought to avail ourselves of their good qualities and bring them to bear on the removal of the bad" (Spence and Exell 293). Nathan displays a courteous and respectful approach to David. In seeking to tell friends the truth, we must remember that

even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted (Gal. 6:1).

Nathan's case concerned two men who lived in one city. These men were separated from each other by financial status. The enormity of this separation is stressed by the use of the words "exceeding many," "but" (indicating a contrast) and "nothing, save one." (2 Sam. 12:2,3). These two men were also separated from each other by that which each considered dear. There is no mention of any personal attachment of the rich man to his "flocks and herds," but there is detailed an emotional attachment of the poor man and his family to the "one little ewe lamb" (2,3). Notice the words that would denote a family experience: "nourished up," "grew up together with him, and with his children," "did eat of his own morsel, and drank of his own cup," "lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter." All of these would make the relationship more precious. "This exquisitely pathetic parable was founded on a common custom of

pastoral people who have pet lambs, which they bring up with their children, and which they address in terms of endearment" (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown 1:Part 2, 243). These words also parallel Uriah's description of a journey home which would allow him to "go into my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife" (2 Sam. 11:11).

Nathan related the actions of the rich man in his attempt to entertain a traveler who had come to him. One, in his mind's ear, can almost hear the silence that must have characterized David as he contemplated the situations set before him. Nathan related how the rich man, who had "exceeding many flocks and herds" (2) had spared all of them and had taken "the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him" (4). One could probably hear the stress in Nathan's voice when he came to the words "spared" and "took" (4).

David's Pronouncement (12:5,6).

When David, as civil ruler, heard Nathan's presentation, his reaction was quick. His anger ["anaph - to be angry, to be displeased, to breathe hard", (The Online Bible)] was greatly ("me`od)...properly, vehemence, i.e....vehemently...". (Biblesoft's) kindled ["charah - to be hot, to furious, to burn, to become angry, to be kindled," (The Online Bible)]. The "basic stem, [of] the word refers to the "burning of anger", (Vine, Online Version). This is not just a mild irritation. David's full wrath was kindled "against the man." This reaction shows that David was not a bad man.

He was a man whose main purpose in life was to do God's will, but he had yielded to temptation, had been entangled in further and greater guilt in the effort to conceal his sin, and all the while his conscience had been

stupefied by the delirium of prosperity and power (Ellicott 2:473).

David pronounced a judicial sentence for this civil case. David based his sentence on his relationship with Jehovah as an appointed ruler (1 Sam. 16:1-13). He uttered an oath as he pronounced his sentence. He called the rich man "a son of death." David had made a similar pronouncement on Abner and his men for their failure to properly protect Saul (1 Sam. 26:13-16). While David did not sentence the rich man to death, he did decree that he must restore the lamb fourfold. David also based his sentence on the Law as the standard (Exo. 22:1). This shows that while David's anger was greatly kindled, he did not allow his anger to cause him to go beyond the Law which bound him.

David, further, responded that the rich man had no pity. This word, "chamal," "connotes that emotional response which results (or may result) in action to remove its object (and/or its subject) from impending difficulty... This root can also express the emotion of pity" (Harris 1:296). On this account, Harris commented that the rich man "lacked that feeling of concern which would lead him to spare the poor man the grief of losing his only and beloved lamb." Wilson observed this word means "to treat with tenderness, humanity, and clemency" (Wilson 311). Certainly, the rich man was guilty of mistreating the poor man and David could see this clearly. If we did not have to look in the mirror every day, we could certainly give this rich man a hard time (Matt. 7:1-5).

Nathan's Practical Application: A Shocker

When David had made his clear pronouncement concerning the guilt of the rich man, Nathan made a practical application of this judicial pronouncement. Four (three in the original) powerful words brought the

case home to David; "Thou art the man." Krummacher observed, "'If ever a word from human lips fell with crushing weight and with the illuminating power of a gleam of lightning, it was this'" (Spence and Exell 305). Nathan, though sent by Jehovah, was fulfilling the commands of the law which instructed the Israelites to "not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt surely rebuke thy neighbor, and not bear sin because of him" (Lev. 19:17). The action and effects of this application are seen in chapter 12:7-14.

Nathan Rebuked David's Iniquity (12:7)

Nathan's application was in reality Jehovah's application (12:1). Jehovah allowed David to see the heinousness of his own crime by allowing him to see it played out in the actions of another. David could see clearly when looking at another's sin. Nathan helped David see clearly when looking at his own sins. "David is made to see himself as God's sees him: a humbling experience for a king (see Psalm 51)" (Alexander 246). "It is as if hitherto only the back of the offender was seen, when, suddenly turning around, his face appeared, and David beheld himself" (Spence and Exell 305)! In this application, Nathan "shows his faithfulness, and deals as plainly and roundly with king David himself as if he had been a common person" (Henry 2:501). Nathan was lovingly honest with his friend.

In applying the story to David, one sees the following comparisons: If David represented the rich man, Uriah represented the poor man. David had many wives and concubines, Uriah had Bathsheba. We are impressed here with Uriah's respect for Jehovah's marriage law (Gen. 2:24). Uriah had rejoiced in the wife of his youth, been satisfied with her provisions for him and been "ravished always with her love" (Prov. 5:18-19). In taking the one

ewe lamb, David had neglected his harem and taken the one wife of Uriah for his own pleasure.

David's pronouncement condemned himself. He declared the rich man "worthy to die." Adultery was a capital offense under the Law (Lev. 20:10). One can imagine the shock that must have registered on David's face when Nathan uttered those words. Nathan's application reminded David of individual responsibility for sin (Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 6:23; Acts 2:37). "These awful words pierced his heart, aroused his conscience, and brought him to his knees" (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown 243). Nathan's pronouncement was intended to bring David to repentance.

Nathan Rebuked David's Ingratitude (12:7,8)

As Nathan proceeds with his practical application, he uses the important formula which emphasizes the authority with which he speaks, "Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel." After having made an application of the Law to David, Nathan reminds David of the God behind that Law. He reminds David that He is "Jehovah," the Covenant God, thus David's sin affects his covenant-relationship with Jehovah. He is "God," the Majestic One. He is "Jehovah, the God of Israel," reminding David of his relationship with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exo. 3:13-15; 6:2-9).

Nathan's reminder should have caused David to realize that everything he had and was, he owed to Jehovah and he had earned none of it himself. Notice the language of dependency in this section. "I anointed thee," "I delivered thee," "I gave thee," "I would have added." All of these said that David was indebted to Jehovah for everything.

In violating Jehovah's commands, David showed his ingratitude for the blessings Jehovah had provided to him.

Like Eve who already had trees “good for food” and a “delight to the eyes” (Gen. 2:9; 3:6), David lost sight of his blessings and coveted more (Gen. 3:6).

God’s bounty to us is a great aggravation of our discontent and desire of forbidden fruit. It is ungrateful to covet what God has prohibited, while we have liberty to pray for what God has promised, and that is enough (Henry 2:501).

Nathan Rebuked David’s Insubordination (12:9,10,14)

Jehovah asked David why he had “despised the word of Jehovah.” “Despised” is from “bazah...to disesteem,” (Biblesoft’s). Brown, Driver and Briggs define it, “to despise, to hold in contempt, to disdain” (The Online Bible). In verse 10, Jehovah declared that David “despised me.” To despise Jehovah’s word is to despise Jehovah (Acts 9:5; 1 Thess. 4:8). Jesus said, “He that loveth me not keepeth not my words: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s who sent me” (John 14:24). The word of Jehovah here is the Law.

This is the spring and this is the malignity of sin, that it is making light of the divine law and the law-maker; as if the obligation of it were weak, the precepts of it trifling, and the threats not at all formidable. Though no man ever wrote more honourably of the law of God than David did, yet, in this instance, he is justly charged with a contempt of it (Henry 2:501).

When Saul was anointed king of Israel, Samuel told Israel,

If ye will fear Jehovah, and serve him, and hearken unto his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of Jehovah, and both ye and also the king that reigneth over you be followers of Jehovah your God, well: but if ye will not

hearken unto the voice of Jehovah, but rebel against the commandment of Jehovah, then will the hand of Jehovah be against you, as it was against your fathers (1 Sam. 12:14,15).

Saul eventually “turned back from following” Jehovah and did not perform His “commandments.” Further, he did “not obey the voice of Jehovah” and did “that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah.” All of this was described by Jehovah as follows: “Because thou has rejected the word of Jehovah” (1 Sam. 15:10,19,23,26). It was as a result of Saul’s actions that David had been anointed king. David, in principle, had followed in the steps of Saul in this action. While the overall teaching of the Bible shows there was a difference in the heart of Saul and David, some of their actions of rebellion against the commandments of Jehovah were similar.

Nathan enumerated the ways by which David had “despised the word of Jehovah” and had despised Jehovah. The broad statement was that David “despised the word of Jehovah, to do that which is evil in his sight.” Nathan then moved from the broad description to specific acts of David’s sin. He had smitten (nakah nawkaw’); a primitive root; to strike (lightly or severely, literally or figuratively)” (Biblesoft’s) Uriah the Hittite, though he had done it by proxy. Nathan says David had “smitten Uriah the Hittite” and “hast slain (arag (hawrag’); a primitive root; to smite with deadly intent)” Biblesoft’s) him.” It may be that Nathan here includes both the act and the intent. Ellicott observes that “it was murder in the eyes of the Lord, although accomplished by the sword of the Ammonites” (474). Whereas the rich man had slain the lamb of the poor man, David had slain the poor man!

David had also taken Uriah’s wife to be his wife. As the rich man had failed to use what he already had to satisfy his desire, David had turned away from all that

had been provided him of Saul's wives, which "was a sure proof that he had got all regal rights" (Clarke 2:338), and took the wife of the poor man for his own pleasure. In violating Jehovah's commands, David showed his insubordination to Jehovah.

Nathan Reviewed David's Punishment (12:10-12,14)

Nathan enumerated the ways David would be punished for his actions. Jehovah told Eli, "they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Sam. 2:30). These things will be seen as one studies the future history of David's reign. The punishment consisted of several elements.

1. The sword would never depart from his house. Three of David's sons would die (2 Sam. 13:28,29; 18:14,15; 1 Kings 2:24,25).

2. Evil would be raised up against him out of his own house. The problems David suffered within his own family would certainly more than suffice to recall his sin.

3. David's wives would be taken and given to his neighbor who would lie with them before David's eyes. Absalom "went in unto his father's concubines" (2 Sam. 16:21-22).

4. David's punishment, unlike his secret sin, would be public. Absalom's actions were done "in the sight of all Israel" (2 Sam. 16:22). Certainly that which David suffered was known to those who watched Israel.

5. The child conceived through sin would die. The child was a great benefactor of this decision because he could go the heaven (1 Sam. 12:23; Mark 10:14).

The fact is, that David's loss of character, by the discovery of his crimes, tended, in the natural course of things, to diminish the respect of his family, to weaken the authority of his government, and to encourage the prevalence

of many disorders throughout his kingdom (Jamieson, Faussett and Brown 244).

Thus David's glorious reign was clouded with unceasing troubles. What a lesson for those who think they can sin, and sin, and sin, and get away with it! (Halley 187).

Nathan Received David's Confession (12:13)

The coming of Nathan to tell his friend the truth is important because "not till Nathan spoke to his conscience does he appear to have said one word of penitence to God" (Hastings 312). David was deeply touched by Nathan's practical application. He saw clearly what he had done and declared to Nathan, "I have sinned against Jehovah." David's confession was personal. He said, "I have sinned." David made no bones about it, he took full responsibility for his actions.

The cutting truth of the prophetic word shakes him out of the hollow passion in which he has lived since first he saw this woman, and rouses him again to the consciousness of his better self (Spence and Exell 308).

David also recognized Him against whom he had sinned. While his sin was against, Uriah, Bathsheba, Israel and others, ultimately it was against Jehovah. "He remembers only One, whom he has grieved and alienated, One who is invisible and yet very present, One – this is the terrible thought which overwhelms and crushes him – One who is 'of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.'... "In the original, two words are enough to revolutionize the man's whole life, and to alter all his relations to the Divine justice and the Divine Friend" (Hastings 330). "Not the length of a confession, but its meaning and sincerity, are the important thing" (Spence and Exell 320). "Even in this dark chapter of David's life, we can get a glimpse of his

greatness. His simple confession, 'I have sinned against Jehovah,' is without excuse" (Brannon 128).

Why is it that the king quailed before his subject, whose life was altogether in his hand?...We know that a man standing on the right is mightier than kings and that kingdom is impotent before such a man when kingdom is defiled. It was a pure conscience that animated Nathan with dignity, and clothed him with a Divine royalty; it was an evil conscience that made David cower and tremble before his servant like a beaten hound (Hastings 323-324).

"David, in these few words, pours out before God the confession of a broken heart" (Ellicott 474). He illustrates Solomon's words that "A rebuke entereth deeper into one that hath understanding than a hundred stripes into a fool" (Prov. 17:10).

"Sinned" is from "chata'...properly, to miss; hence (figuratively and generally) to sin" (Biblesoft's).

The root occurs about 580 times in the Old Testament and is thus its principle word for sin. The basic meaning of the root is to miss a mark or a way. The verb has the connotation of breach of civil law, i.e. failure to live up to expectations, in Genesis 40:1. Extended to religious obligations, the form, hata' min, in Leviticus 4:2 designates a failure to observe God's laws and in Leviticus 5:16 denotes action which gives less than is due, a failure of full duty. In the many instances in which the verb occurs in the Qal stem the object is either God or his laws, or else the verb is intransitive. In so acting, man is missing the goal or standard God has for him, is failing to observe the requirements of holy living, or falls short of spiritual wholeness. Thus like other

words related to the notion of 'sin' it assumes an absolute standard or law...hata' means 'to miss, to fall short of the standard...'. In Lev. and in Num. the noun appears many times alternating in meaning between sin, the reality of disobedience to God, and sin-offering, the means of removing the guilt and penalty of sin before the Lord through the sacrificial system (Harris 1:277-278).

David confessed what he learned as a result of sin. "By confession we sever ourselves from our sin and we disown it. Confession relieves by giving a sense of honesty. So long as we retain sin unconfessed, we are conscious of a secret insincerity" (F. W. Robertson, vol. v.) (Spence and Exell 309). Joseph recognized this before a sin was committed and this knowledge allowed him to remain pure (Gen. 39:7-10). David's confession is the basis, many believe, of Psalms 32, 51 and 103. "There is in the Bible no confession so unconditional, no expression of repentance so short, but also none so thoroughly true' (Disselhoff)" (Spence and Exell 309).

Nathan Reminded David Of Jehovah's Covering (12:13,14)

Nathan's reply to David's confession was, "Jehovah also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die" (13). Here one sees the concern of Jehovah for His people who are willing to do right. Only Jehovah can forgive sin (Exo. 34:7; Dan. 9:9; Mark 2:7). Solomon would write, "He that covereth his transgressions shall not prosper; But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall obtain mercy" (Prov. 28:13). A Psalmist, perhaps David, wrote,

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven
Whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man
unto whom Jehovah imputeth not iniquity,
And in whose spirit there is no guile (Psa.
32:1-2).

Here one sees the celerity of Jehovah's dealings with David's sin. When David repented, Jehovah forgave him and put away his sin. "The whole was but the transaction of a moment. One minute he was standing obstinate and rebellious, stout in his sin, and the next minute the whole change had come, and the hard heart was softened and the proud will had bent and the sin was gone" (Hastings 338). Isaiah would later promise,

let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon (Isa. 55:7).

Here one sees the completeness of Jehovah's dealing with David's sin. "The original language of the text might be rendered, 'The Lord hath caused thy sin to pass away'" (Hastings 339). David would beseech Jehovah to do this very thing again when he numbered the people (2 Sam. 24:10). This is the same terminology used by Jehovah to "Joshua the high priest" when He told him, "I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee" (Zech. 3:1,4). How comforting for the Christian today to know, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Here one sees the comfort that comes to David as a result of Jehovah's dealing with David's sin. David was guilty of two sins which brought the death penalty under Moses law: adultery (Lev. 20:10) and murder (Lev. 24:17). Seeing David's heart as it is revealed in Scripture, we conclude that he was still broken-hearted with himself because he had succumbed to sin and followed it out to its dastardly conclusion, but elated that Jehovah had loved him enough to forgive him and cover him and deliver him from death. It was a privilege for Nathan to

assure David of Jehovah's forgiveness. It is the case that "reproofs of instruction are the way of life" (Prov. 6:23). Nathan knew that since David had repented, he would be honored (Prov. 13:18).

David's comfort comes from being released from the condemnation of death, both physically and spiritually (Rom. 6:23), being restored to fellowship with Jehovah (1 John 1:7) and having his heart renewed to do Jehovah's will (Psalms 51:9-10).

David's confession and Jehovah's covering could not remove the consequences of sin. Nathan announced, "the child...shall surely die" (14). How true that "the way of the transgressor is hard" (Prov. 13:15). As Israel later, David had sown "the wind, and...shall reap the whirlwind" (Hosea 8:7). David had again shown the truth of the principle, put into place in the creation ("after their kind," Gen. 1) that, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Job 4:8; Gal. 6:7,8).

The reason for punishment is given by Jehovah, "because by this deed thou has given great occasion to the enemies of Jehovah to blaspheme." Jehovah's enemies are always glad to blaspheme Him and they are even more glad when they can use His own servants as the occasion of that blasphemy. David represented the nation and the nation represented Jehovah. Any sin on the part of David or the nation would reflect badly on Jehovah among the heathen nations who were watching Israel closely. Israel would be guilty of this sin many times (Isa. 52:5; Ezek. 36:20,23; Rom. 2:24).

The integrity of God is well-nigh irreparably breached by the behavior of those who profess to be devoted to his service. There is a great deal of hypocrisy in the argument of the man-on-the-street who inveighs against the church because of the 'hypocrites' in the church. But most tragically, the daily conduct of too many

Christians makes them out to be just that (Little 1104-1105).

The eminence of a man makes his sin the more conspicuous and the more deadly in its effects. The question for every man must be, What will be the result of sin on my part, not to myself only, but to the cause of Christ, to the character of religion? (Hastings 342).

Jesus said,

Woe unto the world because of occasions of stumbling! for it must needs be that the occasions come; but woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh (Matt. 18:7)!

“A Christian is often the only ‘Bible’ a careless world will read. What if the type is crooked? What if the print is blurred?” (Winter 481).

Notice that it is the enemies of Jehovah who take occasion of the sin to blaspheme Jehovah. The friends of Jehovah are heart-broken when a saint sins and seek, in every way possible, to restore him to his former saved position. Can we, in our heart’s eye and with our heart’s ear see and hear the tears as they fall to the parchment as Paul writes, “Demas forsook me, having loved this present world” (2 Tim. 4:10). When Paul wrote to the Philippians about the “enemies of the cross of Christ,” he did so “even weeping” (Phil. 3:18). Paul’s work in Ephesus consisted of admonishing “every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:31).

Nathan’s Performance: A Statement

Nathan’s performance of Jehovah’s work provides a statement to us today of the need to tell our friends the truth when they are guilty of sin. We do that because we love them and want them to go to heaven. We really

are friends when we tell the truth or deal truly with each other in the matter of sin (Gal. 4:16). In telling our friends the truth about sin, we must seek to use the best wisdom we can lest we excite opposition as well as repel and harden the sinner.

In personal matters, Jesus told us of the possibility that fellowship could be ruptured between brethren when he stated, "if thy brother sin against thee" (Matt. 18:15). This is not a public sin at this point, but a private sin against a brother. Responsibilities in this matter are spelled out with the use of the verbs, "Go," "Take," and "Tell" (18:15-17). There is also the responsibility to "show him his fault" (18:15). "Show" is from Elencho, which "signifies (a) to convict, confute, refute, usually with the suggestion of putting the convicted person to shame... more than telling the offender his fault is in view..." (Vine 1:239). Luke records the words of Jesus concerning matters between brethren this way, "If thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him" (Luke 17:3).

As was the case with David, the offender has two choices available to him. He may restore the fellowship which has been ruptured by hearing the complaint and taking the appropriate corrective action (Matt. 18:15). If this is done, the guilty brother is gained. He may refuse to restore the fellowship by casting off the complaint and refusing to correct the fault (18:16). The one refusing to hear is described as refusing to hear the lone brother, witnesses and the congregation (18:16,17). "Hear" is from parakouo, "to hear without taking heed, to neglect to hear" (Vine 2:205). "When sin is not dealt with honestly, it always spreads. What was once a matter between two people has now grown to involve four or five people. No wonder Jesus and Paul both compared sin to leaven (yeast), because leaven spreads" (Wiersbe 66).

In public matters, John recorded the letter written

to “the elect lady” (2 John 1). This woman was loved (agape) by John and others (1). In this letter John instructs her concerning some matters of importance to her and the church. He tells her to be aware of the deceivers (7). “Deceivers” suggests wanderers moving about with the purpose of leading the faithful astray. He also warns her to be attentive to herself in order that she not lose the things which have been gained, but that she receive a full reward. John, then tells her to be alert in practicing hospitality (9-11). With regard to traveling teachers coming her way, John tells her to have no fellowship with them. With false teachers, Christians must depart from the normal practice of hospitality. It seems to be the case that false teachers had come and received her fellowship in the past. The greeting would imply approval and a desire for success. John tells her that she must not continue in her fellowship with false teachers. If she does, she becomes guilty with them in leading people away from God and will be punished accordingly.

Conclusion

The matter of friends loving friends enough to tell them the truth is very important to our Christianity. Our love for them is the motivating factor in this matter and all our actions will be those which convey that love to those whom we are correcting. There is never a time when being ugly and unloving is justified in correcting people. The aim is always to convert one from the error of his way, save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins (James 5:19,20). Concerning those from whom fellowship would be withdrawn, Paul wrote, “And yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2 Thess. 3:15).

Let us have the courage we need to tell our friends the truth when, according to the standard of the Bible,

they are wrong. Let us also have the compassion we need to convey our love for their souls to them throughout the process of correction. May those who might observe our correcting of a friend be able to say, "Behold how he loved him" (John 11:36)!

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CHAPTER 25

Ahithophel: A False Friend With A New Testament Counterpart

Gary McDade

Introduction

The Power Lectureship continues to strengthen the church today even as it has from its beginning. Wade Webster, the new director, is one of the best young preachers and writers of our generation. It is an honor to be asked once again to participate in this significant brotherhood lectureship. "David: The Man Who Had The Heart To Be King" is a theme that will introduce many people to a large section of Scripture that is deep with instructional value. It is likely that those who are studying this material for the first time, along with those who are restudying it, may kindle a desire that will once again create a burning zeal for the Word of God among members of the churches of Christ. When the names and stories and concepts covered in this lectureship are the subjects of discussion at our dinner tables and in our living rooms the church of Christ will be a thousand times stronger than it is today.

Who Was Ahithophel?

The subject before us now, "Ahithophel: A False Friend With A New Testament Counterpart," contains a theme that is not unfamiliar to those of us who have lived

long enough to have lost a close friend who traveled in the dark shadows of betrayal. Ahithophel was a highly regarded cabinet member in King David's administration. A virtually unparalleled compliment concerning his counsel appears in 2 Samuel 16:23, "And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom."

Why Did Ahithophel Forsake David?

The trait, even though motivated by separate events, that will forever bind Ahithophel and Absalom is revenge. First, Absalom meted out his revenge on his brother Amnon for the rape of their sister Tamar by killing him (2 Sam. 13:28). From the very day that Amnon forced their sister, Absalom determined to kill him (v. 32). Absalom's murder of his brother Amnon was the reason Absalom fled from his father David's house (vs. 34-38). "Absalom fled, and went to Talmai, the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur" (v. 37) where he remained in self-imposed exile for three years (v. 38). Joab, son of Zeruah David's half sister, who became chief and captain of David's army by leading in the victorious assault on Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5:8; 1 Chron. 11:6), saw that "the soul of king David longed to go forth unto Absalom" (v. 39), so he fetched a wise woman of Tekoah to appear before David, and he "put the words in her mouth" (2 Sam. 14:3) that led David to bring Absalom back to Jerusalem. The principle of reconciliation that was irresistible to David was this:

For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him (v. 14).

At first David would not allow Absalom to see his face (v. 24), but after two years and two failed attempts to gain an audience with Joab to use him as a liaison to his father, Absalom ordered Joab's barley field burnt which at last brought Joab to his house. Joab said to him, "Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire? And Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, Come hither, that I may send thee to the king, to say, Wherefore am I come from Geshur? it had been good for me to have been there still: now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me" (vs. 31-32). The results were as hoped by Absalom, "So Joab came to the king, and told him: and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom" (v. 33).

David's son Absalom was an impressive looking man. He is described in verses 25-26.

But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled it: because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he polled it:) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight.

Absalom began to feed his wicked ambition to usurp his father's throne. He stole the hearts of the people with his pompous entourage of chariots and horses and fifty men to run before him (2 Sam. 15:1). He rose up early, stationed himself in a prominent place, and invited all comers to allow him to exercise judgment on their behalf while casting disparagement on the king's availability. The Bible says, "Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were

made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!" (v. 4). In this way "Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel" (v. 6).

When Absalom was confident that the timing was prime for him to make his move he sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying,

As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron. And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing. And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom (vs. 10-12).

