

## INTRODUCTION

David's figure casts an enormous shadow over most of the Bible beginning with the last verses of the book of Ruth to the last chapter of Revelation. His life and words are placed at the center of the history recorded in the Bible some three thousand years ago. He was born into a family of farmers and shepherds in Bethlehem, Israel. He grew into manhood learning the family business. At the same time he was a gifted musical and lyrical prodigy. Unlike the passing fame of modern musicians, and the shallow lyrics of so many songs, religious or not, David's songs will remain forever, because they are the Word of God. This work uses the Davidic covenant as a lens through which to view David's life and to apply it to the believer's daily walk with God. My desire is to show how understanding and applying the Bible's account of the life of David is vital to a believer's growth in grace.

David was the royal ancestor and type of Jesus Christ who anticipates and fulfills God's plan of salvation, because of this David's life relates to the believer's daily walk with the Lord Jesus Christ, through the Davidic covenant. Understanding David's life properly can have an enormous impact on our spiritual growth. We learn from David's faithfulness and from his failures how to live, and how not to live, before the Lord. In short, this paper is more than anything else about how a right understanding and application of how the life of David helps us in our sanctification. What is sanctification? Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and to live unto righteousness (Westminster Shorter Catechism, p. 377). In understanding God's work of

sanctification in David through the biblical narrative and in the Psalms written by, for, and to him, this process in the believer's life is greatly strengthened.

Buckets of ink, acres of trees, and in recent years, gigabytes of electronic media, have been expended throughout the history of the church extolling his virtues and examining his life because it is so central to the message of redemption. Just as the national identity of the modern state of Israel is proclaimed by the Star of David on its flag, our Christian identity is tied to him as well by our Lord Jesus who is defined in His human person as the Son of David. The intensity of David's character is so strong we are instinctively drawn to him as were the men and women of his time. We can sense his character and leadership in the narrative of his life. We see the passion of his heart for God in the Psalms, and are amazed at his miraculous victories, and then we are stunned by the enormity of His failures. David is a character who at the same time inspires and disappoints us as we read the Bible's account of his life.

### **Common Misgivings about the Life of David**

I believe there is a natural reluctance to study King David's life carefully for many believers because of what is seen as the defining failure in his life in his sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah. A close examination of the narrative of his life reveals other black marks as well, as the famous commentator Matthew Henry said of David in his introduction to his commentary on 2 Samuel, "his cloud has a dark side" (Henry, vol. 2, p. 349). Recently, I was preaching from that text and found myself blurting out the sentiment from a sermon I had come across in my study, having read the text from 2 Samuel 11, about David's sin with Bathsheba, I said, "I wish this text was not in the Bible." I made one of those slips from the pulpit that upon reflection will have to

follow with a public retraction and apology at the next Sunday. Why did I say that? Because I agreed with the sentiment when I first read it, simply because it is so utterly evil and wicked that a man of David's stature and esteem could commit such an atrocity. David's failure defies our moral sensibilities and rightly so. And yet, at the same time, I believe there is a far greater reason for my reaction to David's moral failure. We have the same reaction toward others who have failed in such miserable and public ways as David did. When we see someone's public failure we have the instinctive reaction of self-righteousness. Somehow seeing someone else fail exposes a secret idea in us that we might be better because we have not fallen in such a flagrant way. The truth is far different, however. Rather than give us occasion to glory in self-righteousness -- "at least I have not done what David did!" -- , these things have been written down for our instruction to teach us to avoid the occasion of sin that brought David to that place, but even more importantly to show us what true repentance looks like. The truth of total depravity and remaining sin is placed in full view in the life of David. Unlike the propaganda of false religion, the Bible often records its heroes *in flagrante delicto*, showing all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and there is none righteous, not one. The best of saints are like David, at times in their lives, tragic failures.

Upon reflection of my stupid self-righteous comment about wishing the chapter describing the adultery of David and Bathsheba, and David's murder of Uriah were not in the Bible, I repented. My thought changed from wishing this crowning failure was omitted from the Bible to being profoundly glad that it is included, just as surely as I am profoundly glad the record of the fall of our first parents Adam and Eve is recorded for me in Genesis. Their fall into sin explains my sin, and while not excusing my sin, it

shows sin's consequences and God's glorious redemption for sinners promised to the seed of the woman. The very seed which came through the life of King David and would ultimately result in the birth of the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, who reigns forever. If there is repentance and hope for David in the midst of his sins, than there is the same for me and all sinners whose sins are no less profound and deserving of judgment.

On one hand then is the error of self-righteousness which comes into the believer's life, on the other is using David's sin as an excuse and a cover for sin. I recently watched a news program chronicling how a pastor had apparently murdered his wife and was involved in a cover-up. As I listened to what sounded like lies to me, I thought, "he is emulating David." Such an error is always a temptation to God's people, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" (Rom. 6:1). (All Scripture quotations in this paper are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.) If we study carefully the consequences in David's life for his sin, it helps us say emphatically with the Apostle Paul, "By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (Rom. 6:2). Time alone can tell whether this man will come to the same broken-hearted repentance as David. I suspect many hypocrites have given themselves false comfort with the thought, "Well, David did it!"

I hope this work on the life of David can serve as a small antidote to some of the misapprehensions of the life of David and what it means for the church, for our lives as believers, and our witness to those who are outside the church. I deeply hope that others will benefit from a closer examination of David from: (1) the standpoint of his place in the covenant of redemption, as the type of his greater son, King Jesus, and then from, (2) an application of the various themes of David's life to the life of every believer.

## **The Importance of Comparing Our Life to David's**

David's lifespan was not like that of the antediluvians, nor was it cut off in the midst of years. He reached a full seventy years before he went to be with the Lord. The various stages of David's life are very close to the stages of an average lifespan today. Indeed through looking at our life through the lens of David's life we get a part of the answer to the prayer for a heart of wisdom we pray for when we read Psalm 90:12, "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." John Calvin had this view of the life of David as seen in his preface to his commentary on the Psalms,

And as David holds the principal place among them (the authors of the Psalms), it has greatly aided me in understanding more fully the complaints made by him of the internal afflictions the Church had to sustain through those who gave themselves out to be her members, that I had suffered the same or similar things from the domestic enemies of the Church. For although I follow David at a great distance, and come far short of equaling him: or rather, although in aspiring slowly and with great difficulty to attain to the many virtues in which he excelled, I feel myself tarnished with the contrary vices; yet if I have any things in common with him, I have no hesitation in comparing myself with him. In reading the instances of his faith, patience, fervor, zeal, and integrity, it has, as it ought, drawn me from unnumbered groans and sighs, that I am so far from approaching them; but it has, notwithstanding, been of very great advantage to me to

behold him in a mirror, both at the commencement of my calling, and the continued course of my function; so that I know the more assuredly, that whatever that most illustrious king and prophet suffered was exhibited to me by God as an example for imitation (Calvin, p. xi).

There is always a danger in examining the life of any biblical character to slip into moralism, whether it is Abraham, Joseph, Moses, or David, or some other biblical hero, because ultimately they all fall short of the perfection of Christ. Looking at the virtues of the saints as a model for our lives can easily lead to looking at their failings as an excuse for our own sin as well. Indeed when the Bible holds up the example of the faithful it does so to point to their faith in Christ (Hebrews 11), and how it is Christ who enables the believer to be victorious against our sinful flesh, a hostile world arrayed against Christ, and a very real Devil.

### **Thematic Approach**

All of Scripture is written down for our instruction. The Scripture's record of David and his Psalms speak to us in all the various stages and circumstances we find ourselves in. I will not take a chronological approach in this paper but will rather deal with the subject of David and the Davidic Covenant thematically, looking at the various themes the life of the warrior-king of Israel. I will seek to show how David's situation in life relates to our own, and to our sanctification, as the Lord moves us to our ultimate goal of glorifying and enjoying Him forever. 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles, and a short part of 1 Kings supply what biographical knowledge we have of the life of David. The majority of

what we know about David comes from the over seventy psalms attributed to him. As John Calvin said about the Psalms:

I have been accustomed to call this book, “An Anatomy of all Parts of the Soul”; for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated (Calvin p. xxxvii).

Gerald H. Wilson in his commentary on the Psalms suggests all of the Psalms are rightly understood as Davidic in nature. He believes in particular the first three books of the Psalms , chapters 1 through 89,serve as commentary on the Davidic kingship (Wilson p. 90). The Davidic Covenant is essential in understanding the meaning of the Psalms; therefore, only through an appreciation of the various aspects of David’s life can we fully understand and appreciate the message of the Psalms. Because the psalms are the prayer book for the church for all ages it is particularly important for us to understand the very real sense in which they are all Davidic (Wilson. p.30).

### **Outline of Major Themes in the Life of David**

First, it my desire to show how the Kingship and God’s covenant with David are at the heart of God’s redemptive plan for his people. I will examine the theological and practical significance of the kingship, and covenant of David in the first two chapters. God established a permanent kingly line when David was anointed and installed as king. The sure mercies of David are promised to flow to all Israel for all times, “Incline your

ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David ” (Isa. 55:3).

Next, we will see in David’s life how God calls him be in a personal relationship with Him and to know and serve Him. David is a man who knows God and who is focused on Him and knows the Lord is his shepherd. This is what John Piper calls, “a Godward life.” As David himself says, “May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you! May those who love your salvation say evermore, ‘God is great!’?” (Psa. 70:4), (Piper, p.18). This Godward orientation is the defining characteristic of David’s life. He is a man after God’s own heart that God seeks out to serve as King (1 Sam. 13:14). Next we will look at David’s foremost characteristic is he is a man who worships God in spirit and truth. We will see how this takes place in his life. Considering God’s call of David from humble origins to be placed on the throne of Israel and thereby inaugurating his kingship, we will examine God’s preparation of David for a life of service. We will also look at how God uses friendship as a means of grace through his relationship with Jonathan and his mighty men.

David’s victories are directly related to David’s dependence upon God to protect and strengthen him. David’s failures and his suffering forge his faith, and they serve to deepen his dependence upon the Lord. David is a model of a believer who learns to live a life of repentance. Another dominating characteristic of David’s life is his settled purpose to love his enemies, as seen in his dealing with Saul and those who joined Absalom in the rebellion.

The theme of betrayal is also a prominent one in David's life; we see it in his marriage, his dealings with Saul, his son Absalom, and his friend Ahitophel, as well as the people of Israel who followed in the rebellion.

Finally we will look at how David prepares for the successor to his throne and what application his succession plan for Solomon has for that stage of our lives and to the life of the church as it seeks to impart to the next generation a faithful legacy of the gospel.

My hope and prayer is this examination of the great themes in David's life will show how God's sure love for King David is fulfilled in his greater son, King Jesus, and in the lives of the Israel of God, His Church, and we, individual members of it. I hope it will encourage believers of every age to examine their life and circumstances in light of what the scriptures tell us about David and God's covenant with him. Understanding the life of David is essential to understanding the message of the whole Bible. God's covenant with David and his anointing of him culminates directly in the incarnation of Jesus the Messiah. More importantly it is the life of David and God's covenant with David revealed in the Scriptures which are directly tied to our justification, and our sanctification. The more we understand what David went through in the various stages in his life, the more we understand about ourselves and our relationship to the Lord because of the unchangeable nature of God's covenant with David for us who participate in the covenant through the finished work of Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER I

### BEHOLD YOUR KING!

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zech. 9:9)*

*Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And Jesus said to him, "It is as you say." (Matt. 27:11 New American Standard)*

We almost gloss over the full meaning of the words of the angels to the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem in our haste to get to the manger scene, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord," (Luke 2:11). The gospel of Luke makes clear that Jesus is the King who has come from the royal line of David to be born in the city of David, Bethlehem. The stirring prophecy of Isaiah 9 that we thrill to hear sung in Handel's *Messiah* contains these words I think we often tack on as an afterthought to the prophecy of the birth of the Messiah. Verse seven of that famous passage is often not given its proper emphasis, "Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this" (Isa.9:7). Luke's gospel likewise declares the fulfillment of the Davidic Kingship in the birth of Christ, "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. *And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David*, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:32-33).

## **Israel Demands a King**

The narrative of the life of David in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 1 Chronicles, and the Psalms attributed to David, occupy a vast portion of the middle ground of the Bible. Sometimes in our haste to get through the historical narrative and in our forgetfulness of the historical setting of the Psalms, we miss vital truths that are essential to our growth in grace. The kingship of Israel is one of those truths. When we understand that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the royal line of David, it brings clarity to our understanding of the message of the Bible. Because of the narrative in 1 Samuel 8 where the people demand a king like the surrounding nations have, and Samuel's dire warning of the consequences of such an action, we often mistakenly think of the kingship as an alternate plan that is begrudgingly implemented by the Lord.

But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, "No! But there shall be 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." And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey their voice and make them a king." Samuel then said to the men of Israel, "Go every man to his city." (1Sam. 8:19-22)

What is often misunderstood in this instance and throughout the Scriptures is the tension between God's sovereign decree and man's responsibility to obey God. Here is one of the most striking instances of this in the scriptures. The people demand a king for the wrong reasons over the objections of the prophet Samuel, yet God overrules their

demand for His glorious purpose. A great part of that purpose was to establish the royal line of David from which the last King of Israel would come. Deuteronomy 17, clearly sets forth the duty and obligation of the king and the people of Israel saying, “When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, 'I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me, you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you “(Deuteronomy 17:13-15). In establishing the kingdom, the people were exercising their prerogative from Scripture, consequences for their choice notwithstanding. In God’s timing the kingdom would be implemented. Later, the kingdom was taken from the house of Saul because of his disobedience and given to David and his descendants. “Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward “(1Sam. 16:13).

### **David as a Type of Jesus the Messiah**

As the prototype of Israel’s earthly kings, David is also the type of the Antitype of Jesus the Messiah who is the true and real fulfillment of the King who would come in the future and occupy the throne of David forever as the King of the Israel of God. In the future Israel includes not only those who are physical descendants of Israel, but those nations who submit to his Lordship. The first verse of the New Testament announces the fulfillment of David’s successor in the royal genealogy of Jesus, “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1). In announcing his arrival to Mary the angel says, “And behold, you will conceive in your

womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High” (Luke 1:31-33).

Jesus’s primary teaching was about the kingdom that He came to bring. At the beginning of His last week of ministry before the cross Jesus entered Jerusalem in the manner of the kings of Israel at their coronation and in fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is He, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zech. 9:9). This finds its fulfillment in the Gospel of Luke, “And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:32). Pilate was mocking Jesus and the Jews at the same time when he brought Jesus out to them and said to the Jews, “Behold your King!” (John 19:14). In spite of his mockery Pilate declares the truth about Jesus on the cross at His death when had ordered the words written over him, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews” (John 19:19). When Jesus rose from the dead and commissioned the disciples to go and make disciples, it was on the basis that he was given all authority as the King.

In the last chapter of the Bible, Revelation 22, we are told the culmination of all history is summed up by what Jesus the risen and ascended Messiah has done for His people. As He sums up all of scripture He declares Himself to the churches to be, “the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star “(Rev 22:16). When we look at the reign of David over Israel in the Bible we need to constantly keep in mind the Kingly rule of Christ over the church and understand the implications of His reign. He is Lord over everything.

## **The Warrior-King**

David's main characteristic as King is he is a warrior. His whole career is one of doing battle with those forces opposed to the nation of Israel, from the nations as well as those who were from within Israel as in the case of Saul and his own son Absalom. As we look at the life of David and draw from it lessons for our own life we must examine this crucial characteristic which we are to be involved in a militant battle against the forces of evil that are arrayed against the church and our soul. David's life shows the ascension of a warrior to the throne of Israel. His life is characterized by constant conflict. The Psalms are crucial for our understanding of how Jesus fulfills the Kingship of Israel. When Jesus rose from the dead, He opens the Scriptures to the disciples and specifically referenced the Psalms as pointing to himself, "Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled,'" (Luke 24:44). Several Psalms emphasize the warrior aspect of the Messiah's reign. In Psalm 2 David declares the glory of his reign and more importantly that of the coming Messiah.

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart, and cast away their cords from us."

He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, "As for me, I have set my King on Zion,

my holy hill.” I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me,  
“You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I  
will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth  
your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and  
dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.” Now therefore, O  
kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD  
with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be  
angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled.  
Blessed are all who take refuge in him (Psa.2:1-12).

As part of the introduction to the Psalms, together with Psalm 1, Psalm 2 declares the way we enter into worship in the presence of God is through the Lord's knowledge of His righteous ones and the reign of the Anointed one, that He will destroy His enemies and the enemies of God's people (Wilson, p. 89). The picture painted for us in this Psalm is of an all-powerful, warrior King who will be installed in Mt. Zion and who will establish a kingdom establishing the house and lineage of David forever.

When the apostles were arrested by the Sanhedrin and ordered to stop preaching the gospel in Acts 4, their response was to quote Psalm 2 to them as being fulfilled by the conspiracy of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, the puppet Jewish King Herod, along with the Jewish people as well as the Gentiles. “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,” “Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’ - for truly in this city there were gathered

together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place” (Act 4:24-28). The application by the apostles of this Psalm is plain - kill His Son, kill His people, and the King laughs, because He will raise them up again.

In Psalm 68, David emphasizes Christ’s victory over His enemies. The first verse announces the theme of the Psalm, “God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered; and those who hate him shall flee before him!” (Psa. 68:1). In verse 18 David says, “You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the LORD God may dwell there” (Psa. 68:18). This is quoted by Paul as being fulfilled by Christ in Ephesians, “Therefore it says, ‘When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.’ (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things” (Eph. 4:7-10). Paul sets this passage and the entire kingship of David in its redemptive historical setting in this verse. This is the lens through which we see and understand that Christ is the fulfillment of the warrior king David who leads his people to victory.

The picture of this Psalm is a conquering King coming into the city carrying captives in a procession and passing out the plunder of victory, a scene that would have been often repeated in David’s military career in Israel (Wilson, p.939). Ephesians 4:8 declares that Christ has defeated our enemies, and gives back to those who have participated in the victory, gifts in the form of ministers in the church. Even among the rebellious

(Psa.68:18b) gifts are secured and the church is blessed just as the people of ancient Israel were blessed by David's victories. After Absalom's rebellion results in a deadly civil war, David not only forgives the enemies in the rebellion, but enlists them in service in his new administration (2 Sam.19:16-42). In the same way Christ takes His enemies captive and enlists them in His service. One of the great blessings of being under the reign of David was the privilege of participating in David's victories. His mighty men did great exploits with David. Just as surely we are privileged to participate in Christ's victories as He advances His kingdom.

Those who persist in their rebellion, however, are destroyed. "But God will strike the heads of his enemies, the hairy crown of him who walks in his guilty ways. The Lord said, "I will bring them back from Bashan, I will bring them back from the depths of the sea, that you may strike your feet in their blood, that the tongues of your dogs may have their portion from the foe," (Psa. 68:21-24).

David is ruthless in the destruction of the enemies of God. He destroys the Philistines repeatedly. Even when he is unequally yoked with them for a time at Gath he uses that time as an occasion to plunder and destroy other ancient enemies of Israel. At the end of his reign, he gives orders to his son Solomon to ruthlessly put to the sword those who had been his enemies. David's enemies were those who refused his reign. Likewise in the life of King Jesus we see the theme of righteous vengeance. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus summarizes the kingdom parable of a ruler who entrusts his riches with his subjects, rather than seek to advance his kingdom some sent word to him, refusing to accept his reign, his response to them is in Luke 19:37, "But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me." Christ's

reign will be complete when all of His enemies have been destroyed, “Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet” (1Cor. 15:24-25). Revelation depicts the reigning Christ with a robe dipped in blood conquering his enemies (Rev. 19:13). The apostle Paul in Romans encourages the persecuted church with the knowledge that one day the church will get to participate in the punishment of the enemies of Christ. “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (Rom. 16:19-20).

Psalm 110 is the most famous of the Messianic psalms. Jesus quoted it explicitly as written by David and fulfilled by Himself. The warrior theme is explicit in it as well,

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David, in the Spirit, is calls him Lord, saying, and 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet'? If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?" And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions (Matt. 22:41-42).

The fact that Jesus is the Messiah and fulfilled all of the prophecies of the Bible is the most profound truth in Scripture. The rest of Psalm 110 points to the three fold office of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King. While David illustrates the office of priest to a degree, several times he dons the priestly robe and offers sacrifices, and even more as a

prophet in that half of the Psalms are attributed to him, still, the overwhelming type of David for the Messiah to come is that of King. The reign of Christ over this world will continue until all of the enemies of Christ are subdued, (I Cor. 15:25). As Martyn Lloyd-Jones points out in his Ephesians commentaries, spiritual warfare is not just a metaphor of the Christian life, it is *the* metaphor of the Christian life, (Lloyd-Jones, p. 20). As we ponder the meaning of Jesus as the fulfillment of David the warrior king it should give us new confidence and boldness as we engage in spiritual conflict against the enemies of Christ and of our soul.