Upon learning of the advantage of his son Absalom and wishing to spare bloodshed and destruction in the capitol city of Jerusalem, David retreated (v. 13ff.). Warren W. Wiersbe observed, "Thanks to David's speedy departure, Absalom's rebellion was a bloodless coup and he took Jerusalem unopposed, which was just what David wanted (15:14). Unlike Absalom, David was a man with a shepherd's heart who thought first about the welfare of his people (24:17; Psa. 78:70-72)" (Wiersbe, 585). The revenge of Absalom upon his brother Amnon for forcing their sister eventually gave way to the division of the entire nation! And, Ahithophel was among the conspirators.

Now, note in the second place, even though motivated by a separate event, the linking trait of revenge between Absalom and Ahithophel. Ahithophel was the grandfather of Bathsheba with whom David had committed adultery back in chapter 11. D.F. Payne rightly observed, "We are not told why Ahithophel was prepared to join the

conspiracy. Since he was Bathsheba's grandfather (cf. 11:3; 23:34), one would not have expected this of him, unless it was because he felt that David had tarnished his granddaughter's reputation" (Guthrie and Motyer, 309). As a trusted member in King David's cabinet, Ahithophel may have been standing right there when the prophet Nathan said to David,

Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun (2 Sam. 12:9-12).

When Absalom summoned Ahithophel's advice saying, "Give counsel among you what we shall do," Ahithophel said,

Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong. So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel (2 Sam. 16:21-22).

Ahithophel then suggested that he himself be dispatched immediately under the cloak of darkness with 12,000

troops to assassinate King David (2 Sam. 17:1-3). His counsel “pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel” (v. 4). But, upon initially learning that Ahithophel was among the conspirators, King David had prayed, “O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness” (2 Sam. 15:31). And, David enlisted the services of his loyal friend Hushai the Archite to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel (v. 34). Hushai had made himself available to Absalom in Jerusalem by the time Ahithophel’s counsel was needed, and so Absalom sought the benefit of Hushai’s counsel too. But, Hushai said, “The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time” (2 Sam. 17:7). Instead of commissioning a designated attack force under the charge of someone else, Hushai advised that Absalom amass the strength of Israel and lead the army himself so Absalom could sustain the appearance of being in charge of the developments in the drive to kill David. David’s men were known to be valiant and any losses sustained by Ahithophel might yield the intelligence from the battlefield saying, “There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom” (v. 9).

Weirsbe summed up the events.

Ahithophel’s matter-of-fact speech was forgotten as Hushai’s grand plan, punctuated with vivid mental pictures, gripped the hearts and minds of Absalom and his leaders. God answered David’s prayer and confused the counsel of Ahithophel. Absalom would ride at the front of his army, intent on victory, but he would meet with humiliating defeat. “The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations” (Psa. 33:10-11, NKJV). (Weirsbe, 586).

Ahithophel had been a faithful servant of the king and the kingdom until he determined in his heart to get vengeance on David for what he did to Bathsheba and Uriah. This desire for revenge so obsessed him that he ceased to be a servant of the Lord and began to serve his own sinful desires. He knew of Absalom's ambitions and kept them hidden from David, and he cooperated with the crown prince in the palace coup. But with all of his wisdom, Ahithophel was supporting the wrong king, and the Lord had to judge him. Both Ahithophel and Absalom ended up hanging from a tree. How tragic it is when a man or woman leads an exemplary and useful life and then fails dishonorably at the end. There are old fools as well as young fools, and Ahithophel was one of them. All of us need to pray that the Lord will help us to end well (Weirsbe, 587).

Why Did Athihophel Take His Own Life?

Absalom and the people judged Hushai's counsel to be superior to Ahithophel's, but it was not so in reality. The Lord was at work behind the scenes, "For the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom" (2 Sam. 17:14). Ahithophel's pride may have been injured, but there is no indication of that in the text. The text says that he "saw that his counsel was not followed" (v. 23). Hushai's counsel brought about King Absalom's defeat, and Ahithophel was following the wrong king. Again, Weirsbe observed, "As a traitor against King David, Ahithophel would either be slain or banished forever from the kingdom. Rather than humiliate himself and his family in his death, he put his affairs in order and hanged himself" (Weirsbe, 587). The Bible says, "And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him

home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father" (v. 23).

Who Was His New Testament Counterpart?

The betrayal of King David by Ahithophel is eclipsed in the New Testament by the betrayal of Jesus Christ by the apostle Judas. David's sinful actions concerning Bathsheba and Uriah precipitated Ahithophel's decisions. Judas's greed precipitated his betrayal of our Lord. In the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus at Bethany when Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with costly ointment of spikenard, Judas protested ostensibly the extravagance of the cost of the ointment that in his judgment could have better served the poor, but John informs us, "This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein" (John 12:6). Judas was unperturbed by the weeping of Mary at the thought of the crucifixion and burial of the Savior as she applied the ointment to Jesus' feet mixing it with her tears and wiping His feet with the hair of her head. Judas was a thief, and soon his thoughts would run to the silver he could get for exposing Jesus to the soldiers. Mary's actions prompted Jesus to say, "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her" (Matt. 26:13). Judas' reaction was diametrically opposed to this lasting sentiment of love and respect. Matthew wrote, "Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him" (vs. 14-16).

The arrangement with the chief priests and elders

of the people for the betrayal of Jesus that night in Gethsemane was that Judas would give the armed mob a sign. Judas had said, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him" (Matt. 26:48-49). Upon doing so Jesus said to him, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48). In oriental culture, the kiss is a common form of greeting much like the handshake in western society. Naturally, the kiss is more personal and inherently affectionate. It is even regulated when employed by saints of any culture and generation so as to always be chaste or "holy" (Rom. 16:16). The one who had been so unmoved by the affectionate display by Mary at the feet of Jesus now selected the kiss to serve as the sign of the ultimate betrayal.

Once Judas saw that he was condemned by his attitude and actions he underwent a change of mind that was more like Esau "who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Heb. 12:16-17) than a person possessed of godly sorrow that "worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:10). One clear difference between Judas and Esau is that there is no mention of tears in Judas's regretful fit of desperation.

The apostle Matthew recounts his actions.

Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took

the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me (Matt. 27:3-10).

The closest thing to funeral comments about Judas were uttered by the apostle Peter.

Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take (Acts 1:16-20; cf. also Psa. 69:25; 109:1-20).

The poet wrote,

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.
--Omar Khayyam (1048-1131).

Conclusion

Betrayal, revenge, greed, and absence of compassion convey no commendation to the wise of heart who value love and loyalty and long for eternal life in heaven with the sainted dead gone before and those yet living who are like minded.

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**David, The Sinner:
A
Contrite Heart**

CHAPTER 26

What David Didn't See From His Rooftop

David Sain

And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house. And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child (2 Sam. 11:2-5).

Life can be characterized in various ways. For example, it has been said that life is a series of changes that take place from birth to death. Some of those changes are the result of actions or decisions that we have made. Other changes are the result of actions or decisions that others make, that have an effect upon us.

Some of those changes are welcomed, while other changes are not welcomed. Nonetheless, they happen. Changes in the world about us and changes in our personal lives are reality. And, generally speaking, the one who adjusts the best when changes take place will have the

happiest and most fulfilling life.

Similarly, life can also be accurately characterized as a series of choices. From early in life, and throughout life, everyone makes choices – thousands of choices. Consider how many choices you make in an average day – what to wear, what to eat, how you will spend any leisure time that you may have, etc.

Some choices that we make affect us for the moment but have no lasting effect upon how one's life turns out. For example, what you choose to wear today may affect you for a few hours, but it is unlikely that it will have any bearing upon the rest of your life.

However, some choices that we make have a lasting effect upon our lives. For example, whom we choose as friends will affect us for a long time because our friends have a tremendous influence upon us. Where we chose to go to college and what we choose for a “major” in school will make a lasting impact upon our occupation and that usually has a great affect on where we live. Whom we choose to date may have a life-long, and eternal consequence, because the person whom we choose may be the person whom we marry. And let us not overlook the obvious impact that moral and spiritual choices have upon life. Those are choices that not only affect life here on earth. They have an eternal effect!

Summarizing, we all make choices, and all choices have consequences. Some choices are more significant than others, and the consequences from our choices vary in their lasting effect, but all choices have consequences! And that is what King David failed to see from his rooftop.

The Moment Of Decision

We are not told and, therefore, do not know what made David rise from his bed that “eveningtide.” Maybe he was restless and unable to sleep. Maybe he got up

“to get a breath of fresh air.” The reason he arose is not important to know. That which happened when he went on to the roof is important.

When David walked out on to his rooftop he saw a woman washing herself. He found her beautiful to look upon. At that moment he could have thought, and should have thought, “that is something I do not need to see.” And at that moment he should have decided to turn himself away and put his mind on more appropriate things. Instead, he continued to look, and he made a choice that brought devastating consequences.

David called for one or more of his servants, to whom he gave instructions to find out more about this woman upon whom he had gazed while she bathed. The report came back that she was Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, and that she was a married woman. Her husband was Uriah, the Hitite.

Upon hearing the report, David was not deterred in his pursuit of this woman. The fact that she was married did not matter to him. So, he sent messengers to bring Bathsheba to him. According to the teaching of the Lord Jesus, he committed adultery with her, in his heart, before he became intimate with her in the privacy of his bedroom (Matt. 5:28). Indeed, before David’s messengers brought her to David, he was guilty of lust, desiring that to which he had no right. In other words, the sexual act that David committed with Bathsheba was first in his mind. As Jesus said,

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies... (Matt. 15:19).

Consequences From The Decision

As previously emphasized, there are consequences to all choices. And some choices can result in harsh and

cruel consequences that affect multiple lives. Such was the case with the decision that David made to commit adultery with Bathsheba.

First, consider the consequences that came to Bathsheba. In addition to being guilty of adultery, her life was turned into one of great grief and sorrow.

After David committed adultery with her, he learned that Bathsheba was pregnant with his child. As is so often the case, one sin can lead to another. So, David attempted to cover up his sin, and the resulting pregnancy, by bringing her husband (one of David's warriors) home from the battlefield. David proceeded to make arrangements for Uriah to go home and lie with his wife, after which he would assume that he was the father of the child to which his wife would give birth. However, David underestimated Uriah's loyalty to his commanding officers and fellow-soldiers. Uriah refused David's offer.

That prompted David to get Uriah drunk, thinking, no doubt, that in such a state Uriah would go lie with his wife. But, again, Uriah foiled David's plan and did not go home to his wife. Therefore, David made another decision that resulted in severe consequences. He devised a scheme that would result in Uriah's death. Through David's instructions to Joab, Uriah was placed in a situation in battle that left him unprotected and he was slain.

Soon the news came to Bathsheba that her husband had been killed in battle. In addition to having to deal with being pregnant with David's child, she must also bury her husband. Consider the devastating effect this had upon her, her family, and upon the family of Uriah.

Furthermore, consider the effect all of this had upon an innocent little baby. After Nathan brought David to see and confess his sinfulness (2 Sam. 12:1-13), Nathan told David something that would happen as a major consequence of what he had done -

Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die (2 Sam. 12:14).

The innocent child that Bathsheba gave birth to died as a consequence of David's sinful choice. The Biblical record says, "the Lord struck the child...and it was very sick" and, one week later, the child died.

One of the harsh realities of life on earth is that innocent people sometimes have to suffer as a consequence of another person's behavior. David had to deal with the knowledge of what his behavior had done to this child and to the child's mother. Bathsheba has now given birth to a child out-of-wedlock. She has buried her husband. And she now must bury her child. And all of that resulted from the wrong choice that David made on his rooftop.

And the consequence of his sin was not yet completed. Through Nathan, the Lord said to David, "the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife" (2 Sam. 12:10).

The Bible student knows that this divine pronouncement was fulfilled, and that murder and violent deaths characterized the house of David throughout the years that followed. As an example, recall how David's son, Absalom murdered another of David's sons, Amnon, after Amnon raped Absalom's sister, Tamar.

And recall how, years later, Absalom turned on his father and sought to kill David, only to be killed in battle with David's servants. But, in spite of the way his son had treated him, recall the cry of anguish that came from that brokenhearted father when David learned that Absalom had been killed (2 Sam. 18:33).

How sobering it is to consider all of the tragedies that

happened in David's life as a result of that wrong choice that he made when he lusted for another man's wife.

Two More Things David Should Have Seen

1. David should have seen what Moses saw.

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible (Heb. 11:24-27).

Note that this narrative identifies Moses as one who had "come to years." In other words, he was old enough to discern right from wrong and make a responsible decision. And I am certain that Moses made a good choice, albeit a choice that led to suffering affliction. After living in the environs of royalty, he turned his back upon the Egyptians and chose to suffer with the people of God. And the part of that text that captivates my attention and appreciation is that Moses saw the folly of enjoying "the pleasures of sin for a season."

David could have seen what Moses did. He would have turned his back upon the brief moment of sensual pleasure, realizing that it could not be worth the severe consequences that would come from it.

2. David needed to see what Joseph saw.

And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; There is

none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? (Gen. 39:7-9).

As you know, Joseph's jealous brothers sold him into slavery. He was bought by Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. However, in the providential care of God (Gen. 50:20), Joseph was prosperous and prominent in Egypt.

Then, trouble erupted when Potiphar's wife made advances to him and tried to seduce him. She was persistent and continued to tempt him day by day. However, Joseph steadfastly resisted the temptation, and refused to yield. Eventually, she got him into trouble by lying to her husband, and Joseph was cast into prison.

Now, consider how he might have reasoned under those circumstances. He could have said, "I have a great job. I have a good living. And this woman can get me into a lot of trouble. Beside, no one will know." Instead, he realized that to give in to Potiphar's wife would make him disloyal to his master, and (above all) would make him sin against God. Joseph knew that if he indulged in illicit sex with Potiphar's wife, that God would know and that he would have sinned against God! His concern was not who else might know about it. His concern was that he must not sin against God.

How much better off David would have been had he been able to see what Joseph saw. Think of the broken hearts, the grief, and the loss of lives that could have been avoided if David had said, like Joseph, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" To his credit, David did eventually realize that he had sinned against the Lord (2 Sam. 11:13).

Practical Lessons For You And Me

1. Be on guard. Do not make the mistake of thinking

that you cannot be tempted to sin. Guard your heart carefully. That is where sin is born. As James wrote, "... every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1:13-15). Also, remember that Paul cautioned, "let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

2. As noted previously, David's sin with Bathsheba and the things that he resorted to in an effort to cover up his adultery illustrate that one sin usually leads to another sin. To engage in such a sinful action usually has a rippling effect, damaging the lives of many people. So, when you are tempted, stop and think. What will be the cost when your sin is known – and it will be known!

3. Flee evil desires. As the apostle Paul taught, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thess. 5:21-22). When your conscience sounds the alarm that you are in a situation that is not good, listen to your conscience. When you first find yourself uncomfortable in a tempting situation, get out of that situation. The longer you stay in that situation, the more difficult it will be to "abstain" from the temptation.

Concluding Thought

Having considered how David failed to see some things that he should have seen, and how he would have been better off had he used better judgment, let us end this study on an positive, encouraging note.

After Nathan confronted David about his sin, David confessed, "I have sinned" (2 Sam. 12:13). And the reply of Nathan is the sweet sound of forgiveness. He said, "The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die" (2 Sam. 12:13). Adultery is a terrible sin that puts one under the condemnation of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21), but it can be forgiven when one humbly complies with God's laws of pardon!

CHAPTER 27

The Sin Of Counting Heads: When David Numbered Israel

Larry Acuff

What a difference a day makes. David, strong and mighty, stands before the army of Israel and his brothers and said, "Is there not a cause?...Thy servant will go and fight this Philistine" (1 Sam. 17:29, 32). He slew the giant. No armor or army. His confidence in himself and his faith that the God of heaven was with him was motivation enough. Several years are past and David has resorted to numbering the people against God's will. His motivation - the devil, "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel" (1 Chron. 21:1).

Here are the facts. David is moved to number Israel and Judah (2 Sam. 24:1). He gives the command to Joab. Joab ask, "...why doth my Lord the king delight in this thing" (2 Sam. 24:3)? David's word prevails and the people are numbered. Israel has 800,000 valiant men and the men of Judah have 500,000 men. According to 1 Chronicles 21:1 it was Satan who provoked David to number Israel. God was displeased with David for doing this thing and David confessed his sin.

I have sinned greatly in that I have done:
and now I beseech thee O Lord, take away

the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly...So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men" (2 Sam. 24:10, 15).

This lesson will cover three aspects of "The Sin of Counting Heads." One will be *The Cause of Counting*. Two will be *The Course of Counting* and three; will be *The Consequences of Counting*.

I. The Cause Of Counting

What motivated David to count? Satan. 2 Samuel 24 tells us that God was angry with David and he moved David to number the people. However, we read, "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel" (1 Chron. 21:1). God allowed Satan to do so.

Folks, we begin to count heads when we lose our faith in God or when become so arrogant that we conclude we don't need God. Satan is at the root of our counting heads. Satan is at the root of our failure to have faith in the God of the Bible. How does he do it?

One is pride. "Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs). "There are six things the Lord hates, yea seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look..." (Prov. 6:16-17).

We put our faith in numbers, in our own ability rather than in God. A great Bible example is Peter walking on the water. Peter looked at the boisterous wind and he became afraid and began to sink. He looked at the wind and not the Lord (Matt. 14:25-33).

Satan has one desire and that is to keep us from being saved. He uses three techniques to do so. One is that he will do everything he can to keep one out of the

body of Christ. Salvation is in Christ (Gal. 3:27). He tells the world that "one church is just as good as another," when we know that there is only one body (Eph. 4:4) and that the saved are added to that one body (Acts 2:47). Satan keeps one from being saved by telling the world "You don't need the church, you can be saved without the church." Yet we know the Bible teaches that salvation is in the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 15:24).

A second technique Satan uses is that if you do obey the gospel he will do all he can to get you back into the world. Paul said, "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world..." (2 Tim. 4:10).

A third technique Satan uses is to render you useless to the body of Christ. He will do this by putting every obstacle in your way. The church becomes a social club, somewhere to go on Sunday morning if there isn't anything else to do. We are taught to seek God's kingdom first (Matt. 6:33). Work, sports, recreation all become the most important. Satan says, "Gotcha ya".

If your life is not what it used to be perhaps Satan has moved you to number the people. Satan is the cause of the counting. Satan was the cause of sin in the Garden of Eden. He said to Eve, "Ye shalt not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). Satan was the cause of the trauma that came upon Job (Job 1-2). Satan stood by Joshua in Zechariah 3 and Satan stands by many today to defeat the work of the Lord.

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered (Jer. 8:20-22)?

Could it be because Satan has moved us to count the people?
Paul admonishes,

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand (Eph. 6:10-12).

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

Satan is the cause of counting.

II. The Course Of Counting

Just as David used Joab and the Captains of the Host, the devil uses whatever tools he can find. Here are several methods the devil uses to convince us to count heads. THE COURSE OF THE COUNTING is the method, the path, the way the devil uses to get us to number the people and to rely on numbers rather than on our faith in the God of heaven.

One, we're weak. He used that with the ten spies in Numbers 13. We know there are grapes in the land, but there are giants there and we are like grasshoppers. Many great works of the Lord have not been accomplished because we have concluded that we are too weak to accomplish them. There are grapes to be had, souls to be saved. Our brethren launched out to establish the Gospel Broadcast Network. That is a grape from the promise land. There was probably some poor weak soul who said it can't be done. There are souls lost all over the world that can be saved by the gospel if we will just get it to them.

We can double the membership of our congregation any day we choose. We can have great days in Bible School anytime we choose. Have you ever considered having a great Bible School drive and having as your goal to double your Bible School attendance? "We can't do that Bro. Acuff. All we have are older folks in our congregation." They see the giant of age. The devil has us counting heads again doesn't he? Don't you know those senior citizens of your congregation have children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren? If you are having 200 in Bible school set a goal for 400. Quit messing around. Do something big for a change.

Many congregations gave stopped having gospel meetings because they started counting heads. Jesus commanded us "to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Paul said, "It pleased God that the foolishness of preaching should save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21). "Faith comes by hearing and hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Paul then asked, "How shall they hear without a preacher" (Rom. 10:14).

Some stopped having gospel meeting because they started counting heads - the few who attend. Why not have a "Chair Night"? Why not have "Fill the building Night"? Instead of seeing the giants and feeling like grasshoppers, take advantage of the grapes of God's goodness and support. Besides grasshoppers can make a lot of noise and do a lot of damage - let that damage be done to Satan.

Remember Deborah? Remember Captain Sisera? He had 900 chariots of iron. General Barak had 10,000 men but that's like having 10,000 BB guns going against a "Sherman Tank". The Bible says, "And the Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots" (Judges 4:15). He sure did. God caused it to rain. "The clouds dropped

water" (Judges 5:4). "...the stars in their courses fought against Sisera" (Judges 5:20). What is that saying? God fought for Israel. Chariots aren't much good in mud.

Did not God fight with Gideon? Scared the Midianites to death. They killed each other; 300 men defeated them. "If God be for us who can be against us" (Rom. 8:31).

Remember Elisha's servant? The King of Syria sent horses and chariots, a great host. Elisha's servant saw that and said what are we going to do? Elisha told him not to be afraid. Wow! The servant must have been like some of us. He probably said to Elisha, "Hey man you stayed up too late last night. What do you mean don't be afraid?" Elisha prayed and asked the Lord to open his eyes,

And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha (2 Kings 6:17).

The second method Satan uses is we're poor. The denominations have all the money. What have we done? We've allowed Satan to move us to number the people to count the heads. So we're too poor? How much trust do we have in God? Have we forgotten what the Bible says?

I heard of one preacher who announced to the congregation that he had some good news. He said, "Brethren, we have the money for our yearly budget. We have all the money we need. Now all we have to do is get out of the pockets of the brethren and into the collection plate."

Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness (2 Cor. 9:10).

What is God able to do? "Multiply your seed sown". Why not start using God's counting system rather than Satan's? We begin to see only what we can do. We count heads and say, "We don't have enough." What does the Bible say? "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills" (Psalm 50:10). What does Malachi teach us?

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it (Mal. 3:10).

God will open the windows of heaven if we will simply do His will. Moses challenged the children of Israel that if they did not do His will "And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron" (Deut. 28:23).

We have the money to do whatever needs to be done to preach the gospel to the world. A small congregation with a budget of just over \$100,000 a year wanted to buy a church van but didn't have the money. They set a goal to raise \$10,000 over the course of the year in order to have a down payment for the van. A few folks had given extra and they had about \$900 by the first of March. In announcements one Sunday, in an effort to motivate the members, the congregation was told of another congregation where a lady had said she would give \$5000 toward the purchase of a van if the elders would agree to buy one. Guess what? There happened to be visiting in that congregation that day a prominent business lady. After the service she went to the preacher and said, "What would you say if I said I would give you \$5000 on your van?" She asked for a pen and wrote a check to the church. Brethren if we plan, pray and

promote God will provide us with whatever we need.

A congregation in Middle Tennessee had a budget of about \$12,000 per Sunday. Come the end of the year and they are short \$100,000. Many elders would be scrambling to see what they could cut. They would be in a panic. You would think the Titanic is sinking again. Not this eldership. They just set a goal that on a given Sunday at the end of December they would have a special contribution of \$100,000. They didn't have \$100,000 contribution - their contribution was \$106,000. This eldership wasn't moved by Satan to number the people.

Do you have a need? Don't hide it, or deny it, or disregard it! Rejoice in it, for it is an opportunity to see God's supply. That is precisely the reason for it. Oh, if we could see this! How we scramble to stay out of need when God is obliged to put us in whatever need and distress it takes to move us into the realm of his wonderful supply. He loves us that much! He gives us needs that we might give us himself! (Jack R. Taylor, *God's Miraculous Plan of Economy*, pg. 124).

We sing the song with children, "This Little Light of Mine" and one verse says, "Don't let Satan puff it out, I'm gonna let it shine." Don't let Satan move us to number the people.

The third method the devil uses is that we need to sit down and count the cost. Some brethren are scared to death that we are going off half cocked and will be embarrassed because we can't finish the job. The favorite words of some are "We've got to be careful." We've been careful long enough. We've been counting heads too long. It's time to do something.

And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not

down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him,⁰ Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:27-33).

We're familiar with this passage. Do we have enough to go to battle? Do we have enough to build the tower? Notice at the beginning of that passage it reads, "And whosoever doth not bear his cross..." (Luke 14:27). Paul wrote,

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

A Crucified Man Loves God Supremely.

If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his won life also, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:26).

Of course this doesn't mean that you don't love others but it does mean that we love Christ more.

A Crucified Man Looks In Only One Direction.

Paul wrote,

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those

things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:12-13).

An airplane doesn't have a rear view mirror. Perhaps this is what Jesus was saying when He said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness..." (Matt. 6:33).

James says that "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways...For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was" (James 1:8,24). We must focus on those things that are before. Just look at the things he uses to keep us from looking straight ahead.

One of his modus operandi is discouragement. He will use this method of operation to keep you from looking in only one direction. You will work hard encouraging others and they obey the gospel and in six weeks you can't find them. Someone says, "See it doesn't do any good to bring them in the front door and let them go out the back." Tack this scripture to every thing you can put it on - "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we will reap if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9).

A second modus operandi the devil uses is self-pity. "Oh, Bro. Acuff if you only new what I have to put up with blah, blah, blah, blah." "Why should I try to visit anyone, no one ever visits me." So the devil use this tool to keep us from looking in only one direction.

A third modus operandi is: I'm a multi-tasker. In other words I can't focus on just one thing for the Lord etc.

A Crucified Man Hangs On To Nothing. Christ on the cross had nothing in His hands.

Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able (Luke 13:24).

Bro. Burton Coffman published a book of sermons several years ago in which there was a title, *Casual Seekers At The Strait Gate*. In that sermon he pointed out that there were those who could not enter the strait gate because they tried to carry contraband. Many want to bring the world into the church with them. Some want to bring their denominational practices into the body of Jesus Christ. No! Turn loose of everything. A crucified man lets go of any and everything that will hinder his serving God.

The course of counting. The way Satan moves people to follow him rather than the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The Consequences Of Counting

David sinned when he numbered the people. There is always a consequence to sin. It is interesting in David's sin with Bathsheba that he suffered in many ways. The loss of the child. The sword would not depart from his house. He was not allowed to build the Temple. The rebellion of his family. However, in the sin of numbering the people we have a different perspective for the Bible says,

So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel
from the morning even to the time appointed:
and there died of the people from Dan even
to Beersheba seventy thousand men (2 Sam.
24:15).

Was it because the nation of Israel had become so arrogant and the people relied so much on themselves that God punished the nation by this pestilence? The Bible says, "The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel..." (2 Sam. 24:1). Therefore Israel suffered.

David was their leader. Leadership therefore must take responsibility for its actions.

The guilt of numbering the people lay exclusively with David. But in the body politic as well as

natural, when the head suffers, all the members suffer along with it; and, besides, although David's sin was the immediate cause, the great increase of national offenses at this time had (2 Sam. 24:1) kindled the anger of the Lord (Jamison, Fausset, *Brown Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, on Studylight.org, 2 Samuel 24).

There are three things to be noted about David's sin.

David Was Convinced Of His Sin. "David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people" (2 Sam. 24:10). It is hard to get a man, woman, nation to repent if they are not convinced they have sinned. How many confessions have we heard that went like this, "If I have sinned." "If?" That's not very convincing. We love David because he was a man who could recognize the fact that he had sinned. Perhaps more than any other character in the Bible David seems to be so willing to admit that he had sinned.

David Confessed His Sin To God. "...I have sinned greatly in that I have done; and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly" (2 Sam. 24:10). This reminds us of David's confession following his sin with Bathsheba when he said, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (Psa. 51:4).

David Contributed To His Sacrifice For His Sin. David was told, "Go up, rear an altar unto the Lord in the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite" (2 Sam. 24:18). Araunah offered David an oxen but notice David's response, "And the King said unto Araunah, Nay, but I will surely buy it of thee at a price neither will I offer burnt offering unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing...(2 Sam. 24:24).

What are the consequences we face for our lack of trust in God?

One Is That Souls Are Lost because we do not put faith in God and launch out into the deep. Peter and company had been out fishing all night and caught nothing. Jesus said, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a drought" (Luke 5:4). With the encouragement of Jesus they caught so many fish the boat begin to sink (Luke 5:7).

A Second Consequence Is That Our Influence Is Weakened. When the leaders of the church come to the conclusion that we are only going to do what we can see, we are only going to do what we know we can accomplish and for fear of failure refuse to lead the church into dynamic works for God's cause our influence is weakened in the congregation and in the community. "Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down" (Zech. 11:2).

A Third Consequence Of Counting Heads Is That Those Who Would Help Become Discouraged And Leave. Some members of the body of Christ have left for Pentecostalism because they have been a part of a congregation who have followed the devil's admonition and numbered the people. They have refused to do anything because they first count the cost and say we can't do it, forgetting that God will be with us and help us. It's like attending a funeral every Sunday morning in those congregations because there is no excitement and enthusiasm. The baptistery is not used and all some are doing are "holding services".

We pay a consequence when we listen to the devil.

CONCLUSION

A quote sums this up.

May I say that a great many folk today trust mathematics and not the Maker. They trust

the computer and not the Christ. They trust in numbers and not in the name of the Lord (*Thru The Bible Commentary Series*, 1 and 2 Chronicles, J. Vernon McGee, pg. 75).

David learned his lesson. Here is what he wrote:

It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes (Psa. 118:8-9).

In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion (Psa. 71:1).

We need to ask ourselves some very pointed questions. Do we really trust God and do we really believe in God. "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6).

CHAPTER 28

Trouble At Home: Sin In David's Family

Brad Harrub

Introduction

Can you imagine being the son or daughter of Bill Gates? Consider for a moment being an heir to the wealthiest man in the United States. Few people could truly comprehend the life of luxury that his wealth could obtain—not to mention that you would never have to worry about fixing your computer if it crashed! But seriously, would it be a position to be envied? Contrast that with the son of a man currently living in Nicaragua—a boy who will never know anything but hunger and deep poverty. A boy whose life expectancy is shorter than average due to the physical hardships he will endure, but a boy whose father was baptized into the church some five years ago during a mission campaign. Thanks to men and women willing to carry out the great commission, this boy is growing up in a Christian home. Who is really to be envied?

Given the task, one could probably identify thousands of examples of individuals who are quite successful from a business point of view—but utter failures in the home. King David is a great example of this. Oftentimes we limit our perspective of King David to a mighty warrior, a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), the man who wrote many of the psalms, and the man who eventually

took a “walk on the roof” and committed adultery with Bathsheba, and had her husband Uriah killed in battle. But what else can we learn from this shepherd boy who eventually rose to be a prominent king? What type of father and husband was David? What lasting impressions did he instill in the hearts of his posterity?

Background

David grew up during a period in which the twelve Israelite tribes were still united. In order to better comprehend David's family and his role in biblical history it helps to recall the timeframe that is under discussion. The book of Deuteronomy was primarily a series of sermons—a second reading of the Law—from Moses to the second generation of Israelites, prior to their entering the promise-land. God kept His promise to Abraham (Genesis 12) and delivered the promise land to the Israelites (Joshua 21:43-45). It would be during this period that the Israelites would experience a spiritual renewal as circumcision was reinstated and Passover was once again observed. During this period the people divided the land according to tribes, and judges ruled the Israelites. But at the close of the book of Judges we learn that “everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25).

Thus, a cycle of behavior became apparent—with the people heeding the voice of the Lord only when they were being oppressed. During times of peace men would return to doing what they felt was right. Wayne Jackson recorded: “This period of history, of more than three and one half centuries (cf., 1 Kings 6:1), was characterized by four cycles: (a) The people would rebel against Jehovah; (b) The Lord would send an oppressor to punish them; (c) Israel would cry out for deliverance; and (d) God would raise up a judge to overthrow the enemy and free His people.”

Following the death of Samson (Judges 16) we reach a period in history represented by a time of peace that would end in turmoil, as the Israelites sought for a “king” that they might be “like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:5). Even though the people were warned (1 Sam. 8:11-18) Samuel would hold the distinction of being the last judge. Following Samuel, Saul was chosen and anointed king over Israel—and thus Saul, David, and Solomon succeeded Samuel. During this time in our world’s history the Israelites were still a single nation, but that too would soon change.

David was not Saul’s son, and so the transition of power from Saul to David was a very precarious one. David continued to grow in wisdom and stature, and was a hero on the battlefield, causing King Saul to find himself jealous of “David and his ten thousands” (1 Sam. 18:7). Having grown up slaying Goliath and defeating the Philistines David finds himself in an unusual situation as King Saul’s hatred grows for his young victorious successor. David’s road to the throne was far from smooth—as Saul’s jealousy caused David to hide out, lest he be killed. David began his reign as king initially over the tribe of Judah, and it would be another seven years before he would be crowned king over all twelve tribes of Judah and Israel. It is within this volatile environment that David begins to build his family. The wise writer of Proverbs observed, “when the whirlwind passes by, the wicked is no more, but the righteous has an everlasting foundation” (10:25).

David: A Family Without A Foundation

The Influence Of Parents And In-Laws

Volumes of books have been written on the importance of parental guidance in bringing up their children. Sadly today many parents have shed the

responsibility of rearing their children and have turned it over to school teachers, day-care centers, youth ministers, and Bible class teachers. Somewhere along the way we have forgotten that our sole job with our children is to return them unto God Who gave them. Simply put, our sole job is a soul job! The Bible remains crystal clear that parents have the responsibility of training up their children (Deut. 6:4-9; Eph. 6:4). The role of parents cannot be overlooked, and this is true as well for a little shepherd boy named David.

There are many things we are not privileged to in God's Word. Background regarding David's parents is one of these. We know that Jesse was his father (Matt. 1:6), and that David was the youngest of eight sons (1 Sam. 17:12). We can also deduce from Scripture that Jesse was a humble man who had means (1 Sam. 17:17-18, 20). The Bible does not tell us much about David's mother, aside from her being a maidservant (Psa. 86:16; 116:16). But we know that these two individuals shaped David's heart in such a way that he longed to do good, he was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22) and eventually this ruddy young man was anointed king by Samuel (1 Sam. 16).

But David's parents were not the only one's influencing his family life. In addition to vital role of parents, our young people today need to know of the influence and importance of in-laws. Far too often decisions about marriage are made based solely on outward appearances of mates, and little or no consideration is given to the extended family and in-laws. It has wisely been said many times, "you don't just marry the person, you also get the family as well". David is a textbook example of what happens when one marries with little regard to the in-laws. In 1 Samuel 18:17 we learn that Saul intended to give Merab, his oldest daughter

to David, but after time passed, she married Adriel the Meholathite. The text indicates that Michal, another of Saul's daughters loved David. And again, Saul viewed this relationship as a way to snare David, having him killed by the Philistines. While most in-laws today do not plot to kill the spouse of their children, oftentimes they can kill them spiritually. The influence, beliefs, and priorities of in-laws should be greatly considered before committing to a marriage relationship. Had David considered the true character of his in-laws, he may have wisely chosen a different environment in which to begin his family. How many modern day marriages have crumbled as a result of in-laws whose different beliefs worked against the marriage relationship?

Lesson Learned: Our parents play a major role in how we will rear our own children. Things like religious beliefs, discipline, overall values and priorities are often passed on from parents to children. As such, thought and consideration should be given to the in-laws as we begin to select our mates.

You Can't Parent If You Are Never Home

David's battle conquests were numerous (e.g., 2 Sam. 8). His bravery was apparent from his youth, in which we learn he defeated a lion and bear (1 Sam. 17:34-35). He then went on to slay the giant Philistine Goliath (1 Sam. 17:45-51). Anyone even vaguely familiar with the accounts of David's life will quickly recognize God had blessed his efforts on the battlefield. In fact, it happened that on one occasion when David was coming home that the women were celebrating and dancing with tambourines singing: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Sam. 18:7). But all of his conquests were not without some compromise—David was rarely at home with his children.

Try as hard as we might, we simply cannot be two

places at once. How many times have children suffered as the result of a parent who is away from home too long. Even preachers oftentimes find themselves “saving the world” at the neglect of their own children. There is a reason why the inspired writer of Proverbs penned the words “the rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother” (Prov. 29:15). Haven't we seen this acted out over and over in our society today? In my generation we had to come up with a whole new term for it—latchkey kids. These were kids who let themselves in after school everyday because both parents were working outside the home.

[Personal side note: As someone who speaks and travels to congregations all across the country, I am acutely aware of leaving family. I try diligently to make sure my family is with me at least one-half of the time when I go out to conduct Christian evidence seminars—at my own expense. In inviting guest preachers to speak, one of the things congregations often forget is the family who is left behind. I fully recognize that it is my wife (and children) who sacrifices the most, and is the one who works the hardest, for she is left at home to tend to all of our children. I would strongly recommend elders giving consideration to this dilemma when inviting guest preachers. In more than six years of speaking all across the United States and abroad, I have had less than five congregations give consideration to my wife (or family) accompanying me. I say that not out of any bitterness or resentment, but rather as a reminder to elders that they can help keep husbands and wives together for a relatively small expense.]

As parents we must not follow in David's footsteps when it comes to career. We must remember that our primary mission field must be our own family first. And if we are going to be successful in getting our children

to Heaven, then we must be at home to mold and shape them in the way they would go (Proverbs 22:6). Christian parents must stop using worldly parameters for measuring success. Remember, Jesus admonished, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). Success is not a massive house, with late-model cars, and stylish clothes. True success is getting our children to Heaven! Have we forgotten that the Son of God said, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost" (Luke 9:25)? I would add "For what profit is it if a man gains the whole world by working himself all the time but loses his own children to the world?" Dad's, how often do we truly consider our wife and children when looking at working overtime?

Additionally, we need to start training our own children to follow this divine pattern. We need our young men to follow a career pathway that will allow their future spouse to stay at home. They need to be taught not to begin their marriage dependent on two salaries. We need to train our young ladies how to be women of virtue, and constantly remind them that one of the highest positions they can obtain is that of a homemaker and mother. This is not the mindset and worldview that they are getting from society, and thus Christian parents must take it upon themselves to teach it.

The time has come for Christians in America to turn away from materialism and embrace lives of contentment. Consider the real difference we would see in our nation if our families recognized what holds real value and took to heart Paul's words to Timothy:

Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

And having food and clothing, with these shall we be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Tim. 6:6-10).

Just imagine.

Part of being content is developing a family plan in which one parent is able to stay home to rear the children. Just prior to Paul admonishing Timothy to strive for contentment he laid down a divine plan for young widowed females. He observed: "Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully." Notice that divinely laid down order: young women are to marry first, then bear children (something our society needs to be reminded of), and then guide the house. How can mothers guide the house if they are never home? In this age where feminism has become very rooted in American culture, the suggestion for women to be homemakers is not a popular topic—but God's Word is not concerned with popularity contests. God's Word is concerned with giving mankind a pattern to get to Heaven.

The inspired writer of Psalm 127 made this observation in verse 4: "Children are like arrows in the hand of a mighty man." Why do you think the writer chose this particular analogy? Do you think the inspired writer's choice of words happened just by chance? Or do you think that the writer realized what you and I know today—that long before the archer ever places an arrow

between his fingers, and long before he ever pulls that bowstring taut, he already has sighted his target? He knows long before he ever releases that arrow where he wants it to go. There is forethought and planning involved in launching that arrow. It doesn't just occur haphazardly. Sadly, David spent too much time launching real arrows, and not enough time launching his children. Friends, we are God's archers! Our children are God's arrows! We must remember the goal on which we have our sights targeted, and then launch our children on their way with the same forethought and planning as the archer does his arrow. Each step that we take in guiding and directing our children should be made with that target in mind—that big, bold bulls-eye that we so lovingly call Heaven.

Unless we break the cycle, our children will likely follow in our footsteps, and place a higher importance on material blessings instead of spiritual blessings. And then when they join the workforce they will do precisely what they have watched their parents do for years and years—strive for prosperity. But in doing so, he forgets about God. Recall the warning Moses gave the Israelites in Deuteronomy 8:

When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you. Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, lest--when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt (10-14).

Too many parents are building beautiful houses, watching as their silver and gold is multiplied, yet all the while forgetting God. We are God's archers! Our children are God's arrows. We must take our responsibility seriously and stop allowing other people to launch our children in any direction they please. Our children should be sent on their way with such force and such strength that by the time they turn 17 or leave the home, they possess strong convictions about their religious beliefs. Otherwise, those who compose the "church of tomorrow" (as so many like to call it) will continue walking out the doors of our church buildings, never to darken those doors again. But be forewarned: this kind of direction and guidance requires "quantity time" and a Christian example. Fathers, it may be politically correct to discuss "quality time," but getting your children to heaven also takes quantity time.

Lesson Learned: Rear your own children! Don't rely on the world to raise them. If we are going to get our children to heaven then we must take an active role and be home. Learn to be content, and stop trying to "keep up with the Joneses." Give your children guidance and attention—not things.

The High Price Of Ignoring The Sins Of Our Children

How many times have Christian parents witnessed their children conducting themselves wrongly, only to overlook it or pass it off as "just a phase"? We have forgotten that it is O.K. to tell our children "no." Oftentimes, because it is our own children, we refuse to identify sin as what it is—sin. In 2 Samuel 13 we read of an incident between two of David's offspring, an incident that David overlooked and paid dearly for failing to address it properly. Ironically, year's later David's own son Solomon would admonish: "He who spares his rod

hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly" (Prov. 13:24). If only David had heeded this sage advice himself.

David's son Amnon became infatuated with his half-sister Tamar. Tamar was Absalom's sister, and she was a virgin. Amnon and his friend Jonadab conceived of a plan in which Amnon feigned illness, in order that Tamar would come and prepare food in his sight. An unsuspecting David sent Tamar to Amnon's house, where Amnon then forced himself on her (v. 14). Instead of then taking her as his wife or owning up to his sin, Amnon sent Tamar away.

Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, "Arise, be gone!" So she said to him, "No, indeed! This evil of sending me away is worse than the other that you did to me." But he would not listen to her (2 Sam. 13:15-16).

Tamar's brother Absalom was furious. And the text indicates that when "King David heard all these things, he was very angry" (2 Sam. 13:21). But we never read of David addressing the sin of Amnon. Instead, he did what many parents do, and simply stuck his head in the sand, hoping that everything would resolve itself. Instead of resolution, Absalom's anger eventually resulted in the murder of Amnon. David's refusal to deal with sin would eventually lead to Absalom's rebellion, and David's exile. Consider how much better things would have been had David addressed Amnon's sin. When your children sin are you more worried about your own pride and what others think or are you worried about how their sin has separated them from Almighty God?

We can only speculate as to why King David remained quiet regarding Amnon's sin. Many have

suggested that his sin of passion made it difficult for David to confront, given his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba. But consider for a moment how much heartache and sorrow could have been avoided if David had acted as the spiritual leader of his family and quickly rebuked Amnon. Instead, Amnon was killed by the hand of Absalom, and Absalom was then killed by Joab, David's ruthless general (2 Samuel 18).

One of the problems we have in the home today is that parents oftentimes will not discipline their children. (I suspect some of this is caused by the guilt of being away all day at the office.) The Bible is crystal clear that Christian parents are to discipline their children: "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction will drive it far from him" (Prov. 22:15). "Do not withhold correction from a child; for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from Sheol" (Prov. 23:13-14). "The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. Correct your son, and he will give you rest; yes, he will give delight to your soul" (Prov. 29:15,17). While this may not seem politically correct during a time in which "anti-spanking laws" are being legislated, the Bible is not concerned with political correctness. Parents have an obligation to discipline their children (Heb. 12:7-8).

Consider what happens if children are left to rule the home—never developing a fear or respect for their parents. What will be the outcome of children who are never disciplined, but instead they make the rules for themselves. How can we expect them to develop a healthy respect and fear for God (Deut. 10:12; Psalms 111:10) if they don't even fear their parents? Consider the parallels between the Christian home and the church: they both have a head, they both have a father, they have the same

goal, and they both require discipline. There is a reason God gave us this pattern.

Lesson Learned: Doing the right thing is not always the easy thing. However, we should never forget that sin separates us (and our children) from God (Isaiah 59:2). Our children need to have consistent and godly correction. If we truly love our children we will not tarry in disciplining them.

Do You Know Whom Your Children Are Hanging Around?

Ask yourself this simple question: Do I have the courage—the backbone—to step in and put a stop to a relationship if it is hindering your child’s journey to Heaven? Do you know with whom your children spend their time? Who are they texting or emailing at night? In a recent college survey given to college age students, more than 80% indicated that the friends they hung around had a huge impact on their faithfulness. In Samuel 13:3, we learn “But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David’s brother. Now Jonadab was a very crafty man.” It was the “crafty” Jonadab who helped Amnon devise the plot lure Tamar to his room. Paul’s words are as valid today as they were the day he wrote them “Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits’” (1 Cor. 15:33).

This is one of those lessons that is often learned too late. Parents hear this truth, but far too often they find themselves justifying their particular situation, and the peers their children associate with. Additionally, parents routinely let their guard down as children enter college—a time in which peers play a crucial role in influencing our children. How much time do you spend getting to know your children’s friends? Sadly, years later parents recognize that their child’s journey towards apostasy began when they were hanging around certain

wayward individuals. I suspect every congregation of the Lord's Church holds some gray-headed parents who wish they had given more heed to this verse when their own children were young. Do you really know your children's friends?

Lesson Learned: Know your children's friends (and their parents if possible!)

David Was Not A One-Woman Man

While the Bible records that David was a man after God's own heart, it also records that David was the first king to introduce polygamy into the Israelite nation. We know that David came from Hebron to Jerusalem and took concubines and wives (2 Sam. 5:13). He married Michal (1 Sam. 18:27), Abigail (1 Sam. 25:42), and Ahinoam (1 Sam. 25:43). At Hebron he married Maacah (who became the mother of Absalom—2 Sam. 3:3), Haggith (1 Chron. 3:2), Abital (1 Chron. 3:3), and Eglah (1 Chron. 3:30). Plus we read of David having 10 concubines (2 Sam. 15:16). David was not content with "the wife of his youth" but rather he gave into his lust and passion. How many marriages have been destroyed by a simple "walk on the roof" that eventually led to adultery? Our children will pattern their relationships after what they see at home—and if they witness a mother or father who is unfaithful, they are more likely to follow in their shoes. One can't help but wonder if David's behavior at home ultimately did not lead to much of the heartache he suffered from his children's behavior. In commenting on David's sin with Bathsheba, Dean Stanley observed, "His crime itself had sprung from the lawless and licentious life, fostered by the polygamy which he had been the first to introduce into the monarchy..." (as quoted in Jackson, 1978, p. 123).

Having multiple wives was not uncommon during

this time—but this did not mean that God condoned this behavior. As Commentator Matthew Henry observed:

Shall we praise him for this? We praise him not; we justify him not; nor can we scarcely excuse him. The bad example of the patriarchs might make him think there as no harm in it, and he might hope it would strengthen his interest, by multiplying his alliances, and increasing the royal family.... David had many wives, and yet that did not keep him from coveting his neighbor's wife and defiling her; for men that have once broken the fence will wander endlessly, (n.d., 2:469).

Our initial reaction to this charge might be “But I have never cheated on my spouse!” However, how many families have been torn asunder by a father or mother who meets someone online, or a spouse who becomes addicted to internet pornography? This is a daily occurrence in our society today, and it is becoming far too common within the church. How closely are you guarding your heart? In Job 31:1, we find Job declaring, “I have made a covenant with my eyes. Why then should I look upon young women?” It is time we follow Job's example—make that covenant with our eyes—and set our minds on things above, not on things of the Earth (Col. 3:2). The cost of failure is too high. In Psalm 1:1-2 we read,

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners. Nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord. And in His law he meditates day and night.

Sermons are being delivered everyday by your actions in your own home to your children. What is the underlying message of that sermon? What are we teaching our children about an undefiled marriage bed (Heb. 13:4)?

Lesson Learned: Christian husbands need to uxorious—excessively devoted to their wife. We must always be aware that even people after God's own heart can fall victim to temptation. Parents must guard their hearts and remain faithful. Our children are patterning themselves after what they see at home!

David Missed A Golden Opportunity

David, like all humans sinned. His decision to take a "walk on the roof" ended up in an adulterous relationship that resulted in the death of Uriah. When Nathan uttered his famous line "Thou art the man!" we discover that David had done all of this in secret (2 Sam. 12:12). Most parents are very effective at hiding sin from their children. Consider the difference that David could have made had he used his mistake as a learning tool for his own children. Would Amnon been as quick to fulfill his own passion if he had listened to his father describe how he had failed them, and failed Almighty God. Instead, David remained silent, and his silence would later come back to haunt him. I am not suggesting that we expose our children to every sin that we have ever committed—but I'm also not suggesting we hide them. Instead, when applicable, we should use these as teaching opportunities, so that our children will not follow in our own footsteps.

One of the tragedies I see in the church today is that people view going forward similar to donning a Scarlet Letter. We don't have too many individuals going forward asking for prayers—primarily because of the stigma that is associated with the very act of walking down the aisle. This is sad for two reasons: (1) our children are not exposed to godly sorrow and repentance; and (2) we as a family of believers are frequently unaware of the trials and struggles with which our brothers and sisters

are wrestling. As a result, we are missing the opportunity to teach our children and help our fellow Christians.

Lesson Learned: Parents can help their children avoid many of the trials and temptations of this life by using real life examples. Oftentimes children grow up thinking that sin is going to have a big black label on it that they will be able to easily spot, and only later on in life do they realize the subtle and seductive nature of sin.

Material Wealth Is Not Always A Plus In Rearing Children

David was a king who got what he wanted. As a result, the children he fathered grew up enjoying an environment of wealth and prosperity. David himself had grown up as a shepherd boy who tended sheep. His children experienced a totally different childhood. As parents, we all want our children to have it “better” than what we had—but does better equate with “more”? What is the real cost of all of this material gain?

How many families have filled up three-car garages, constructed larger homes, purchased more land, or built up more impressive portfolios, only to wake up and realize that their own children’s mental and spiritual health has been sacrificed? They do not have that “peace that surpasses all understanding.” At what point will we as a nation realize that “material goods” do not guarantee “happier and healthier” families?

There is still a generation living today who can recall a time when things were much simpler. This generation grew up before the advent of television (and commercials). They can recall making all of their purchases from a single “department store” such as Woolworth’s. Many from this older generation can even remember paging through the Sears catalog in search of Christmas gifts or home furnishings. (In fact, some can even recall using catalogs for “other” purposes in outhouses.) While abundant material goods did exist in the past, they did

not inundate every aspect of life as they do today.