David in his life engaged in battle after battle against foes from the outside of Israel including the Philistines, the Amalekites, Ammonites, the Jebusites, and all the ancient enemies of Israel. Just as much of his time is in conflict, even war with his fellow Jews like Saul, and even his own son Absalom. His conflict with enemies within and without is analogous to the conflicts we engage in in the visible church, in whatever age the believer lives. Often David's greatest enemy was his own sinful flesh as in the instance of his sin against Uriah and Bathsheba, and when Satan entices him to number Israel. The conflicts of David with his enemies within and without are analogous to the spiritual conflict which every believer is called to be actively engaged. We are called to militantly engage in a spiritual battle with the enemies of our soul. David's enemies within the nation of Israel are analogous to those false sons that are within the pale of the church to do it harm and stop its advancement. Those who would deny the cardinal tenets of the faith or promote open violation of God's moral law as witnessed in the recent trends in mainline denominations to wholeheartedly embrace homosexual and immoral relationships even in their ordained leadership.

In the words of the hymn writer Samuel J. Stone, the church is called to follow Christ in actively fighting against such spiritual evil:

The Church shall never perish! Her dear Lord to defend,  
To guide, sustain, and cherish, Is with her to the end:  
Though there be those who hate her, And false sons in her pale,  
Against both foe or traitor She ever shall prevail.

The Philistines and other enemies of Israel during the time of David are analogous to the world system of evil that is arrayed against Christ and his church in all times, including our own. The modern Philistines of secular humanism, atheism, and false religions of all kinds still seek to take away the throne of Christ and destroy His people. As the church militant we must constantly remember that we are engaged in a cosmic spiritual battle for the souls of men under the leadership of our warrior king, of which those ancient battles of David are a type. Christ has already won the victory but we are called to be active participants in the battle until He comes again, and there is a new heaven and a new earth.

'Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of her war,  
She waits the consummation of peace forevermore;  
Till, with the vision glorious, Her longing eyes are blest,  
And the great Church victorious Shall be the Church at rest.

## **Conclusion**

Understanding that Christ is King and Lord is critical to our sanctification. This is made more difficult for us in our culture because the concept of having a king is completely alien to the American mindset. Our whole nation was founded in order to get rid of a king. The truth is however, that if we have come to Christ by faith, then we have

a benevolent, sovereign King who loves us and cares for us and is in the process of conquering His enemies as well as ours. First he makes we who were His enemies His subjects - He subdues us. Then He puts us to work conquering the enemies within and without that assault us spiritually.

CHAPTER II  
THE LORD OF THE COVENANT

*And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever. (2 Sam.7:16)*

*Incline your ear, and come to me; hear that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. (Isa. 55:3).*

In 2 Samuel 7 God gives the Covenant of David. It is summarized in verse sixteen, "And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever" (2Sam. 7:16). God's plan to redeem a people for himself was announced to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, "And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed," (Gen. 12:1-3). The covenant with Abraham reaches its climax here under David's assumption of the throne in Jerusalem. Under the Mosaic covenant the ark which symbolized the presence of God with His people roamed around Israel in a tent, now the ark has permanent location in Jerusalem. When David finally assumes the throne in Jerusalem, after the ark is brought up, the Covenant is ratified. It is a time of peace and rest for David after his long conflict with Saul. The theological focus of the covenant of David in the Bible is on what it means for David's life and further and is more far reaching in what it means for the life of Israel. The

language of the Davidic covenant shows that God's dealing with David and his descendants is based on his *chesed*, his steadfast love that never changes. The emphasis of God's Covenant with David is the unilateral, unchanging of the covenant. Michael A. Grisanti speaks of this in a journal article on the Davidic covenant,

It is as Yahweh's son that David and his descendants will enjoy the provisions of this covenant. These verses also introduce the possibility that disloyal sons could forfeit the opportunity to enjoy the provisions of this covenant (cf. 1 Kings 2:4; 8:25; 6:12-13; 9:4, 6-7; Psalms 89:29-32; 132:12). As with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), Yahweh promised David an eternal progeny and possession of land. Loyal sons, i.e., those who lived in accordance with the stipulations of the Mosaic Covenant, would fully enjoy the provisions offered them. However, disloyal sons, i.e., Davidic descendants who practice covenant treachery, will forfeit the promised divine protection and will eventually lose their enjoyment of ruler ship and land. Even though Yahweh promises to cause disloyal sons to forfeit their opportunity to enjoy the provisions of this covenant, He affirms that the Davidic house and throne will endure forever; giving the hope that Yahweh would one day raise up a loyal son who would satisfy Yahweh's demands for covenant conformity. Although the line of David may be chastised, the terms of this covenant, the *Chesed* of God, will never be withdrawn (Grisanti, pp. 241-242).

The covenant speaks to David in the ancient language of adoption (Grisanti, p. 241). David and his descendants will be adopted and treated as sons. The focus of theology behind the Davidic covenant will have a profound practical effect on the lives of God's people as it did David's when we grasp the covenant's significance for everything we do, and in whatever circumstances we find ourselves.

Palmer Robertson in his book, *Christ of the Covenants*, shows how Christ fulfills the conditional and unconditional aspects of all the covenants including the Davidic, (Robertson, p. 249). The Davidic covenant is ultimately ratified by Jesus the Messiah through His mediating death for sinners. In Psalm 40, David speaks of this mediating work prophetically,

In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart." I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD.

I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation, (Psa.40:5-10).

In Hebrews the writer says this Psalm is fulfilled by Jesus:

For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, He said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.” Then I said, “Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.” When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Heb. 10:4-10)

The writer of Hebrews declares that Jesus prophesied an end to the Levitical sacrifices for sins a thousand years before His life and death of Christ. Jesus the Messiah put an end to them once for all. David by the Spirit of God spoke the words of His Greater Son. The Divine Covenant could not be fulfilled by animal sacrifices that they only pointed to something far greater (Phillips, p. 336-7).

David reveals this in his prayer of repentance in Psalm 51, as well, “For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Psa. 51:16-17). David knew that his standing before God was not based on merit, but by grace.

## **Eternal Significance for the People of God**

The Davidic Covenant was the primary basis of hope for the people of God in times of judgment and exile. In Isaiah 55:1-3, Isaiah promises hope to those who are suffering under judgment for their sins. The people of Judah are encouraged to come to God based on the covenant with David, “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy, and eat! Come; buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David” (Isa. 55:1-3).

Jeremiah the prophet likewise declares the eternal effect of the Davidic covenant as the basis of hope for God’s people,

Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: The LORD is our righteousness. For thus says the LORD: David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man in

my presence to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings, and to make sacrifices forever.

The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: Thus says the LORD: If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time, then also my covenant with David my servant may be broken, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and my covenant with the Levitical priests my ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered and the sands of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the offspring of David my servant, and the Levitical priests who minister to me. The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: “Have you not observed that these people are saying, ‘The LORD has rejected the two clans that he chose’? Thus they have despised my people so that they are no longer a nation in their sight. Thus says the LORD: If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed order of heaven and earth, then I will reject the offspring of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his offspring to rule over the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them,” (Jer. 33:14-26).

Clearly from this scripture, God's covenant with David and for the people of Israel will never end as long as there is day and night on the earth. Here again is the unconditional, unending covenant of David promised to a people in the midst of judgment and exile, (Grisanti, p. 12).

### **The Unconditional Nature of the Covenant**

Psalm 89 is likewise probably written from the perspective of the Babylonian exile. The Psalm opens with joyful exuberance, extolling the virtues of the Davidic Covenant for the people who are suffering the consequence of their sins:

I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations. For I said, "Steadfast love will be built up forever; in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness." You have said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: "I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations"" (Psa.89:1-4).

The issue at the heart of this psalm is the Davidic covenant and its application to the people of God suffering in the Babylonian exile because of the violation of the terms of the Covenant of David. It is important to keep in mind the nature of a covenant. A covenant is a solemn blood oath. Palmer Robertson defines a biblical covenant as a bond in blood sovereignly administered, which means at its essence a covenant is a promise or agreement between two or more persons under a blood oath, (Robertson, p. 4). The Davidic covenant was primarily an agreement between God and David, and his descendants who would sit on the throne. God's covenant with David is repeated by the

Chronicler in II Chronicles 17, from the perspective of Israel's exile in Babylon , promising a special relationship that would be passed on to his obedient sons. Psalm 89 from the same perspective repeats the same theme:

I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him, so that my hand shall be established with him; my arm also shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not outwit him; the wicked shall not humble him. I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him.

My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers.

He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.' And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. My steadfast love I will keep for him forever and my covenant will stand firm for him. I will establish his offspring forever and his throne as the days of the heavens.

If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules, if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, but I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness.

I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips. Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will

not lie to David. His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me. Like the moon it shall be established forever, a faithful witness in the skies. Selah (Psa. 89:20-37)

Even a cursory look at the lives of the Kings of Israel descended from David, however, show even the best of them are very flawed, beginning with David's immediate heir Solomon, who began to fall away by allowing the false religions of his many wives (I Kings 11), (Robertson, pp. 252-267). As Israel suffers under the sanctions for violating the covenant in the Babylonian captivity the word of God through the Psalmist explains why they are suffering and cries out to God to turn from the judgment He has brought upon Judah by destroying them and sending them into exile. The fact of the matter is the Davidic dynasty did end until it was revived once and for all at the birth of Christ, (Robertson, p.249).

Hope of restoration is offered in the prophesies based on the covenant with David. David as the "firstborn, the highest of the kings of earth" is here again a type of Jesus Christ. David foreshadows Christ who is uniquely the Son of God and Savior of the Church. In Christ the Davidic Covenant is completely fulfilled. The apostle Paul declares this to be the case when preaching in the synagogue at Antioch, Pisidia,

And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, "I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David." Therefore he says also in another psalm, "You will not let your Holy One see corruption."

For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own

generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption (Acts 13:34-36).

Paul goes on to say in this sermon to the Jews there, unlike David; Jesus did not see corruption but was raised from the dead. His whole message is an exposition of how Jesus is the fulfillment of the covenant promises given to David and to Israel. The result was many of the Jews there believed and began to follow Christ. It is also important to see the language of Psalm 89:27 woven into several key passages in the New Testament that show how they are connected to the Davidic covenant, “For those whom he foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Rom. 8:29 ). “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (Col. 1:15). “For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you?" Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son?" (Heb. 1:5).

### **The Davidic Covenant and the Psalms**

Old Testament scholar Mark Futato points out in His book, *Interpreting the Psalms*, that the apostle Paul in Colossians 3:16 is referring to three types of psalms. All three of which have in common the fact that they are the word of Christ, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col. 3:16),

When reading a psalm, it is helpful to read that psalm both as being spoken by Christ and as speaking about Christ. Each of these perspectives will yield different insights into any given psalm. Both perspectives can be used for the simple reason that

Christ is the Lord of the covenant and the Servant of the covenant. As the Lord of the Covenant, Christ is the one to whom the psalms are addressed by us; and as Servant of the covenant, Christ is the one by whom the psalms are voiced for us, (Futato, p. 174).

As mentioned in the introduction half of the Psalms are attributed to David. Modern textual criticism has called into question the Davidic composition of many of the Psalms. However many early manuscripts give the title “David” to all one hundred fifty psalms. Seventy three Psalms bear the title, *le David*. The Hebrew preposition *le*, can mean “to” or “for” or “by”. What is obvious in the Psalter, especially the first half of it, is the dominating Davidic character of the Psalms, (Wilson, p. 89). A critique of textual criticism of who wrote Psalms is beyond the scope of this paper, except to say that beyond the Davidic authorship issue, it is very clear that in all the Psalms, the Davidic covenant is the key to their interpretation, (Wilson, pp. 89, 90).

If the ongoing nature of the covenant of David is self-evident from the Scriptures, then the theological implications for the life of the church and individual believers are enormous. As we look at the life of David and seek to apply it to our present situation we must constantly keep before us God’s gracious unconditional covenant. As his closing point in the sermon at Pentecost, after expounding Psalm 16 and Psalm 110, Peter makes this statement, “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified,” (Act 2:36). When they understood the implications of Jesus fulfillment of the Davidic covenant they were cut to the heart and convicted of their sin and three thousand souls were added to the church,

(Acts 2:38-41). The apostle James at the Jerusalem council declares the fulfillment of the prophecy of Amos about the inclusion of the Gentiles, "After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old" (Act 15:16-18).

### **Practical Implications of the Covenant of David**

There are practical implications of the Davidic covenant for our sanctification and witness to the world. The Davidic Covenant shows the importance of our connection to the people of God from every tongue tribe and nation that God brings into a relationship with Him in every generation. The Church has not replaced Israel as the instrument of drawing a people to Him; rather, the Church is the continuity of the Old Testament Israel of God. The Davidic covenant is God's plan for drawing us into a relationship with Him and His people through the church. The church alone possesses the ordinary means of grace: the Word, the sacraments, and the fellowship of the saints that God uses to grow us into maturity. God's Covenant with David is fulfilled through the Church. Through the church gentile Christians are engrafted into the messianic Israel, (LaRondelle, p. 210). The primary means that God uses to grow us in grace is through the church.

Also a very important practical implication of the Davidic covenant is our witness to the lost. A careful explanation of who Jesus is and what he has done in fulfilling the Davidic covenant is absolutely critical in our witness to those who are outside the church. The fact that Jesus fulfills all ancient prophecies of the Bible should be our primary basis of witnessing to those who have not received Christ as their King. This is particularly

important in the area of Jewish evangelism. In a recent exchange with a Hasidic Jew, Mike Moore, General Secretary of Christian Witness to Israel had this exchange,

“Why do you know so much about the Tanakh [the Old Testament]?”

“I know very little but I do read it every day.”

“Why do you read the Tanakh?”

“Because it’s the Word of God.”

“Why do you want to read the Word of God?”

“Everyone should want to read God’s Word because it teaches us what to believe and how to live.”

“The Tanakh is for the Jews.”

“But in the prophets God speaks to “the nations” and to the far off “isles,” not just to Israel.”

(Newsletter, August 19, 2011, Christian Witness to Israel, Michael Moore, used by permission)

In addition, it brings those who are believers to a deeper understanding of our connection to the word of God. These promises are fulfilled by God for us from the word of God. These promises are ours. The events of the life of David and the Covenant of David fulfilled by Jesus Christ make them very personal and real for us as we read the narrative of David’s life and read of how he relates to God in the Psalms.

## **Conclusion**

As we meditate upon the covenant of David we begin to understand more clearly the New Testament perspective of our identity in Christ, “But you are a chosen race, a royal

priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light,” (1Pe 2:8-9).

We also see and recognize the unconditional nature of the covenant as well. God will never forsake his promises even though we do ours. Likewise as we understand the life of David through the narrative of his life and the Psalms we are able to grow deeper in our knowledge of God’s love and care for every detail of our lives. The certainty that He will never leave us or forsake us grows ever surer in our lives.

## CHAPTER III

### A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

*"Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."* (1Sam. 16:7)

When we think in terms of a calling we usually do so in the context of a call to the ministry. It is hard for a minister to think otherwise. I will never forget being a young man of thirteen years old and telling one of my mother's co-workers of my call to the ministry. I remember the words of May Alice Coleman, "Make sure you are called, because some of them preachers weren't called, they just went." It is important to note that calling does not just apply to the ministry. All work is a holy calling, including David's calling to be King of Israel. No less holy was his calling to be the son of Jesse and a shepherd, and a musician, and a soldier. David did not seek to be the King of Israel; God sought him out for the position. He sought him in the place where he was serving faithfully in his first calling as the son of Jesse and shepherd boy in the hills of Bethlehem.

#### **A Call to Service**

The first call of a servant of God is to be a servant in the home. This usually involves a vocation. We should always remember that our Lord Jesus spent his young adult life working as a carpenter in his father's business. The disciples were called to follow Christ while they were engaged in another profession, most of them were fishermen. The apostle Paul supported his calling to preach the gospel as a tent maker forgoing the right to receive a salary for the sake of the credibility of the gospel.

The question is often posed, “Are leaders born or made?” The answer is both, as seen in the life of David. The first thing David was called to be was the son of Jesse. As the book of Ruth informs us David is a descendent of Boaz and Ruth the Moabitess. As the youngest son of Jesse he was given the most menial and demeaning jobs. The narrative describes David as handsome and ruddy, yet we infer from the narrative in 1 Samuel that he is not an imposing figure. When God told Samuel to acquiesce to Israel’s demand for a king, Samuel found the tallest and most handsome man in Israel, (1 Sam.9:2). God let Israel experience through the choice of Saul, the same thing the church today experiences, when she falls victim to the natural way of thinking that we often assume in the church. God made it clear to Samuel that His interest was in a heart that was completely devoted to Him. In rejecting the other sons of Jesse, God explains why he chose David: but the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart" (1Sam. 16:7).

After Samuel anoints David in Bethlehem, David goes back to two part time jobs: humbly tending sheep in the shepherd’s field, and serving as court musician for King Saul. The best preparation outside of theological training is the humble serving of others in menial tasks. Waiting tables part- time while I attended through seminary prepared me to deal with people as much as any practical theology course I took while there. This is a kingdom principle operative in the life of the Lord Jesus himself. He stayed at home and labored as a carpenter serving people at a level of their very basic needs. Too often ministers have not learned the value of lowly service. We live in an entitlement culture where the expectation of young people is often that there is an obligation for them to have

all of their needs and wants met. The lessons learned in lowly service doing the most common of tasks are often the most valuable preparation for ministry. When David asked Saul to allow him to face Goliath in his first battle, he gave as his qualifications to do so the following resume:

And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God." And David said, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!" (1Sam. 17:34-37).

God's call on David was first for him to be a shepherd. The most beloved Psalm in the Bible, and perhaps the most familiar text besides John 3:16, is Psalm 23. The Psalm shows how a shepherd boy tending sheep came to know and understand God's love, care, and protection of him in much the same way.

David's family was at one time wealthy. He was a descendant of Boaz the husband of Ruth. The text speaks of him being a powerful man, a man of war (Tsumura, p.428) . It is not at all apparent that much of that wealth remained at the time David comes on the scene in the biblical narrative in I Samuel. In fact when His occupation as a shepherd, his Moabite ancestry, and the meager provision he brings to the king's court all point to a

humble background, (Bergen, p. 203). Another thing that is noticeable here is that David is not much in favor with his father Jesse. Samuel has to ask for him specifically and only reluctantly is David brought forward to be anointed by Samuel the prophet. Somewhere he acquired great skill as a musician. He became skillful at playing the lyre perhaps in long hours of practice while watching over flocks of sheep.

There is not much detail in 1 Samuel about David's circumstances as a young man. What we do know comes from the text of 1 Sam. 16. David is tending sheep around the hills of the ancient city of Bethlehem. Even after he is anointed as a king he is busy tending sheep in Bethlehem between his times playing music in Saul's court to provide Saul relief from his bouts of depression.

### **Promotion**

David's call and anointing as King is given in the context immediately following the rejection of Saul as king. Saul had started his career as king with great promise and success, but because of his massive failure at Gilgal, (1 Sam. 15:23-35) by failing to obey God's command to utterly destroy the Amalekite's plunder, Saul is rejected as being king. The rejection of Saul leads directly to the call and anointing of David as King. It is a common experience that opportunity for promotion comes because of the failing of another in the position above us. This was David's experience with replacing Saul.

Samuel is commanded to go to Bethlehem to the place of the shepherd's and seek out the youngest son of Jesse to anoint as the new king. When the family sees Samuel coming they are fearful in much the same way that shepherd in the same place will be afraid a thousand years from this time at the messenger who brings news of the arrival of David's greater son to come. The elders tremble at Samuel's arrival and they ask him if

he comes in peace. Samuel's answer in 1 Samuel 16:5 is, "in peace I have come to sacrifice." All sacrifices in the Old Testament point forward to the sacrifice of Christ and the substitutionary work of Christ as does the one recorded here. The first step in the call of God upon his servant's life is an end to the hostility that innately exists between God and man. God has given terms of peace. Peace with God has been accomplished under the Old Covenant was by looking forward to the finished work of Christ, in the New Covenant looking back to the finished work of Christ. Samuel's sacrifice represented the reconciliation with God that Christ would one day bring. From our perspective in the New Covenant we see how this sacrifice represents reconciliation between us and God as well. Indeed, it is the finished work of Christ makes sense of this narrative and allows us to apply the lessons we learn from that finished work to our lives.

### **The Basis of the Choice of David**

In this passage we also see the basis of God's choice of David as king is completely a sovereign choice. Samuel has to look past his own prejudices. Like Samuel, too often in the church we look at success in athletics, politics, or business as qualifications for office rather than what God looks for in His servants. Samuel would have been a great recruiter for athletics. He was looking for someone tall and strapping like Saul when he went looking for his replacement. How often are we like Samuel in looking to elevate leadership in the church? How often do we judge by outward appearance rather than looking at what God looks at, which is the heart? Outward appearance is no basis of standing before God. Samuel has to be told explicitly that God does not look upon the outward appearance but rather judges the intentions of the heart.

One by one the sons of Jesse are eliminated as candidates by God, until Samuel has to inquire, “Is there anyone else?” Finally David is brought forward and a young man of approximately sixteen years old is anointed to be the future king of Israel, even though the text is careful not to mention the reason for the anointing at the time (Tsumura, p.423).The choosing of the youngest is a motif that is often found in Scripture that ultimately points to the humility of Christ in the incarnation (Tsumura, p. 421). From that day the Spirit of God rested upon him and the Holy Spirit came and affirmed Him as God’s servant.

God’s providential dealings with David then placed David in the service of the one he would replace. David is confident in the knowledge of his calling. He does not conspire or plot with others to get what he knows is rightfully his. Rather he is content to wait on the hand of God to bring about only what He can perform. David is content to take the place of a servant and serve in Saul’s court with his musical talent, and tend sheep for his father until that time comes for him to take his place as king. God’s preparation of David was for the purpose of revealing the Christ as the Shepherd of the Sheep.

### **Psalm 23 and David’s Heart for God as a Shepherd**

Commentators disagree about the precise date of composition of the most famous of David’s writing, but obviously it draws upon this early phase of David’s life as a shepherd (Van Gemeren, p. 214). No other scripture has brought more comfort to the people of God than Psalm 23. In thirty years of ministry I have been called upon many times to read Psalm 23 at the bedside of a dying believer. I know of no greater source of spiritual comfort. This Psalm shows David’s heart singularly devoted to God. Psalm 23

calls to mind the supreme comfort that comes from being completely orientated toward God,

*A Psalm of David.*

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely

goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I  
shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever (Psa. 23:1-6).

This Psalm finds its fulfillment in the person of David's Greater Son who is the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd I know my own and my own know me", (John 10:14) Isaiah in promising deliverance to God's people in exile, prophesies that the Messiah, "will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young." (Isa. 40:11), Ezekiel likewise prophesied and tied the promise of the future Shepherd of Israel specifically to the Davidic Covenant, "I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. And will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their

shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken” (Ezek. 34:21-24). The LORD in these prophecies and in Psalm 23 is no less than the pre- incarnate Son of God, who is often revealed in the Old Covenant by the Covenant name for God, YHWH, translated in most English translations as LORD. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit David writes this inspired Psalm about the LORD which has brought comfort to the church through the ages.

Psalm 23 answers the most vital of questions for the believer, “How am I related to God?” It comforts us with the answer: I am because He owns me and because He has purchased me with His life by laying down His life for me, because He is my Shepherd. The answer to the first question of the Heidelberg Catechism of references this when it says, “I am not my own but I belong body and soul to my faithful Shepherd, Jesus Christ.” The result of understanding God’s ownership is comfort and contentment. Phillip Keller points out in his classic book, *A Shepherd looks at Psalm 23* that a farmer makes a sheep his own by purchasing them. Jesus, the good shepherd of God’s people lays down his life for us and makes us His own by purchasing us with His death (Keller, p.24).

What is striking about this psalm is the intimacy of it. God is not far off and distant but is very near to help His sheep. The language of the Psalm is written in personal pronouns; seventeen times in six verses David uses personal pronouns to describe his walk with the Lord.

The second half of the psalm David speaks of the Lord’s deliverance from enemies and from the valley of the shadow of death. He deals with two vital aspects of the

Christian life: the problem of pain and the problem of pleasure. The addictive, selfish pursuit of pleasure apart from God ends in destruction and pain. Failure to understand this basic principle leads to a life of ruin and chaos, and great pain and suffering, failure to understand that deliverance comes only from God through the provision of His Son ends in utter, eternal destruction. David's life does not fit the model of the modern prosperity gospel. He was, like the Messiah to come, a man of sorrows acquainted with grief. However, unlike the Messiah to come, much of David's sorrow was self-inflicted. C.S. Lewis said in the *Problem of Pain*, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts to us in our pain – it is His megaphone to arouse a deaf world" (Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, p. 406). A great many of David's psalms are laments over pain and suffering and cries for deliverance from suffering. His is not a fairy tale world, but one full of death and destruction and personal suffering. The promise of God through David that was fulfilled in Jesus Christ which reminds us that not only does He know and understand our pain, He is with us in the midst of suffering.

David knew what it was like to put himself between the sheep and deadly enemies of wild animals. Throughout his life he would be pursued by enemies like Saul, sometimes the Philistines, his own son Absalom, and sometimes the enemy of his own sinful flesh. So the Lord Jesus lays down His life to deliver His sheep from the enemies of our soul. Even in the valley of the shadow of death our Shepherd gives us courage. The picture in the psalm is of a flock going through a narrow ravine where there are predators like lions and wild dogs that can come in from above and ravage the flock. Perhaps David brought this Psalm to mind when he crossed the Kidron valley as he snuck out of Jerusalem with the few who supported to him at the beginning of Absalom's rebellion, (Van Gemeren, p.

214). The psalm reminds me of the constant scene in the old Western movies where the bad guys are up in the hills on both sides awaiting to ambush the good guys as they come through the valley. Somehow in the old movies the good guys would always win against incredible odds. The enemies of our soul await us constantly in ambush: the world system of evil that hates God and His creation, our sinful flesh that is bent toward self-gratification, the very real Devil and his demonic minions who constantly seek to destroy us, and sometimes traitors from our own family or church. In the face of such an onslaught I have a powerful defense to rescue me from danger and death, one that when I lay hold of it by faith makes me invincible. I will fear no evil for the good Shepherd is with me. Even if I am slaughtered it is for my good, for I will be raised up again with Him on the last day. This is what Paul understood in the Philippian prison, as he awaited execution, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain."

Psalm 23 also speaks of God's abundant provision for us; a table is spread for him in the presence of his enemies. A monthly feast was spread for the king and his court and all the king's family was expected to be in attendance. Perhaps this is in David's mind when he composes this psalm. In the presence of one who hated him and was seeking to kill him, God provided for him a royal feast. Jesus said he came not just to make small provision for our lives but he came that we might have life and that we might have it abundantly. Not just a small provision as this psalm makes clear, but one in which there is rich abundance of food, and an overflowing cup of the best vintage. This abundance is given to us in the church at the high feast of the Lord's Supper, one of the ordinary means of grace given to the church until Christ's return, a feast of the richest kind.

This Psalm shows us that the Shepherd's love for his flock never ceases. The Shepherd pursues us with kindness and mercy. God's leading attribute in the Covenant of David is His graciousness. God loves to show His power by turning his enemies into his friends. The picture here in the psalm is that of God pursuing us with his goodness and mercy all the days of our lives on earth and then in the house of the Lord forever. It is still the custom of the family patriarch in the Middle East to build a house by adding rooms to it as it was when David wrote this psalm. Many houses become large and expansive as a result. As David contemplates the house that God is building he is bursting with excitement because he gets to dwell in the house of the King forever. Jesus comforts his disciples as well in the New Testament with the promise that He goes away to prepare a place for us. In the father's house there are many rooms for his children. Those who are in the father's house will never lack for provision even in the most desperate trials.

### **God as Our Shepherd in Psalm 95**

In Psalm 95 which the writer of Hebrews attributes to David, the theme of God's blessings and goodness to his people as a shepherd is prominent,

Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.

Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, Therefore I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter my rest." (Psa.95:1-8)

Psalm 95 not only ties the Davidic covenant to the Mosaic covenant but also time makes prominent the theme of Jesus as Shepherd of the sheep just like Psalm 23. Over and over through his life, Providence overrules in desperate situations in David's favor, teaching him to lean on and completely trust in the promises of God. The result for David is a life of thanksgiving for God's blessings and favor. The life of David teaches us what it means to be in a truly intimate relationship with God. He lovingly and tenderly cares for us even when we do truly stupid and destructive things as sheep are often prone to do.

### **Conclusion**

As we begin to learn through the ordinary means of grace, that is, the Word of God, the sacraments, fellowship, and trials, we learn more and more about how much we are valued and cared for by God because of what Jesus has done for us. We are truly transformed by grace as God works in our lives to assure us of His presence at work in

our lives through the Holy Spirit. The benediction of the writer of Hebrews becomes ever more real in our lives.

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen (Heb. 13:20-21).

## CHAPTER IV

### WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

*You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.” (John 4:22-26)*

The Scriptures tells us the chief reason God chose David above all others to be king and establish his covenant was because David was a man after God’s own heart. We see this in God’s choice of David over all the other sons of Jesse, “But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart’” (1Sam. 16:7). David was a man of the type that Jesus taught us that God was seeking in John, but the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. David shows in his life and his psalms how this worship should manifest itself in the life of the church and the lives of believers. “God is a spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24). Indeed the overwhelming impression of the life of David from the narrative in the historical books and the Psalms attributed to him is of a man whose chief passion is to love and serve God and to live a life completely dependent upon him. The psalms of David spring up and reflect this desire and become the song book and of the temple in the Old Testament and

of the church, the spiritual temple of God in the New Testament. Just how important they are in the ongoing worship and life of the church is expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith, as the singing of Psalms with grace in the heart, is the only prescribed singing recognized by the divines (Westminster Confession of Faith, p.104). The practice in many denominations seeking to be faithful to worship God according to the regulative principle that worship should only be done in a way prescribed by the scriptures. In many ways our present situation in the church is analogous to the situation that existed on first century Israel when Jesus encountered the woman at the well in Samaria. The big dispute was, “On which mountain should we worship?” Jesus’ answer was that it was not a matter of location of place, or even form of worship that meant the most to God. The most important matter to God was the matter of the heart.

### **Symbol of God’s Presence**

In 2 Samuel 6 after the Philistine threat is dealt with David desires to give the worship of God first priority and bring the ark to Jerusalem. For generations the ark, the symbol of God’s presence with Israel has been neglected and not been given central importance in the life of Israel. David orders the ark to be brought to Jerusalem after the defeat of the Jebusites so the worship of God can be given its proper place in the life of the nation. The ark symbolized three primary things to Israel: God’s rule, God’s reconciliation, and God’s revelation (Davis, 2 Samuel, p.73-74). The ark was His footstool, symbolizing His reign over his people when it was set in the midst of the camp. His reconciliation, the blood of the animal sacrifices were poured over the ark to symbolize the fact that God took away or covered the sins of Israel, and the content of the stone tablets of the ten commandments symbolized that God had spoken to His people Israel. In bringing the ark

into Jerusalem David is saying that the worship of God is not a secondary issue in the nation of Israel, but that worship is to be the primary focus of the people of God. Saul had sought the kingdom of Saul; David would seek the Kingdom of God, “Then let us bring again the ark of our God to us, for we did not seek it in the days of Saul.” (1Chron. 13:3) This more than anything marks the heart of what God is seeking of those who would worship Him in a way pleasing in His sight.

### **Proper Worship**

We see in the account of the ark being brought to Jerusalem how important the worship of God is to God and the importance of doing it in the way that God has ordained worship to be done. In the exuberance to bring the ark the priests had not closely followed the Bible’s instruction on how to move it. Everything seems to be in place for an exciting celebration of worship – a variety of musical instruments including lyres, harps, tambourines, all kinds of musical instruments, and an elaborate processional in which the ark was being brought in on an ox cart. When the ark slips, Uzzah the priest rushes to keep the ark from falling off the cart and in what seems to be a harsh judgment for trying to be helpful is struck dead by the lord. Uzzah was struck down and the festival of worship came to an abrupt end because the priests had failed to follow God’s very careful instructions in Num. 4:4-20 on how to treat the ark. If they had paid attention to God’s instructions they would have understood God’s concern to be treated as holy in the manner He wants to be worshipped. He told the priest’s concerning the ark they should not touch it, look at it, or put it on a cart, and that if they did, they would die. God, in putting Uzzah to death, affirms His word and shows David the importance of worshipping God correctly.

David is shocked and angry with God. He thought he was in doing a great service to God and instead judgment falls upon him because of his sincere effort to honor God, “And David was angry because the LORD had burst forth against Uzzah. And that place is called Perez-uzzah, to this day. And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and he said, ‘How can the ark of the LORD come to me?’” (2 Sam. 6:8-9). The right worship of God is not to be taken lightly. He is a holy God and he will be treated as holy by all who come near to Him. He is as represented by Aslan the great Lion character in C.S. Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia* tales, as “not a tame lion” (Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, p.182). His holiness is not to be taken lightly in our worship.

There is a three month interruption of the ark’s procession to Jerusalem while the ark stays at the house of a brave man named Obed-edom. In that time Obed-edom’s house is abundantly blessed by the presence of the ark. The same presence of God that struck down Uzzah, blesses Obed-edom. According to the Jewish historian Josephus who wrote in the first century A.D., before Obed-edom received the ark he was very poor but after hosting it for three months he became incredibly wealthy. Such a story plays well for the purveyors of the modern prosperity Gospel, that faith in Christ guarantees material blessings to those who have enough faith. But that is not the application we should make. This should not keep us from recognizing the incredible blessing of being in the presence of God. There is no price that can be paid for the presence of God in the life of God’s people. Seeing the blessing of Obed-edom confirms this for David.

The procession to Jerusalem continues with the ark with great exuberance. There is dancing and the blast of a trumpet. The blessing and promise of God’s presence lead to great joy. The admonition of Psalm 2:11 is understood and obeyed, “Serve the LORD

with fear, and rejoice with trembling.” This is not a manufactured excitement, not just stirring up the emotions for emotions sake, but a deep intense reflection of a real relationship with the living God led by David.

Not everyone is happy with the effect of on David. Michal, David’s wife mocks him for making a spectacle of himself with his dancing. Three times in this passage Michal is referred to as the daughter of Saul as if to emphasize that her concern like Saul’s was not for God’s glory and honor, but her own. She seems more concerned about decency and order, prudence and protocol than on honoring and exalting the Lord. Michal was jealous to maintain appearances rather than to maintain zeal for the glory of God, (Davis, 1 Samuel, p. 79).

Despite his stumbling first attempt at installing the ark in Jerusalem, David succeeds in bringing it there. It is very instructive that he insists that God be enthroned in Zion as symbolized by the ark before he is made king. The covenant manifests itself in David’s life by a desire to worship God. Worship will inevitably flow from the heart a believer. To know God is to worship and serve him with the people of God

In 2 Samuel 7 after his installation as king, at a time when there is peace from the enemy threat, David wants to build a temple for the worship of God. David seeks out counsel from the word of God through the prophet Nathan who advises him to do what is in his heart. David seeking the counsel of the godly prophet and the advice the prophet gives is a model for all who seek guidance and direction as to serving the Lord. If what is being considered is a good thing that God has approved in His word, and you are gifted and equipped to carry it out then move in that direction until God shows otherwise.

### **God’s Providence at Work in Our Worship**

Often a believer will have the same experience as David has as he seeks to move a particular direction to fulfill his calling. David's desire is superseded because of disqualifying sin of shedding too much blood. His desire to build a temple for God would be fulfilled in his son Solomon only after his passing after his passing, (Matthew Henry, vol. 2, p. 374).

Recently I had the privilege to be in Colorado Springs, Colorado and observe the training of Air Force Academy cadets off of a friend's back porch. I watched in awe as the cadets parachuted, flew gliders and trainers to prepare them for careers as pilots in the service. It reminded me of my own desire to be a pilot in the Air Force after graduating from a state university. After passing the required physical I thought I could be assured to enter flight training, but I failed the flight aptitude test. As a result I was redirected to pursue another calling. Like David, often our plans to serve the Lord in a particular place, or way, are overturned and we are redirected to a different area or place of service. Sometimes there are things in our life that disqualify us for service as did David's shedding of blood. That does not mean other areas of service are any less important or honorable as was David's calling to defeat the enemies of God and to establish a kingly dynasty that would one day result in the reign of Jesus Christ forever.

### **Psalm 40 and Worship in Spirit and Truth**

The psalms have as one of their primary applications the ongoing temple worship of Israel. Much of the argument about date or purpose of the psalms centers on this obvious early use of the Psalms in the temple worship (Wilson pp. 23, 24). The church has recognized from its foundation the ongoing significance of the psalms in the worship of the church, the temple of God made without hands the church. All of them are given for

this purpose so whatever other redemptive historical truths lay behind them that biblical scholars diligently seek out and seek to understand this primary purpose for them remains central. Psalm 40 is one of the specifically Messianic psalms referenced in the New Testament as being fulfilled by Jesus. In the heart of Psalm 40 is the prophecy of David's greater Son who would one day come and put an end to the Levitical system of sacrifices,

In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me:

I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart." I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD.

I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.

As for you, O LORD, you will not restrain your mercy from me; your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me"

(Psa. 40:6-11).

The amount of animal sacrifice described in the book of Leviticus is overwhelming. The death of Christ is prophesied here in this Psalm. It will put an end to the Levitical system. The tribe of the Levites sole function was to offer animal sacrifices to symbolize

atonement for the sins of Israel. It is good news for the Jew first and for the rest of the world that the whole system of animal sacrifices which God required generation after generation in the tabernacle and the temple service in the Old Covenant is now fulfilled.

David declares here the insufficiency of animal sacrifices. The writer of Hebrews makes the point that Jesus was not of the Levites, he was like David of the tribe of Judah for the forgiveness of sins because the sacrifices have been fulfilled. The sacrifices are not bad – they were ordained by God for most of the life of Israel as a type or shadow of the perfection of Jesus the Christ to come. As valuable as animals were then and are now, they were not then, are not now, sufficient to meet our biggest need, the need for righteousness. God did not desire sacrifice for sacrifices sake. He desired them to satisfy His justice. No animal could do that; they could only symbolize what only Jesus could do. In the film, *Saving Private Ryan*, Captain Miller the leader of the mission to save Private Ryan tells him as he dies heroically, "... earn this, earn it!", meaning for him to earn the sacrifice of the men who died to rescue him. We see him in the film's epilogue, years later visiting the grave of Captain Miller in Normandy, weeping and crying out, "I hope I've earned it!", and begging his wife to affirm that he has been a good man. The implication of his tears and self-doubt is that he could not be sure that he had earned his life. It is a rather sad ending to the story of a heroic rescue.

It is good news for us that there is no ambiguity in the salvation that God has given us. It is clear that in the prophecy of Psalm 40 that Christ, not we, who has earned salvation for His people. The eternal Covenant made between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit first shows itself as it appears to Adam and Eve at the Fall in Genesis 3:15, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her

offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel". Then it is shown to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Gen 12:3) and then to Moses at the Covenant in Sinai, "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine" (Exod. 19:5). And then to David in 2 Samuel 7:16, 17, "And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever." In every restatement of the promise of salvation it is clear that it is completely and totally secured by God's unconditional grace to His undeserving people. The Covenant of David in the middle of the history of redemption, like all of the other promises of God, ratified by animal sacrifice in the Old Testament, anticipates that Jesus Christ will completely fulfill in His death for His people what animal sacrifices could only anticipate.

Likewise in this Psalm is a contrast between what God does not desire and what he does desire, He does not desire sacrifices and burnt offerings but he does desire a delight to do His will. David repeats this in his prayer of repentance as well "For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise (Psalm 51:16-17). When Christ reigns in our heart our duty becomes our delight, not out of slavish fear but out of joy. As we grow in grace and recognize more and more God's reign over us through Christ's death the more our pleasure and delight becomes to do the will of God.

Instinctively then we join in the congregation with the temple worship. The solemn assembly of the Church together in its appointed times of worship is a glorious thing. Whether it is in a large congregation or a tiny fellowship of two or three gathered together in the name of Christ it is glorious anticipation of the great congregation that will assemble forever at the feet of Jesus Christ on the throne of Heaven. Heaven and earth meet in the assembly of God's people. Jesus preaches the good news for deliverance today through his word faithfully delivered through the God ordained means of grace preaching of the word, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

### **Conclusion**

There are hints in the narrative of the life of David of the ordinary means of grace in Christ's church. One such place is the monthly gathering of the kings table the princes and commanders of the realm at the Kings table at the new moon celebration. Saul expected his sons and daughters to gather for a monthly feast, (1 Sam. 20:27). It is a custom in many churches to observe the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday of the month. It is even more so a gathering at the Royal table in order to fellowship with the king and our fellow royalty. For indeed we are a holy nation, a royal priesthood as I Peter makes clear a gathering at the Royal Table, But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light, (1Pet. 2:9).