Yet today, my generation has perfected the art of "keeping up with the Joneses." We want to be surrounded in luxury. We are constantly bombarded with products to make our yards greener, children smarter, house cleaner, television signal stronger, or food taste better. We constantly see the products in magazines and on television—and we covet them all as our children watch. Our children are growing up in an age in which "work ethic" is a bygone concept. They simply see all our "stuff" and they desire even more. David's children must have felt a similar feeling growing up as children to the king.

If we are going to get our families to heaven we must abandon this modern day form of idolatry. Paul warned the Christians in Colosse that covetousness was a form of idolatry (Col. 3:5). We must instill in our hearts, and the hearts of our posterity, Jesus' admonition: "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). Consider the real difference we would see in our nation if our families recognized what holds real value and took to heart Paul's words to Timothy:

Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these shall we be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Tim. 6:6-10).

Conclusion

David was a success on the battlefield, but in many aspects he was a failure in the home. How many modern-day Christians share this trait? It's time we re-evaluate our priorities and look at how we define success.

Many congregations have "vital statistic" boards mounted in the front of their auditorium that records attendance and contribution. I would suggest congregations add a new line: Number of children who abandoned the Faith this year. You want to talk about a vital statistic! That one remains the massive 2-ton elephant in the room that we don't like to talk about. What would it feel like to look up and see we met our budget, but we have lost 23 precious souls to the world? I think it would be a wake up call to parents and Bible teachers about the real definition of success. Think of how congregations would feel knowing that year-after-year that line held the number zero. Friends, that's true success. Are you like David—a success at the office, but a failure at home? Isn't it time you stop launching arrows at the office and launch your children towards heaven? Isn't it time you rethink your definition of success?

References

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CHAPTER 29

David's New Ox Cart

Gary Colley

It is a joy for this speaker to again have a part in the great "POWER" lectures. To have my subject assigned and the brotherly association with the elders, brother Wade L. Webster, director, and with all of the admired brethren of the Southaven church of Christ is a pleasure and honor. It is our prayer that this fine theme, and these good speakers, may benefit many with the study of the Bible. We trust the spoken lectures, the book, and the tapes will have far reaching profit to all who are striving for the faith of the Gospel. May God's blessings accompany this effort is our prayer.

Introduction

It seems that some are always looking for something new. Whether it be ladies looking for a new dress or a new dish to serve her family, or the men looking for a new suit or car, something new is a challenge. Some things that are new are desirable, especially when it pertains to the things of this life. Great strides have been made in transportation, new medicines and procedures in the medical field, and foods for our health. But when we come to our reverence and respect for the God of our creation, new things are not desirable, preferred, nor are they correct. Subjectivism is supplanting God's teaching

with our own thoughts. Humility and faithfulness are two important keys if we want to go to Heaven. God's Word does not change, His attitude toward sin does not change, nor are His arrangements for worship and work in the church subject to change (Heb. 13:8-9). Although the "old," even in religion, is still very beneficial, proven, and workable, and is substantially approved by God, the appeal of something new is, by some, still sought after. Just because a thing is new does not mean it is better. Think of all the implications of a "new" cart. It implies that the old is not good enough. "We can make a better one!" Their problem is the same difficulty as we have today. They did not consult the Lord, even though the "new cart" contained the most precious cargo that was ever to be moved, God's law. The ark contained the agreement made with God by the people to carry out His commands. Frank Sinatra's song, containing one of the most rebellious statements ever made, expressed it well, "I did it my way!" The sexual revolution was an attack on the home, from which we are still suffering today. They thought they had made "a new cart!" This movement of the 1960's sowed to the wind, and we continue today to reap the whirlwind (Hosea 8:7)!

"Ask For The Old Paths"

The weeping prophet Jeremiah in the Old Testament records the word of God concerning these matters,

Thus saith Jehovah, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way; and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls: but they said, We will not walk therein (Jer. 6:16).

The sorrow of the people who would not walk in the "old paths" is seen when they said, "We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of healing, and, behold,

dismay" (Jer. 8:15)! Jeremiah wept over the departure from God by his people. Even though their difficulties had been brought on them by their own wrong ways, God asked, "Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with foreign vanities" (idols). Though they had sinned, Jehovah and Jeremiah had pity, sympathy, and pain for the people of God. He said,

For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt: I mourn; dismay hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered (Jer. 8:21)?

God's instructions are always plain, simple, and clear, but not always heard, accepted, and respected by the people (1 Tim. 4:1). Though we now have no direct communication from God, we can know that we are guided by the Lord only when we go according to His revealed will (Heb. 1:1-2; 2 Peter 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). We should always seek the will of the Lord first and foremost in our actions (Matt. 6:33).

David Anointed King

Following the death of Saul, David was anointed king over Israel at the age of thirty years and reigned forty years. Actually David was anointed to be king three times. First, Samuel anointed him (1 Sam. 16:13), second, he was made king over Judah (2 Sam. 2:4), and third, he was anointed king by public choice (2 Sam. 5:1-3). Israel had for a long time been without the true God in their midst, and they had fallen into idolatry. David wanted to establish Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and saw the need to bring the ark there for that purpose. It had been located in Kirjathjearim at the house of Abinadab and evidently remained there all through the reign of

Saul for forty years (Acts 13:21; 1 Sam. 7:2). The ark was brought by David from the Southern extremity to the northern extremity of the country (1 Chron. 13:1-5). David reigned in the notable city of Hebron seven years and six months and in Jerusalem thirty-three years (2 Sam. 5:5).

David Seeks God's Counsel

David fully realized that since God gave him the kingdom He would direct him as to the steps he should take in moving the ark (Psa. 37:5). God's instructions for moving the ark had already been clearly given (Exo. 25:10-22; Num. 4; 1 Chron. 13-16). It seems that David had forgotten, or else deemed the instruction of little significance, when it came to moving the ark. God's instruction, given many years before were yet unchanged. The ark should be carried by poles through the rings on either side of the ark on the shoulders of the priest. In this direction, God excluded the ark being hauled on any kind of cart, new or old. The Scriptures inform us that the Philistines prepared for the ark to be moved on the new ox cart (1 Sam. 6:7-8). But the Philistines were heathens, who had no knowledge of God's will, nor who had any interest in pleasing the only true and living God.

The new ox cart was not an expedient to carrying out God's commands, it was an addition to God's instructions. God protected the ark. When the Philistines wanted to get rid of the ark, they brought it to this town which had made a city of the Levites (1 Chron. 6:59). Because the men of Bethshemesh (House of the Sun) "looked into the ark of Jehovah" (1 Sam. 6:17-19), God smote the men of Bethshemesh with a great slaughter.

David had been given the will of God for moving the ark and should have known better than his present actions of moving it on the new ox cart. The Levites

were forbidden to touch the ark with the threat of death (Num. 4:15-20). Uzzah and Ahio “drove the new cart,” though they evidently had not been sanctified for this service (1 Chron. 15:2-15). Because Uzzah put forth his hand to steady the ark when the oxen stumbled, God “smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God” (2 Sam. 6:6-7). This stopped the procession until it could be determined what the Will of God was in this matter.

The Importance Of Divine Law

All should be impressed with the solemnity of ignoring or rejecting God’s divine law. These events certainly impressed David! “And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me” (2 Sam. 6:9)? He placed the ark in the house of Obededom where it remained for three months. His house was greatly blessed because of the presence of the ark. God’s presence always blesses those to whom He is near. On David’s second try, the ark is removed in harmony with God’s will and David sacrificed oxen and fatlings at every six paces (2 Sam. 6:13).

It is called the “ark of God” because it contained His law. He sat enthroned above the overshadowing wings of the cherubim, by which He presented His guidance and protection for the people. Wherever the ark went, the people were blessed. The ark is called “by the name of the Lord of host,” or the Lord of armies (2 Sam. 6:2). It is said that where God writes His name, there He promises to meet and bless His people (Exo. 20:24). God wrote His name in the Tabernacle, the Temple, and now it is in the church of Christ (Eph. 2:19-22). God meets all men with salvation now where He records His name (Acts 4:12; 10:43), in the church. The church is not a part of God’s plan of salvation, it is where God’s salvation is found,

and it is His plan for salvation of all who will obey His Son (Matt. 5:20; 28:18-20).

David Prepares A Place For The Ark

David gathered all the chosen men of Israel, and consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds. It is then that David seeks the counsel of God. He would not move the ark again until he sought God's approval. This was of great importance to be right with God and unite the entire nation. David built a house for himself, and then "he prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent" (1 Chron. 15:1). He took with him thirty thousand chosen men of Israel for this important task, and brought the ark to Jerusalem with great fan-fair (2 Sam. 6:1, 14-15). The high priest and his sons wrapped the ark in the veil of the screen, and then covered it with sealskin and a cloth of blue. They then placed the poles in the circles provided on the ark for carrying it on their shoulders.

Does The End Justify The Means?

Some today suggest and argue that the end justifies the means. They would say that it did not matter how the ark was moved to Jerusalem, just so David moved the ark. It appears that good intentions are of much more value with some today than doing what God commanded. But no one can argue successfully with the death of Uzzah in his disobedience. God's disapproval is clearly seen in the death of Uzzah. Good intentions and sincerity are not the deciding factors in this situation. This should be a red flag of warning for all today. Many now seem to be easily persuaded to go their own way, and though completely mistaken in their actions of worship and work, think that it will be acceptable in service to God (John 4:24). Jesus taught that when God's law is overlooked

or rejected, people will worship in vain (Matt. 15:9). If the Lord's church does not see itself as the pillar and ground of the truth, the eternal destruction of souls will result from changing or adding to God's order (1 Tim. 3:15; 4:1).

Some Departures On New Ox Carts Today

The community churches that are springing up in our day think they have found a "new ox cart" and are striving to please the community instead of God. They are ashamed of the restoration of the New Testament church and even the Scriptural name that the bride of Christ wears (Rom. 16:16). Some are practicing denominationalism, declaring that the Lord's church is a denomination, and accepting those who have not obeyed in baptism. They are teaching that baptism, though commanded by the Lord, is not absolutely essential to salvation (Acts 2:38; 22:16). These have a "new ox cart" and are filling the church with error. These contend that there is no God-given pattern for all to follow in faith and worship. But 2 Timothy 1:13 reads otherwise and disagrees! We must walk in God's way to be acceptable.

Mechanical instruments of music are brought into the worship of some without consulting the authority of God. They want to say, that though vocal music is commanded by God (Eph. 5:19), the rejection of instrumental music in worship is nothing more or less than our human tradition, and that we should fellowship those who use it. They have a "new ox cart," but no authority from Heaven.

Some suggest we will be "more spiritual" by adopting the New Age Mysticism and practices of the Catholic/Pagan ways, such as Christmas and Easter. They are not satisfied in remembering the Lord as He taught us to do every first day of the week (Acts 2:42; 20:7). They like the foot stomping, hand clapping, pep rally

kind of religion. It may seem exciting to some, but it is an addition "a new ox cart" which God will not approve (Matt. 28:18-20; Col. 3:16-17).

The "change agents" also desire to have women in the leadership of the church and in public worship. They may claim to have "a new ox cart" but God has made His Will very clear in this regard (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:11-12). Godly women will reject these departures from the Will of God.

No Rebellious Heart In David

As the theme of this lectureship suggests, David was the man who had the heart to be King over God's people. It does not seem that David was trying to be rebellious in heart, but he acted in ignorance and disregard for the law of God. His wrong way of acting did not justify the means and resulted in the stopping of the ark's removal and the death of Uzzah. No doubt David was humiliated and discouraged when his own way did not work. But he had contradicted the way God had commanded. We must see today that to honor God is of utmost importance! Paul wrote,

Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations forever and ever (Eph. 3:21).

We may boast of being "progressive," and ask others to take a look at our new streamlined **OX CART**, but this does not assure acceptance with God. The apostle John wrote,

Whosoever goeth onward (literally 'is progressive'), and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any in unto you, and

bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 1:9-11).

Our own ways and our own institutions, such as the “Christian Missionary Society” set into motion by the First Christian Church, shows great indignity to God in our supposed efforts to render faithful service to God. He intended that the church of Christ be the responsible ones for the spreading of the Gospel (1 Cor. 1:21). The church is His missionary society. Ignorance and disregard for God’s commandments will certainly bring God’s displeasure upon us in punishment. David’s own failure, and the sin of Uzzah, came as a result of not carefully seeking out God’s law. They needed to stop their actions until they determined God’s will, and act with great care to observe all that He commanded (1 Peter 4:11).

The Commission

The marching orders for the church today are clearly given in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; John 20:21-23). We learn that without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6), and that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17). God’s Word thoroughly furnishes the man of God unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). And Paul writes, “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). And further James informs us. “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good (God’s will), and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). The evidence found in God’s Word must be the basis of our faith, or else we walk by our own desires and ways and not faith (2 Cor. 5:7). We should know that to please God, no man is called upon to formulate plans for Him. We cannot be His counselor! The ways and thoughts of man are not the ways and

thoughts of God (Isa. 55:8-9). We are to,

Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and thy unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon (Isa. 55:6-8).

The way man maps out may seem to himself to be acceptable to God, even better than what God has prescribed because we consider it so, but we need to learn that the way to please God is not in the ways of man (Prov. 14:12; Jer. 10:23).

The Christian Home Today

We have mentioned in our introduction the sexual revolution of the 1960's. How sad to see in the homes of Christians today those who ignore God's laws for modesty, cursing, and faithfulness. Instead of what God intended for the Christian home, we too often see the home as a carnival of arguing adults and rebellious young people. We need to put God's Word back in our homes, and read it on a daily basis with our children. How else can we follow God's commands, do right ourselves, and bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the truth (Eph. 6:1-4). Divorce is on the upswing. Promiscuous sex and illegitimacy are running rampant. Cheating and lying are overlooked as if they were approved of God! Some say, "Well we have our own way of doing things." They could say, "Look at our new ox cart!"

We should as a family, study and pray together, and worship together in the Lord's church at every opportunity (Heb. 10:23-25). We need to make our homes a worthy place for God to reign and dwell. His presence will purify, beautify, and fill our homes with the fragrance of Heaven on earth (Psa. 127:1). His abiding there will

help us through sorrows, lighten our burdens, and bring happiness and peace to us and our children (Eph. 1:3).

Conclusion

David and Israel had learned the important lesson about obeying God in all things. Have we (Matt. 7:21-29)? They never again tried to make a “new ox cart” for Jehovah. We must learn the same lesson, lest we bring the curse of God upon ourselves (Rev. 22:18-19). We need elders in the church who are not hirelings or afraid of the wolves, but who still stand for the Truth in all instances (Matt. 7:15; Acts 20:28). May our religious service always be pleasing and in accordance with the Will of God (Matt. 4:4). When David finally followed God’s authority, there was joy, thankfulness, and success in the moving of the ark into Jerusalem. Let us remember that none of God’s commandments are trivial or to be ignored. Certainly we need to learn the lesson, that “David’s New Ox Cart” was not pleasing to God, nor a success for him.

CHAPTER 30

Murder He Wrote: The Death Of Uriah

Jimmy Clark

The life of David is filled with great highs and great lows. David's greatest highs came when he took the lead against the enemies of Israel in battle. David's greatest lows came when he could not defeat the enemy within his own spirit. The Bible does not show partiality toward men. The dark side of one of Israel's greatest leaders is exposed for man to study and scrutinize. Paul wrote concerning a study of the Old Testament,

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope (Rom. 15:4).

Paul wrote again in another place,

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted (1 Cor. 10:6).

Any study of the Old Testament must include a look into the events of unpleasant matters that the Lord's admonitions ring aloud and true to the honest heart.

Contributing Factors Toward Uriah's Death

Adultery and murder begin in the heart. Jesus said,

That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders (Mark 7:20-21).

There was a facet of the heart of David that needed to be purified. He would later admit this, by saying,

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me (Psa. 51:10).

Again,

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness (Psa. 51:14).

Here is David's ultimate admission that his heart was defiled and that a wrong spirit dwelt within him. If one were to look back on David's life concerning his lust in multiplying wives, one would gain insight into the steps that produced the record of 2 Samuel 11.

The law of Moses had said concerning the rise of an earthly king in Israel, "Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn now away..." (Deut. 17:17). David failed in this very thing.

Now these were the sons of David, which were born unto him in Hebron; the firstborn Ammon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; the second, Daniel, of Abigail the Carmelitess; the third, Absalom the son of Maachah the daughter of Talmi king of Geshur; the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah of Abital; the sixth, Ithream by Eglah his wife. These six were born unto him in hebron; and there he reigned seven years and six months; and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years. And these were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shimea, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon, four, of Bathsheba the daughter of Ammiel; Ibhar also,

and Elishama, and Eliphelet, and Nogah, and Hepheg, and Japhia, and Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphelet, nine. These were all the sons of David, besides the sons of the concubines, and Tamar their sister (1 Chron. 3:1-9).

The text of 2 Samuel 11 does not indicate initially that David intended to add to his wives or concubines. Bathsheba was not eligible to be married to David seeing that she was the wife of Uriah. Bathsheba and her sons are in the list through the circumstances recorded in 2 Samuel 11. It is necessary to see the setting of the ordeal in order to see what transpired in the death of Uriah.

Once David was told that his adulterous action with Bathsheba resulted in the conception of a child (cf. 2 Sam. 11:5), he set into motion the actions of a royal cover up. The passages of 2 Samuel 11:6-27 give the details of the attempted cover up and death of Uriah.

The record states that David's first order of business in the cover up was to call for Uriah,

And David sent to Joab, saying, send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David. And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered (2 Sam. 11:6-7).

It is interesting to note that David's summoning of Uriah appears to reveal his genuine interest in the war. The military war with Ammon was far from David's intent as the chapter further reveals. Joab had messengers to send word to David concerning the war (2 Sam. 11:18-19) yet David wanted Uriah.

The second aspect of David's plan was to send Uriah home to be with his wife.

And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of

the king's house, and there followed him a mess of meat from the king (2 Sam. 11:8-9).

The emphasis of going home, washing the feet, and the food provided has particular significance concerning David's desire for Uriah. The text of 2 Samuel reveals that Uriah knew what the meaning of the gesture involved yet he was not of a mind to carry it through to its fullness as long as the battle was still on against Rabbah.

But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house. And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from thy journey? why then didst thou not go down unto thine house? And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; **shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife** (emphasis mine, J.C.) as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing (2 Sam. 11:9-11).

Uriah's own explanation indicates that he knew what the royal command involved. Uriah was a man of military priorities and of extreme loyalty. His spirit is in strong contrast to the heart of David at this time.

The third aspect of David's plot is seen in the following words:

And David said to Uriah, Tarry here today also, and tomorrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow, And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house (2 Sam. 11:12-13).

David turns to drunkenness to dull the mind of Uriah with the hope that he would at least go home for the night. The appearance of Uriah going home drunk would have seemed to have given adequate suspicion that the child would have been Uriah's. Nevertheless, Uriah, even in a drunken state, did not go home.

The fourth and final aspect of David's plot was to devise a way to terminate Uriah's life and ultimately take Bathsheba to be his wife.

And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die (2 Sam. 11:14-15).

Something has seriously happened to the heart of David at this point. He has sold out to sin when one of his most loyal mighty men is viewed as an object worthy of death. The plot was secretive in nature (cf. 2 Sam. 12:12) pulling in innocent men to carry it out (cf. 2 Sam. 11:16-17). The darkness of the moment is seen in David's response to the message of Uriah's death when Joab thought that David would be furious (cf. 2 Sam. 11:20-23).

Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it; and encourage thou him (2 Sam. 11:25).

David then takes the widow of Uriah into his own house and she becomes another of his wives (cf. 2 Sam. 11:27). The last part of the passage gives the Lord's response: "But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (2 Sam. 11:27). What was not to be displeasing to Joab was

displeasing to the Lord. It is important to look at other chapters of the Bible to see further details of the heart of David and the consequences of the sins committed.

Clear Fundamentals Revealed By Other Scriptures

While Psalm 51 reveals the penitence of David after Nathan preached to him recorded in 2 Samuel 12:1-14, Psalm 32 reveals something of the heart of David before he confessed the sin and was forgiven. Notice these words:

When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah (Psa. 32:3-5).

Verses three and four of this psalm reveal the guilty heart of David in graphic terms. His conscience was in great pain. He likely felt physical illness due to the guilt of his heart. Having time to reflect upon his great cover up did not reveal any great pleasure in his feeble effort to hide his sins. He would come to know full well the inspired words,

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy (Prov. 28:13).

A clear fundamental of David's heart is seen in that he still has a tender conscience in the midst of great sin. King Saul sought to kill David without success yet did not manifest such a heart unto the end of his days. A

contrite heart is a must with God (cf. Psa. 34:18; 51:17; Isa. 57:15; 66:2).

Another fundamental that David would face is seen in the words of Nathan the prophet.

Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife (2 Sam. 12:9-10).

One emphasis of these two verses is that to despise the commandment of the Lord is to despise the Lord Himself. The authority of the Lord through inspired revelation and the Lord Himself are tied together. One cannot say that he loves God and then refuse to do what the Lord says or violate what the Lord says not to do. Jesus Himself said,

If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings; and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me (John 13:23-24).

Respect for God is to respect by following His Word.

Another fundamental is that though sins of great magnitude can be forgiven, consequences still come.

Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take away thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly; but I will do this thing

before all Israel, and before the sun (2 Sam. 12:11-12).

The sword did not depart from the house of David and Absalom would fulfill the very word of God prophesied. Another sad consequence of David's sin is that the child born through the adulterous act would die. Nathan said even in view of David's confession and forgiveness,

Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die (2 Sam. 12:14).

Though David sought to intercede for the life of the child, the Lord's word was fulfilled (2 Sam. 12:15-23). Consequences faced, even if forgiveness is given, is a great deterrent to sin.

Concrete Facts To Be Learned

Before closing this subject with just the details from the text, there needs to be some observations about lessons to be gained from the murder of Uriah. God does not take the shedding of innocent blood lightly nor should man.

First, secret sins are often concealed by feigned words. David said many words, both spoken and written, in the course of the plot to deal with Uriah. The real heart of those words were kept secret (cf. 2 Sam. 12:12) to avoid being discovered and to carry out sin's mischievous work. Satan himself used words to deceive the heart of Eve (cf. Gen. 3:1-5). Jezebel used words to bring about the death of Naboth (cf. 1 Kings 21:8-11). All should be grateful that the Lord does not, nor cannot, lie (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). The Lord expects His people to speak the truth (Eph. 4:25) and to love the truth (2 Thess. 2:10).

Second, the devises of sin lead from one sin to

another. The beginning of David's handling of Uriah was not to have him killed. However, when the plans of the cover up did not initially follow through, the sin of deceit led to the sin of drunkenness which led to the ultimate killing of Uriah. Sin is never satisfied with one taste of bitterness if the objective is not reached. The plot must be thickened when the heart is set on it.

Third, sin can corrupt the hearts and minds of righteous people. How could a righteous man come to such a state as this? When David was young, his heart and life were one with God. He stood in victory over the uncircumcised Philistine who defied the armies of the living God (1 Sam. 17:45, 50). He knew that the Lord had delivered him out of the paw of the lion and the bear (1 Sam. 17:37). His heart smote him when he cut off a piece of the garment of King Saul, the Lord's anointed (1 Sam. 24:4-5) even when Saul sought to kill him. He mourned over the death of Saul (2 Sam. 1:17). The scripture does not say in vain, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). Again, the scriptures say, "Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33).

Finally, doing what pleases the Lord should be the guiding course of life. David had a copy of the law (Deut. 17:18-20). He was also a prophet of God (Acts 2:29-30). He had divine revelation to guide himself and the nation. However, having the revelation and applying the revelation are two different things. Application has always been a problem of humanity when it comes to doing the will of God. Solomon wrote,

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding...She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her (Prov. 3:13, 18).

Jesus Himself stated, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17).

The murder of Uriah was a dark moment in the life of David. His ultimate response of penitent obedience stands as a testimony for all to seek to do the will of the Lord in spite of how dark the days have become. It is never a matter of whether man will sin or not, "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). The question is "What will one do when he sins?" The heart must remain tender and receptive to the corrective measures of divine will. Redemption turns man's heart away from himself and unto God where it should be.



**David, The Servant:
A
Compliant Heart**

CHAPTER 31

My Servant David

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

Introduction

It has been a joy supreme to speak on all the previous Power Lectureships dating back to the initial one on God's Providence in 1989. Likewise, it has been a rewarding profit to pen a chapter for each of the published volumes each one of which I have read with informative profit.

My genuine gratitude is expressed to Wade, Larry, Con and all the precious people composing the Southaven congregation for the esteemed invitation to speak and write for the 2008 lectureship. Thanks to Tommy and Peggy where we stay each year.

An entire lectureship on the illustrious David is an idea whose lectureship and literary time has come. I do not recall any past lectureship conducted by any of our sound brethren that has dealt exclusively with David. This marks it as unique indeed.