David's chief legacy to the Church was to describe his intense personal relationship to the Lord in the Psalms. Robert D. Bergen speaks of it this way:

The core of David's legacy to the world was his intense, intimate relationship with the Lord, especially as it came in the medium of

poetry. Built into his life was the desire to carry out the Lord's will at every turn, a desire that was matched by his experience of the Lord's help in every crisis, (Bergen, p.442).

David's worship was both intimately personal, but also consisted in public displays of devotion. His concern for God to be honored and exalted and the Godward direction of his life is the chief thing we draw from his life.

## CHAPTER V

### A FRIEND OF SINNERS

*Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners! (Luke 7:34).*

One of the most neglected means of grace for believers is the cultivation of Christian friendships. In the age of Facebook and social networking a person can claim to have hundreds or even thousands of friends or followers, when in reality just a few people know us well. As we witness in David's life he is surrounded by men loyal to him who would be willing to die for him. There are no bonds among men that are closer than those forged on the battlefield. Why do soldiers fight? Repeated modern studies have shown primary motivation is for their comrades in arms.

The strongest motivation for enduring combat, especially for US soldiers, is the bond formed among members of a squad or platoon. This cohesion is the single most important sustaining and motivating force for combat soldiers. Simply put, soldiers fight because of the other members of their small unit. Most soldiers value honor and reputation more than their lives because life among comrades whom a soldier has failed seems lonely and worthless, (Rielly, p. 61).

The church desperately needs to learn this lesson in its leadership. What modern sociological study has proven in its study of combat effectiveness has been true from ancient times. You cannot help reading the military exploits of David and his

companions not only being thrilled at the incredible victories and mutual sacrifice, but also of the strong bonds that are formed.

You see this as evident in the exploits of David's mighty men. 2 Samuel 23:8-32 recounts the inner circle of three mighty men. If there were a list of ancient Jewish Medal of Honor winners, then the list of these mighty warriors would be it. A strong band of brothers whose friendship and loyalty was forged during the hardships of Abdullum followed and fought with and for David for his entire career (Bergen p. 471,472).

We get the same sense of the importance of relationships among brothers as we read the account of Jesus and the disciples, and at the account of the apostle's exploits in the book of Acts. It is particularly evident in reading the Pauline epistles how important are the bonds of shared hardship and sacrifice for a higher purpose.

The cause of Christ's church and the gospel are far greater than any military mission, so is our call to engage in spiritual warfare. We are not called to do this alone. God has called us in the context of a relationship with the Friend of sinners. We like Him are to engage in committing ourselves to friendship that build up and serve one another in the body of Christ. There is perhaps no greater example of this kind of Christian friendship than the example of David and Jonathan in the Bible, except for the intimate friendship between Jesus and His inner circle of disciples, Peter, James, and John.

### **Jonathan's Friendship**

Jonathan, King Saul's son, knit his heart to David upon his arrival in the court of Saul. Jonathan Saul's son stands in stark contrast to his father Saul, who was David's arch enemy. It should greatly encourage us in the ministry to see the life of Jonathan, and

serve as a reminder that some of the greatest covenant children can come out of the most dysfunctional families. Jonathan is a witness to this. Jonathan is the rightful heir to the throne through Saul yet gladly sets aside his throne rights for the sake of David acknowledging God's call on David's life. As an example of Christian friendship and what it means to our growth in grace there is no parallel in Scripture. In 1 Samuel 14 we read of the incredible faith and fearless military exploits of Jonathan. How fearless and faithful he is in contrast to his father's dissembling. Jonathan is instinctively drawn to David as a friend. Jonathan recognized immediately God's blessing on David and ceded to him his throne rights in recognition of God's call on his life to be the king. Jonathan and David make a covenant of friendship which shows their friendship is a bond closer than that of a blood relative. "Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul" (1Sam. 18:3).

Sadly in the current culture the church in America finds itself, much is made of a supposedly homosexual relationship between David and Jonathan. One simple fact is often overlooked that should settle the matter quickly, is that both men were married, to women. In David's case more than one. Indeed, it is clear from the narrative that David has a sin problem that is sexual in nature, but it is definitely of a hetero, and not a homosexual kind. Attempts to make David and Jonathan's relationship into a homosexual relationship are based on trying to use the Bible to justify sexual perversion. Such attempts need to be met with straightforward exegesis that puts that lie of the Devil to rest. There is not a hint of a homosexual relationship between David and Jonathan except in the perverse minds of those who would twist the scriptures to justify their own disobedience. Friendship is vital to our lives and to our spiritual and emotional health.

Jonathan protected David against Saul, who in his rage and jealousy would repeatedly try to murder David. It was Jonathan who looked after David and would warn him of Saul's rising rage. After returning briefly to the king's court at the monthly dinner held for the king, David and Jonathan renewed their covenant of friendship.

At the same time the church needs to acknowledge its failure in leadership to maintain and cultivate godly, same sex friendships among men and women. Such friendships are absolutely essential to our personal and spiritual growth in grace. We need friends to help us in our spiritual growth and to hold us accountable in our struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

1 Samuel 20 begins with David seeking counsel from his best friend. When Saul, his king and father-in-law had nearly killed him, Michal, David's wife helped him escape. As Jonathan sends David away from the royal court where Saul plans to murder him, Jonathan renews the covenant he made when he first met David, "If I am still alive, show me the steadfast love of the LORD, that I may not die; and do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever, when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth." And Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD take vengeance on David's enemies." And Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him, for he loved him as he loved his own soul, (1Sam. 20:13-17). Thus begins a long period of being a fugitive. David will keep his promise to Jonathan through Jonathan's son Mephibosheth. He will bring Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, into his house and treat him as his own to fulfill his covenant with Jonathan.

### **David's Friendship to the Friendless**

While fleeing in exile David befriends those who were in debt, those who were depressed, and those who were in distress. The outcasts of society began to stream to him in his desert hideout at Abdullum (1 Sam. 22:1-5). The Chronicler makes it clear that friendship was the basis of this relationship,

David went out to meet them and said to them, "If you have come to me in friendship to help me, my heart will be joined to you; but if to betray me to my adversaries, although there is no wrong in my hands, then may the God of our fathers see and rebuke you."

Then the Spirit clothed Amasai, chief of the thirty, and he said, "We are yours, O David, and with you, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace to you, and peace to your helpers! For your God helps you." Then David received them and made them officers of his troops. (1Chron. 12:17-18)

The result of this friendship was to give them confidence and character to become an effective fighting force, one which will grow stronger and stronger while the forces of Saul would grow weaker and weaker. This is no doubt testimony to David as a leader and the power of encouragement to build up people to make them effective members. Like Jesus he was a friend to the downcast and heavy laden, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt.11:28).

The self-righteous Pharisees could not see the parallel to David at Abdullum, as Jesus brought hope to the outcasts of society, "the Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and

sinner!” (Luke 7:34 ). David draws those who are needy to him, just as Jesus did in his earthly ministry, and just as he does now through the proclamation of the good news of Christ’s love for sinners.

### **David’s Mighty Men**

In the epilogue of David’s life in 2 Samuel 23 we have recounted the heroic exploits of David’s mighty men. In verses 8-13 of this passage we get a sense of just how devoted they are to David. Because of what David has done for them they respond in a lavish way when in the hideout while in Abdullum he makes an offhand comment longing for a drink from the well at the gate of Bethlehem some twelve miles to the north. “Oh, that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate!”(2 Sam. 23:15). Three of his men make a daring raid to give him his wish. David is so overcome with emotion that these men would risk their lives to bring him a drink that he pours it out as an offering to the Lord. It is a picture of how precious and costly service to Christ should be for us. It is also from David of how highly he viewed and appreciated the sacrificial friendship of his men.

We should not underestimate in the church the importance of friendship to the lost. A survey of the lists of mighty men in 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles 11, show that a number of these men were not of any tribe of Israel, yet they became bound to David and Israel because of David’s friendship. Honestly caring for, and loving people outside the church is one of the most important evangelistic methods given to us. Jesus was the friend of sinners and so should we be as well.

There is an obvious omission in the list of David’s mighty men in 2 Samuel 23, and 1 Chronicles 11. Joab is only mentioned as the father of Abishai. David’s friendship with

Joab is an example of how a relationship can be destructive and of how bad company can corrupt good morals (I Cor. 15:33). We see in the narrative what a negative influence Joab was in David's life. Joab aids and abets David in his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah. We see his ruthless murder of Abner and Amasa, and his insubordination in executing Absalom against David's orders. David's continued toleration of Joab's insubordination is directly tied to Joab's loyalty to him personally. David's toleration of Joab's insubordination is a great testimony to the cost of personal compromise and friendship with the ungodly. Only at the end of his life as David recognizes the threat he will be to his son Solomon, does David bring Joab to justice.

### **Conclusion**

A study of the life of David instructs us to seek to strengthen each other through the bonds of friendship. The cultivating of close same sex friendships is vital to our growth in grace. Friendships that are formed on the basis of mutual love for Christ and his church are as crucial for the advancement of Christ's kingdom as they were for David's. As we share our passions, activity, and family life with others we develop strong bonds that encourage and support us through sharing our burdens and trials with one another. Intentional men's and women's ministry in the church are an extremely important part of the life of the church. We need to appreciate fully the mandate to love one another means to actively care and be concerned for our companions in the body of Christ.

## CHAPTER VI

### DAVID'S VICTORIES

*And the LORD gave victory to David wherever he went (2Sa 8:6).*

#### **David and Goliath**

We love this story. There is no story better known and loved in the Bible than the story of David versus the giant Philistine, Goliath of Gath. This account stirs our imagination like few other accounts in the Bible. It is *the* metaphor to describe how a smaller ill-equipped, apparently weaker opponent, overcomes one who is far larger and better equipped. Every underdog sports team dreams of being a tiny David to knock off a top ranked Goliath. The 1981 USA Olympic Hockey victory over the USSR comes to mind. Personally, I'll never forget watching one of the smallest Division I football schools of the NCAA, the Citadel, defeating the University of Arkansas in football in 1991. Everyone in the stadium was in complete shock. Something of the same feeling must have permeated the camp of Israel and the Philistines when Goliath went down with a mighty thud. David versus Goliath appeals to us on a deep, deep, level because we identify with the underdog who goes out to fight a desperate battle against seemingly insurmountable odds and comes out of the conflict victorious.

David was doing his job tending sheep when suddenly there was the news of an invasion from the south of the Philistines. The armies of Israel led by Saul and his chief of staff Abner, move to engage them to the south of Jerusalem in the valley of Elah to the south of Jerusalem. The battle ground came to a standstill for forty days with armies facing each other on each side of valley. The Philistine champion Goliath would come out and mock Israel each day taunting them to send out a champion to fight, the loser

would then serve the victor of the single combat. Day by day Goliath would taunt Israel with these words, “I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man that we may fight together.” Goliath’s presence had this effect in the camp of Israel, “When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine; they were dismayed and greatly afraid.” When David arrives with provisions for his brothers and sees the humiliation of Israel, he volunteers to go out and face Goliath.

A desperate situation against deadly odds faces Israel and David rises to meet the challenge. We are instinctively drawn to something very deep and striking in this story to which we are instinctively drawn, because at its heart there is something greater than merely a giant upset victory. At the heart of this story there is a type of the victory of the people of God who are led by our King over the forces of evil. Goliath the Philistine giant is a type of Satan. David is a type of the seed of the woman. He is a type of the Christ who will one day crush the head of the serpent prophesied at the dawn of the history of man when He who was mortally bruised rises from the dead and ascends to the throne of heaven (Gen. 3:15). Behind this historic narrative of Goliath at the head of the Philistine enemy of Israel, is the spiritual reality that Satan is a monster of evil at the head of a legion of demonic forces committed to destroying Christ and His church. He failed when God raised Christ from the dead and defeated death and Hell for all who believe, just as surely as Goliath failed when the stone sunk into his skull.

David does not put himself forward to fight Goliath as anything but the King’s servant but he does so with great boldness. He draws on his preparation protecting sheep in Bethlehem against wild beasts. He refuses armor; he refuses any help but the Lord’s. His confidence is in the fact that the battle is the Lord’s and that he will be victorious.

David's victory over Goliath shows how lessons learned while working as a shepherd prepared him to win a great victory. Learning the skills necessary to kill wild animals prepared him to face and kill the giant Goliath. For the believer this underlines the importance of learning lessons in the context of our ordinary lives before attempting to take on some extraordinary task. Before we are brought forward for greater service we must learn to win at keeping a few sheep, and being an errand boy. Lessons learned in Bible study and time spent in prayer, and from fellowship with other believers are to be applied in the battles we face in life. Lessons learned in taking the least place as a servant in Christ's church prepare us to be asked to come forward and lead. Unless we have prepared beforehand we will not be ready to face the battles we will inevitably face in life.

### **What are the Giants in Your Life?**

Unlike David's sling and stones and Goliath's sword, the weapons of our warfare are not man-made, but they are more real because the spiritual reality that we face is even more real. They are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses, (giants). My best friend in seminary was famous for preaching a sermon on the subject of David and Goliath, entitled, "What are the Giants in Your Life" in which he listed five possible giants that needed to be destroyed in a believer's life. I remember he was roundly criticized and taken to task by the homiletics professor, but I still remember that sermon. He was simply borrowing John Bunyan's allegory in the classic *Pilgrim's Progress*, who picks up a similar theme when he speaks of Christian, fighting with "Giant Despair." The truth of the matter, we are engaged in a spiritual battle of giants. Some of them are demonic in nature. Some attack our hearts and minds. Some of the giants come from a

hostile world opposed to godliness and truth, who come mocking and taunting the people of God. Others come from our own sinful nature, our lust, and our moral weaknesses. Some are the giants of addiction and lust that seem insurmountable. Sometimes we face giants that are strongholds of demonic resistance to the Gospel by evil governments who persecute the church, and false religion. Courageous men and women of faith are needed to appropriate the faith that David had and to go out and meet them in the name of the living God, and be as assured as David was of victory.

### **David's Victories over Ancient Enemies**

David's signature victory over the Philistines secured him a promotion to chief general of the army of Israel. He accepted the challenge and courageously began to pursue the Philistines with a holy vengeance. He began to pursue the Philistines with a holy vengeance, "And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him, so that Saul set him over the men of war" (1Sam. 18:5). Soon the number one hit song in Israel was about David, this catchy lyric was being hummed by everyone. And the women sang to one another as they celebrated, "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands." King Saul quickly saw the implications of David's popularity and was struck by a fierce jealousy, "And Saul was very angry, and this saying displeased him. He said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands, and what more can he have but the kingdom?" (1Sam. 18:7-8).

In spite of his jealousy Saul kept investing David with opportunity to lead the army resulting in victory after victory. When Saul required a dowry of one hundred dead Philistines, David brought two hundred to secure the marriage with Michal, Saul's daughter.

When David ran away to the cave of Abdullum and began to collect those who were in debt, depressed, and disenfranchised as his followers, he won victories for Israel by saving their city of Keilah from the Philistines even during his time of his banishment. When David was so fearful of Saul that he actually went over to the Philistines in the city of Gath he spent his time plundering the ancient enemies of Israel everywhere he went he was victorious.

Now David and his men went up and made raids against the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites, for these were the inhabitants of the land from of old, as far as Shur, to the land of Egypt. And David would strike the land and would leave neither man nor woman alive, but would take away the sheep, the oxen, the donkeys, the camels, and the garments, and come back to Achish. When Achish asked, “Where have you made a raid today?” David would say, “Against the Negeb of Judah,” or, “Against the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites,” or, “Against the Negeb of the Kenites.” And David would leave neither man nor woman alive to bring news to Gath, thinking, “lest they should tell about us and say, ‘So David has done.’” Such was his custom all the while he lived in the country of the Philistines. (1Sam. 27:7-11)

In fact it is the consequence of his victories over these enemies and the way he conducted warfare against them at this time that probably leads to his disqualification to build the temple because the Lord says, he was a man of blood (1Chron. 22:8).

As a consequence of his alliance with the Philistines he and his men are called to muster with the Philistines in order to do battle against their fellow Jews led by Saul. They make the long Journey from the stronghold of Ziklag to Gath. Only the providential suspicions of the Philistine commanders prevent him from going to war against his fellow countrymen. As David returns though, he discovers his entire camp has been burned and all their families have been taken by an Amalekite raiding band coming up from the wilderness. The situation seems absolutely hopeless until he seeks God's help through inquiring of the priest. By God's direction he and his men catch the Amalekites and recover their families and their property. Victory again comes to David as a result of being completely dependent upon the Lord. God uses the Philistines to overthrow his enemy Saul and clear the way for him to ascend the throne

Before David could move his throne from Hebron to Jerusalem, he must drive out the ancient enemy of Israel the Jebusites. As he approaches Jerusalem to take the city, in order to install the ark of the Covenant and secure his throne, David and Israel must deal with the last of the ancient enemies of Israel the Jebusites. They had occupied what would become Jerusalem for over 800 years since Joshua and Israel crossed the Jordan. When David's forces approach the city the Jebusites taunt them with some kind of pagan curse to the effect that even the lame and blind could defeat them. God miraculously gives the victory by revealing a secret entrance through the water channel because of complete dependence upon the Lord.

After his installation as king, we are told that David defeats the Philistines, and then proceeds to defeat the nations of the Transjordan (2 Sam. 8:1-13), the Moabites, the Syrians, the Ammonites, Amalekites, the Zobahites, and the Edomites were all subdued

at this time. 2 Sam. 8:6 explains this victory, “And the LORD gave victory to David wherever he went.” The reason is further expounded in Psalm 60, which tells of God’s triumph after a time of humiliation from Israel’s enemies.

*To the choirmaster: according to Shushan Eduth. A Miktam of David; for instruction; when he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, and when Joab on his return struck down twelve thousands of Edom in the Valley of Salt.*

O God, you have rejected us broken our defenses; you have been angry; oh, restore us. You have made the land to quake; you have torn it open; repair its breaches, for it totters.

You have made your people see hard things; you have given us wine to drink that made us stagger. You have set up a banner for those who fear you that they may flee to it from the bow. Selah  
That your beloved ones may be delivered, Give salvation by your right hand and answer us! God has spoken in his holiness:

“With exultation I will divide up Shechem and portion out the Vale of Succoth. Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim is my helmet; Judah is my scepter. Moab is my washbasin; upon Edom I cast my shoe; over Philistia I shout in triumph.”

Who will bring me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom?

Have you not rejected us, O God? You do not go forth, O God, with our armies. Oh, grant us help against the foe, for vain is the

salvation of man! With God we shall do valiantly; it is he who will tread down our foes (Psa. 60:1-12).

We tend to think in the context of the Old Testament and David's victory. Victory over the enemy in Israel was directly tied to covenantal faithfulness of the king and the people of God. We tend to think in these terms about our own lives and situations, and many times it is appropriate for us to do so. Sometimes our personal failures are directly tied to our unfaithfulness as this psalm implies, at others we experience enormous personal victory and blessing as a result of our faithfulness. Any student of history can see this working out not only in the lives of individuals, but of nations as well. Rightly we pray for victory in times of war over the enemies of our nation. Yet we must be careful. One example of the way we foolishly pray is for God's help in our athletic contests. I distinctly remember praying for a fumble in a high school football game and it occurring. I distinctly remember praying for victory at other times and losing as well. This has led me to the conclusion that in the New Covenant only common grace applies to athletic contests. In other words, God is usually on the side with the biggest tackles in football. The correct application to the church and to us as individual believers is a spiritual application for a spiritual victory over the enemies of the people of God and our souls.

Gerald Wilson makes a strong contemporary application from this Psalm to our lives today. In his commentary he points out that victory over fortified cities requires God's power and assistance. Relying on our own human strength is worthless. Our failures do not undermine God's plans and purposes. If we do not win the victory it does not mean that God has failed. And finally that destruction, no matter how devastating can be

mended. God's relentless goodness is the source of the psalmist's great hope (Wilson, p. 865, 6).

### **Victory over the Forces of Ahitophel and Absalom**

David faced no greater odds than when he fled before his son's Absalom's rebellion. With a meager band he escaped Jerusalem and crossed the Jordan River where friends provided for him and his small army. David overthrew the forces of Absalom who were led by his former best friend Ahitophel. Ahitophel's counsel was considered to be as the voice of God. God used David's loyal friend Hushai to remain behind and thwart Ahitophel's counsel, which ultimately led David to victory. Once again, at the end of his life, David wins an incredible victory against overwhelming odds.

David goes on to defeat another rebellion from the tribe of Benjamin led by named Sheba, who is described in the Scripture as a "worthless man", (2 Samuel 20:1). He is worthless because he is rebelling against God's anointed King fresh on the heels of Absalom's rebellion. It is a common pattern when engaged in a spiritual conflict that one attack will be quickly followed by another, (Henry, vol. 2, p. 429). Sheba's rebellion is put down despite the treachery of David's chief of staff Joab, who ruthlessly murders his cousin Amasa, who David had put in charge of the army after Absalom's rebellion. Joab's relentless pursuit of Sheba results in the quick end of Sheba's rebellion. David's continued toleration of Joab's insubordination is directly tied to Joab's loyalty to him personally and his ability to win. The desire to win at all costs, can lead to destruction. David's relationship to Joab as mentioned in the previous chapter is a great testimony to the cost of personal compromise.

## Conclusion

David began his military career with a victory over a giant; he ends it in the same way. Forty years earlier David's first military was a victory over the Philistines, now at over 60 years old the Philistines once again attack Israel with a giant at the fore. It is a testimony to David's leadership that he has his mighty men at his side ready to fight to the death with him. At the beginning of his career no one would go out to face a giant with him, at the end of it four men are willing to step into the fray. Achieving victory is never about what we can accomplish on our own. First and foremost being victorious is about dependence upon God for grace, strength, and perseverance, and then it is about encouraging and enabling others to fulfill their ministries for the goal of expanding the kingdom of God by defeating its enemies. David leads his men into battle; after which he is told by his men that he will not be going to battle any more. He is able to subdue the giant, with their help and thus his last victory is like his first, over a giant Philistine. The application to our calling is clear: we fight and serve as long as we are able, then we resign to those are more able and better equipped.

In 2 Samuel 22, and Psalm 18 (which is the same song polished for the temple worship) there sounds the high note of victory over enemies. According to the superscription in Psalm 18 in which the song is described in the songbook of Israel, it is a retrospect for all of David's victories. *To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, the servant of the LORD, who addressed the words of this song to the LORD on the day when the LORD rescued him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul,* (Psa.18:1). David has set down in this Psalm the reason for all of his victories. The words almost shock our evangelical sensibilities when we read them,

The LORD dealt with me according to my righteousness;  
according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me. For I  
have kept the ways of the LORD and have not wickedly departed  
from my God. For all his rules were before me and from his  
statutes I did not turn aside. I was blameless before him, and I  
kept myself from guilt. And the LORD has rewarded me  
according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in his  
sight (2Sam. 22:21-25).

How can David who has sinned so egregiously with Bathsheba, and murdered Uriah  
make such a statement? Again the key is in the superscription; it is about the early focus  
of his life to do what is right in spite of any personal cost to him. It is also about the  
whole tenor of David's life that the Holy Spirit prompts him to write about -- the  
Godward focus of his life and how utterly and completely dependent he is upon the Lord.  
The testimony is one of faithfulness, not works salvation. Those who faithfully follow  
the Lord and esteem his word, and obey it will be blessed, those who do not - will not.  
(Davis, 2 Samuel, p. 285).

David's seemingly audacious statement here is very important corrective to what can  
be a tendency toward false humility and using past failures as an excuse to keep us from  
kingdom service. We can become so focused on failure that we fail to appreciate the  
victories that have been won for and through us in Christ. The message of the Gospel is  
even though we may have huge personal failures, God's grace at operation in our life  
makes us victorious.

## CHAPTER VII

### DAVID'S FAILURES

*For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all (Rom 11:32).*

We love winners. We are obsessed with winning to the point that nothing else matters. As the late Coach Vince Lombardi once said, "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing." Yet we see failure constantly in the world and in the church. It seems daily we have yet another cherished hero diminished in our eyes by defeat. Failure hurts and often times define us for the rest of our lives, particularly moral or personal failures, especially when they are public and known by many. Daily in the news we are assaulted with the sordid details of some political, athletic, or religious hero who has failed terribly, many times sexually in a scandal. While less noticed the failures of those who are not such public figures are the subject everyday life. Failure is a part and parcel of the daily experience; my children often like to chide me with the mantra, "You failed again," when I do not perform up to their expectations. It should bring encouragement to our soul to know when we do fail, and do so often God is with us even in the midst of those failures.

One of the most remarkable features of the Bible is its honesty about its heroes of faith. All of the major characters of the Bible are presented as they are with no hesitation to describe at times the glaring failures of those who are held up as examples of faith. This is certainly true in the life of David. As great as his victories are, as great as his military and spiritual victories are, on equal display, and arguably more prominently displayed, are his moral and military failures.

The Bible's accounts of the moral failures of its most prominent figures, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, all tell us something of the typical nature of besetting sin in the life

of the believer. Their sin displayed in great detail also gives opportunity for repentance and restoration which is one of the most essential aspects of a believer's growth in grace and sanctification

We learn as much about sanctification and growth in grace from our failures as we do the victories in life. In fact, I would argue from Scripture we learn more in trials and affliction that look like apparent failures. Many of the Psalms are classified as laments, literally as cries for help in the midst of desperate circumstances. Failure often results in suffering which results in a desperate cry for help. The role of suffering in our sanctification as exemplified in the life of David will be examined further in a later chapter. We learn as we look at David's life how in many ways failure affected him and his family and the whole nation of Israel.

For many the first thought of David is that of his moral failure with Bathsheba, his cover up of his sin and murder of Uriah. But it certainly was not his only failure. Lessons learned from failure are as important as those learned from triumph. The basic principle of interpretation of the Old Testament is found in 1 Corinthians 10:6-13. After speaking of God's deliverance of Israel through the miraculous means which were really Jesus Christ in the wilderness, he tells us to look at their negative example,

Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed

by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it (1Cor. 10:6-13).

When I played offensive line in college football we were taught to think of the worst thing that could happen to us when we were running a particular play, and at a minimum, to not let that happen. We learn as much from negative examples as we do from positive ones in studying the characters of the Bible.

It has been argued that David's marriage to Michal, Saul's daughter was a failure that led David into a bad direction (Pink, vol. 1, p. 64). His multiple marriages to wives, though according to the custom of the day, were against the expressed rule for kings in Israel given in Deuteronomy 17. There is no other way to look at this aspect of David's life than to say that he failed in this very important area of devotion to God. His failures in his relationships with women will be multiplied as his life unfolds.

### **Failure at Nob**

David maintained the utmost integrity in his dealings with Saul. Again, and again he refused to avenge himself and take the throne by his own hand. His conduct in maintaining a posture of right attitude to Saul is exemplary, except in his haste to escape Saul's grasp he sins against others in ways that make others pay a dear price. In 1

Samuel 21, we have the account of David running to hideout at Nob, the headquarters of the priests. While he is there gathering provisions, Goliath's sword and bread from the priests, David takes matters into his own hands and lies to Ahimelech in order to escape Saul. As a result Ahimelech and all the priests at Nob are executed by Doeg the Edomite. In I Samuel 22:22 Saul's henchman, Doeg the Edomite sees David and reports to Saul. Saul confronts Ahimelech the priest about protecting Saul and has Doeg kill him and all the priests but one who escapes. David said to Abiathar, "I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have occasioned the death of all the persons of your father's house" (1Sam. 22:22). David knew when it happened there would be the consequences. His failure was a failure of violating the trust of Ahimelech. From there he runs for protection to the enemy of Israel, the Philistines. David's failure at Nob shows us what happens when we seek out escape by the world's ways and methods.

### **Unholy Alliance**

David falls into a pattern of besetting sin after having a victorious confrontation with Saul. He has a crisis of faith and says to himself, "I will one day perish at the hand of Saul." He grows weary of the conflict and the running from Saul and decides to once again seek refuge among Israel's sworn enemy. In spiritual warfare our primary defense is the shield of faith which must always be held up against the fiery missiles of the enemy. Chief among his fiery darts is the missile of fear of man. Once again David succumbs and not only hides among the Philistines but employs himself in their army. His plan works, he escapes Saul's grasp but at a great cost. David is employed by the Philistines and he pretends to aid Israel while putting members of Israel's ancient

enemies under the ban, at the same time saving their plunder to buy off the Philistines. The result of this slaughter is that he will forfeit the opportunity to build the temple because he shed too much blood. In David's own words, "But God said to me, 'You may not build a house for my name, for you are a man of war and have shed blood.'" (1Chron. 28:3)

David's failure here is similar to his previous failure when he sought refuge with the Philistines. Even more so on this occasion he seeks refuge for himself through his own abilities. In his previous successes David sought the word of the Lord from the prophet, or through the priest wearing the linen ephod. Here he relies on his own abilities and cunning for escape. Unfortunately in this failure David had the sad experience of many believers today who find they can trust the word of unbeliever's more than they can trust their fellow church members. Still it was a failure for David to adopt the way of the enemies of God to advance his own agenda, (Henry, vol. 2, p. 333).

David had the favor of the Philistines so much so they gave him the city of Ziklag. Even in the midst of his failure God shows his mercy. In so doing they give him as an inheritance one of the cities promised to Israel as an inheritance, (Henry, p. 334). There are still consequences for his sin; for one year and four months he must live a lie. Later when David wants to build the temple he cannot because he is a man of blood, "But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'You have shed much blood, and have waged great wars. You shall not build a house to my name, because you have shed so much blood before me on the earth'" (1Chron. 22:8).

The book of 2 Samuel can be outlined with two basic divisions: The fame and success of David (Chapters 1-10), and the shame and sorrow of David, (Chapters 11-20).

At the beginning of chapter 11 we see David at the pinnacle of success. He has a palace to live in; he has won extensive military victories; he has collected all the materials needed to build the Temple, in short at the age of fifty he had it all. Unfortunately, he wanted more. When he should have been going to battle he decided to stay home and enjoy a respite from the rigors of war. Perhaps he was well aware of the proximity of Bathsheba's rooftop to his own. The human heart is desperately cunning when it is bent on satisfying its lustful desire.

### **Failure to Engage in Warfare**

David's moral failure began when he neglected his duty to engage in warfare. Chief among the duties of an ancient near eastern king was to fight against the enemies that threatened your kingdom. In the same way our number one job description as a believer is to be engaged in spiritual warfare against the enemies of our soul. Our weapons are not physical weapons but are spiritual divinely powerful weapons for the destruction of fortresses. As surely as David failing to engage the Ammonites in warfare led to his horrible sin against Bathsheba and Uriah, so our failure to actively use our spiritual weaponry will lead to our failure as well. God has given us the ordinary means of grace as our weaponry against the temptation, the word of God, the sacraments, prayer, fellowship, and understanding trials in the light of the Gospel. When we neglect these we are exposed to temptation as was David.

### **The Reality of Remaining Sin – David and Bathsheba**

David's life reminds us of the issue of remaining sin in the life of believer. A neglect of the means of grace, failing to apprehend daily what the sacrifice of Christ means for us, (David knew by inspiration that only God could take away sins not animal sacrifices)

can lead us to the sin of presumption, that we are forgiven no matter what we do. The next step from presumption is either gross sin, as in the case of David and Bathsheba, or callous indifference to the things of God. The reality of remaining sin must be dealt with by the believer. Like the apostle Paul in Romans we must understand the reality of remaining sin in our lives, “For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” (Rom. 7:15).

The particular sin of sexual lust that set off a chain reaction of follow up sins is perhaps the most common of the besetting sins of man. Over and over in the life of Israel in the Old Testament the nation is judged for sexual debauchery that went hand in hand with the idolatry of the surrounding nations that God called Israel to separate from. Today the visible church is constantly rocked with sexual scandal. The members of the church struggle with the sexual license which is the norm in our American culture. That immorality is taken for granted in the church should astound us, when the largest Presbyterian body in the world, the PCUSA has now completely abandoned any demand for moral purity among its office holders or members. The faithful record in the word of God of David’s sinful failure stands as a reminder to the church that God is not mocked and He will judge sin. David’s descent into flagrant, overt evil reminds us that if we would judge ourselves correctly according to the word of God, and use the means of escape available to us, we can escape the consequences of such sinful actions.

In 2 Samuel 11:1 we read the awful account,

In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they

ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful.

And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, “Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?” So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, “I am pregnant.” (2 Sam. 11:1-5)

David lusted for Bathsheba, sent for her, had sex with her and thought that would be the end of the affair. Until he received a fearful message from Bathsheba, that no irresponsible, sexually immoral, man wants to hear, “I am pregnant.” David uses his power as the king to attempt to cover up his crime by calling Uriah from the front lines across the Jordan back to Jerusalem. Unsuccessfully he tries to entice Uriah to have sexual relations with his wife so it will appear that he is the father and the sin will be covered. Uriah refuses to cooperate which leads David to arrange for his murder on the front lines near the Ammonite stronghold in Jordan with other valiant comrades to make it look good (Davis, 2 Samuel, p. 142-143) .

To complete the deed Bathsheba goes through a period of mourning and then marries David. The highhandedness and arrogance of the wickedness is confirmed by David’s

words to Joab, David said to the messenger, “Thus shall you say to Joab, ‘Do not let this matter trouble you, for the sword devours now one and now another. Strengthen your attack against the city and overthrow it.’ And encourage him” (2Sa 11:25). For a time David was arrogant about his sin. For the moment it seems he has gotten away with adultery, lying, and murder, but the last verse of the chapter is very foreboding about the consequences that will come. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD (2Sam. 11:27), (Davis, 2 Samuel, p.146).

Following the sin with Bathsheba there are instances of failure in David’s life. His failure to follow the instruction of Deuteronomy 17 for kings not to multiply wives is one of the most glaring. “And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away,” (Deuteronomy 17:17). Also there was at times in David’s life a failure to discipline subordinates like Abner who murdered Abiathar for revenge and also his own children. As in the case of his son Amnon who raped his sister Tamar. David’s failure to deal with that issue leads Absalom to a blind rage in which he murders Amnon. It is obvious from the narrative that David failed to be engaged in the life of his children culminating in the rebellion of Absalom. Family dysfunction as a consequence of David’s paralyzing guilt over the affair with Bathsheba, no doubt led to the disaster with Absalom.

### **Failure in Tolerating Evil Company**

David’s failure to discipline his executive officer Joab is another failure that looms large in David’s life. David’s failure’s to discipline Joab for his murder of Abner, for taking Absalom’s life against his orders, and for his murder of Amasa, are all a blot on David’s record. Joab was his most effective general, but like so many effective wartime

soldiers he was unrestrained to a serious fault using his position as a way to promote himself and his own selfish cause. Failing to deal with Joab had multiple consequences for David, including those that led to his most devastating failures. 1 Corinthians 15:33 tells us that bad company corrupts good morals. David's complicity with Joab hurt his effectiveness as a spiritual leader.

### **Listening to the Voice of Satan**

Another failure in the life of David is his final folly recorded in the account given in 2 Samuel 24, and 1 Chronicles 21, of David conducting a census of Israel. (Pink, vol. 2, p. 309) Many reasons are given why David's actions were wrong, but on the surface the exact reason is difficult to know, except to say that even a scoundrel like Joab objected to it as folly. The result was the Lord's anger was kindled and judgment fell upon Israel. Not until David repents and purchases the field of Aruniah in order to make a sacrifice of atonement does the Lord's wrath turn away. It is interesting that it is recorded in 2 Samuel 24:1, that the Lord incited David, and in 1 Chronicles 21:1, that Satan incited him, but really there is no difference. The two accounts show together that God overrules Satan and sin for his glory. He allows sin and failure in the lives of his children in order to prove his grace and faithfulness and promote his honor and glory, For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all. (Rom 11:32)

### **Conclusion**

We should never use David's failures as an excuse for our own. The heart is such that we tend to study reasons to excuse our sin and disobedience. A serious study of the life of David leads us to see the enormous consequences of sin in a believer's life. God will not leave us alone in our sin. This is why we must maintain a healthy introspective

searching out of sin in our life as David did in Psalm 139, “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” (Psa.139:23-24).

## CHAPTER VIII

### REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD

*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.*

*Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. (Psalm 51:1-11)*

#### **A Life of Repentance**

Following closely on the moral failures that are so clearly shown by scripture in the life of David is the fact that he demonstrates what a life of repentance looks like. Again his leading attribute that sets him apart to begin with, is being a man after God's own heart. David exemplifies that the whole life a believer should be a life characterized by repentance as Martin Luther described in his famous *Ninety-five Thesis*. We live in an age in which the need for repentance for salvation is very much minimized. This has resulted in tragic consequences for the church. Repentance is a work of grace in the believer's life and will never be completed in this life, nonetheless it is essential for our

sanctification as and as evidence for our justification. As the Westminster Confession of Faith says, “Although repentance be not to be rested in, as any satisfaction for sin, or any cause of the pardon thereof, which is the act of God's free grace in Christ; yet it is of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it” (Westminster Confession of Faith, p. 65).

In almost every instance of failing in David’s life we see the Scriptures record that he turns to God soon after. We also see his repentance is never perfect as ours is never perfect, which is why we are never to rest in our repentance. Repentance is a work of God’s grace which is a part of the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in a believer’s life. As we look at this important aspect of David’s life in covenant relationship to God, we see David was a great repenter. The sooner we learn to daily practice the grace of repentance in our lives, the greater progress we will make in our growth in grace. In 1 Samuel 21, David had exposed the priests at Nob to danger when he went there to get provisions and the sword of Goliath. Doeg the Edomite sighted David there resulting in orders from Saul to kill the priests by which they were destroyed by Doeg . David runs to the Philistines and to the cave of Abdullum. He knows he has caused their Death. He writes Psalm 34 there to express his repentant heart,

I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the LORD; Let the humble hear and be glad. Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together! I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears (Psa. 34:1-4).

While at the cave David not only repents toward God as the Psalm so deeply expresses, but he demonstrates his repentance by caring for others, including his aging parents, his wives, and everyone who was in distress, in debt, and discontented. David chooses as his companions those whom Jesus chooses, “Consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, and not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong,” (1Cor. 1:26-28). David’s repentance at the cave shows he began to quit living in fear, and began to see the consequences of lying and manipulating, and instead begins to live in faith in practical ways. It also shows that our repentance is never perfect and is not to be rested in for soon David falls into another sin (Pink, vol.1, p. 76).

### **Besetting Sin**

The Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 5 explains the role of besetting sin in a believer’s life, “The most wise, righteous, and gracious God does oftentimes leave, for a season, His own children to manifold temptations, and the corruption of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled.”

Besetting sins do not leave us easily as we see in the lives of all of the saints recorded in the Bible, including David. After courageously confronting Saul in the wilderness, David’s fear overtakes him. He seeks refuge among the Philistines. Rather than seeking God’s wisdom through the prophet Nathan, or inquiring of God through the priest, David turns to himself his own resources. He offers himself as a mercenary in the service of the Philistines. They give David his own city, the stronghold of Ziklag, which actually was a

part of the inheritance of Israel. This is an illustration of God's is mercy and grace to us even in our sin. While David is engaged at Ziklag in defeating the mutual enemies of Israel and the Philistines, he is living a lie, telling the Philistines he is actually plundering Israel. The sinful way he destroys these enemies results in David forfeiting the right to build the temple (2 Chron. 28:3).

### **A Way of Escape**

Still the way of escape from the sinful entanglement at Ziklag is how God works repentance in the life of his children; we see how through providence David is provided a way of escape. David had run to the enemy for protection. This is typical of believers and the church. How often do we run to the world for our own comfort nurture and protection? How often do we seek enjoyment and nurture according to the standards of the world, rather than seeking God and his ways for us? He always makes a way for us to escape. The Philistines marshal their forces to go and do battle against the forces of Israel and David finds himself in the ranks of the Philistines, only to be told he would not be needed at the last minute. God providing David a way out of combat with his fellow Israelites is an illustration of the truth of 1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure," (1Cor. 10:12-13). Sometimes it is as simple as turning around and walking away from temptation. Pastor Harry Reeder tells the story of a man who came to him for help with his addiction to pornography. Dr. Reeder asked him how he came to be tempted. He explained that when he went to work downtown he parked in front of a pornography store and usually succumbed to the temptation to go in.

Pastor Reeder's simple advice to him, "Don't park there!" is advice to us all to not put ourselves in a place where we know we will be tempted.

### **Consequences for Sin**

Still a part of repentance is suffering the consequences for sin. When David and his fellow soldiers make the long march back to Ziklag from the Philistine muster they find their fortress city burned and all their wives and property taken by a marauding band. The consequences to being unequally yoked to the Philistines seem to be loss of family, loss of property, and loss of respect. David's leadership is called into question by his men. Everything he cherished was gone as a result as of his sinful alliance with the Philistines. David is humbled and broken as a result; and David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God. (1Sam. 30:6) David's repentance is toward God first, then he seeks out wisdom by inquiring through the priest Abiathar what course of action he should take in what seemed hopeless. David sought counsel through the ordinary means of grace available through the priest and received direction from the Lord. As a result of David's repentance God was very gracious and all the people and property of David and his men were recovered and the Amalekite raiding party was destroyed. There is always a blessing when we turn our hearts away from our sin and toward God. The principle of God's restoring and blessing his returning sons is deeply illustrated in the life of David in this instance.