It has been 3,000 years plus since he lived, served and ruled. Yet, his name is among the most recognizable of any Biblical personality. Early in life little children study and sing of him. As prominent as the names of Abraham, Moses and Paul are in Holy Writ, yet David's name occurs more than any of them. Other than names depicting Deity, David's name occurs more than that of

any other Biblical personality. If my personal count is correct, his name occurs 1,117 times in actual Scripture and in ascriptions at the beginning of Psalms he penned. I find this to be most amazing indeed. In inspiring Sacred Scripture, the Holy Spirit did not want any Biblical reader to forget David and the prominent place he filled in the developing and culminating scheme of human redemption. Humanly speaking, Jesus was the descendant of many illustrious people such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Ruth, Solomon, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Mary. Yet, by far, He is referred to most often as the Son of David. The New Testament begins with this in Matthew 1:1. This says something significant about the greatness of David linked with his Lord. He is called the man after God's own heart in 1 Samuel 13:14.

Beginning Scriptures

A quartet of passages in Psalms comes to mind in depicting David as servant. They read,

He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands... It is he that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword (Psa. 78:70-72; 144:10).¹

In his first recorded sermon in the book of Acts Paul told the Antiochian audience in Pisidia, "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption" (Acts 13:36).

David was king forty of the seventy years he tabernacled on planet earth. Generally, we think of a king

as being served by a group of dedicated servants who do his constant bidding. However, Paul, by inspiration, recalled him in the role of a servant. His was a dual role. He served God and His counsel; he served the people he ruled—Judah at first and all the tribes next.

David: A Youthful Servant

This is the very role he filled when we first meet him in the middle section of 1 Samuel. Samuel, the Seer, is commanded by Jehovah to travel to Bethlehem to anoint Saul's successor. The older sons of Jesse are rejected one by one. Only the youngest is left and he is not even present for the anointing service! Evidently, Jesse did not feel he would be considered in what Samuel had in mind. Samuel inquired if the appearing ones constituted the fullness of Jesse's sons. Jesse responded, "There remaineth yet the youngest, and behold, he keepeth the sheep" (1 Sam. 16:11). At Samuel's insistence David is summoned from the shepherd's task (Psa. 78:70). A most attractive description of youthful David appears in 1 Samuel 16:12. Upon his arrival and with promptness God's Seer anoints him as future king.

David's name first appears in Holy Writ in Ruth 4. The next appearance of his name is here in 1 Samuel 16:13. But he does not leave the shepherd's task at this point. He is still a sheep feeder and lamb shield in 1 Samuel 17:15. This is how his oldest brother, Eliab, depicted him in 1 Samuel 17:28. In this verse there is no love and admiration from Eliab toward his shepherd brother. Had the eldest forgotten about the anointing by Samuel in the previous chapter?

In this role as shepherd lad he was doing the bidding of his father Jesse. He was a serving shepherd! Later, he will earn the title of being the Shepherd King and the writer of the Shepherd Psalm—the 23rd. As a reliable and

industrious youth he was learning how to be a servant. This rich experience will reward him handsomely in later life. David cannot be separated from his role as God's servant and the service he rendered his nation. His illustrious Son, the Mighty Messiah, would be a servant as depicted in Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45. He came not to be ministered to or served but to minister and serve God and His fellowmen. Christianity and service go hand-in-hand. The one is a saintly synonym of the other.

David: A Courageous Servant

The marvelous manifestation of emerging courage is observed in his early life. In presenting his credentials to an amazed Saul, prior to meeting Goliath, David recounted a time when he was a serving shepherd to his beloved sheep. A bear and lion, as hungry predators, attacked the sheep of which he was shield. He slew them both. The king of the jungle, the lion, was no match for youthful David (1 Sam. 17:34-36).

His courage reached a new dimension as he confronted arrogant Goliath, the Philistine giant, in the latter part of 1 Samuel 17. Unarmed with any military might and armor, he was heavily armed with God's might and armor. He marched forth boldly, even with haste, with slingshot in hand. Overly confident Goliath fell with just **ONE** well-placed stone to the giant's forehead. The ten-foot giant fell helplessly to the ground in humiliating defeat. David took Goliath's own sword and beheaded the Philistine's leader. Courage was on the front burner in this bold confrontation. It met with prompt admiration on the part of Saul's gallant son-Jonathan (1 Sam. 18:1ff). Firm and fervent would be their beautiful friendship and fellowship the remnant of their lives with David's outlining Jonathan some four decades. David gave a new meaning to courage and boldness.

David: A Military Servant

The slaying of arrogant Goliath was only the beginning of David's military powers and success. He was Saul's main captain fighting numerous battles against the fierce Philistines. Whether with few or many he was a force with which to be reckoned among the persistent Philistines. David served Saul well even though Saul, through relentless envy and consuming jealousy, turned against this military genius and sought to kill his single greatest benefactor. David was as good as Saul was evil during this period of Israelite history.

In the days he was sought by Saul and his army, as though he were an incorrigible outlaw, David was captain over and a servant to a group who followed him with sacrificial trust and loyalty.

After becoming king his military might and genius, with Jehovah's aid, continued against neighboring nations until they had become his subjects paying regular tribute to him and his kingdom.

The military and service went hand-in-hand with David. The two terms are still very compatible to modern people. Men and women in the military today are viewed by all as being in service to their country. Military service is a well understood term in our day.

David: A Ruling Servant

Though destined to become a future king, David did not hurry up the process by slaying Saul when he could have done so in 1 Samuel 24, 26. His time to rule would come and come it did in the opening chapters of 2 Samuel. He ruled over Judah from Hebron for 7 1/2 years and over all the United Kingdom for 33 years (2 Sam. 5:5). He was 30 years old when he began his reign in Hebron. He was a servant to Judah at first and then to all Israel the last 33 years of his illustrious life. Careful

consideration of him throughout 2 Samuel testifies to the correction of this assessment. Paul is a New Testament proof of such in Acts 13:36. The Holy Spirit inspired him to state this and the Spirit of truth knew of what he conveyed to Paul. This verse was quoted in the early part of this study. David had 20 descendants to succeed him—Solomon and the 19 who ruled over the Southern Kingdom or Judah. There were 19 over Israel or the Northern Kingdom but these did not sit on David's throne. They came from a number of different tribes. Very few of his descendants on his throne thought of themselves as ruling **servants**. They were too dictatorial or autocratic to think in terms of service to be rendered while they ruled. Ahaz, Manasseh, Amon and Jehoiakim were of this autocratic and dictatorial order. Service was not to their liking at all. Not a single one of the Northern Kings served God and their subjects in that order. They were all wicked with some like Ahab being extremely wicked and vile.

David: A Worshipping Servant

The greatest men of both testaments were worshippers from Abel in Genesis 4 to John on Patmos in the book of Revelation. David ranks exceptionally high in that illustrious list. Idols were never a temptation to him as they had been to far too many of his ancestors and would be to far too many of his descendants inclusive of his own son Solomon. Sadly, his own son and successor fell victim to idolatrous inclinations and practices as we see unfolded in 1 Kings 11—one of the saddest chapters in the whole of Holy Writ.

David penned many of the Psalms—not all of them as some seem to have concluded. Many of them are filled to overflowing with worshipful gems of brilliant beauty. The following verse sums up in stately fashion his whole

worship philosophy and active allegiance to his holy God on heavenly high,

Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name;
worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness
(Psa. 29:2).

This is how he felt; this is what he did; this is what he desired others to do.

His driving desire to build the temple reflects his love of worship and the high priority it enjoyed in his life. His stirring conversation with Araunah in 2 Samuel 24 says much for his concept of worship. He would not worship God unless he paid fully what the desired location deserved. His noteworthy words to the generous Araunah were, “[N]either will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing” (2 Sam. 24:24). David paid Araunah fully for the threshingflood and the animals to be offered. There is a great lesson for all of us. Worship, minus any and all costs, will never rise to the desired height of priority.

David: A Penitent Servant

David rose to holy heights as an Israelite indeed (cf. John 1:47). This was true in the years prior to his becoming king and in the early part of his kingship both in Hebron and Jerusalem. In sad contrast, he sank to the lowest of moral and ethical levels. In a moment of injurious idleness, he allowed a look of lust upon a bathing beauty to inflame him with unrighteous and ungodly desires. Why did he not go to one of his many wives for the release of his pent-up passions? But alas, he did not! That look triggered lasciviousness. That lasciviousness triggered the crimson act of adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of self-sacrificing Uriah the Hittite who, at that very moment, was fighting David’s battles on a foreign battlefield in Trans-Jordan with the Ammonites. This adultery resulted in an

unwanted and unplanned pregnancy. With integrity totally lacking, David attempted to cover his moral escapade by passing real paternity to Uriah. This failed. Uriah was brought home from the field of battle but refused to go to his house and be intimate with his wife. David added another sin in his progression of transgressions. He succeeded in getting Uriah drunk with the hope the drunken soldier would then go to his house and have relations with the now pregnant Bathsheba. This, too, failed. Then, in bloodthirsty heartlessness, he wrote out a murderous document planned for Uriah's sure death. Uriah even delivered it to Joab! How utterly cruel, cold and calloused. The insensitive decree was executed by Joab, David's commander on the Ammonite battlefield. Unfolded here is a different David than what was observed from 1 Samuel 16 to the end of 2 Samuel 10.

David remained impenitent and unmoved until Nathan came with a very powerful and provoking parable of the ewe lamb taken from the poor owner by the rich robber. Promptly, David passed deadly judgment on the insensitive rich man in this inexcusable action. "Thou art the man" is Nathan's potent response and apt application. David's enormous sins had been brought home to him by the noble and brave Nathan. David was then smitten with his sin. Immediately, he confessed his sin by saying, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Sam. 12:13).

Psalm 51, it is generally believed, was David's penitential Psalm subsequent to Nathan's rebuke of him. In total contriteness he penned penitentially,

And my sin is ever before me. Against thee,
thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in
thy sight... (Psa. 51:3-4).

A number of Bible students believe Psalm 32 was written when pardon had been granted him. I am of this number.

David could and did sin grievously but could and did repent with the deepest of sincerity and contrition. Perhaps he lived another 20 years after this suffering consequences many, yet he never repeated these hardened acts of transgression again. Repentance had a permanent effect within his life.

David: A Suffering Servant

In 1 Samuel 17:28 he suffered uncalled-for insults from his older brother, Eliab. From a deeply jealous and completely envious Saul he suffered in the most unjust type of monarchical hatred, contempt and disdain. Saul and his army of puppets stalked David's every step treating him as though he were an incorrigible outlaw—the government's most wanted criminal. He was number one on Saul's hit list though perfectly innocent of any crime. The enraged king forgot about the uncircumcised Philistines who were the real enemies of his tottering kingdom. Conditions became so intolerable in Israel for David that he had to go among the Philistines in 1 Samuel 27. He knew firsthand unrequited love—love that is not returned. He and his men once saved Keilah, a city in southern Palestine (1 Sam. 23:5). Later, this formerly saved city was ready to deliver David into the malicious hands of unrelenting Saul (1 Sam. 23:12). He suffered much prior to his becoming king.

As king he had former friends forsake him. His own son, Absalom, turned against him seeking David's death and then the kingdom for himself. Here was another case of unrequited love. He experienced much suffering within his own family. Many of the Psalms he wrote depict the innumerable sufferings his enemies hurled his direction. If he wrote Psalm 142, as likely he did, he stated, "No man cared for my soul" (v. 4). Suffering was never far removed from David's heart and life.

David: A Praying Servant

Many of his Psalms reflect the persistency of his fervent prayers. Had he lived in modern times, he could well relate to a well-known lyrical question, "Where could I go but to the Lord?" He was no skeptic relative to prayers. He served a God who commanded prayers, heard them from His faithful children and answered them in harmony with Heaven's will. A number of his Psalms will contain an allusion to the prayerful cries he sent to heaven on high with assurance later in these same Psalms that his prayers had been heard and heeded. Psalm 54 is an example of this. In Psalm 54:1-2 he prayed to be saved; for his prayer to be heard and for the listening God to "give ear to the words of my mouth." Psalm 54:7 states with blessed assurance,

For he hath delivered me out of all trouble:
and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine
enemies.

One of his most familiar passages on prayer is recorded in Psalm 55:17 wherein we read,

Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray,
and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.

Have you ever wondered why he did not say, "Morning, noon and at evening will I pray and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice?" This is the way we would express it. But be it recalled that their day began at sundown—not at midnight as with us. In Genesis 1 it is consistently stated as the evening (night) and morning (day) composing the six days of creative activity. Therefore, to David evening would be the first part of his day, morning when night had passed and noon when half the working day was gone. Like a later devout Israelite, Daniel, David prayed thrice daily and perhaps even more some days. If he wrote Psalm 119, as in my judgment he did, he wrote,

“Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments” (Psa. 119:164). This praise could have been partly in songs but likely also much in the praise of prayer.

David: A Writing Servant

Jesus divided Old Testament Scripture into the law of Moses, the psalms and the prophets in Luke 24:44. David was a king but did not write 1 and 2 Kings. He was a prophet as Peter tells us in Acts 2 but did not write major or minor prophetic books as Isaiah through Malachi did. His literary skills are reflected in the poetic section of the Old Testament. He did not write Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or Song of Solomon but did compose many of the Psalms. Contrary to what some have concluded, he did not write all 150 of the Psalms. What he did write he penned as Israel’s Sweet Singer and as an inspired composer. According to ancient ascriptions attached to many of the Psalms, he penned many of the ones found early in the book. Psalm 14 is of this number where he styled as a fool every God denier (v. 1). He repeated such again in Psalm 53:1. He wrote Psalm 15 with 2 questions asked, 11 answers supplied and a logical conclusion drawn from premises carefully laid. Very appropriately, this has been called, “The Gentleman’s Psalm.” He wrote Psalm 16 and 22 which are greatly and beautifully Messianic in literally intent. He wrote Psalm 19 with twin echoes of God’s glory—His book of Nature and His Book of Revelation by Sacred Scripture. He wrote the immortal Psalm 23 which is possibly the most beloved composition of any he penned over a lifetime of literary pursuits. He penned Psalms 51 and 32 relating to his great sins with Bathsheba and against Uriah, confession of the same and the gracious pardon afforded him. He penned Psalm 40 with great insights relative to the coming Redeemer. The writer of

Hebrews 10, in all probability Paul, had his inspired eye on this very Psalm (Heb. 10:5ff). No ascription adorns Psalm 119. David, more than any other person, seems the likely person to have written it. It is majestic and a marvelous masterpiece in all its precious 176 verses. It is a stately tribute to the majesty, marvels and magnificence of God's Holy Book, the Bible. He wrote Psalm 139. This is a powerful chapter in portraying Jehovah's omniscience and His omnipresence. Also it is a resounding refutation of the evils of evolution and atrocious abortions which kill babies by the multiplies millions annually throughout the world. More than a million of these are in our own country according to reports that have come to me.

David was a literary genius with talents galore but was guided and governed by Holy Spirit inspiration as he himself stated in 2 Samuel 23:2.

David: A Preparatory Servant

With reverential resolve David determined to build a fabulous and glorious temple for Jehovah his God. At first Nathan told him to proceed with his construction plans (2 Sam. 7:1-3). However, the Lord said no. David would not be allowed to construct such. The building of it would be left into the hands of his successor—Solomon. But graciously, David was allowed to serve in a preparatory sort of way. With persistent passion he prepared mightily for this constructive effort culminated by youthful Solomon. The Bible says, "So David prepared abundantly before his death" (1 Chron. 22:5). See also 1 Chronicles 22:14. We read in 1 Chronicles 29:2, "Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God...". With whole heart and soul he pursued these preparatory phases of this worthy work. It was one of the great accomplishments of a successful life.

David: A Counseling Servant

Solomon paid dear and deserved tribute to his father in Proverbs 4:3-5,

For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.

The counsel continues in subsequent verses. Among his final counsel to his young, impressionable son were these words of weight and wisdom,

Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go thy way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; And keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself... (1 Kings 2:1-3).

In earlier life as Monarch of Israel Solomon kept faithfully and fervently these wonderful and worthy words of counsel. In later life the digressive king turned aside from this Davidic counsel. 1 Kings 11 unfolds the fall of the once mighty and renowned king. This just has to be one of the saddest chapters in the whole of the Bible.

In 1 Chronicles 28-29 the aged king gave needed counsel to Israelite leaders and the people. Later generations en masse turned away from this Davidic counsel. How utterly sad!

David: A Servant To The End

Unlike what his son Solomon would do in his later reign, David did not abandon Almighty God in later life. David stayed faithful and fervent till the end of his life. With consecrated diligence he prepared for the future erection of the glorious temple. The closing chapters of 1 Chronicles so attest. Jehovah's temple was uppermost upon his heart as he neared the end of his time on earth. God's temple today, the Lord's church, should be near and dear to us as we grow older and approach the day of our demise.

This stately tribute is given of the gallant warrior, the renowned king and the God worshipper in 1 Chronicles 29:28, "And he died in a good old age, full of days, riches and honour: and Solomon his son reigned in his stead."

Conclusion

There would have been a vast lonesome place in the galaxy of humanity had David not lived. He gave an almost unparalleled demonstration of what a king ought to be and what the Lord's servant should be. In his death he left a vast lonesome place in the forest of stately trees. The tree of his life overshadowed all other trees of his peers. Few have been men who equalled him and almost no one, save the Messiah, has overshadowed him. He ranks with Abraham, Moses and Paul as the finest specimen of humanity.

Endnote

- 1 All Scriptures are from the KJV.

CHAPTER 32

The House That David Longed To Build

Daniel F. Cates

The writer is honored to have another opportunity to address the Southaven Church of Christ and those who are present for the sixteenth annual Power Lectures. He has great admiration for the leaders, Larry Everson and Con Lambert; evangelists, Wade Webster and Robert Jefferies; and other members of this congregation. There simply are not enough superlatives to describe what this congregation means to him and his family in particular or to the brotherhood in general.

What opportunities to learn and grow have been lying before us due to this lectureship and its subject, David: The Man Who Had the Heart to Be King. There are many great men and women who could merit such attention as this lectureship, but few could be used to glean so many great lessons—both of a positive and negative sort, both as exhortation and warning—as David whom the Lord called “a man after mine own heart” (Acts 13:22, c.f., 1 Sam. 13:14).

Introduction

In this lecture the writer has been asked to address not David, but “The House David Longed to Build.” David is pictured in Scripture as having built himself a great house, or palace, upon his occupying Jerusalem (1

Chron. 11:4-8) and making his court (2 Sam. 5:12) and reputation (2 Sam. 5:10) there. The building of this, his, house was due to the aid of another king,

And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house (2 Sam. 5:11).

While that house of David is not described in too great detail, it is known to have been made of cedar (2 Sam. 7:2) and may be the house that Solomon was working on in 1 Kings 7:2, for a great house of cedar could be rightly called "the house of the forest of Lebanon." Josephus added to the description given in Scripture saying, David "continued in houses made of cedar, such as were of a great height, and had the most curious works of architecture in them" (VII, iv, 4). Regarding cedar as a building material and testifying thereby to the greatness of this house, Coffman wrote,

There is no more desirable timber from which a house may be built...The cedar wood is hostile to all kinds of insects and creeping things... (pp. 60-61).

Though not too much is known detail wise, David's house must have been very impressive and yet his desire was not fulfilled in it. This house was not one that David merely longed to build, it was one which he actually did build. Another house, one that David longed to build for the Lord, is the one upon which this study shall focus.

Why David Longed To Build This Other House

Having built his own house, and for that matter a tabernacle, or tent, for the ark of the covenant (2 Sam. 6:17; 1 Chron. 16:1; 2 Chron. 1:4), David was determined to go a step further in exhibiting his devotion to God and

establishing a rest for the ark in a house in Jerusalem. The inspired record reads,

And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies; That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains (2 Sam. 7:1-2).

David not only longed to build the Lord a house on the occasion of rest “from all his enemies,” but consistently published that unfulfilled desire; to his people and to his son, Solomon, the temple’s future builder. To his people he said,

Hear me, my brethren, and my people: As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building: (1 Chron. 28:2).

To Solomon he said, “My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God:” (1 Chron. 22:7). The message was abundantly clear, for the vision of the father was transferred to the son; furthermore, the son testified that this desire on the part of David was pleasing to the God whom he sought to honor. Solomon said,

And it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. And the LORD said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart (1 Kings 8:17-18).

When one studies the events on the Bible, he invariably learns great lessons and recognizes inescapable responsibilities; that is, when one looks to Scripture, he

inevitably sees what he ought to be in God's eyes. This was James' message:

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed (James 1:22-25).

One observing the example of David reaches this conclusion: God deserves better than man gives himself! Men today would do extremely well to sacrifice for God what they sacrifice for their own homes, vehicles, hobbies, or entertainment; whether the sacrifices be of money, time, effort, love, or otherwise! The sad reality is that some spend more money on their pets, more time in their vehicles, more effort on their hobbies, and more affection on their entertainment than they do toward being acceptable toward their Creator. God deserves more than these things, and David recognized that God deserved more than David himself; otherwise David would not have said "the house...must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries" exclusively of the house "that is to be builded for the LORD" (1 Chron. 22:5)!

Why David Could Not Build This Other House

While David longed to build this house, the Lord would not let him. In fact, while the prophet Nathan had said, "Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee" (2 Sam. 7:3); he had done so presumptively

(though not presumptuously). Nathan apparently felt that the Lord would be pleased with such a house; however,

[I]t came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying, Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in? Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar? Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel: And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house (2 Sam. 7:4-11).

Nathan had not considered that the Lord had not asked for a house, nor was He all too eager to have one! In fact, consider the ultra-emphatic straight-forwardness of God's reply as recorded by the Chronicler: "Thus saith

the LORD, Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in:" (1 Chron. 17:4).

This begs a question: Did God at all approve of the temple? That question is difficult to answer, but let the reader consider a few arguments both in its favor and against.

In favor of the temple, the reader might consider the following arguments: first, God appreciated the attitude of David in desiring to build Him a house (1 Kings 8:18); second, "the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God" (2 Chron. 5:14) as it had the tabernacle (Exo. 40:34); third, the Lord had hallowed it and made it His dwelling place (2 Chron. 36:14-15); fourth, when it had been destroyed, the Lord Himself issued the command to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:2-3); fifth, the Lord providentially kept the re-builders safe from hindrance (Ezra 5:2-5); sixth, the church, individually and corporately, is described as a temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21); seventh, New Jerusalem contains a temple (Rev. 3:12) wherein is God's throne (Rev. 7:15; Rev. 16:17) and the ark of His testament (Rev. 11:19) and which is "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb" (Rev. 21:22); eighth, God had not said, "No one shall build me a house," but "Thou [David-DFC] shalt not" (1 Chron. 17:4); ninth, neither David nor Solomon volunteered Solomon to build the temple, God did (1 Kings 5:5; 8:19; 1 Chron. 28:6).

Against the temple, the reader might consider another set of arguments: first, God said that He did not want one (1 Chron. 17:4); second, the Lord destroyed the temple twice (2 Chron. 36:18-19; Matt. 24:1-2, 27 ["the coming of the Son of man" representing judgment against Jerusalem that "that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent" and "would not" {Matt. 23:36-39}]; c.f., (2 Chron. 36:15-17; Lam. 2:7); third, "Christ himself is the True House (or Temple) of God (John 2:10). (And that means the Jewish edifice [which in existence at that

time had been build by the Idumaeen Herod-DFC] was the False Temple)" (Coffman, p. 84); fourth, "Ezekiel gives the dramatic account of how that Spirit [God's-DFC] left it with the sound of a rushing mighty wind (Eze. 11:22-23)" (ibid.); fifth, Amos in Amos 9:11 "spoke of the temple of Solomon as a condition 'fallen' from the tabernacle of David" (ibid., p. 85); sixth, "Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (Acts 7:48); seventh, the house spoken of in 2 Samuel 7:12-13 is the church and the seed was the Messiah, Jesus (Matt. 1:1), whose house and kingdom has been established forever (2 Sam. 7:16; Luke 1:32-33; Heb. 1:8).

In the writer's mind the question just asked is a difficult one to answer-or even to fathom for that matter; he will let the reader decide for himself, though it matters not for God knows how He felt toward the temple whether man does or not.

Aside from David's being told "Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in:" (1 Chron. 17:4), there were other considerations regarded his inability to build the house for which he so longed. Solomon would write, "Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house unto the name of the LORD his God for the wars which were about him on every side, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet" (1 Kings 5:3). David was a little more specific in his treatment of the disallowance:

But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight...But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood (1 Chron. 22:8; 28:3).

It was not the case that David could not build the house because he was too busy fighting at the time that he longed to do so, for the Holy Spirit wrote, "it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies" (2 Sam. 7:1). David was a warrior who killed many opponents of God, including blasphemous Goliath (1 Sam. 17:45-51); however, he also killed a righteous man, Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam. 11:14-25), dealt coldly with Shimei (1 Kings 2:8-9; c.f., 2 Sam. 16:5-13; 19:16-23); and numbered his troops as though they were responsible for his military successes (2 Sam. 24:1-10; the "he" of verse one is not God, but Satan according to 1 Chron. 21:1); incidentally, he was not above torture (2 Sam. 12:26-31).

Again, there are lessons to be gleaned throughout the pages of God's Word. In David's being disallowed from numbering the people one sees that sin has its consequences! Isaiah wrote, "Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him" (Isa. 3:11). Paul affirmed, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7) and, "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). When one today sins, he is taking responsibility for the consequences—a hangover, an accident, a prison sentence, a broken home, vehicular homicide, death, and, ultimately, with any of these an eternal separation from God (Matt. 7:23; 25:41) in a state of spiritual death (Rev. 21:8) if disobedient and impenitent.