To examine the depth of David's sin against Bathsheba, Uriah, and the nation is to recoil in disbelief. The wonder of looking at David's sin in the word of God is for us to look at the negative consequences and not repeat the same mistakes. Until we come to

the place where we know that we are a sinner we are hopeless in our condition before the Lord. When sin displeases the Lord as did David's illicit affair with Bathsheba, its cover up, and the murder of Uriah, there will be judgment from the Lord and deep consequences. Indeed this account shows how consequences for sin are inescapable. At the end of 2 Samuel 11 it appears that David has succeeded in using his powers as king to cover the shame of his sin, however, Chapter 12 however is a different story.

And the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flocks or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."

Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of

Israel, ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul ... ’” (2 Sam. 12:1-7).

### **The Word of God is used to Bring Repentance**

David is convicted of his sin through the word of God by Nathan the prophet. He comes rather innocuously to David and tells a touching story about a greedy landowner who steals another’s pet sheep. David is enraged and wants the greedy landowner to pay restitution for his crime. After drawing David in with the story, Nathan sets the hook. David is the man who has committed the high crime against Uriah. It is the word of God rightly applied to David’s sin that brings about repentance in his life. One of the keys to living a life of repentance is to be in a place where the word of God is regularly and faithfully taught and proclaimed. The role of Nathan in David’s life illustrates that it is essential to have a faithful man of God who will fearlessly speak the truth of the word of God into our life. For those who are hardened and persist in their sins there must be those called to courageously speak the truth about sin without reservation. The word of God is the means of grace that is primary in bringing about the grace of repentance and godly change.

### **Repentance toward God**

In this passage we see David’s repentance. “I have sinned against the LORD.” Echoing the words recorded in Psalm 51, “Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight”, (Psa. 51:4) David understands the harm he has brought to Bathsheba, and Uriah, it and all sin is ultimately against a holy God. David is carrying an enormous burden of guilt. For the better part of a year, he has spent a great deal of time and energy in covering his sin. Nathan delivers a very detailed rebuke about what David

has done. He also recounts all the blessings that have been bestowed on him by God's mercy and grace and what the consequences of David's sin will be in his life.

David's remorse is directed toward God and not toward man in the sense of worldly regret of the world, the kind of regret that springs from being caught and exposed, the kind we seem to be regularly apprised of in the world. David has a genuine sorrow resulting in a genuine turning away from sin to God. Some things cannot be undone, like the marriage to Bathsheba, or the death of the child that will come, or the consequences of blood that will come on his household, these will remain. Even more than the shame of His sin, David will know God's forgiving grace (Davis, 2 Samuel, p. 156).

David's repentance shows us the difference committed before and after a believer's conversion. Sins of the believer and the unbeliever are no less vile; ultimately the difference is only the sins of the believer are covered by the blood of Christ which alone can take away sins. God puts away our sin the moment we are effectually called and justified by his grace through the faith we are given. We will never be more righteous before God than at the moment of regeneration, but when we sin against God we grieve the Holy Spirit who is in us. Psalm 51 is David's heart expression of repentance. It is a model of repentance for every believer for all time in our walk of faith before the Lord. We should memorize it and make it our own to teach us how to repent when we sin,

*To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.*

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not

despise. Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem; then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar (Psa.51).

Just as David's guilt is removed, so is ours when we confess and turn to the Lord. Repentance is not an option for us when we sin. Though we are not saved by repentance, repentance is a result of our salvation. The believer will desire to live a life of repentance and will never be content in sin because of the operation of the Holy Spirit to convict us and restore our fellowship with God. David's repentance sits in the middle of the Bible as a constant beacon calling us back from our sin into fellowship with the Lord.

### **The Fact of Remaining Sin**

The fact of remaining sin should inform all of relationships. Sin explains why there are moral failures in the church, as we are treated to the scandal *du jour*. Our response needs to be like that of the early church father Ambrose who was asked about the moral failure of the Bishop in the next town, "He fell yesterday, I may fall today." That such a figure as David in the Bible could sin so boldly and badly, reminds us how frail and prone to sin we are and how powerful God's forgiving restoring grace is to all who seek it. John writes of this in his first epistle,

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you

may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. (1John 1:7-2:2)

David's repentance and restoration does not remove from him consequences for his sin, neither does ours for us. The deep consequences for David's sin should disabuse us of any notion that grace is a license to sin. The son conceived with Bathsheba will die, there will be ongoing violent bloodshed in his house with his sons Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah violently killed. His daughter and concubines would be horribly violated, all the things David sowed in his sin would be reaped as a consequence (2Sam. 12:10-14). As the apostle Paul writes in Galatians, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life," (Gal. 6:7-8).

Far from causing us to turn away from the one suffering the consequences of sin we should move toward them. There is a natural tendency in us to move away from those who sin in the manner David did who are members of the body of Christ. There is a tendency to pull back from David himself and somehow diminish his importance, but to do so is to commit the sin of the Pharisees. Those who have sin exposed are the most prepared to receive God's grace and mercy. As severe as David's chastening was it was less than He deserved. As severe as we may think ours may be at any given moment it is less than we deserve. Thus David would write for us as well,

The LORD is merciful and gracious; slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust (Psa.103:8-14).

### **Conclusion**

And finally we see David's repentance when he committed the sin of numbering Israel (1 Chron. 22; 2 Sam. 24) He begs God to stop the plague that is destroying Israel and confesses it is his fault and he should be punished, and pleads for God to relent. David demonstrates repentance by purchasing Aruinah the Jebusites threshing floor in order to build an altar and to make a sacrifice. Atonement for sin must be made in order to stop the plague. God's wrath is turned away and the angel of death's hand is stopped from utterly destroying Israel. Christ shed His blood in order to fulfill all righteousness

There is an amazing picture of the Gospel in this final chapter of 2 Samuel. God's wrath is turned away because a sacrifice is made (Davis, 2 Samuel, p.322). It was not the offering of animals that turned God's wrath away, but rather what the animal's represented, the coming Lamb of God who will take away the sins of His people. The Gospel of the kingdom consists of repentance from sin and faith toward God. Only the

life of David's greater Son will accomplish the removal of sin and death. Repentance and faith are the two inseparable sides of the coin of salvation. True repentance occurs in the life of the believer because of a vital union with Christ based on His finished work on the cross. The record of David's penitent heart is a model for us throughout our walk with the Lord.

## CHAPTER IX

### LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

*You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy," but I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, (Matt. 5:43-44).*

We think of the teaching of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount as something entirely new when Jesus gave it, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" (Matt. 5:43-46). We see David putting into the practice the principles of love for enemies, and love for the undeserving, long before Christ Jesus' incarnation, through the Holy Spirit's abiding presence in David.

#### **Saul**

David's arch enemy in the narrative of 1 Samuel is Saul. When Israel begged God for a king, Samuel anointed Saul. It seems Saul's chief qualification for being king in Samuel's estimation was his height and he outwardly possessed the attributes of a king. He was appointed at the insistence of the people over the objections of Samuel. Saul started his reign and his military career as a king with great promise. He was a good leader in enlisting other leaders to help him and initially he had great success. Though he begins well, early in his career as king he makes a mistake that will ultimately end his reign and his life. Instead of putting the Amalekite army and plunder under the ban as God had commanded, he keeps some of the livestock ostensibly so the people of Israel

can make animal sacrifices to the Lord. When Samuel confronts him he is told the kingdom has been taken from him and given to another,

And Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you. For you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel." As Samuel turned to go away, Saul seized the skirt of his robe, and it tore. And Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you" (1Sam. 15:26-29).

No doubt from that point onward in his career as king Saul was looking over his shoulder to see who the usurper would be that would take the kingdom away from him. Little did he know it was a little shepherd boy who would serve as his court musician. David the young shepherd, who killed the Philistine giant at the Valley of Elah, would become his worst enemy. David would live an exemplary life before Saul. He would serve faithfully as his court musician, he would become Saul's best general, and even become his son-in-law at an enormous personal risk. But ultimately none of these relationships or any service David could perform, could turn Saul from his burning hatred for David. It seems obvious that Saul would have heard the words of the prophet Samuel echo in his mind that the kingdom would be taken from him and given to another. It was obvious to everyone a short time after David's public appearance in Israel, that David would be Saul's successor. We get a sense of how intense Saul's hatred for David will become from his reaction to the new hit song in Jerusalem after David returns in victory procession after defeating the Philistines ,

And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him, so that Saul set him over the men of war. And this was good in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants. As they were coming home, when David returned from striking down the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments. And the women sang to one another as they celebrated, "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands." And Saul was very angry, and this saying displeased him. He said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands, and what more can he have but the kingdom?" And Saul eyed David from that day on (1Sam. 18:5-9).

Afterwards, Saul tries to pin him to a wall with a spear, and begins a plan to have David killed. With the help of Jonathan and his wife Michal, David escapes from Saul and begins to live a life on the run in the wilderness south and east of Jerusalem.

In 1 Samuel 23 we meet David who has learned not to do anything without first asking the Lord what to do. When the Philistines are ransacking the town of Keilah west of Bethlehem, David asks if he should go and deliver it from being destroyed. After the Lord tells him to go and he wins a great victory, he asks the Lord if the people there will give him up to Saul. The Lord assures him David's good deed will not go unpunished by Saul so David flees to the wilderness of Engedi, a large oasis in the desert to the east by

the Dead Sea. Saul takes three thousand of the best soldiers in pursuit of David and his band of six hundred men who go up into the rough terrain west of the Dead Sea.

David is hiding in a cave in the wilderness when Saul comes in to relieve himself. While he is completely vulnerable, David has the opportunity to kill Saul and end the conflict but he refuses, even though his men urge him to do so. And the men of David said to him, “Here is the day of which the LORD said to you, ‘Behold, I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it shall seem good to you’” (1Sam. 24:4). But David instead chooses to cut off a corner of Saul’s robe. Even this mild action convicts David, the text says, “David’s heart struck him, because he had cut off a corner of Saul’s robe” (Davis, 1 Samuel, p. 247).

In this instance David shows one of the most important aspects of sanctification in a believer’s life. He demonstrates how we are to treat our enemies. We are never to repay evil for evil, “Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all” (Rom 12:17). We are never to avenge ourselves, “Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord” (Rom 12:19). David understood God had installed Saul as King and it was not his prerogative to take the kingdom for himself. Saul did David great harm, he was seeking to kill David, but David would not take vengeance into his own hands.

### **Final Confrontation with Saul**

In 1 Samuel 26 we have David’s final words to his enemy Saul. This marks the last time they will meet. There are many similarities with their encounter in Chapter 24 but also many differences. Three thousand men are still seeking David and his band of six

hundred. This time however the place of confrontation is not in a cave but out in the open. David occupies the high ground. Here is a model of how we are to confront and treat our enemies even when we have the upper hand.

It is a capital crime under the Uniform Code of Military Justice of the United States for a soldier to go to sleep on watch. This rule has existed in most armies' throughout history for obvious reasons. The Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Saul and his entire army in the open making them completely vulnerable to David's forces. Yet David once again refuses to exploit the opportunity to take advantage of the situation to destroy Saul,

Then said Abishai to David, "God has given your enemy into your hand this day. Now please let me pin him to the earth with one stroke of the spear, and I will not strike him twice." But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him, for who can put out his hand against the LORD's anointed and be guiltless?"

And David said, "As the LORD lives, the LORD will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish. The LORD forbid that I should put out my hand against the LORD's anointed. But take now the spear that is at his head and the jar of water, and let us go."

So David took the spear and the jar of water from Saul's head, and they went away. No man saw it or knew it, nor did any awake, for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen upon them (1Sam.26:8-12).

As he did in his previous confrontation with Saul, David adopts a posture of deep humility and compares himself to a flea. This is an important principle for us to maintain when we are called to go and do the hard work of confronting someone with the harm they have done to us or to others. We must deal with our sin and fault and see ourselves correctly before venturing to confront others.

When Saul is confronted he admits his fault, and that he has been a fool. Saul's foolishness stemmed from his extreme self-centeredness. Perhaps David had Saul in mind when he wrote Psalm 14:1, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good" (Psa.14:1). Because in his heart Saul said in effect, "There is no God," because he believed that he was God. Saul's problem was pathological self-centeredness. Here he seems to repent and acknowledged the injustice with which he has treated David (Davis, 1 Samuel, p.276).

### **Important Lessons about Confronting Sin**

Taken with chapter 24 we learn important lessons about confronting sin. David's confrontation of Saul in these two instances in many ways mirrored the steps for church discipline outlined by Jesus for us in Matthew 18,

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector (Matt. 18:15-17).

David confronted Saul in a relatively private place in Engedi as we read in 1 Samuel 24. As Saul refuses to be dissuaded from pursuing David, David escalates the confrontation in front of Saul's entire army. David's desire is reconciliation and peace but it is obvious Saul will have none of it from David, he wants David gone because he is a threat to his kingdom. David refuses Saul's offer because he doesn't trust him. We are under no obligation to entrust ourselves to abusers. We are to forgive them, confront them, and reconcile with them if possible. But we are not obligated, as demonstrated by David's confrontation with Saul to put ourselves in a position to be abused. Forgiveness does not necessarily mean reconciliation.

The fact of David loving his enemy Saul is apparent in the way he treats the Amalekite messenger who brings him news of his death. David shows his love and respect for Saul in insisting on a decent burial of the remains of Saul and Jonathan. Just because he has engaged in fierce contention with him does not mean that he turns from his obligation to give honor to whom honor is due.

David's honor and respect continues to the household of Saul even after Saul's death. He remembers the covenant he made with Jonathan, even remembers it as being made with the house of Saul, fifteen years before. And David said, "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake (2Sam. 9:1)?" (David was determined to keep the solemn oath he had made with Jonathan fifteen years before. As the text shows however, the covenant is with the house of Saul for the sake of the promise he made to Jonathan. David's kindness to Mephibosheth is an extension of his kindness. Mephibosheth was covered in shame and humiliation because of a crippling injury which occurred when he was a boy as his nurse dropped him as they fled

from the Philistines. David's kindness to Mephibosheth for the sake of David's covenant with Jonathan is analogous to the kindness of Christ to us on the basis of His covenant with us. We pray every time we pray the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

### **Nabal**

In 1 Samuel 25 we meet Nabal, whose very name means "fool." Nabal was a very wealthy man who had inherited Caleb's fortune around Hebron. When David sends men to request provisions for his men from Nabal, he refuses and treats David and his men with contempt. David's reaction is to strap on sword in order to destroy Nabal, but he is stopped by Nabal's godly wife Abigail who intervenes for her foolish husband. "My lord shall have no cause of grief or pangs of conscience for having shed blood without cause or for my lord taking vengeance himself. And when the LORD has dealt well with my lord, then remember your servant." (1Sam. 25:31 ). When David stops from killing Nabal at her intervention, his response to Abigail shows the depth of how he understood the principle of not taking one's own revenge, "And David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from avenging myself with my own hand! ",(1Sam. 25:32-33 ). David is kept from sinning against the Lord by taking his own revenge. He blesses Abigail for her faithfulness, and after the Lord executes vengeance on Nabal, David honors Abigail by taking her as his wife. By refusing to avenge himself and overlooking Nabal's insult, room is left for the vengeance of God. It is a vital lesson for us as we engage in life in the world and the church and encounter those who are fools like Nabal (Davis, 1 Samuel, p.265). Paul had

such an adversary in Alexander the Coppersmith. While not knowing the detail of the evil Alexander had done, we do know Paul's response, "Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds" (2Tim. 4:14).

### **Forgiving Enemies after Absalom's Rebellion**

David's pattern of forgiving his enemies is also illustrated in the way He returned to Jerusalem after fleeing from his son Absalom. Even as the tide of battle turns against the forces of Absalom, David gives strict orders not to harm his son Absalom. When the report is delivered that Absalom is dead he cries out in anguish over the death of his rebellious son, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son (2Sa 18:33)!" His grief over Absalom is so great his men threaten to rebel as will if he does not stop his inordinate grieving (Davis, 2 Samuel, p. 231).

The usual custom of rulers to deal harshly with the rebels after a failed palace coup. David acting contrary to the custom and prerogative chooses rather to forgive those who had sought to destroy him. In so doing David once again shows his throne will be ultimately established by mercy. There is a great picture of the Gospel in this story, before we invited Christ into our life, we were His enemies. For example Saul of Tarsus who hated Christ and was active in terrorizing the church until Jesus knocked him off of his horse on the road to Damascus. In forgiving the rebels David demonstrates the kingdom principle of turning his enemies into his friends and servants.

The first person David forgives is Absalom's chief general Amasa. Amasa is also David's nephew, hence his words to Amasa, "Are you not my bone and my flesh? God do so to me and more also, if you are not commander of my army from now on in place

of Joab (2Sa 19:13).” Not only does David forgive Amasa for leading the rebel army he places him at the front of his army. (Although his cousin Joab will soon murder him out of jealousy). David forgives Amasa and all the rebellious Israelites and wisely waits for them to invite him back to the throne. The picture is of Christ who waits to for his enemies to be made willing to invite him be their King (Henry, vol. 2, p. 425).

The next person David meets who was his enemy is Shemei. As David crosses the Jordan River in the same place Joshua crossed it some eight hundred years before his is met by two contingents anxious to ingratiate themselves to the returning king. Ziba the servant of Saul entrusted to care for Saul’s sole surviving heir, Mephibosheth, and Shemei, the Benjamite who had cursed at David and threw stones at him as he stole out of Jerusalem fleeing from Absalom. His men had urged him to kill Shimei at that time but he had refused. Shemei comes to David with his hat in is hand (and a thousand men with him) to beg for his life. Once again his men urge justice be done, and David prefers mercy instead. David refuses to avenge a personal grudge. Later on at the succession of Solomon to the throne Shemei will be executed but not today, Shall anyone be put to death in Israel this day? For do I not know that I am this day king over Israel?" And the king said to Shimei, "You shall not die." And the king gave him his oath (2Sam. 19:22-23), (Henry, vol. 2, p.426).

In David’s mind Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth had joined the rebels much to David’s hurt. Again David resists the urge to exercise vengeance, and takes time to listen to Mephibosheth’s defense that he had been deceived by his servant Ziba, who had stolen his donkey. David forgives both Mephibosheth and Ziba and restores the covenant that

he made to take care of Mephibosheth and his family for the sake of the covenant he had made with Jonathan (2 Sam. 19:24-27).

### **Conclusion**

In all of these instances David models a life of extending mercy and grace to the underserving. In so doing he models the operative truth of forgiveness which ought to be in every believer, our gospel obligation to forgive our debtors as we have been forgiven our debts. David's death sentence had been commuted; he knew he could do no less to others. Our death sentence to Hell has been commuted by our Judge and King. Jesus has satisfied the justice God demands by giving Himself in the place of believers. Our response must be not only a life of grateful service to our King, but also a life of forgiving as we have been forgiven. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matt. 6:14-15).

## CHAPTER X

### BETRAYAL

*Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me*

*Psalm 41:9*

The theme of betrayal is one that looms large in every life; no one escapes it at some point in life. Betrayal is the destruction of the trust which is the foundation of every relationship, and we betray each other in many ways. A spouse betrays a relationship through adultery. A child is betrayed when he is deserted or abused. An employer betrays a trusted, faithful employee. Friends betray us through the breaking of confidence or gossip. The church is betrayed by heresy and scandal. Nations are betrayed by traitors. We are ashamed when we recount in our own lives the various ways we have betrayed others and worst of all how we have betrayed Christ. Understanding how we have been betrayed and how we have betrayed others is a key part in our sanctification. The theme of betrayal is a one prominently displayed in the life of David. Both in those who betrayed him, and those he betrayed. David was betrayed in a very real sense by his own father Jesse when Samuel came searching among his sons for the one who would replace Saul. David was not even called by his father for consideration. He was betrayed by Saul repeatedly beginning with Saul's refusal to give his daughter in marriage to David as he had promised. Much time has been devoted in the previous chapter to David and Saul's conflict, so in this chapter we will look at other instances of the betrayal David.

#### **David Betrays Others**

David's betrayals were also his failures mentioned in Chapter 6. In addition to the failures which began in betrayal in those instances we see others as well. David betrayed the priests at Nob, he betrayed the Philistines at Ziklag, and he betrayed Uriah and the other soldiers who were killed as a result of his attempted cover up of his sin. David also betrayed Bathsheba, by entering into an illicit relationship with her, he betrayed his daughter Tamar, when he refused to discipline Amnon his son who raped her, and he betrayed the nation with pride by numbering her people for military reasons.