What David Did To Prepare For This Other House

Though David could not build the longed for house, apparently there were no restrictions placed upon him regarding making preparations for it. David intensively worked toward the building of the house though he did not build it himself.

The first preparation made was the finding of a location for the altar. After he had numbered his fighting men, a pestilence was sent as punishment (2 Sam. 24:12-15). Mercifully,

when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshingplace of Araunah the Jebusite (2 Sam. 24:16).

There David offered sacrifices (2 Sam. 24:17-25) which cost him something (2 Sam. 24:24) and determined to set aside land to build the temple for the altar, saying "This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel" (2 Sam. 22:1; c.f., 2 Chron. 3:1).

The second preparation involved getting workers and preparing materials for the house, for,

David commanded to gather together the strangers that were in the land of Israel; and he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God. And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joinings; and brass in abundance without weight; Also cedar trees in abundance: for the Zidonians and they of Tyre brought much cedar wood to David (1 Chron. 22:2-4).

The third preparation was to enlist Solomon in his own stead. This preparation is revealed in Scripture thus:

And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for

the LORD must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death. Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for the LORD God of Israel (1 Chron. 22:5-7),

saying, "...Now, my son, the LORD be with thee; and prosper thou, and build the house of the LORD thy God, as he hath said of thee" (1 Chron. 22:11).

A lesson is clear on this point as well, for as David made preparations for Solomon to be able to continue smoothly in his work, so must ones today lay good spiritual foundations for their successors! This has ever been the case for the obedient. Moses commanded,

[T]ake heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons; ...that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children (Deut. 4:9-10).

He also commanded the Israelites to keep the words of Deuteronomy 6:4-5 in their hearts (Deut. 6:6) that they might teach them "diligently" unto their children (Deut. 6:7). Similarly, David vowed to not keep the wisdom of God from "the generation to come" but to show them "the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done" (Psalm 78:4). Solomon's wise counsel included this instruction and resulting tendency: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). If one today is not preparing his children for future spiritual success, who will? The educational system will not; the

media will not; the culture will not; the government will not; counterfeit religions will not—they will perish spiritually!

What David Never Saw Of This Other House

David died without seeing the temple; however, his son completed the task appointed him first by God and then by David. Solomon's efforts began with his seeking the aid of Hiram king of Tyre who "was ever a lover of David" (1 Kings 5:1). Inspiration recorded,

Solomon sent to Hiram, saying, Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house unto the name of the LORD his God for the wars which were about him on every side, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet. But now the LORD my God hath given me rest on every side, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent. And, behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son, whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an house unto my name. Now therefore command thou that they hew me cedar trees out of Lebanon; and my servants shall be with thy servants: and unto thee will I give hire for thy servants according to all that thou shalt appoint: for thou knowest that there is not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians. And it came to pass, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly, and said, Blessed be the LORD this day, which hath given unto David a wise son over this great people. And Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for: and I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and

concerning timber of fir. My servants shall bring them down from Lebanon unto the sea: and I will convey them by sea in floats unto the place that thou shalt appoint me, and will cause them to be discharged there, and thou shalt receive them: and thou shalt accomplish my desire, in giving food for my household. So Hiram gave Solomon cedar trees and fir trees according to all his desire (1 Kings 5:2-10).

Solomon then raised a levy out of all Israel; and the levy was thirty thousand men. And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by courses: a month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home: and Adoniram was over the levy. And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains; Beside the chief of Solomon's officers which were over the work, three thousand and three hundred, which ruled over the people that wrought in the work. And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house. And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew them, and the stonesquarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house (1 Kings 5:13-18).

Many more details are given in 1 Kings 6 regarding the building of the temple; of special note is that Solomon was "seven years in building it" (1 Kings 6:38).

After the house David had longed to build was finished Solomon could say,

[T]he LORD hath performed his word that he spake, and I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built an house

for the name of the LORD God of Israel. And I have set there a place for the ark, wherein is the covenant of the LORD, which he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt (1 Kings 8:20-21).

What a house it was! A perusal of 1 Kings 5, 6 and 2 Chronicles 3, 4 testify to the grandeur of it; perhaps unequaled by any other building in history—no expense was spared. It was not the largest building of its day (the reader is encouraged to consult Free, pp. 142-143); however, it had to have been the most valuable of that or any day. A “present-day cost” estimate from the Sunday School Times was reprinted in a 1932 Gospel Advocate (p. 397). That estimated value, seventy-six years ago, was \$78,000,000,000. The total cost in building was estimated at \$87,212,210,840. One of the writer’s former students, Wade Purdom, did some number crunching using an inflation factor calculator from a United States government web site; he found that in 2005 terms, the value of the temple would have been 947,000,000,000 while the cost would have been 1,059,718,888,126. What a building indeed!

A final lesson is learned with reference to David’s inability to see his longed for temple built: One does not always see his plans come to fruition. Many great men in human terms died without seeing their life’s work rewarded. Many great men in God’s terms died to see their life’s work rewarded. Solomon bemoaned the fact that “there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten” (Eccl. 2:16). Disconsolately he wrote,

Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under

the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity. Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun. For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil. For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?

That sad view of life is the necessary conclusion of all who live only for this world! That is why Jesus said,

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matt. 6:19-21).

Conclusion

David longed to build a house for the Lord; he did not and could not, but nonetheless it was his desire, perhaps even his deepest desire. He desired such not to encapsulate his God, but to honor Him. David knew that God had and has a dwelling place from which He reigns (Psalm 113:5; 1 Kings 8:49; Psalm 11:4; 103:19; c.f., Psalm 2:4; 14:2; 20:6; 33:13; 53:2; 57:3; 102:19; 115:3; et al.). Let the reader understand that fact as well and, as David,

lift up his eyes unto the One that even now “dwellest in the heavens” (Psalm 123:1).

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**Ladies Classes:
The Women
In David's Life**

CHAPTER 33

Bathsheba: Whose Bath Made A King Unclean

Jane McWhorter

The life of David has always intrigued me. A number of years ago I did an extensive study of the life of this servant of God that resulted in the book, **Meet My Friend David** (McWhorter).

When someone mentions David's name, his life is usually defined by two events: his victorious battle with Goliath and his moral fall with Bathsheba into the abyss of sin.

The twentieth chapter of 1 Chronicles begins with a rather matter-of-fact account of Joab's leading David's army out of Jerusalem in the spring of the year to ravage the nation of Ammon and capture its capital city of Rabbah. Verses 2 and 3 of that same chapter briefly summarize the setting of King Hanun's royal crown on the head of David, the seizing of the spoil of the city, and the making of the Ammonites into laborers. It is a matter-of-fact account of a war and its results, told in three verses.

In a parallel passage, however, the writer of 2 Samuel lifted the curtain of time in the eleventh chapter and inserted fifty-one verses between the beginning of that war with the Ammonites and its conclusion. Here he tells

the intriguing story of David and Bathsheba, which was transpiring while one of the battles was being fought. In this study we are going to try to slip behind that curtain of time and view those events as they unfolded.

Events Leading To This Phase Of David's Life

David was in his fifties when he paced his roof on that fateful day in Jerusalem. Much had happened since Samuel had anointed him as a boy to be the future king of Israel - his years as a strong, handsome shepherd boy whose tender heart produced many haunting psalms; his musical ability with his harp; his anointing by Samuel to succeed King Saul as the ruler over God's people; his being called "a man after God's own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14); his killing of Goliath; his friendship with Jonathan; his ten years of darting in and out of the hills and caves with a rugged band of men to escape King Saul's wrath; the deaths of Saul and his sons; David's anointing as king over Judah at Hebron and his reign over the southern part of the nation; his subsequent anointing seven and a half years later to be king over the northern tribes, thus making him the ruler over the entire nation of Israel; his capture of the Canaanite city of Jerusalem to be his capital; and his successful conquering of the nations around him. Nearly everything had turned out well for David. The Hebrew nation of Israel was finally a commanding influence in that area.

Thus, for the first time since God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15:18, God's people possessed what had been promised to them. Now they controlled the land from the wilderness of Sinai to the Euphrates and from the Arabian Desert to the Mediterranean Sea, an area at least five times as large as that conquered by the twelve tribes (McWhorter, 59).

However, there had been some disappointments along the path that led to David's rise to glory as the leader of a mighty nation with all its riches.

First, one of David's disappointments resulted from Jehovah's denial of his desire to build a temple in Jerusalem as a suitable dwelling place for God (2 Sam. 7:2-17). Through the prophet Nathan, God told David that this task would be accomplished by one of his sons. David was gracious, however, in accepting his Father's denial.

Second, immediately before the account of the sin of David and Bathsheba, the inspired writer related another disappointment the king faced in the humiliating rejection of his good-will gesture to Hanun, the new king of the neighboring Ammonites. In the midst of the accounts of David's foreign conquests, the reader is permitted to enter a seldom-noticed valley of his life.

Hanun began ruling after the death of his father, Nahash. In earlier years the older king had been kind to David. David had not forgotten. In an effort to show gratitude, he had sent servants to comfort the bereaved son. Instead of accepting David's good intentions, Hanun was leery and listened to the opinions of his princes, who maintained that David had only sent his men as spies. Consequently, Hanun cut off half of the beard of each of David's servants, in addition to cutting off their garments in the middle of their buttocks (2 Sam. 10:1-6). The men were then set free half-naked and half-shaven. Naturally, David was upset over his delegation's humiliation and sent word to them to remain in Jericho until their beards grew out.

Hanun had truly insulted the King of Israel. David had offered a sincere gesture of friendship and sympathy to Hanun. Instead of showing appreciation, Hanun hurled insult at his neighboring king. A man's beard was held in high respect in the East. He would often swear by it. The

only time a beard was cut off was in mourning or as a sign of slavery. Cutting off half of the beard and clothes made the men seem ridiculous and look like slaves. It was an accumulation of insults (Clarke 2:332). A knowledge of the extraordinary respect and value attached to a man's beard accounted "for the shame which the deputies felt, and the determined spirit of revenge which burst out in all Israel on learning the outrage" (Jamieson, 234).

Realizing that Israel would not allow such an insult to be overlooked, the Ammonites enlisted the aid of the Syrians in the battle that would soon ensue. However, the Syrians were eventually defeated. The tenth chapter of 2 Samuel closes with the statement: "So the Syrians were afraid to help the people of Ammon anymore" (2 Sam. 10:19).

Israel retreated to its borders because the winter season was approaching, but David had not forgotten the indignant insult of King Hanun. When the warmer spring months rolled around, David again sought revenge against this foreign king and his country by resuming his military activities against them. His army, under the leadership of Joab, was sent to finish ravaging the country of the Ammonites as revenge for their insult and to besiege their capital of Rabbah, located in the mountains of Gilead.

Sadly, this time David stayed home instead of leading his army into battle. We are not given the reason. Could such a major disappointment in David's life be justification for his approaching actions? Certainly not, but an awareness of this situation may enable the reader to have some insight into David's state of mind at this time.

On The Rooftop

It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David

sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel, and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house (2 Sam. 11:1-2a).

One day at eventide, while David's army was fighting for him, he arose from his bed and walked on the roof of his palace. Most of the people in that area started their days at daybreak and then took naps in the middle of the day. "Afterwards they lounged in the cool of the evening on their flat-roofed terraces. It is probable that David had ascended to enjoy the open-air refreshment earlier than usual" (Jamieson, 235).

Why was David enjoying the coolness of the spring breeze on his palace rooftop on this particular day? Was there not government business that needed his attention? Why had he not gone into battle with his soldiers? After all, they were fighting primarily because **he** had been personally insulted by the treatment of the delegation he had sent as a good-will gesture to Hanun, the king of the Ammonites. Why had he not personally led the men who were seeking revenge for **him**? Was he feeling despondent over the insult of Hanun? Was he too old to continue the strenuous life of a soldier? [Later David did weaken in a battle against the Philistines, and the men of David told him that he would not again go with them in battle "lest you quench the lamp of Israel" (2 Sam. 21:17).]

The Scriptures are silent about David's reasons for being on his rooftop that day.

And from the roof he saw a woman bathing,
and the woman was very beautiful to behold
(2 Sam. 11:2b).

Regardless of the reasons for David's being at his palace

instead of leading his men in battle, there was nothing wrong with walking on the roof of his own palace. No doubt he had done it many times before this particular day. Of course the palace was taller than the surrounding buildings. Consequently, anyone on the palace roof could see the roofs of other people in Jerusalem. Most of the dwellings surrounding the palace were occupied by important people in David's government.

David looked down (as he had probably done many times before this day) and his eyes fastened on a scene below him – a beautiful woman taking a bath. He lusted. He wanted this woman! David should have turned immediately and moved to another part of the roof and asked God's forgiveness for his lusting. Better yet, he could have gone inside the palace. Perhaps he needed another nap.

The sight of Bathsheba aroused David sexually, but remember that he had a harem of wives and concubines that he could have visited. When David was in Hebron, six wives were listed (2 Sam. 3:2-5). Shortly after this time, Michal, David's first wife, was returned to him upon his demand (2 Sam. 3:13-16), making seven wives at that time. Of those seven wives, we are probably most familiar with the name of Abigail, the widow of Nabal, who refused to feed David and his men when they were fleeing from Saul. We are told that Abigail had a beautiful countenance (1 Sam. 25:3). When David began his reign in Jerusalem, he "took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he had come from Hebron. Also more sons and daughters were born to David" (2 Sam. 5:13). Of course some of those first wives had sons who were now in their late teens. By this time, some of the women may have been wrinkled, grayed, chubby, and lacking in sexual charm.

[Remember that God intended for one man and one

woman to live together in marriage (Gen. 2:24). He only tolerated additional wives and concubines among His people. In fact, in Deuteronomy 17:17 God had expressly forbidden a king of His people to have multiple wives “lest his heart turn away.”]

But the sight of Bathsheba intrigued David. He did not move his eyes away quickly enough. He allowed his lust to take a second step when he inquired about the identity of this beautiful woman on an adjoining rooftop.

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
(2 Sam. 11:3)?

Someone told the king that Uriah and his wife Bathsheba lived in the house David had seen from his rooftop.

Bathsheba

Who was this beautiful woman named Bathsheba? Her identity seems to be found in four men in her life.

Eliam

We are told that Bathsheba was the daughter of Eliam (2 Sam. 11:3). Who was Eliam? Was he a significant person? 1 Chronicles 3:5 gives Eliam’s other name when it states that Bathsheba was the daughter of Ammiel. Many Bible scholars think that her father was the same person who was listed as one of David’s “mighty men” in 2 Samuel 23:34. If so, she was the daughter of a loyal supporter of the king. Probably he would have been a frequent guest at the palace.

Ahithophel

Bathsheba’s grandfather was Ahithophel (compare

2 Sam. 11:3 with 2 Sam. 23:34), who was one of David's chief counselors (2 Sam. 15:12).

Later, when Absalom rebelled against his father, Ahithophel forsook David and began counseling Absalom (2 Sam. 16:23). It was Ahithophel who advised Absalom to publicly take possessions of his father's harem and thus display that he was mightier than David. Later, fearing that the rebellion against David was over, this traitor committed suicide (2 Sam. 17:23).

Machir

Some Bible scholars think that Machir was the brother of Bathsheba. Carl Hagensick in his article, "Nine Men in the Life of Bathsheba," mentioned some interesting facts about Machir. It seems that he is first mentioned in 2 Samuel 9:4 in connection with David's search for any person of Saul's house that he might show the kindness of God to him. When David learned that Jonathan had a crippled son (Mephibosheth), he inquired where he was. He was told that the man was in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, who is also the father of Bathsheba. If it is true that Bathsheba's father was known by the two names of Eliam and Ammiel (2 Sam. 11:3; 1 Chron. 3:5), that means that Mephibosheth had been staying with Bathsheba's brother.

Long after the sin of David and Bathsheba and even after Absalom had rebelled against his father, Machir's name is mentioned another time in the Scriptures. When David had been humiliated and escaped across the Jordan to the mountain fortress of Mahanaim, he was without supplies for his men. Three people were responsible for taking supplies to them. One of them was Machir (2 Sam. 17:27).

Uriah

Bathsheba's husband seemed to be a man of sterling

character. Although he was a Hittite by nationality (a gentile nation), it is thought that he was obviously at least a second generation Jew by religion because his name contains the *iah* for Jehovah. Like his father-in-law, Uriah was later listed as one of David's **mighty** men (2 Sam. 23:39).

When the story later unfolds, Uriah's loyalty to the king, his army, and the nation is unsurpassed as he placed duty to God and his country above personal pleasure.

Questions

It seems evident that Bathsheba was the granddaughter of one of David's closest advisors, the daughter and wife of two of his top soldiers, as well as the sister of the man who had befriended Mephibosheth. **Why did David not recognize her?**

First, the lack of light at this time of day (eveningtide, when the sun was beginning to go down) could have hindered David's vision. Second, her house may have been some distance from the roof of the palace. Third, even though Bathsheba seemed to be related to some of David's most influential men, the king may never have been introduced to her. Fourth, even if David had seen Bathsheba before this time, she would have been dressed in a veil and a loose, long robe. He had certainly never seen her without her clothes!

Why was Bathsheba bathing in such a public fashion? "The middle eastern houses had roofs with walls that came to about waist height" (Hagensick, 3). If Bathsheba's house had such a wall, she would have been protected from the gazes of people around her but not from the eyes of someone at the height of the king's palace. Coffman comments on this situation in the following manner:

Our text here does not indicate that there was anything improper about Bathsheba's bath in such a space which exposed her; but the suspicion remains that she was not nearly so discreet as she should have been (4:136).

The next verse causes one to believe that this was not the usual bath for cleanliness but rather a ritual bath connected with the necessary cleaning from the uncleanness connected with a woman's menstrual period (Lev. 15:19-33). This point may have been mentioned to prove that Bathsheba was not already pregnant by her husband Uriah or anyone else, for that matter.

Adultery

Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house. And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, I am with child (2 Sam. 11:4-5).

We do not know what kind of woman Bathsheba was in a moral sense. We are not told whether or not she knowingly exposed herself on the top of her house. Neither are we informed whether she complied with David's wishes willingly or unwillingly. After all, when the King of Israel summoned someone to his palace, that person normally complied immediately, regardless of personal feelings.

One fact is quite apparent. David and Bathsheba committed adultery that night. Apparently the incident was a "one-night fling." David sent Bathsheba home and probably thought that was the end of the matter.

Time went by. Because adultery was committed just after Bathsheba had completed the purification rites after menstruation, she could have known that she was

pregnant in about a month or two. Her message to the king was short but powerful: "I am with child."

The Progressive Steps Of David's Cover-Up

Send Uriah Home

When David learned that Bathsheba was pregnant with his child, he immediately began to try to cover up the wrong that had been committed. He sent word to Joab, instructing him to send Uriah home. When he arrived, David asked the soldier how the war was progressing and then told him to go home and relax ("wash your feet" 2 Sam. 11:8). The king even sent a gift of food to make Uriah's stay more enjoyable. Apparently David reasoned that if Uriah could return home, eat good food and then spend the night with his own wife, he would naturally presume that the baby that was later to be born was his own child.

However, there was a flaw in David's plan. Uriah was a man of strong character and unfailing loyalty to his country and especially to his fellow soldiers. Instead of going home, Uriah slept at the door of the king's palace with the servants. When David later questioned Uriah, he replied that he did not think it would be right for him to return home and enjoy being with his wife while Joab and the other soldiers were camping in the open fields in tents. His words must have rung in David's ears: "I will not do this thing" (2 Sam. 11:11). How much heartache could have been spared if only David had been man enough to say "I will not do this thing" when he lusted on the top of his palace roof.

Get Uriah Drunk

Undoubtedly David was disappointed when his first plan failed. Calling Uriah before him, he promised to allow the soldier to return to the battlefield the next

day. Before David released the man, however, he invited him to join the king for dinner, probably reasoning that alcohol would cause Uriah to weaken his beliefs so he would return home to spend the night with Bathsheba.

David had underestimated Uriah's strong convictions. Once again he spent the night with the king's servants rather than enjoy the pleasures of his own home.

Have Uriah Killed In Battle

When Uriah's convictions prevented his going home to his wife, the king resorted to a desperate move. David reasoned that his sin had to be covered up in some way. Uriah was sent back into battle with a note from David to Joab, demanding that this soldier be put on the front line of the battle and left there to die. Uriah personally carried David's message. Why did he not read the king's words and dispose of his own death warrant? Evidently his sterling character prevailed.

When David finally received word that his evil scheme had been successful this time, he probably thought his sin had been covered up and buried forever. After the customary time of mourning, David brought Bathsheba to his house and made her his wife before their son was born. "But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (2 Sam. 11:27).

"You Are The Man!"

During the remainder of Bathsheba's pregnancy and even after their son was born, David refused to acknowledge his sin. One day the prophet Nathan appeared and told him a parable about a rich man, a poor man, and one precious little ewe lamb (2 Sam. 12:1-4). Unknowingly, the mighty king pronounced his own sentence. "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this shall surely die" (2 Sam. 12:5-6)! It was then that Nathan's words

pierced David's heart: "You are the man" (2 Sam. 12:7).

David sincerely repented: "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Sam. 12:13). Nathan told the ruler that he himself would not die, but death would claim his new baby boy. In addition to this immediate punishment, his own family would cause him continual heartache for years to come.

While the young baby lay gravely ill for a week, David fasted, wept and lay on the ground. Only after the child's death did the king resume normal life. His actions were based upon his assurance of God's forgiveness and his belief in the rewards of heaven. "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Sam. 12:23).

Again David went in to Bathsheba and lay with her. This time it was not just lust and passion. **He comforted her in the loss of their child.** Solomon was born to them in due time.

Latter Years

Approximately twenty years later, when David was in his seventies, Abishag, a beautiful young virgin, was summoned to care for the king and sleep with him and keep him warm in bed. But David did not have sexual relations with her (1 Kings 1:4).

It was during this time frame that we learn about Bathsheba's continued importance in Israel's history. When Adonijah, the son of David and Haggith, was preparing to usurp the kingdom, the prophet Nathan urged Bathsheba to appeal to David to keep his promise to appoint their son Solomon to the throne. Approaching David in his chambers where Abishag was ministering to his needs, Bathsheba bowed down to the ground with her request to make their son Solomon king. As a result, Adonijah's uprising was overcome and Solomon ruled after David's death.

Lessons For Today

After making this study of David and Bathsheba, it seems that several lessons emerge for Christians today.

First, it is just a fact of life that men are sexually aroused by the sight of a woman's body. Who was in the wrong: Bathsheba, for exposing her body in a place where a man could see her, or David, for looking? Even if rooftop bathing had been the custom, **Bathsheba was in the wrong and so was David.** Although a man can easily be sexually aroused by the sight of a partially clothed or naked woman, he should have the integrity to turn his back and walk away when he encounters lust-producing sights.

A recent "Dear Abby" column caught my eye. It was a question concerning graphic sexual fashion. "Which is more degrading - **men** who look at the pictures or the **women** who expose themselves?" The answer was **both**. All through the ages, both sexes have had a responsibility.

Laura Elliott is the editor of **Girl to Girl**, an excellent book written **by** young girls **for** young girls. In the chapter that deals with proper dressing, the author tells it *just like it is*: "Both one-piece and two-piece swimsuits are immodest" (150).

However, a woman can be clothed from her neck to her toes and still be immodest. Spandex shirts that are too tight and also low-cut can often leave little to the imagination. Jeans can also be in the same category.

The girls who wrote **Girl to Girl** made a survey of young men, asking them what constitutes modesty.

'Tight clothing, especially, produces more impure thoughts within a man's head than girls will ever know.' The majority rated tight jeans as immodest. Nearly half the Christian men surveyed said that 'skirts above knee' are

immodest, with an identical rating for 'shorts above knee' (145).

Some of the guys' comments in **Girl to Girl** are thought-provoking. "You can tell by what she wears what she wants guys to think about when they look at her." "I know how a girl expects to be treated when I see what she's wearing." "If she wants to be noticed because of her body, it is a spiritual turn off" (146-147).

Today women may cry out, "But everyone else dresses this way." Could Bathsheba possibly have said, "But other women also take baths on their rooftops"? Our senses can become so dulled to sin that we gradually accept it as the norm.

Christian Woman recently had an excellent article (*Respect: A Young Girls Fashion Show*) written by Lori Locke about her efforts to have a fashion to "help these girls see how they can look great without being so revealing" (40).

It is our hope that this effort, also, will be an encouragement to our teens and to others to dress tastefully. We want them to see that they can be chaste and still attractive; that dressing modestly earns respect from their peers and parents alike; and most importantly, that our clothing reflects the person we want to be (41).

We must remember that men are sexually aroused by the sight of a woman's body. Both sexes are responsible and must take all possible steps to prevent the beginning of lust. Even if everybody else dresses immodestly, it is still wrong.

Second, a very small step can lead to an abyss of misery. People may say, "Just one small dose of drugs won't hurt anyone. It would be fun to see what it is like to get high." Every drug addict began with just one small dose.

Phillip Carter, a member of the Lord's church who has recently been released after a ten-year prison sentence, recently wrote an excellent, thought-provoking article that appeared in the **Gospel Advocate** (26), in which he said:

I cultivated drug use. I watered it with profuse tears, nurtured it with perceived lawfulness, grew it tall, and anticipated a noble harvest. And that is the problem. There is no harvest-only scorched fields and total loss.