### **David is Betrayed**

David was also betrayed many times in his own life. He was betrayed by Joab, when Joab murdered Abner, and disobeyed David's orders to spare Absalom, and murdered Amasa. Other than David's own betrayal of Uriah, there is no greater instance in the life of David than his betrayal by his son Absalom and those who followed Absalom in the rebellion. What David sowed in his betrayal of Uriah will come back on him a hundredfold in the rebellion of Absalom. David is about sixty years old at the time of the beginning of Absalom's plot. David seems paralyzed by the dysfunction that his sin has brought upon his family. His son Amnon rapes his sister Tamar and David is apparently so disengaged from his family, or so crippled with his own guilt, that he does nothing to discipline Amnon. Absalom is so enraged he waits for an opportunity to take revenge, and murders Amnon. David exiles Absalom and refuses to reconcile with him even after Absalom is brought back to Jerusalem after murdering his brother Amnon (Henry, vol. 2, p. 405). David is disengaged as Absalom plots with the youth to take over the throne from his father,

After this Absalom got himself a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run before him. And Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the way of the gate. And when any man had a dispute to come before the king for judgment, Absalom would call to him and say, "From what city are you?" And when he said, "Your servant is of such and such a tribe in Israel," Absalom would say to him, "See, your claims are good and right, but there is no man designated by the king to hear you." Then Absalom would say, "Oh that I were judge in the land! Then every man with a dispute or cause might come to me, and I would give him justice." And whenever a man came near to pay homage to him, he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him. Thus Absalom did to all of Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel (2Sam. 15:1-6).

Absalom began to plot against his father. His actions will continue to fulfill the judgments prophesied by Nathan after the affair with Bathsheba,

Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the LORD, "Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it

secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.” (2 Sam. 12:10-12)

Absalom buys himself a fancy chariot, and he gets fifty runners to run in front of him to draw attention to himself. He also sets himself at the gate of the city and begins to ingratiate himself to the people who come to seek justice. He is campaigning for king. He puts himself forward as a better alternative to his father (Davis, 2 Samuel, pp. 188-190).

### **Ahitophel**

The rebellion comes to full flower when he asks permission to go to Hebron, where David first began his reign, ostensibly to sacrifice. In reality Absalom is planning to take over the throne and needs help so he seeks out David’s best friend and advisor Ahitophel. The question arises as to why will Ahitophel who had been so close to David, betray him? The answer is found in sorting through the genealogies of Samuel where we find that Ahitophel is Bathsheba’s grandfather (2 Samuel 11:3). Simply put, Ahitophel acts out of anger and desire for revenge for what David had done to his granddaughter and to Uriah.

This act of betrayal by Ahitophel whose wisdom and friendship David had relied upon hurt David deeply. Ahitophel’s wisdom was so famous that the author of 2 Samuel says his counsel was considered to be like the voice of God (2 Samuel 16:23). This betrayal of such a trusted friend and advisor stuns David and writes emotionally of it in Psalm 41,

My enemies say of me in malice, “When will he die, and his name perish?” And when one comes to see me, he utters empty words, while his heart gathers iniquity; when he goes out, he

tells it abroad. All who hate me whisper together about me; they imagine the worst for me. They say, “A deadly thing is poured out on him; he will not rise again from where he lies.” Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me (Psa.41:5-9).

### **Betrayal by the Nation**

The plot to overthrow David had become so overwhelming that the vast majority of Israel decided to follow Absalom. Though David himself has sown the seeds of the rebellion, still it is God’s prerogative alone to install and remove God’s anointed servant. The conspiracy of Absalom and his followers mirrors the rebellion of Satan, the exalted creature of heaven who would put himself in the place of the eternal Son of God who alone is the King and ruler of the world. Prophetic fulfillment is also found when Judas, one of Jesus’ inner circle of twelve disciples, sells him out to the Pharisees for thirty pieces of silver. When Jesus quotes this Psalm in the gospel it shows us yet again how we are to view and apply the life of David to our present situation in life (Davis, 2 Samuel, p. 192).

David must to flee Jerusalem in the face of the overwhelming odds confronting him there. In fleeing Jerusalem, Psalm 3 was in his heart,

*A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.*

O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me;  
many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God.  
Selah

But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill. Selah

I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me. I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.

Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked.

Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people!

Selah. (Psalm 3:1)

David moves from cowering fear in the face of the betrayal of his son and most trusted advisor to bold trust in the favor and ability of God to deliver him from the evil plot of Absalom.

### **Conclusion**

God avenges David of the betrayal of Absalom and Ahitophel and ultimately he is restored to the throne by the people of Israel. The theme of betrayal in David's life has prophetic fulfillment in the life of Jesus who was also betrayed by a close friend. It is a theme that will occur at some point to some degree in every believer's life. A steadfast confidence in God's merciful providence enables the believer to endure the pain of betrayal. Trust in God's justice will keep us from taking our own revenge. Sometimes in this life we will see the vindication of God as did David, sometimes we will not, and sometimes, it may be for us as it was for David, not to our liking. David's victory over the rebels was turned into mourning because of David's inordinate grief over Absalom,

“the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people, for the people heard that day, ‘The king is grieving for his son,’”(2Sam. 19:2 ). On the Day of Judgment we will see every injustice made right, we will even get to participate in it, and “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet ” (Rom. 16:20). Waiting for that Day is part of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, a lesson we clearly learn from the life of David.

## CHAPTER XI

### A MAN OF SORROWS

*He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.  
(Isa. 53:3)*

As we have seen in preceding chapters suffering comes into the life of David as a result of injustice, his own moral failure, and the betrayal of others. Likewise it is in the life of every believer, we suffer as a result of our own sin and the sin of others. We suffer simply as a result of living in a fallen world, broken by sin. Sometimes we suffer as did Job, by direct, demonic attack, but for whatever reason suffering comes to us the Bible calls us to understand it as a part of God's grace at work in our lives. What then accounts for the suffering of the perfect Lord Jesus Christ? The answer is the most important issue facing the world today, and the very heart of the good news we are called to bring to a suffering, dying world. Jesus suffered for the sake of His people. He was tempted and tried in all points like we are yet without sin. "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; and upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5).

#### **Psalms of Lament**

Perhaps the most neglected truth of the Bible is how God uses suffering and trials to help grow us in grace. Our tendency is to look down upon those experiencing trials and suffering as somehow being outside the favor of God much as did Job's sorry comforters look upon Job in his suffering. Indeed, much of our suffering is self-induced, like David's, yet that fact does not negate its importance as one of the means God uses to grow us in our sanctification. The most common genre in the Psalms is the Psalm of Lament. Over half of the Psalms attributed directly to David are classified as laments.

The laments are the voice of the soul in the times of the bitterest complaints we have against God (Allender, p. 29).

The most famous lament psalm is Psalm 22. This Psalm begins with the bitterest complaint ever recorded in Scripture, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest (Psa. 22:1-2). We cannot be entirely sure what occasioned David’s writing of this Psalm. Was it an illness? Was it during his flight from Saul? Was it during Absalom’s rebellion? An examination of the life of David reveals many episodes of trials and suffering both as a result of persecution, betrayal and by self-inflicted suffering as a direct result of David’s own sin. Too quickly we tend to pass by the significance of this for our growth in grace. The narrative of David’s life as well as the Psalms which reveal his deepest emotions show us the importance of suffering to grow us in grace and equipping us for service in Christ’s church.

### **Affliction as a Means of Grace**

We naturally recoil from suffering. Doing everything we can possibly do to avoid pain is instinctive in us. When we do teach the means of growing as a believer we often neglect to teach that suffering is one of the primary means that God uses to grow us in grace. We glibly teach new believers that in order to grow as Christians they need to be baptized, go the church regularly, take the Lord’s Supper, read the Bible, attend services and then as a natural result they will become spiritually mature. We fail to mention that suffering is one of the primary means that the Holy Spirit uses to accomplish spiritual growth in our lives. Jesus’ explicitly quotes Psalm 22 on the cross in reference to

Himself. As we understand the words were originally written by David in response to His betrayal by His best friend, we can relate more readily. When we understand the fulfillment of the psalm by Judas' betrayal of Jesus we see how we are drawn closer to Christ through the life of David.

The life of David and the words of David in the Psalms of lament teach us that suffering is the way God gets our attention to draw us close to Him. The lament Psalms follow a pattern of calling on God to help in a time of deep desperation or humiliation because of circumstances or the onslaught of enemies. They are the dominant Psalm type. The Psalms of lament follow a consistent pattern of a complaint followed by a petition for help, followed by thanksgiving for deliverance (Wilson, p. 144). The lament Psalms are vital for our growth in grace for they show us suffering inevitably comes to us because of sin, sometimes our own, sometimes because of others. The life of David through the Psalms helps us identify the source of suffering.

Jesus' suffering has nothing to do with His sin, but everything to do with ours. Because he was moved by the Holy Spirit to compose psalms of lament, we can see David's suffering was related directly to the suffering of Jesus. Our suffering through God's grace does as well and the writer of Hebrews makes it clear to us that this is why Jesus saves us.

It was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, "I will tell of your

name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.” And again, “I will put my trust in him.” And again, “Behold, I and the children God has given me.” Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham.

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Heb. 2:10-13)

### **The Life of Jesus in the Life of David**

The life of David helps us to understand the life of Jesus far better, and makes Jesus more understandable. We can easily identify with the folly of David and the resulting suffering that comes into our life because of our own sin. At the same time David points to Jesus, the one who is the perfect sacrifice to take away our sin, and has done so through suffering (Phillips, p. 72).

Psalm 69 is another Psalm that was written in a time of great crisis in David’s life. It informs us how to bring our emotions more in line with the life of Christ in us through the Holy Spirit applying the word of God to our circumstances. At the same time Psalm

69 describes the intensity of David's suffering and its fulfillment in the suffering of Christ. There is no more helpless and debilitating feeling in the world than the feeling you are about to drown. It is the feeling the infamous waterboarding torture is based upon, a sensation so overwhelming that it forces even the most hardened of terrorists to break down in seconds resulting in a feeling of despair so overwhelming that it leads to self-destruction. David cries out in this Psalm,

Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck.

I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold;

I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me.

(Psalm 69:1-2).

Despair and loss of hope are destructive emotions. They are the attending emotions that lead to suicide. The temptation for us is to feel that God does not care and does not understand. These are precisely the times that are most important for us to draw near to Christ who suffered the most grievous suffering of all time in His passion and Death.

### **Conclusion**

Whereas most of our suffering is due to our own sin and folly not all of it is, as David expresses in this psalm. All of Jesus Christ's suffering was a result of bearing upon His person the sins of others. Jesus has complete knowledge of our condition of suffering and of that sin that caused it. The glorious truth is that in His suffering he bears the full weight on His person of the judgment we deserve. In the most important way for our sanctification we must realize that suffering is a part of the means of grace that God uses to draw us into a deeper relationship with Him as He did in the life of David.

## SUCCESSION CHAPTER XII

*One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts (Psa. 145:4).*

In every generation of the church theme of succession should come up. Sadly though there is often little thought given to a plan of godly succession in the church and in various ministries. Many times succession in the ministry has more resemblance to a palace coup than the orderly transition to the next generation of leadership. The Davidic covenant instituted a kingdom according to the stipulations outlined in Deut.17:14-20. The throne of Israel would be passed from one generation of David's descendants to the next, "so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel." (Deut. 17:20). There is much in the narrative and in the Psalms that should guide us as we consider this important theme of life in the church.

David is at the end of his life and his health is deteriorating, but he is careful to leave a legacy to his son Solomon. One of the most important things we do in ministry is have a plan for succession of leadership and to ensure succeeding generations understand the foundational principles that are at stake.

There are at least three prominent successions of leadership in the account of the life of David. When David succeeds Saul, when Absalom tries to succeed David, and when Solomon succeeds David. The succession of kings continues through the lineage of David even when it appears to have been ended with the Babylonian captivity. God preserves it until it ends with the birth of Jesus Christ in the city of David who assumes the throne once and for all as He is coronated King at the Triumphal entry. His ultimate succession to the throne is described in Philippians 2,

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11).

### **The Succession of Solomon**

At the end of his life David appoints Solomon as his successor. He had other sons who could possibly be qualified, but Solomon is chosen. The legacy and legitimacy of David's reign would pass through Solomon. The most important legacy to Solomon was the spiritual legacy of the Davidic covenant. The accompanying blessings of wealth and prestige ultimately led to Solomon's spiritual ruin. The most important legacy we leave the church are not material assets, as the ruins of thousands of ancient churches from early centuries attest, and as countless empty cathedrals in Europe attest. The same is true in the spiritual legacy that we leave our families. The worst thing we can do is to leave great assets and wealth to our children without imparting to them a legacy of faith and trust in the living God.

### **Dealing with Threats to the Next Generation**

In making plans for the succession of the kingdom to Solomon, David deals with obstacles to his reign. There are deadly obstacles that will destroy young Solomon and the kingdom if they are not dealt with swiftly and severely. Chief among them is the ruthless Joab, David's duplicitous chief of staff. Even as David is about to expire, Joab is conspiring to place Solomon's half-brother Adonijah on the throne. Joab must be executed so Solomon's reign will not be threatened.

The wicked Shimei, the Benjamite who had cursed David as he fled from Absalom was another threat to Solomon that David swiftly dealt with when he violated the terms of his probation. In reading these chapters it seems ruthless and harsh to our modern sensibilities to see enemies dealt with so severely, yet there are issues today that threaten the church and succeeding generations which must be dealt with in a manner that is spiritually ruthlessness. I am part of a Reformed church body, the Presbyterian Church in America, which was founded because of the loss of the historical foundation of the Christian church. Cardinal tenets of the Christian faith were at stake at its founding: the inerrancy of Scripture, the deity of Christ, the necessity of salvation through faith alone through Christ's redeeming work. It has been heartening to be a part of such a church for over thirty years. I have always had the very real sense that I was a part of a movement that had its spiritual roots in the Reformation and the Great Awakening. Now forty years into our existence we face the challenge of imparting that same spiritual legacy to the next generation of leadership in our church.

As we consider the succession of the spiritual legacy we will impart to the next generation, we must carefully consider how we are to deal with threats to the spiritual safety and well-being of the church. This is not a time to be sentimental about false pretenders to the spiritual legacy we are charged to impart, the enemies of the gospel are becoming ever more apparent. One glaring example are those who deny the authority of the Bible, and its plain teaching on origins, substituting evolutionary theory for the historicity of Adam and Eve. Another dangerous threat is the so-called Insider Movement – those who are involved in translation work of the Bible -- who translate the

original meaning of the text in the Bible in a way to make it more palpable to those from a Muslim background, distorting the truth.

Another growing threat of adding man's works to salvation is found in the teaching of the so called Federal Vision which tries to reinterpret the Apostle Paul's message of grace alone. Many of our young pastors are being drawn by the deadly allure of adding works to salvation by grace through faith alone. There are even those who advocate embracing Romanism whole heartedly, wearing Roman Catholic garments, and using Roman liturgy in services in supposedly Reformed and evangelical churches. Someone in our denomination has even argued that we should consider coming under the authority of the bishop of Rome. There are a steady number of members and ministers in our churches who regularly fall from grace in the sense that the apostle Paul describes in the book of Galatians, "You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace," (Gal 5:4) when they return to the slavery of manmade religion. These are serious threats to the spiritual legacy of the Reformation which we have been entrusted to impart to the next generation.

We must deal spiritually with these enemies as Matthew Henry said about David's ruthless treatment of Joab and Adonijah to Solomon's succession, "We have here the effectual care David took both to secure Solomon's right and to preserve the public peace, by crushing Adonijah's project in the bud" (Henry, vol. 2, p. 454). So must we who oversee the work of the church must crush in the bud any threats to the legacy of the gospel of grace to succeeding generations.

### **Prayer for Future Generations of Faithfulness**

Behind David's desire to see Solomon succeed him was the same heart for God that carried him through his entire life. Psalm 72 records the prayer David had for Solomon as he prepares to succeed him on the throne. This prayer of David will find its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. In writing it in the Psalms David ensures that the people will sing a prayer of blessing on all future kings in the Davidic line, (Matthew Henry, vol. 3, p. 13). This psalm is also instructive for us as we consider what we are to pray and strive for in succeeding generations in the church. First it is a prayer for righteousness and justice:

Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son! May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice!

Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness!

May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor!

May they fear you while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!

May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth! In his days may the righteous flourish and peace abound, till the moon be no more (Psa.72:1-7)!

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Christ's kingdom. At the beginning of Solomon's reign we see it in Solomon's rule. He no doubt instructed by his father's prayer asks for wisdom to rule in righteousness. We see the prayer fulfilled as

acknowledged by the Queen of Sheba, “Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on his throne as king for the LORD your God! Because your God loved Israel and would establish them forever, he has made you king over them, that you may execute justice and righteousness” (2Chron. 9:8). We know it does not find its fulfillment in Solomon or his successors. Only Jesus Christ fulfills it when He comes to reign, He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:32-33)

### **Prayer for the Reign of Christ.**

David prays that the reign of his son will demonstrate his absolute sovereignty, “May he have dominion from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth!” (Psalm 72:8). In 1Kings 4:21 we read, “Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life (1Kings 4:21-22).” Solomon’s kingdom stretched throughout the known earth, yet as extensive was his reign; it was only a type of the eternal reign of Christ which will cover the earth. Indeed as the church advances through the proclamation of the gospel more and more we see fulfilled the proclamation of the Scripture in Revelation, “Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (Rev 11:15).

### **Prayer for the Nations**

The nations instinctively know of the reign of Christ as illustrated by the wise men from the east who came to Bethlehem to worship as recorded in the gospel of Matthew,

“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him’” (Matt. 2:1-2). As His kingdom expands through the proclamation of the Gospel, God’s desire is that all of the nations might offer up prayers for His honor and glory. This is why missionary outreach must be at the heart of what the church does to extend the kingdom of God. We must be careful to pass on to successive generations a passion for the Gospel of grace for the nations.

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (Rev. 7:9-10).

### **A Heart of Mercy**

We must also pass on a legacy of a passion for mercy ministry,

For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. From oppression and violence he redeems their life, and precious is their blood in his sight (Psa. 72:11-14).

Certainly the reign of Christ includes a heart that desires to see the widow and the orphan cared for and fed, as well as reaching out to the destitute and downtrodden. But most of all it means reaching out to those who were like David’s early companions: those

in debt, those who were in distress, and those who were discouraged. God has called us to seek the cause of the poor and needy and recognize they are sick and needy. Jesus made it plain that He did not come to call the self-righteous, but sinners to repentance. “And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners’” (Mark 2:17). “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven “(Matt.5:3), until a soul comes to understand it is desperately impoverished and hopeless it will not recognize its need for the saving grace of God.

### **A Prayer for The Expansion of Christ’s Kingdom**

David’s prayer for Solomon continues as a prayer for an abundant blessings and the extension of Christ’s kingdom,

Long may he live; may gold of Sheba be given to him! May  
prayer be made for him continually, and blessings invoked for  
him all the day!

May there be abundance of grain in the land; on the tops of the  
mountains may it wave; may its fruit be like Lebanon; and may  
people blossom in the cities like the grass of the field!

(Psa.72:15-16)

David prayed for Solomon to be prayed for continually. This prayer teaches us to pray for Jesus Christ and his rule to cover the earth. His power is such that He can make grain fields grow in the mountains above the tree line and can make an abundant harvest even in the harshest environment. He can plant the Gospel of his unconditional love in the most forbidding, unwelcoming place on earth and it can grow, (Henry, vol. 3, p.

416) This passage calls to mind the great paraphrase of this Psalm in Isaac Watt's hymn, *Jesus Shall Reign*,

To Jesus endless prayer be made and endless praises crown his  
head; His name like sweet perfume shall rise with every  
morning sacrifice.

### **Conclusion**

Finally in this prayer we see David's chief concern for Solomon, that God's favor and blessing would rest on him always,

May his name endure forever, his fame continue as long as the  
sun! May people be blessed in him, all nations call him blessed!  
Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does  
wondrous things. Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the  
whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen! The  
prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended (Psa.72:17-20).

David's prayer for his son, unbeknownst to him, was a prayer for the reign of the greater Son who would be born to the Virgin Mary who would in turn be considered blessed forever because of God's sovereign choice of her to be the mother of the Messiah. Her prayer for herself and each succeeding generation of the faithful in the church is a fitting summary of how it is solely the grace and mercy of God that calls succeeding generations to live under the glorious reign of the Lord Jesus Christ,

For he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.

For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation (Luke 1:48-50).

## CONCLUSION

Jesus said that He came to give us life, and to give it to us abundantly (John 10:10). The life of David shows us what an abundant life looks like. It shows us how to glorify God and enjoy him forever in an Old Testament shadow of the life of Christ Jesus who was yet to come. We should live our life the end in view to glorify God, and no person in the Bible other than Jesus himself shows us more how to do so than David in his life and words. Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, so was David. But David's suffering like ours, was often self-inflicted, due to sinful failing. He was a man tempted in every way like us and full of many sins. Because of this some believers pull back from a close examination of David's life. This is a mistake. David's life and words are at the center of the Bible for a very important reason -- to show us what it means to have a heart for God. Applying lessons from the life of David is a great corrective against the perfectionism that so easily creeps into our understanding of the gospel.