Some may say, "Just a little petting will not matter. After all, I love this boy. We can stop before it gets too far." We must remember that there is a "point of no return" when the body's chemistry won't allow a halt. The first step can easily lead to that point.

David's first step was refusing to turn his head when he saw Bathsheba. That one step led to misery for the remainder of his life.

Third, our loving heavenly Father is willing to forgive our blackest sins if we truly repent and make matters right. When David said, "I have sinned against the Lord," God was willing to forgive him (2 Sam. 12:13). The Scriptures are silent about Bathsheba's repentance but her later actions seem to indicate that she was in favor with the Lord. Nathan requested that she approach her husband concerning Adonijah's uprising and ask David to declare Solomon as the next ruler. Years earlier (2 Sam. 12:25), Nathan had even given the baby Solomon a special name from God (*Jedidiah*, meaning *Beloved of the Lord*).

Fourth, even though God is willing to forgive our sins, certain inevitable consequences may follow. Amnon and Absalom, two of David's oldest sons, witnessed the shame their father had brought to their family and Israel. Who knows what influence David's adultery had upon the desires of Amnon when he raped his half sister (2 Sam.

13:1-22)? Could David's killing of Uriah have planted the seeds of murder and rebellion in Absalom's heart? Could David's sin of lust that originated on his palace rooftop have had any bearing on Absalom's decision to go in to his father's concubines in a tent on top of the house (2 Sam. 16:22)?

Today, our wrong-doings will definitely influence our children's behavior. Mothers who dress immodestly usually have daughters who follow in their footsteps. Parents who have had loose morals have difficulty in trying to convince their teenagers to abstain from premarital sex. Young girls with illegitimate babies can certainly have God's forgiveness, but the responsibility of the care of that child will always be with them.

Conclusion

Through God's Word, David and Bathsheba have a lesson for us today. If they could still speak, they would probably beg us to have Uriah's convictions when tempted to do wrong and say, as he did, "I will not do this thing" (2 Sam. 11:11).

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CHAPTER 34

Abigail: A Wise Woman Married To A Foolish Man

Sheila Butt

Several years ago while standing in line at an airport in Phoenix, Arizona, I began a conversation with a gentleman from India. We were discussing our teenaged children and he mentioned that his oldest daughter had graduated from high school the previous year and wanted to attend college. However, she thought it would be best if she got married before going to college. He went on to explain that she thought her life would be less complicated and that she could focus on her studies better if she was married. I asked the obvious question: "Did she have a boyfriend?"

Her father answered "No boyfriend."

I asked if she was now married. "Oh yes!" he said. "Very happy."

I am sure I looked dumbfounded by this time. Where did she get a husband, "I asked?"

"We advertised!" her father beamed.

As we continued our conversation, he told me about choosing his son-in-law. They advertised in India and in the United States. He commented that there were about 20 applicants. The family narrowed the twenty down to

two that the daughter was to consider. One was from India and one was in college in the northeastern United States. After meeting them, his daughter chose the young man who was living in this country already. They were both back in school following the wedding during the summer after her senior year and according to her father they were doing very well in their school work and in their married life.

Although this type of marriage arrangement may sound foreign to us it is still very prevalent in some cultures. Because of our tradition of courtship and marriage in the United States today, it may be hard for us to understand how the beautiful Abigail, whose very name means, "cause of joy" could be married to Nabal, a man whose name literally means, "fool." According to the account in 1 Samuel 25, both lived up to their names!

Samuel had just died and David was now a man without a country. He and his men made their home in the wilderness. In the previous chapter, Saul himself had made the comment, "And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king" and at that time Saul exacted a promise from David that his descendents would not be cut off. The providence of God was working in David's life for him to become king, but it had not come full circle.

This was undoubtedly one of the most discouraging times in David's life. He and his men were without provisions. Being the leader that he was, David surely felt it was his responsibility to take care of his men. He sent ten young men to greet Nabal and to remind him that David and his men had protected his shepherds and his herds while they were together. He also told them to tell Nabal to ask his own young men if this was true. Apparently, Nabal was not interested in asking his men or in finding out the truth.

Nabal made a tragic error in judgment next. He judged David on his present circumstances. David did not seem like anyone of importance to him! He commented,

Who is David and who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men when I do not know where they are from?

Also, notice how many personal pronouns Nabal uses in this discourse. "Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men when I do not know where they are from?" Obviously he had no godly gratitude and was a respecter of persons. Nabal would have fit well in our culture with those who think, "It's all about me!"

The account says that David's men "turned on their heels and went back." One wonders if they were in such a hurry because they were scared to death or whether they were anxious to get David's reaction!

David's reaction was truly that of a person in dire circumstances. Often when we are having difficult times, our judgment gets blurred and our vision gets clouded. Right now it didn't matter to David that he would be king, he didn't feel like a king. What mattered that his men needed food and this "scoundrel" was refusing them! David railed, "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 took four hundred men and intended to carry out the slaughter of Nabal's household.

Abigail had apparently not been present when David's young men made their request. One of Nabal's young men told Abigail,

Look, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master; and he reviled them. But the men were very good to us, and we were not hurt, nor did we miss anything as long as we accompanied them, when we were in the fields. They were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the time we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore, know and consider what you will do, for harm is determined against our master and against all his household. For he is such a scoundrel that one cannot speak to him (1 Sam. 25:17).

Abigail was described in verse 3 as being a woman of "good understanding and beautiful appearance." She was not guilty of the bad judgment of her husband. She listened to what the young man told her and appreciated that David had been kind to them in the wilderness. She understood that David could have taken anything he wanted at any time and the common practices of hospitality would have been to share with him. She rightly judged his character and must have been aware of what was happening between David and Saul. Apparently she also watched over the ways of her household (Prov. 31:27) because this young man fully expected her to take action. He says to her, "Consider now what you will do." Abigail was entreated by this young man most likely because he knew that she had used good judgment in other circumstances and would not sit idly by and let her household be destroyed as long as it was in her power to justify the wrong.

Beginning in verse 18, we see that Abigail has the authority and the means to get the food that David and

his men need prepared and transported "in haste." This was not a small feat. The provisions included two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep, (already dressed), five seahs of roasted grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs. (And I have to look in my freezer to see if I have enough meat to make a casserole for a family who has just lost a loved one?) Abigail had obviously managed her household well.

Abigail and her entourage met David and his men coming down from a hill toward them. There must have been a few tense moments. How would David react? Would they all be destroyed? Abigail's heart may have been pounding and her knees quivering but she did not hesitate. We are told that she "dismounted quickly from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground" (verse 23). She fell at his feet and entreated him, "On me, my lord, on me let this iniquity be! And please let your maidservant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your maidservant."

This scene reminds us of the power of sinless self-sacrifice. Between her physical beauty and her spiritual beauty, David's heart must have skipped a beat at the sight of her on the ground asking for his vengeance to be upon her. For all that women have given up in their quest for equality with men, the truth is that there is nothing more powerful than a wise, beautiful woman in godly subjection for the good of others. It is the epitome of agape love.

Along with her humility and discretion, Abigail proves that she is a woman "of good understanding." She appeals to David's higher purpose...his future kingship. She admits to David that her husband is a scoundrel. She then reminds David that the Lord had kept him from avenging himself with his own hand and that the Lord "will surely make for my lord an enduring house,

because my lord fights the battles of the Lord, and evil is not found in you throughout your days" (verse 28). Notice that Abigail calls David lord and in doing so lifts him to a higher plane than that of a renegade warrior in the wilderness. She acknowledges her respect for him, reminds him that that he is a man of God, and appeals to his integrity. She continues by saying that the Lord will bind his life with the living while He will "sling out" those who would harm David (verse 29).

Abigail assures David that she knows he will become king and does not want him to be grieved or offended in his heart because he did not restrain himself from this bloody revenge. It is interesting here that Abigail reinforces her belief that David will become king to him by asking him to remember her when the Lord has "dealt well with my lord" (verse 31). Abigail is planting a seed in David's heart that she has no way of knowing what the end result might be. She trusts in the providence of God.

What a heartfelt response she receives from David, "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me!" Notice to whom David gives the glory for Abigail's intervention. It is not to Abigail, but to God that David gives the glory. Surely our lives, our actions should always be for the glory of God and not for any attention that we can gain for ourselves. When it is God who is glorified by our beauty, our wisdom, our trust in Him or our attempts to serve Him, then we shall truly be powerful women.

No blood was shed that day. "David received from her hand what she had brought him, and said to her, 'Go up in peace to your house. See, I have heeded your voice and respected your person'" (verse 35). As Christian women, we will be respected by many more people and others will heed our voice more quickly if we are proven

to be women who live godly lives. We are encouraged to lean not on our own understanding but to acknowledge God and His will in our lives and He will direct our paths (Prov. 3:5-6). God was surely directing Abigail's path that day.

Abigail went home to her drunken husband Nabal and wisely did not tell him what had happened until the next day. Every wise woman knows that timing is very important in speaking with our husbands about important matters. When Abigail told Nabal what had happened the next morning, the Bible tells us that "his heart died within him, and he became like a stone" (verse 37). After about ten days, "the Lord struck Nabal, and he died" (verse 38).

When David heard the news, he rejoiced that the Lord had returned Nabal's wickedness "on his own head", and that His servant (David) had been kept from evil. He immediately sent a marriage proposal to Abigail, the woman of "good understanding and beautiful appearance." Imagine her emotions now! She was leaving an apparently loveless, childless marriage to become the wife of a king whom she respected and admired. Abigail's respect and humility are obvious in her response to the messengers, "Then she arose, bowed her face to the earth, and said, 'Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord'" (verse 41).

God blessed Abigail's marriage to David with a son, Chileab. The story of Abigail serves as a wonderful reminder to us that God is at work in our lives even when we seem to be in the most trying circumstances. Abigail, a wise woman, was married to a very foolish man, possibly an alcoholic, whom she obviously did not love. David, a future king, was reduced to humiliating circumstances in asking for food and sought a bloody revenge. God used this scenario to His glory because

both David and Abigail trusted Him and were willing to listen to sound judgment. The Bible reminds us that God will do the same for us:

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart (Psa. 37:3-4).

CHAPTER 35

Michal ~ A Wife Whose Love Grew Cold

Kathy Pollard

If you consult any scholars' opinions of Michal, you will quickly find out there is much controversy over her. Some say she was brokenhearted and disillusioned. Others say she was worldly, proud and resentful. The actual amount of Biblical text about Michal would fill only one page. It is important to avoid filling in the gaps with what we think might have been the case. If you are unfamiliar with Michal, or have not read about her in a while, consider reading up on the account before you continue reading this lesson.

Have you ever known a couple whose marriage should have been terrific but ended in tragedy? Some couples look like they were always meant to be together. They might consist of two powerhouses, a husband and a wife who both have above average amounts of talent, potential and personality. You look at them and think, "What a great team!" Then the terrific couple shocks their friends and family by admitting to infidelity or announcing their plans to divorce. What went wrong? How can that possibly happen to two such amazing Christians?

Then there are those couples who simply do not seem happy together. They understand divorce is not an option. They do not even bicker necessarily. They just seem to live in the same house. You look at them and

wonder why they ever got married in the first place. There is no joy, no spark, no chemistry. Their marriage is...boring. Surely it was not that way in the beginning. They must have felt some passion for each other when they agreed to become man and wife. What happened to it?

We could think of several reasons why some marriages end up unhappy. Perhaps there are things that do not belong, such as short tempers, hurtful accusations, harsh judgments, impatience, or ugly sarcasm. Perhaps there are ingredients that are missing, such as trust, humility, compassion, or intimacy. While one or more of these may be true, there is one reason that is always true in every single miserable marriage, without exception. Before stating that reason, let us look at Michal's progression to depression.

Michal loved David. It is easy to see why this princess would fall for a shepherd boy. David was good-looking (1 Sam. 16:12). He was a popular hero, especially among the women (1 Sam. 18:6,7). And he was successful and famous (1 Sam. 18:14-16, 30). David and Michal were one of those great couples who seemed meant for each other! Michal was King Saul's daughter, and, in addition to being victorious in battle, David was God's chosen (1 Sam. 16:12). The matchmakers of the day would have been nodding their heads in satisfaction.

Michal lost David. Almost as soon as they were married, Saul's jealousy put David's life in danger. One night Saul sent messengers to David's house to kill him. Michal loved David so much that she was willing to foil her father's plans. She warned her husband to flee and helped him escape through the window. She then tricked the messengers by making David's bed look like he was still sleeping in it. She put clothes and goat's hair on a teraphim and arranged it under the covers. When Saul

found out, he said, "Why have you deceived me like this?" Michal then lied and said David had threatened to kill her if she did not let him escape (1 Sam. 19). That very lie may have led Saul to give Michal to another man. David was in hiding and Saul gave Michal to Paltiel the Benjamite (1 Sam. 25:44).

Michal loathed David. Paltiel and Michal were together for several years. After the death of Saul, David demanded his wife back. Paltiel was distraught and wept bitterly, but nothing is said about Michal's feelings (2 Sam. 3:13-16). Her feelings were very clear however, the day she saw David dancing before the Lord. Dripping with sarcasm, Michal met David with, "How glorious was the king of Israel today!" She then accused him of acting as one of the "base fellows" (2 Sam. 6:13-20). She was calling her royal husband empty-headed and foolish.

Oh they could have had a wonderful, blessed union! What led this wife to despise her husband? How could she have gone from being nearly star-struck with adoration to insulting him in such a disrespectful manner? As was mentioned earlier, every unhappy marriage has one contribution in common. NEGLECT. When couples "fall out of love," it is certain that something was neglected. Every form of neglect seems to fall under one of two categories.

Neglecting To Put God First

Attraction is not enough for a happy marriage. Michal saw David's good looks, his popularity, his office in the court. Even though she was a Jewess, she did not share his love for God. Consider the teraphim. What was Michal doing with a household idol? Since it was large enough to represent a man's body, it is doubtful that she dragged it from a neighbor's house. Michal probably learned tolerance of idols in her father's house (1 Sam.

13:13,14; 15:23). The day the ark returned to Jerusalem was a day of celebration, a time of joy and gladness. David and all the house of Israel participated in the sacrifices, shouting and trumpets...with the exception of Michal. When David went home to bless his own household, she criticized him for his behavior and his dress. In her eyes, David did not act like a king. It is interesting that in 2 Samuel 6:20, Michal is called the daughter of Saul. She was acting like her father, jealous and spiteful. Perhaps if she had celebrated with David, and welcomed his blessing, she would have been called the wife of a man after God's own heart. Instead, "she despised him in her heart" (2 Sam. 6:16). Since David was a man after God's own heart, their paths would necessarily lead to isolation from each other and heartache. David's goals were not her own. Michal's priorities were not David's. A couple who bases a relationship on externals will always be disappointed.

We need to choose mates, and teach our children to choose mates, who are seriously devoted to God. Just because someone wears the name Christian does not mean they are committed to the Lord. Michal was a Jew yet she did not love the Lord as she should. A person's attitudes and actions must attest to their Christianity. Time must be given to prove the sincerity of their faith.

If both individuals do not have a high regard for the Lord, issues will arise.

- Will the children be made to go to worship?
- How will extra money be spent? On material things or evangelistic opportunities?
- How will extra time be spent? On worldly pleasures or taking mission trips together?

If you marry a weak Christian, you might one day be married to a man who:

- Is unfaithful in attendance
- Is unfaithful in the marriage
- Desires to give up when trials come
- Will not help you grow spiritually strong
- May be an obstacle to Heaven

A marriage that involves two individuals with different views of God will experience deep conflict. One will be eager to do the things that please God. The other will be indifferent and want to do things that please self (Gal. 5:17). "Can two walk together unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3).

Neglecting To Nurture The Relationship

A woman's love can grow cold, as we have seen with Michal. What started out as love, through time and events, turned to disgust. It does not take significant events (such as David running for his life) for love to cool. It can happen simply through neglect.

There is an excellent book on how to have a close relationship with your spouse called *Staying Close*. The subtitle is sobering, "Stopping the Natural Drift Toward Isolation in Marriage." The authors point out that individuals gradually change through the years. Is your husband the exact same man you married ten or twenty years ago? If proactive steps are not taken to keep up with those changes, isolation WILL occur. Couples can drift apart. Similarly, if you are not consciously nurturing your relationship, your love will grow cold.

Often we are aware of the "big" threats to marriage: dishonesty, flirting with others, rudeness. But just telling the truth, being faithful and always being polite are not enough to keep marriages strong and close. Think of your relationship with your Heavenly Father. Do you have to work at it? Yes! There are times when you do not feel as close to the Lord as you used to. It is not because you

have committed some horrible sin, either. Upon reflection, you realize that you have neglected to spend serious time in the Word, or you have let your prayer life dwindle. You have been so caught up in just getting through the daily busyness that you forgot to connect with God. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8). Sometimes it takes weeks before you realize something is not right. It is the same with marriage. The silent threats are the ones that destroy relationships: lack of real communication, lack of playfulness, failure to "tune in." After weeks and months of neglecting these areas, a couple can feel lukewarm in their affections for each other. They feel like they are living alone, in the same house.

How can you tell if your marriage has drifted into isolation? The authors of *Staying Close* included a list of seven signs. Review the following signs and see if your marriage is in need of some TLC.

- A feeling that your spouse is not hearing you and does not want to understand
- An attitude of "Who cares? Why try? Tomorrow we will talk about it. Let's just get some sleep"
- A feeling of being unable to please or to meet the expectations of your spouse
 - A sense that he is detached from you
 - A feeling that he is going his own way
 - A refusal to cope with what is really wrong—"That's your problem, not mine"
 - A feeling that keeping the peace by avoiding conflict is better than the pain of dealing with reality

If you feel that your marriage is not all that it can be, do not give up. Satan is only too happy to convince you that there is nothing you can do about it. You can stop the marital drift. One mistake women make is relying on someone else to change the way they feel. If you feel like

you have fallen out of love with your husband, do not assume that he should be the one to make things right. If the passion has dimmed, do not blame your husband for his lack of romance. It is up to YOU to change the way you feel. There are several things that you can do to boost your relationship.

Incorporate God's plan for a happy marriage. In Colossians 3, we have the perfect recipe for maintaining a close relationship. Study it closely and see how you can apply it to your own situation. First, Paul lists things that do not belong in a Christian's life. They do not belong in a marriage, either. Beware of fornication, uncleanness, evil desire and covetousness (v. 5). Then dig deeper and get rid of anger, malice and lying as well (v. 8-9). Second, Paul focuses on holy things that Christians should put on. Fill your relationship with tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness and longsuffering (v. 12). Bear with your husband, forgive him, and love him "which is the bond of perfection" (vs. 13-14). Make decisions with the peace of God in your heart (v. 15). Be thankful and notice all the blessings (v. 15). Be filled with the Word of God (v. 16). And make sure all of your actions and attitudes are approved by God (v. 17). Submit to your husband (v. 18). "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord..." (v. 23). Incorporating these into your marriage will guarantee a tight, life-lasting bond.

Pay attention to the details. What makes restaurants, hotels, and shops stand above the rest? The details. We expect them from the finer establishments. Why do we sometimes neglect them in the most important establishment? What do you do for your husband that makes you rise above the rest of the women he meets? Compliment your husband. Other women are going to. If he is not getting compliments from you, what other women say may start to mean something. Let your husband know you are proud to be his wife. Act like

a lady. It is attractive and he deserves it. Cater to your husband's likes and dislikes. Do you know his preferences? Is there a favorite color he likes you to wear? Paying attention to the details will make your husband feel cherished. Maybe this sounds a little too servile for your tastes, but it is the people who do not give who end up feeling unfulfilled themselves.

Show "tangible respect" everyday. Think of some small way each day you can tangibly show your husband you respect him. Write a note and slip it somewhere for him to find. Give him a massage when he comes home. Serve fried chicken one night, if it is his favorite. When he asks why the special attention, say, "Because I love and respect you." After a couple of weeks of this, you will feel as if you have invested too much into your relationship to let it go stale. And, your husband will probably start reciprocating!

Be a lover. Put great effort into making intimacy wonderful. Focus on giving, satisfying, being joyful, and taking pleasure in being together. Go to the extra effort to be feminine and alluring for your husband. If you have children, make sure they know boundaries and respect your privacy, and enforce that.

Be thankful. Open your eyes to the blessings in your marriage. Thank God for how special it feels to be part of a team. Thank Him for giving you a husband to love and cherish. Thank your husband for keeping your vehicle running smoothly or for fertilizing the lawn. Thank him for keeping you company and for providing so consistently for your family. Look for those things that you might be taking for granted and be thankful.

Care, care, care. You may never yell, "I don't care," but do your actions scream it? Show a particular interest in everything concerning your husband. Listen when he starts talking. Look at him. Do not busy your hands

with something else while he is opening his heart. Be interested. Act like you really care, and before long you will not be acting.

We do not know exactly why Michal's love grew cold. It could have been because she was separated from David. We do know that David was a man after God's own heart, and when Michal insulted him, he had been worshipping God. Her bitterness caused her to verbally attack God's anointed. David reprimanded her and she finished out her days without having children. We do not know if that was a punishment from God or if David simply kept himself separate from her from that point on. Either way, she lived the rest of her life in loneliness. It could have been so much different for her! She felt like David's dancing behavior was un-kingly. What if, instead, she simply tried to understand his rejoicing? What if she had cared enough to participate in the celebration herself? Her cold heart was a choice that she made. She ultimately suffered for it.

God wants you to have a close and loving relationship with your spouse (Eccl. 4:9-11). Protect your marriage against the one ingredient that guarantees lukewarm love—neglect. Put God first in your life, and nurture your relationship. Then you will be one of those great couples, the ones that look like they were always meant to be together.

CHAPTER 36

A Wise Woman Who Saved Her City With Quick And Decisive Action

Wendy Wadley

I. Introduction: Sin And Its Consequences

The wise woman of Abel is an account born out of events surrounding the reign of King David. This unnamed heroine played a major role in maintaining peace and unity in the kingdom of Israel. Her quick and decisive action squelched a rebellion, brought justice to a traitor, prevented a civil war and allowed the King's army to return to Jerusalem. What weapons did she use? Her only weapons were wise words and a plan of action.

It is nearly impossible to know the far reaching effects that our words and decisions propel into action. The consequences of this lady's actions were vital to the kingdom of Israel. But, her actions were only a part of the rippling effect of King David's decisions years prior. Before we begin exploring this narrative, let's back up a bit and briefly trace those decisions of King David which led to the actions of this wise woman.

David's own sins were as a result of trouble within himself, which led to trouble within his family and ultimately the kingdom. Years before, due to David's sin with Bathsheba, he was unable to correct his son,

Amnon, for the rape of his half-sister, Tamar. Amnon went unpunished, causing a seething bitterness and eventual hatred to grow and reside in his brother, Absalom. Later, when Absalom killed Amnon, David didn't condemn this act since he had had Uriah killed. As time went on, Absalom's anger and hatred continued to grow until he mounted a rebellion against his own father and violated his concubines. Against David's wishes for any harm to come to his rebel son, his own commander in chief was responsible for having Absalom killed. As David was returning to the throne in Jerusalem after his son's death, tribal jealousies over the manner of his return spawned yet another rebellion. A troublemaker named, Sheba, had threatened to unseat David's throne. As David's army pursued him to stop this revolt, he sought refuge in the city of Abel where our narrative begins. From David's sin with Bathsheba to the wise woman of Abel...the connecting threads are very sobering to think about. With this background in mind, let's now turn our attention to the text.

II. Deliverance From Physical Destruction

The text falls into the part of David's life when his troubles were in the kingdom at large. He was returning back home to Jerusalem following the rebellion and death of his son, Absalom. The men of Israel and the men of Judah sparked animosity between them when each tried to stake a greater claim (a higher status) in connection with King David (19:41-43). The men of Judah claimed to be more closely related to David, while the men of Israel claimed to have ten shares in the king and the first to speak of bringing him back. Capitalizing on this strife, a man of Belial ("Belial" means evil, ungodly, wicked) named Sheba, sounded the trumpet of insurrection and said, "We have no share in David, nor do we have

inheritance in the son of Jesse; every man to his tents, O Israel!" (20:1) These were very strong words! He was, in effect, denying David's divine authority to be king by referring to him only as the son of Jesse. This was the same as saying that David was a man like everyone else with no authority given to him by God to be king. Many from Israel turned their backs on the Lord's anointed, but the men in Judah remained loyal to their king (20:2).

David realized the potential harm of Sheba's rebellion as being even greater than Absalom's (20:6). At the end of verse 6, he ordered the rebellion crushed: "Take your lord's servants and pursue him, lest he find for himself fortified cities, and escape us." First, Amasa received the order, then Abishai, but it was Joab who took control of the pursuit by force and ended up being the one to find Sheba (20:4-13). Joab was David's fiercely loyal commander in chief. "He murdered those who stood in the way of pre-eminence as the leader of Israel's hosts (2 Sam. 3:27)... He was guilty of vindictiveness and ruthless cruelty." Over and over he had shown he was a man who would concede to no one.

Joab's forces located Sheba in Abel of Beth Maachah (20:14). (Baker's Bible Atlas renders this as one town, Abel-beth-maachah. In 20:18, it is simply called Abel.) This town was well fortified and was situated upon a mound. The army besieged the city, and constructed a siege ramp up to the rampart or outer fortifications. When a city was besieged, it was completely surrounded with the intent to gain possession of it. Siege ramps, made of earth, stone and wood, would take hundreds or thousands of men many days to construct. Once completed, the army could wheel their battering rams up the ramp to use to make holes in the upper part of the city walls which were usually thinner than the base. Or, the ramps were sometimes constructed so high, that they reached

the top of the wall itself! It was a huge undertaking to besiege a city, requiring tremendous wealth and resources to fund the operation. A siege could last for months and even years! We have no way to determine how long the siege at Abel lasted. It did last long enough for the siege ramp to be constructed in order to batter the walls down (20:15).

At the last stages of the siege, as the walls were being pummeled and about to be brought down, the wise woman of Abel appears on the scene in this difficult situation, and shouted down to the soldiers asking to speak to Joab (20:16). "Hear, hear! Please say to Joab, 'Come nearby, that I may speak with you.'" By this time, the bad feelings on both sides had had time to intensify. When she made her attempt to communicate with Joab, she had no way of knowing if her request would be granted, or even if she would receive an arrow through the heart! She was attempting to converse with an enraged soldiery. Her plea to speak with Joab was, therefore, a very courageous request!

Fortunately, her request was granted, and Joab, the vicious warrior, actually stopped what he was doing to come near the woman. In all probability, he may have given a command to halt the attack while he spoke to her. I doubt, in the history of warfare, that many battles or sieges have been halted so that the commander could converse with a strange woman who was deemed to be an enemy! This fact alone is almost unimaginable!

As he approached, the woman said, "Are you Joab?" He affirmed his identity and she said to him, "Hear the words of your maidservant." By identifying herself as his maidservant, she was showing a proper respect for his authority. It also may have been an indirect reminder that she, too, was an Israelite, a fellow countryman. Joab listened to her (20:17).

She pleads her case by saying that in old times it was well known that Abel was a place where people could come to settle disputes. The judgment they received at Abel would end the matter (20:18). "The city of Abel had become proverbial for its wisdom." As she continued to speak, with the city on the edge of destruction, she managed to have the presence of mind and calmness of spirit to hold on to her identity. She remembered who she was, and continued by describing herself as being "among the peaceable and faithful in Israel." Then she came to the heart of her plea. "You seek to destroy a city and a mother in Israel. Why would you swallow up the inheritance of the LORD?" (20:19) Abel was such an important city that it was like a mother city to the surrounding areas. The inhabitants of the city were God's own possession. How could he destroy what belonged to God? At this point, Joab obviously realized that the people of Abel did not even know why they were under siege. Her words may have also reminded him of the fact that he had not followed the rules of warfare that God gave to Moses in Deuteronomy 20:10-11:

When you go near a city to fight against it, then proclaim an offer of peace to it. And it shall be that if they accept your offer of peace, and open to you, then all the people who are found in it shall be placed under tribute to you, and serve you. Now if the city will not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it.

Joab had skipped the offer of peace! The woman's words brought Joab's thinking to the point that he recognized her as a fellow Israelite; a loyal, faithful, peaceable, wise and courageous Israelite woman. Her commanding, yet respectful presence, tone and words brought this commander to his knees. The loyalty she exhibited for

Israel matched Joab's loyalty for the King. In Joab's thinking, Israel and King David were synonymous; if you were loyal to one, then you were loyal to the other. Under these desperate circumstances a patriotic female plus a patriotic commander equaled a hopeful resolution. Even as hardened a warrior as Joab was, he was touched by this woman's plea. Her plea struck the very core of his heart! It had worked! Abel now had a chance of survival (20:19).

In chapter 20, verse 20, Joab answered the woman and said, "Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy!" Joab now had a change of heart. No longer would he continue the siege against Abel. His only request was for Sheba to be delivered to him, then he would leave the city. The woman did more than just deliver Sheba. In one quick and decisive moment, the woman told Joab, "Watch, his head will be thrown to you over the wall" (20:21). Swift justice would soon belong to the one who had raised his hand against the king. The woman "in her wisdom" spoke to the people of the city, and together they agreed with her plan of action. This was their only chance to stand down the siege and survive.

The traitor's head was delivered over the wall to Joab. As Sheba had blown a trumpet to begin a revolt leading to his death, Joab blew a trumpet to end the revolt, sparing numerous lives. He withdrew from the city with all of his men and returned to King David in Jerusalem (20:22). "As one bad man exposed the city to destruction, so one good woman effected its deliverance." "She had accomplished what she had her heart set on!"

III. Deliverance From Spiritual Destruction

One can never fully know what is in the future. However, as women, I believe it is safe to say that

most of us will never have to be the liaison to prevent a civil war. Nor will most of us have to parley with a hard-edged commander to spare our lives and the lives of our countrymen. Hopefully, we will never witness our towns on the brink of destruction. Yet, we do face our daily battles for spiritual survival within our own hearts, the hearts of our children, spouses, family members and church members. We see the condition and consequences of Godlessness in our educational establishments, government, the marketplaces, media outlets, entertainment industry, healthcare system and every other entity which comprises twenty-first century life. This is the challenging, spiritual reality we have to raise our children to face. No wonder Paul told the young man Timothy to “endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3).

We all have moments in history we wish we could go back in time and witness for ourselves. This is one of those moments for me. To witness this woman’s commanding courage is something I will only be able to read about, and try to picture for myself in my mind. But, the words and themes in this account, if looked at closely, provide very strong images for our thoughts to wrap around. For the woman, these words and themes took on a physical dimension to prevent physical destruction. But today, we can see them take on a spiritual dimension to prevent spiritual destruction. I would love to learn from the ideas that each of you come up with. Here are those that resonate with me.

1. Faithful – The wise woman of Abel described herself as being among the faithful. She was faithful to the king and was upright as a follower of God. She was reliable and trustworthy. Her faithfulness did not waiver, even though she was faced with the possibility of her own destruction (1 John 5:4; 4:4, Rom. 1:17, Eph.

6:16, 2 Cor. 5:7)! She saw her faithfulness as one of the reasons that Joab should spare her life. It wasn't her fault, or the fault of her countrymen that a traitor had sought refuge in their midst. Up until the very moment that Joab requested Sheba to be handed over to him, the city of Abel didn't even know that they were harboring a criminal. Yet, they nearly lost their lives over it!

On various levels and degrees, haven't we all had to deal with the consequences of someone else's sin? Like the woman from Abel, our lives can be threatened or turned upside down by the sins of people we don't even know. Sin is the ultimate traitor. When the source of the sin comes from inside the walls of our homes through ourselves, our children, our husbands or other family members, it leaves our hearts and spirits on the brink of destruction. It pummels our hearts until we don't think we can take even one more hit. These moments don't make or break us; they reveal who we are and the faith that is truly ours. If one we love is being attacked and brought down by the enemy of sin, then this is no time to curl up in fear, retreat or surrender. We can never think in terms of giving up, even though the walls are about to be brought down. We have to act decisively out of faith in order to shore up our spiritual defenses and those of the ones we love. This is a daily process that can lead to a faith that is virtually impenetrable. As Christians, we like to think that our faithfulness to God is rewarded with a gentler life, a life with only small bumps in the road. Even though the faithful receive blessings that the unfaithful do not, God would have to directly change the reality for all of us in order to insure that our lives are easy and remain unchallenged. He doesn't work that way. As long as we remain here on the earth, then our lives will intersect with the consequences that someone's sin has set in motion. When these unfair challenges come,

things we haven't asked for, things which happen because someone else did wrong, remember who you are. You are among the faithful.

2. Peaceable - The wise woman of Abel also described herself as being among the peaceable in Israel. The closer we are to God individually, the more at peace we are with one another. Peace is not always the absence of conflict in our lives. We can be at peace with God during a violent spiritual storm. But, when the storm is caused by our own sin, then we are not at peace with God. The sin has to be removed. Before we can bring peace to any situation, we must first be at peace with God by removing what it is separating us from God (Phil. 4:9, Eph. 2:14 -16, 2 Tim. 2:22, 2 Pet. 1:2, Col. 1:19-20, Isa. 26: 3; 53:5). When our children, family members or brethren are at odds, it's because there is something that needs to be corrected or adjusted, something that needs to be removed. It can be something as simple as an innocent misunderstanding or oversight, a tone of voice, a facial expression; or it could be a sin such as intentional hurtful and disrespectful words, a willful spirit, a lie, a selfish and jealous heart. The list is endless. It takes an honest and sincere heart to pursue peace. It also takes a lot of hard work, because it requires the back-breaking effort of keeping those weeds pulled everyday! Incorporate these principles into raising your children and grandchildren and in dealing with the children in your congregations. They must be trained to deal with things honestly and not try to hide behind the "let's-just-smooth-it-all-over-they're-only-children" mentality. That is not peace. That is only postponing what will have to be dealt with in even larger proportions later in life. If they never learn to face their behaviors and thought processes that need correction, then how can they ever know true peace with God? Instead, they will be in the habit of making excuses

for their sins, not facing and eliminating them. They will become very skilled at looking for crutches. They will learn to look outwardly and place blame, rather than look inwardly and examine. The wise woman was able to help bring peace by facing reality and acting accordingly. A family who truly desires peace will honestly face reality and not sugarcoat it or run from it. A family who truly desires peace will admit when there is a problem, and take appropriate action to correct it. "The single condition of peace is the surrender of the traitor. It is so in God's dealing with the soul, when besieged by conviction and distress; sin is the traitor; the beloved lust is the rebel: part with that, cast away the transgression, and all shall be well. There is no peace on any other terms" (2 Sam. 20:23-26). If you find yourself in the middle of a conflict, great or small, hold on to your identity. Maintain a calmness of spirit. Remember who you are. You are among the peaceable.

3. Wisdom - The woman from Abel describes herself as peaceable and faithful and as a maidservant of Joab. But, the writer of 2 Samuel only uses one word to describe her...wise. Wisdom is the

ability to judge correctly and to follow the best course of action, based on knowledge and understanding...The first principle of Biblical wisdom is that man should humble himself before God in reverence and worship, obedient to His commands.

It was out of her wisdom that the woman from Abel aroused the people of her city to action (Eccl. 7:12). Contrast this to Sheba who aroused the people to action out of anger and tribal jealousies. Many conflicts have escalated due to people acting foolishly rather than wisely (Eccl. 9:16-18). What better way to use our influence and stir others to action than when it comes from wisdom!

But, her mind could only summon from its reserves, its accumulation of Godly wisdom (Prov. 23:23; 2:1-13; 3:13-18). If her mind had not been set on the course of wisdom, then she could have never summoned it for such a defining moment! If the Holy Spirit, through inspiration, refers to someone as wise, then it's assumed they have an appropriate fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7; 9:10, Job 28:28). Joab was a force to be reckoned with; a force to be feared. How much more the God of Israel whom the woman served! A person of wisdom has a special connection to God, because it is from Him that they receive their wisdom (James 1:5). It is a gift and a character quality of God Himself. When wisdom is given to us from God, then we have that same character quality that He has, though He alone is the full embodiment of it. We can only have a small measure of it, and it all belongs to Him. It should, therefore, be used to His glory in our lives, the lives of our families and our brethren. It should be prayed for and actively sought. Out of all the advice I have been given on raising children, one of the two best pieces is...Invest in Wisdom! (Prov. 4:7). This principle shaped my thoughts and actions, my purchases and my use of time. It changed how I looked at my role as a Christian wife and mother. Ladies, we alone do not know what is good for us. This is why we so desperately, like beggars before the throne of God, need His word and the wisdom He gives us. Space is not going to allow a discussion on everything I would like to write, but consider these questions. Why is it important to be wise and to teach our children to be wise? What are the consequences of not being wise? What are the rewards? How am I nullifying my influence within my family if I am not actively pursuing wisdom? Are there more experienced, Godly women I can learn wisdom from? What does God's word teach about wisdom? How am I

going to invest in wisdom each day? If you are actively pursuing Godly wisdom, and find yourself in the middle of any kind of strife, then remember who you are and who you are trying to become. You are becoming a wise woman.

4. Courage - The woman of Abel was wise, and she had the courage (in that moment) to act on her wisdom. Solomon was wise, but did not always act on his wisdom. He needed the courage to follow through with what he knew to be right, and so do we! Courage is not the absence of fear, but it is moving forward and doing the right thing in spite of our fear. Courage seems to be a byproduct of conviction. When the heart is fully convinced of something, the more courage we will have. God told the Israelites to have courage. Read Joshua chapter one. From this chapter, we learn that courage is interconnected to believing in God's inheritance (v. 6); obeying His commands (v. 7); believing He will be with us (v. 9); and ridding our circles of wicked influences (v. 18). The principles found in these four verses live for us today. When we believe and obey in a consistent way, when our faith is exercised, we will grow in our courage. It takes courage to be Godly women. For one reason, it takes courage because it is not something that is valued by most. The world certainly wants the positive results of Christian living, yet on the other hand, does not value its principles enough to esteem them properly. Courage is something that is best learned when it is demonstrated. We are literally encouraged (have courage put in us) when we see what it looks like to take a stand for God. It's easier to have the courage to take a stand when we know what it looks like. The woman of Abel faced Joab all alone. She didn't know how he would react to her. Yet, she did what she had to do, the only thing left to do. She could not, for one moment, look at fear; she could

only focus on standing up to what had been dropped in her lap. She had no time to fold under pressure, be in denial or be paralyzed by fear; she only had time to act. She couldn't have been a delicate, fragile woman who spent her time trying to avoid unpleasanties and pursuing her own comfort and ease. She was a woman who boldly faced harsh realities. Think about the examples of this kind of courage you have seen in your life. Make them important in the minds of your family by talking about them. Use them as examples to hold up to your children. Let one of those examples be your own. Pick examples from their grandparents, siblings, friends and brethren. Teach them that they will be called upon to take a courageous stand too. And possibly, they may have to do it alone. Let them know that you believe they can. They will begin to see themselves as capable of doing so. Teach them that their own courage will be in direct proportion to their belief and obedience in God's word. Perhaps the reason Solomon ceased to act on the greatest store of human wisdom was because he had quit obeying. The woman of Abel exhibited courage in a very dramatic way. We may never have to do that. The courage we will need to demonstrate may be the quiet, behind-the-scenes kind of courage; the day-in-and-day-out kind of courage; the in-spite-of _____ kind of courage; the put-one-foot-in-front-of-the-other kind of courage. It comes in all forms. We can't always tell who is courageous and who is not just by looking at a person. But God knows. He knows the kind of woman you are striving to become. You are a woman of courage.

5. Discord / Strife / Conflict / Rebellion - The wise woman of Abel found herself, through no fault of her own, in the middle of a serious conflict. The seeds of discord and strife sown by the men of Israel, and mostly Judah, had resulted in an open rebellion. Remember, though,

the larger picture. These people were experiencing the dreadful consequences of the chain of events set into motion by King David's behavior. Larger still, we all are experiencing the dreadful consequences of the chain of events set into motion by the sin committed in the Garden of Eden. At the most fundamental level, we have all been in open rebellion before God, because we have all sinned. Sin produces strife and discord (Prov. 26:2; 15:18; 6:16-19; 10:12; 16:28; Gal. 5:19-21). Its chief work is to separate us from God. It separates us from each other as brethren. The irony in the account given of the events at Abel is that the strife was between two groups of people who were actually on the same side! The people of Abel and Joab's army were all Israelites. Neither rejected the authority of David as their king, and all bowed the knee before Jehovah God. This shows the blinding strength and destructive force of discord among brethren when it is the source of our conflict! We can forget that we are on the same side and literally besiege one another!

Sheba's words took advantage of a tense situation. He capitalized on a moment of strife, and caused it to escalate to a full scale revolt. If the woman had not intervened, how many lives would have been lost due to his arrogance? How many souls are lost because someone inflames a tense situation with words? At times like these, there needs to be a cooling off time. When heads are clear, then people need to talk. Unfortunately, during an emotionally charged situation, it is easy for the minds of the crowd to throw discretion to the back of the bus, and allow destructive attitudes to take the driver's seat. Brethren are all too easily stirred by a floppy tongue. During a period of strife, the truth, initially, may not be brought to light. For many, once a wrong stand has been taken, there is no retreat, no apology, and no

making amends. Ladies, we have all seen this behavior. No matter who does it, no matter how many overlook it, it is always wrong. Until someone admits their wrong and tries to make amends, the traitor is still among us. (Dan. 9:3-19; Psa. 51:2-3) His actions may have been swept under the rug, but he is still a traitor. Confession of our sins and repentance are our only hope to quiet or soften the effects of this kind of rebellion. However, remember that the real enemy and ultimate traitor is the devil. Strife is the work of Satan, not the work of God and his followers. We all have destructive emotions and attitudes that have to be wrestled down so that what is good can rise to the surface. We don't want to use excuses such as "Well, that's just the way I am. That's my personality." These and other excuses will not make an effective line of defense when we stand before God. Strife and conflict between brethren are actually an aberration from God's design for us. It is an abnormal state. It lays to waste the inheritance of the LORD. God wants us to dwell in unity together. (Psa. 133:1) This is His heart's desire (John 17). It breaks His heart when we defy Him in this way. Strife "indicates the presence somewhere of a mind alien to the mind of Christ." "Many have a tendency towards restlessness under authority, and we should both be on our guard against this in our own lives, and also avoid whatever may develop it in others."

In order to combat strife and rebellion we must unify under the truth of God's word. We must be willing to put away the strife. This requires being honest and confronting the cause. The removal of Sheba resulted in harmony once again. We have to remove the sources of discord in our relationships with our families and brethren. Anything that threatens the security of unity must be dealt with. After the siege had ended, I wonder if the people of Abel dismantled the siege ramp so they wouldn't be an easy

target for other intruders. Do we dismantle and discard barriers to our spiritual security (Heb. 12:1; Col. 3:8-10)? Watch out for intruders who disrupt peace. Inasmuch as it is possible, do not tolerate this kind of behavior in your home. If you see the seeds of discord being sown, don't enable them to germinate. Remember who you are at that moment. You are a woman who takes delight in the unity of the brethren.

6. Communication - The wise woman of Abel made a valiant effort to save a whole city from destruction. Her only weapon was carefully chosen words. What a powerful weapon! Her communication halted the destruction that Sheba's words had caused. Sheba's words were triggered by Judah's harsh words. Like rapid fire, the embittered words set off a series of destructive, fatal reactions. I imagine the adrenaline rush from finding Sheba and besieging the city crowded out Joab's ability to even think of simply asking a representative of Abel about Sheba, or of the offer of peace according to the laws of warfare. Joab's lack of proper communication caused him to assume that Abel protected Sheba. He, therefore, treated the entire city and its inhabitants as though it were hostile towards him. The city viewed him as an enemy and rightly so. But, it was all due to a misunderstanding of motives. Joab assumed the wrong thing about Abel's motives.

The city of Abel wasn't even aware that they had been falsely charged. They were not even aware of Sheba's traitorous acts, and gave him up willingly when they learned of them. What a frightening chaos to be in! Proper communication could have prevented so much destruction! But, look at the one saving grace...the wise woman's approach. As women, we understand that when we speak with anyone, our approach is just as important as the actual words that are spoken (Prov. 15:1). The

woman from Abel made the right kind of appeal, one that was constructive for everyone concerned, not just for her. It was due to her wise approach and prudent choice of words that two unnatural enemies would reach a resolution. A respect for God's laws may have even been the actual bridge that connected their minds to bring about a solution. When she referred to Abel as a mother in Israel and an inheritance of the LORD, it probably prompted Joab to remember the words spoken in Deuteronomy 20:10-11. Reading this account from the NKJV, I have counted eighty-five words this lady said. Through their use, she accomplished a feat that many negotiators and mediators during other times of war have not been able to accomplish. What if she had rebuked Joab instead? Or what if she had yelled? I seriously doubt that we would be learning about the wise woman of Abel if she had opted for a childish, less honorable approach. Ladies, we always want to make every effort to take the high road in our communication (Psa. 19:14; Eph. 4:29; Col. 4:6). Ask yourself, "Could I have said that with a kinder tone? Could I have used a better choice of words? Am I being unfair by accusing someone of the wrong motive?"

Is there a better way than the one I have chosen? Did I use the best approach?" I remember watching First Lady Laura Bush answer a question about a high profile, lady politician's harsh words of attack aimed at her. Mrs. Bush was so kind and controlled, gracious and humble. She simply gave the person the benefit of the doubt by saying that she understood the stresses of public life. The words spoken about Mrs. Bush were more than harsh, they were venomous. The whole world, for that moment, knew it. Yet, she would not dignify the words of her accuser by stooping to her level. I can still see the kind expression on her face as she answered the

interviewer's question. She was a lady who was truly wise in her communication. Her amazing response ended the matter, and the press laid it to rest. This is the level of class, the level of wisdom I want to attain to. I'm still working on it. Think of how some marriages could be helped if, very simply, a wise approach was used. Think of the confidence and wisdom we could impart to our children if our approach was kindly appropriate. Think of the good for the cause of Christ among the brotherhood if everyone used a wise approach. Drawing from God's word, selecting carefully what we say and using the proper approach can make us wise in communication. Before we utter a word...think. Remember who you are. You are a woman who is a wise communicator.

7. Reputation - The wise woman of Abel drew the support of the people due to her reputation. The people in the city were willing to listen to her, believe her and even take another's life based upon her credibility! We don't know if she had lived in Abel all of her life, but she had lived there long enough for her reputation to be relied upon. People trusted her! Keep in mind that our reputations are not always synonymous with our character. But, oftentimes they are. Many verses of scripture are personified in this story, one of which is, "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches" (Prov. 22:1). How can we guard our reputations in the community, at work and in our families so that they can be used in service to the church? Look at what this one credible life led to! One good name worked as a tool of reconciliation. Influence is gained or lost based on our reputation, therefore, we should jealously guard what we have worked so hard to establish. If you are ever tempted to veer from upright actions, remember that you are a woman who wants to give even her reputation in service to God.

8. Inheritance of the LORD - The wise woman of

Abel referred to herself and the inhabitants of the city as the “inheritance of the LORD” (20:19). This carries with it the meaning that God’s people are His own possession. What belongs to the LORD needs to be protected! Sheba forgot to protect the LORD’s heritage and look at what happened as a result. Many were nearly destroyed. He forgot to value what belonged to God. His decision probably changed the course of his family forever. Look back in your own families and trace what happened as a result of the key decisions made by your ancestors. How do they impact your family now? People in your family tree, whom you never knew, have probably had a significant impact on your life. Think of how our decisions today will affect our descendants whom we shall never know. The course of hundreds and thousands of lives are affected by the single decision of someone in their lineage! Spiritually speaking, it is imperative that we live to protect our unborn lineage. We don’t want any of our grandchildren, great grandchildren, great-great and so on to ever be lost. When we live with the view to protect the “inheritance of the LORD”, then we may live life with more focus and resolve. Never take the influence you have on your families for granted. Protect what belongs to God. You are His possession! (Rom. 8:16-17; 1 Peter 2:9) Remember, you are a woman who is a valuable part of the “inheritance of the LORD.”

9. Representation – The wise woman of Abel represented the side of right. Her very countenance must have emanated tremendous, inner strength of character just to get and keep Joab’s attention. Not just any woman could have done that. The moment called for an intensely strong character. What is your countenance a representation of? We can only radiate what comes from within. Does your manner of dress match up with what you want to symbolize? Do you embody the strength

of character that signifies your claims as a Christian? Remember, you are a woman who is a representation of Christian character.

10. Quick - The wise woman of Abel made a quick decision which ended a revolt. Decisions like this are rarely made with such speed. What led her to that point was years of slow, quiet, deliberate growth. When the time called for it, she was steady and secure enough to act with the swiftness demanded by her circumstances. Remember, you are a woman whose steady growth in Christ is preparing you for the times when you must issue quick responses.

11. Decisive - The wise woman of Abel exhibited a decisive nature. However, her life, up to this point, had been an accumulation of numerous decisions. Decisiveness is a skill that is developed day by day. It requires experience, common sense and wisdom. We may find ourselves lost in the valley of indecision at times. Oftentimes, a reassessment of our priorities helps to clear matters up and make us more decisive when we need to be. Trust your instincts more. With God's help you can be a decisive woman.

What a privilege it has been to study the example of the wise woman of Abel! She lived more than 3,000 years ago. There is only a mound of earth now where her "mother city in Israel" once stood. After the siege ended, and peace and security were restored, I wonder if she ever gave any thought to the far reaching effects her words and decisions would have on future generations. How many women have drawn strength from her example? How many women stood from inside the city walls and watched her in action, and then, in turn, went and did likewise? The immediate consequences of her actions saved her city. But the rippling effects have continued even until today. From the wise woman of Abel to the

wise women of today...the connecting threads we share are our belief and obedience in the same Jehovah God. Each time a woman, from then until now, pulls strength from this anonymous woman, her words come back to life. She teaches us that our work as women is important (Prov. 14:1a; 24:3-4)! It is a work that is a matter of spiritual life or spiritual death. In order to prevent the spiritual destruction from within the walls of our own families, congregations and towns, it will require every fiber of focused strength to make the day by day, moment by moment decisions which lead to faithfulness and peace with God. We have to summon all of our wisdom and courage, and ask God for the eyes to see what others, at the time, may not. Generations will be affected by the decisions we make today. In a sense the wise woman of Abel is each one of us. Every time a city is benefited by a Godly example, every time a family or marriage is saved from destruction, the same Godly wisdom of this incredible woman is alive in us. God's possession is protected. Ladies, remember who you are. You are the wise woman.