I heard someone once say that the definition of a leader is one who fails regularly in public. David meets that description. Yet as we look at his life even the dark parts of it, we gain great hope for ours in Christ. As we read the Psalms he wrote at the various stages of his life we see how the heart of a man after God's own heart operates. We learn the emotions of faith through the psalms. In this postmodern age our culture is carried away by feeling, not truth. Feelings have replaced the objectivism of the modernism of the preceding generation as the value our culture gives the highest place. The life of David is a prescription for the postmodern heart. David is driven by a real relationship with the living God. He knows the righteous demands of the law and yet he knows his

sinful heart is such that he cannot measure up to God's perfect righteousness and holiness.

There is encouragement in the life of David for every believer at every stage of life: for the young child at home learning obedience in a large family feeling neglected and overlooked by older siblings, for teenagers and college graduates given their first real job with major responsibilities, to soldiers entering battle against imposing odds. There are lessons of the danger of complacency after achieving major successes in life goals. Indeed, there are lessons to be learned from a close study his life that apply to everyone who will carefully observe it from the word of God. Perhaps the most important application is to the believers in so many parts of the world who face overwhelming persecution for their faith in Jesus Christ. David's life shows from beginning to end how God preserves his servants in the midst of the most grievous trials.

More than anything else David's life shows there is hope for the worst of sinners like me who are nonetheless forgiven and blessed by God. He shows us how we are to conduct ourselves even in difficult relationships in order to grow us in grace. The last words of David recorded in 2 Samuel 23 are very apt for concluding this study,

Now these are the last words of David: The oracle of David, the son of Jesse, the oracle of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel:

“The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue.

The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me:

When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God,

He dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth. For does not my house stand so with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire?

But worthless men are all like thorns that are thrown away, for they cannot be taken with the hand; but the man who touches them arms himself with iron and the shaft of a spear, and they are utterly consumed with fire” (2Sam.23:1-7) .

David’s last words here are like the last words of Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, in that they serve as a summary of his life. Although David’s last words do differ from the others mentioned in an important respect, they are less a blessing on his successors than a prophecy about the nature of his kingdom. Three certainties about the kingdom are set forth here by David. It is certain. It is glorious. It has boundaries (Davis, 2 Samuel, pp. 297-301).

### **A Certain Kingdom**

David’s kingdom is as certain as the promise of God. David in the retrospect of his life recorded in 2 Samuel 22 attributes every victory to God’s gracious favor. He is not looking back as he utters his last words; he is looking forward to a glorious future. God made us to be future oriented. He made us to live one day at a time. And the greatest thing we have to look forward to is a glorious eternity with God if we are in Christ. A historical perspective of the certainty of God’s promises to David is absolutely essential

for us to gain a clear understanding of their eternal implications. David, son of Jesse reign approximately one thousand years before Jesus Christ is born, one thousand years after the covenant was made with Abraham in Genesis. The reign of David occurs four hundred years after God deals with Moses as leader of Israel. It is encouraging to our heart to see the certainty of God's promises coming true in the time and space of history when the Scriptures were written down. No other prophetic work can show how every promise of God is completely fulfilled with perfect accuracy according to the plan of God. This is because David and all the Bible's writers speak not on their own initiative but by the Spirit of God. "For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). The kingdom of the Messiah is a just and holy rule (v.3). This cannot be said entirely of David's rule, or of Solomon's, or of Uzziah, or Asa, or any of the Kings, the Scriptures call good, this can only be said of Jesus Christ.

### **A Glorious Kingdom**

The kingdom is as glorious as the sun and the rain that makes nature beautiful, and all who reject him as king will be cast away like sticks in the fire. The kingdom is glorious because the one who rules over it is glorious. He is an attractive, winsome Person. We are used to leaders now in our culture who are self-centered, immoral, and power hungry. All the rulers of the world seem to care about is their own personal power. It is a sad state in our nation as we see the moral vacuum that typifies the average politician. It is the rare exception to see a political leader who truly is a public servant. Sadly, we see the same trend in much of the visible church. The reality of the world is such that no leader or ruler will ever be or do what only Jesus Christ can do. Only He is perfect, only He is

glorious, only He can take away our sins, and only He can solve our biggest problem and make it go away. The follies of this world's leaders only magnify His glory and honor.

### **A Kingdom with Boundaries**

Finally in these last words of David we see the boundaries of the kingdom. Those who submit to the rule of Christ are blessed subjects of the kingdom. Those who reject His rule are cast out of the kingdom. As the succession of kings in Israel and Judah show being a direct physical descendant of David did not ensure a righteous kingdom would prevail. It is a spiritual lesson we must continually take to heart. Being born into a Christian family does not ensure you are truly related to Christ. God has no grandchildren, only those who are adopted by grace through faith alone. Christ's kingdom consists of all who submit to the righteous rule of Christ by faith and repentance.

I have shown how the life of David is instructive for the believer today. A final biblical example is of special worth to make this point. That is the example of Jesus in the gospel of Mark who uses an example from the life of David in just the way I am urging in this paper. The Pharisees were criticizing His disciples for plucking grain heads on the Sabbath to satisfy their hunger. In order to rebuke them He uses an instance from the life of David,

And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which

it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?” (Mark 2:25-26).

Jesus shows how caring for people and their real needs is much more important than outward ritualistic formalism from an example from the life of David. He draws the example from an instance in David’s life in which David’s actions are obviously flawed, in that instance they resulted in the slaughter of the priests at Nob. Still, Jesus uses it to teach a very important spiritual principal that human needs are more important than ritual obedience. If David’s exalted Antitype, Jesus, had a right to set aside a divinely ordained ceremonial provision of the law based on necessity, how much more, does Jesus, God’s Anointed, have a right to do so? (Hendrickson, p.106). By inference here Jesus also teaches us here that we are to look at examples from the life of David given to us in the scriptures, and apply them to our life as we seek by God’s grace to grow in grace, knowledge, and new obedience. Indeed we must listen when Jesus Christ asks us from the Scriptures about the life of David, “Have you never read what David did?”, in every aspect of the life of David as it applies to our life in the church.

## APPENDIX

Study Questions from each chapter for further reflection and application.

## Study 1 -- Introduction

This paper is about a right understanding and application of the life of David that is to assist us in the work that God is doing in our life through the process of sanctification.

The goal of the introduction is to get the believer to honestly assess his understanding of the life of David. The importance and relevance of David's life to our daily life is to "teach us to number our days so that we may get a heart of wisdom." (Psa.90:12)

What is the first thing that comes to your mind when someone mentions the life of David? How do we react when we hear of the public moral failure of people we know?

What does a self-righteous reaction to the moral failings of others tell us about our own spiritual condition?

Do you think believers' use David's failures as an excuse for their own sin?

The Westminster Shorter Catechism question, thirty-five is:

What is sanctification? Answer: Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.

Based on this biblical doctrine, how do you think a study on the life of David can be a part of that process of sanctification?

How do we avoid the danger of moralizing David's virtues, and emulating his failures?

John Calvin calls the Psalms an "anatomy of all parts of the soul". What does he mean?

How is an understanding of the life of David essential to understanding the whole Bible?

In a small group setting, or on your own go through an overview of the whole Bible and tell where the life and writings of David fit into the plan of salvation.

## **Study 2 Behold Your King**

David is presented in the scriptures as the archetypical king of Israel. He is the type of the Messiah who will one day perfectly fulfill the kingship of Israel. As a warrior-king in the ancient near east it was David's job to defend Israel against her enemies. In the same way Jesus is reigning and subduing the Church's enemies under his feet. Jesus conquers as king and to those who will submit and follow he enlists in service. Those who refuse his rule are destroyed. David, albeit in a flawed manner, models how this kingdom is founded.

Read Luke 2:11. What is the significance of Christ's birth in Bethlehem?

How important is an understanding of the Davidic kingship to understanding who Jesus Christ is?

America was founded by rebellion against a king. How do you think this affects our attitude toward the theme of kingship or sovereignty in the Bible? What is most people's attitude toward authority?

Read Deuteronomy 17:13-15. Was it legitimate for Israel to ask for a king?

Read 1 Samuel 18:19-22. What did God promise as a result?

What does this say about God's sovereignty versus man's responsibility? In other words how does God overrule evil with His plan? Read Acts 2: 33-36

Why are the genealogies in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 so important? What is their purpose?

Read Psalm 2:1-6 and Acts 4:24-28. How do the apostles apply this Psalm of David?

How do David and Christ treat their enemies after they have been subdued? What lessons do we learn in life from this? 2 Samuel 19:16-42 and Ephesians 4:7-10?

What happens to the enemies of the King who persist in their rebellion? Psa. 68:21-24.

What various enemies did David face and how are they analogous to the enemies of Christ and His people?

What happens to people who persist in their rebellion against God?

### **Study 3 Lord of the Covenant**

A Covenant is a solemn promise that God makes with His people. In the Davidic Covenant, God made a promise that David and his descendants would reign over Israel forever. It was an unconditional covenant that would never be revoked. It is ultimately fulfilled by Jesus and has the utmost continuing significance for the people of God.

Name some of the Covenants in the Bible. How is the Davidic Covenant in 2 Samuel 7:16 different from them, particularly the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 12:3? How are they similar?

How should the focus of the ancient language of adoption in the Davidic Covenant (1 King 2:4; 8:25; 6:12-13; 9:4, 6-7; Psalms 89:29-32; 132:12) relate to us today in light of the doctrine of adoption? (Romans 8:15-17)

What does it mean to us that the Davidic Covenant is not based on merit but on grace?

Read Psalm 51:16-17. On what did David base his standing before God?

When will the Covenant of David end according to Jeremiah 33:17-22?

What is the significance of the Covenant being repeated in II Chronicles 17 from the perspective of the Babylonian exile?

Pick several Psalms. How are they spoken by Christ, and how are they speaking about Christ, as Mark Futato suggests?

Why is it important for us to understand that the Davidic Covenant is still in effect?

How should we use fulfilled prophecy in our evangelism?

## **Study 4 A Man After God's Own Heart**

The narratives in 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles tell us of the life and events of David. The Psalms tell us of his heart for God. Taken together they give us a sense of the Godward direction of his whole life. Psalm 23 is particularly instructive in that it draws from his time of preparation as young shepherd boy for his later life as king of Israel.

What was David's first calling? How did that prepare him for leadership? How does menial service prepare a person for leadership?

How is the Davidic Covenant tied to the Psalms and how does that aid us in applying them to our life?

When in David's life is he called to be the king? David had to wait many years to be placed on the throne, what does this teach us about preparation for serving?

What were the people of God looking for in a King? How is this similar to how the world chooses its leadership in the church?

How does David relate to God in Psalm 23? Why is this Psalm the most beloved of all Scriptures at the time of death? How should we apply it at other times?

How do we know that God knows and understands our pain and that He is with us in the midst of it according to Psalm 23?

How great is God's provision for us according to Psalm 23?

How do Psalm 23 and Psalm 95 shed light on the benediction in Hebrews 13:20-21?

## **Study 5 Worship in Spirit and Truth**

In John 4:23-24, Jesus tell us that He is seeking those who worship Him in Spirit and in truth. We are told in 1 Samuel 16 that God rejected each of Jesse's sons because they did not possess the heart for God he was looking for. David is chosen because he is a man after God's own heart. The overwhelming dynamic of David's life is worship. It is a worship born in the understanding that our approach to God based on grace and not on merit through an intense, intimate, personal relationship with the Lord.

What statement about the worship of God was David making when he moved the ark to Jerusalem?

What was the fact that God struck Uzzah down because of the way he treated the ark teach us about how we should approach God in worship?

What is the significance of David insisting that the ark be installed before he is installed as king at Jerusalem?

How is the denial of David's desire to build the temple a model for us when our desires and plans are overturned?

Read Psalm 40:6-11. How does this Psalm show that Jesus will put an end to the sacrificial system?

What does the fulfillment of the Old Testament system of sacrifices mean for the salvation of the world?

According to Psalm 40 and Psalm 51:16, 17, what does God desire more than sacrifice from His people?

## **Study 6 A Friend Loves at All Times**

Perhaps you've seen the viral cartoon on the internet of a funeral arranged for hundreds of people to attend and only three people show up, and one of them says, "I don't understand, he had over two thousand friends on Facebook!" There is a great tendency to for many of us to neglect our friendships, forgetting how essential they are for our growth in grace. This chapter deals with the importance of Christian friendship as demonstrated in the life of David.

Read 2 Samuel 23. Relationships among brothers are absolutely essential for our growth in grace. According to this passage how are close relationships formed? Why are these bonds vital for spiritual growth?

What does the fact of our need for friendship say to the need for intentional men's and women's ministry? What might new, intentional, same sex ministries, that serve to build up the body of Christ where you worship look like?

There are many who try to make a homosexual relationship out of the friendship of David and Jonathan. How do you respond?

How is the character of those attracted to David (1 Samuel 22:1-5) and to Jesus (Matthew 11:28) similar. What does this say about those who are most open to the Gospel?

## **Study 7 A Conquering King**

David's victories, particularly his victory over Goliath, stir our heart and imagination like few other accounts in the Bible. They are tied directly to his faithfulness to the Covenant that God made with him. This chapter seeks to show how the same power at work to bring victory over David's enemies should be at work in us to bring us victory in the spiritual battles we face.

What comes to mind when you think of the story of David versus Goliath?

How did the lessons learned as a shepherd prepare him to win a great victory over Goliath?

What are some of the "giants" in your life that need to be confronted? How does this account of David teach you how to gain victory over them?

What was at the heart of Saul's jealousy of David? (1 Samuel 18:7, 8) What does the fact that Saul continues to allow David to serve him say about David's character? What does it say about Saul's? How long do you continue to serve with someone who is your enemy?

What does the Scripture tell us about the source of David's victories? (2 Samuel 8:1-13) How should we apply this today? Should we be asking God's help for victory in our nation's wars, or our football team to win, or should we look for something greater?

What does David's final victory over the Philistine giants teach us about victory as we age?

## Study 8 David's Failures

We can learn more from our failures than we do our victories if we understand them from a biblical perspective. According to Scripture we learn more in trials and affliction than anything else. Looking at the failures in David's life helps us to gain God's perspective on our own. Our failures and our response to them are essential to our sanctification.

What is the greatest failure you have observed recently? Think about and describe the greatest failure of your life. How do the failures of David's life relate to them?

What do the moral failures of Biblical leaders like Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Peter and David tell us about the nature of besetting sin in our life?

How is failure essential to our sanctification?

What was David's failure at Nob? What were the consequences from it? Have failures in your life resulted in great harm to others?

What happens to us when we try to escape our circumstances by means other than what God has appointed? What happened to David at Ziklag?

What was the beginning of David's adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah? What does this teach us about avoiding sin?

How do David's failures to heed the instruction in Deuteronomy 17 contribute to his fall?

What happens as a result of David's failure to discipline his subordinate Joab and his sons Amnon and Absalom?

How does David's sin of numbering Israel affect the nation?

Can you think of examples of when leaders in the church commit sin and it has great rippling effects of judgment in the life of the church and beyond?

## **Study 9 Against You Alone Have I Sinned**

The whole life of a believer should be characterized by a life of repentance. We live in an age in the church in which the need for repentance for salvation is very much minimized. It is a work of grace in the believer's life and will never be completed in this life. It is nonetheless essential for our sanctification, and gives evidence of our salvation. David shows us a repentant heart over and over again after he fails and then turns to God for forgiveness.

Westminster Shorter Catechism question eighty-seven says:

What is repentance unto life? Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.

What are examples of repentance in David's life? How does repentance work itself out in David's life at the various instances of his public failures?

How does David's escape from Ziklag illustrate the truth of 1 Corinthians 10:13?

What is your natural tendency when you see someone overtaken in grievous sin. Do you move toward them, or pull away?

Does repentance remove the consequences of sin from David's life? Does it from ours?

Does Psalm 51:4a, "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight" strike you as an audacious statement given what David did to others?

What should our response be when we see others fall into sin? How does this lead us to a closer examination of our lives and a deeper personal repentance?

How did David come to understand the depth of his sin of numbering Israel?

Why is exposure of our sin a necessary part of the process of repentance?

## **Study 10 Love Your Enemies**

The Gospel teaches us, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, (Mat 5:43-44). In David's life we see him repeatedly putting into practice the principles of loving one's enemies, and loving the undeserving long before the incarnation of his Greater Son. David's life illustrates how we put this principle of loving our enemies into practice.

What led Saul to be David's enemy? (1 Samuel 15:25, 26)

Sometimes we are responsible for those things that make us into enemies to others. How do we know when we are not?

How close was David to Saul? Do you have people who are close to you who have become your enemies?

How does the way David treated Saul teach us to treat the enemies in our life?

What does 1 Samuel 18:5-9 tell us about the heart issue that cause Saul's hatred of David? Have I harbored attitudes like that of Saul that have made me the enemy of others?

What happens to David's conscience when he cuts off a corner of Saul's robe at Engedi?

What does “Nabal” mean? How does Nabal live up to his name? How does David’s treatment of him show how we should deal with fools? (2 Timothy 4:14)

Read 1 Samuel 24:14; Matthew 7:3-5; and Galatians 6:1. What must be the posture of our heart when confronting someone’s sin?

Does forgiveness always mean reconciliation? How do we deal with an abuser?

## Study 11 Betrayal

Betrayal is the destruction of the trust that is the basis of every relationship. If you have lived very long at all you have been betrayed. Likewise you have no doubt betrayed others yourself. Betrayal is a prominent theme in David's life, both as one who is often betrayed, and also as one who betrays others. How we respond when we recognize our betrayal of others and when we are betrayed is vital to our spiritual growth.

Have you ever been betrayed in your life? How did it feel?

Have you ever betrayed others? Have you ever betrayed Christ? What is the greatest betrayal of all time? Discuss famous betrayals in history.

List some of the people that David betrayed in his life.

What did David do when he recognized he had betrayed others?

David's son Absalom betrayed him by leading a rebellion enlisting David's best friend and confidant Ahitophel. Ahitophel felt justified for betraying David. Do you see why? Do you think he was?

What are we taught from scripture about not taking our own revenge? (Rom 12:19)

What happens when we ignore this command?

How is the betrayal of David by Ahitophel spoken of in Psalm 41 also a prophecy of Judas's betrayal of Jesus? (John 13:18, 26)

What is the nature of conspiratorial rebellion according to Psalm 2:1-5?

## **Study 12 A Man of Sorrows**

Suffering comes into the life of David as a result of injustice, his own moral failure, and the betrayal of others. So it is in the life of every believer. We suffer as a result of our own sin and the sin of others as well. We suffer simply as a result of living in a fallen world, broken by sin. Sometimes we suffer as did Job, by direct, demonic attack. For whatever reason suffering comes to us the Bible calls us to understand it as a part of God's grace at work in our lives.

The most frequently used Psalm genre is the lament. What does this simple fact tell us about the importance of suffering in the believer's life?

What are the various reasons for suffering in the life of David? Can you relate to any of them specifically?

How is the suffering of David related to the suffering of Jesus? How does this fact relate to us today?

How can a biblical understanding of suffering keep us from despair and complete loss of hope?

### **Study 13 Succession**

The Davidic covenant instituted a kingdom according to the custom of that time. The throne of Israel would be passed from one generation of David's descendants to the next. The principles we see as he passes the throne to Solomon are principles should apply as we look to the next generation of spiritual leadership in the church as well.

How was succession supposed to occur on the throne of Israel? How is succession supposed to occur in the church of Jesus Christ?

What three prominent successions are there in the record of 1 and 2 Samuel and that of 1 and 2 Chronicles? What lessons do we learn from each of them?

What is the ultimate succession to the throne of David? Who occupies it now? Where?

How did David deal with threats to the succession of Solomon to the throne?

How does this show that we should deal with threats to the spiritual legacy we want to impart to the next generation.

Name some spiritual threats that need to be dealt with ruthlessly for the sake of the next generation of the church.

How does David's prayer anticipate the reign of David's Greater Son Jesus?

What are some positive ways that we can ensure that the next generation of the church is prepared to advance the kingdom of Christ?

## **Study 14 Conclusion**

Jesus said that He came to give us life, and to give it to us abundantly; (John 10:10), the life of David shows us what an abundant life looks like. It shows us how to glorify God and enjoy him forever. David's life and words are at the center of the Bible for a very important reason -- to show us what it means to have a heart for God.

How is the life of David a great corrective against perfectionism?

At what stage of David's life can you most identify with in your present situation?

Does a study of the life of David change any perceptions you have about the Christian life?

How should a study of the life of David deepen our personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

How does the life of David demonstrate that there is hope for us from the Gospel at every stage of our lives?

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## VITA

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