

A Man Loved By God

DAVID was a man who possessed many qualities that God wanted in a king. This faithful man was Israel's greatest king and an ancestor of Jesus Christ. He is described like this by God:

I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will (Acts 13:22).

Preparation

David's early life was excellent preparation for becoming a king. As shepherd to his father's sheep, he had to learn responsibility for a flock that was not his own. He had to care for the sheep and do what his father wanted with them. This would prepare him for taking care of Israel, the 'flock' or people of God. It was also during these years as a shepherd that he learned to have faith in God.

When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it... The LORD... delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear (1 Samuel 17:3-37).

Coming to the throne was not an easy time for David. He was hunted for many years by his predecessor and he had to flee for his life many times. He was brought time and time again to the depths of despair, but he found prayer to be a constant strength. We

can read some of these prayers in Psalms 34 and 52.

This time of trial was another necessary part of the development of one of the Bible's greatest characters. By the time David came to the throne he had firmly established a wonderful trust in and relationship to God.

A Godly King?

The reign of David shows in many ways how God's coming kingdom will be. David ruled on God's behalf, trying to lead the people so that they would obey and please God. He built the fragmented people of Israel into a united kingdom. The enemies of God were subdued and the nations around were brought into submission.

David appointed people to sing and play music to praise God at all hours of the day. He gathered the materials and prepared extensive plans for the building of a glorious temple for God. In all of this he was guided by God, and Samuel, His prophet. This example of noble government will be surpassed only by Christ's kingdom.

He did however commit two serious crimes and sins against God. He committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of one of his greatest warriors. When she became pregnant, he murdered Uriah, her husband, in a failed attempt to cover up the first offence.

God's Forgiveness

It may be hard to understand why God pardoned David these two sins, which under God's law were punishable by death. By forgiving him, God showed that He is, and always has been, a merciful God. It is important to note that David both repented and confessed his sins:

So David said to Nathan [the Prophet], "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die" (2 Samuel 12:13).

God's forgiveness can be a wonderful comfort, because everyone disobeys God in either small or big things. However, if we are trying to the best of our ability to please Him, and if we ask God for forgiveness, He is willing to forgive.

This did not mean that David did not have to face the consequences of his sin. He lost the respect and friendship of many of the people around him. It even led to members of his family being killed. For the rest of his life he suffered terrible shame and remorse for the things which could never be undone.

David's Response

As we saw above, David was quick to confess his sins and to seek forgiveness. Throughout his life, he recognised God's goodness and justice, and tried to please Him.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out

my transgressions... For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me... Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me... I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You (Psalm 51:1, 3, 10, 13).

This is a great lesson for us. No matter what we have done we can always put it behind us and try to do better. If we fail, we've just got to get up and carry on, knowing that God wants us to succeed and will help us all He can along the way. The Psalms of David can be very encouraging to read, whatever our situation.

Character

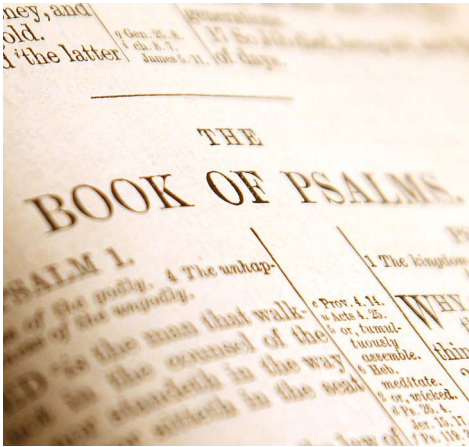
So, what made David a man after God's own heart? Firstly, he had an understanding of kingly duty:

He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God (2 Samuel 23:3).

Despite his faults, David did try to rule like this and was greatly blessed by God. He lived in harmony with priests and prophets and did not oppress his people but gave them freedom and led worship under God's law.

David was also very humble. His kingdom grew until it was comparable to Egypt or Assyria. Yet he was not arrogant about this, but attributed his successes to God.

Nor did he tax the people in order to live in luxury as his son would later do. His people loved him, and David always remembered that he was only a shepherd for God's flock.



He studied and loved God's word more than any other king after him. He modelled his life on what God had revealed in the law, not only spending time to learn the commandments but also to think about the spirit behind them. He tried to model his reign on God's law which was the secret of its success. Two Psalms which show his great love for God's word are Psalm 19 and Psalm 119.

It is little wonder then that God made great promises to David and made known to him His glorious plans for the future, when David's own descendant would reign for ever over God's flock in that glorious kingdom.

Lessons for Us

Let's consider four things we can learn from David's life.

1. The different situations of life can provide tremendous training, teaching us how to trust God and to build a

relationship with Him. These may be opportunities or difficulties: both can shape characters that will please God.

2. There is great value in considering ourselves as God's servants and trying our hardest to do what He asks, no matter what difficulties we face. Jesus himself considered himself to be a servant: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).
3. God is willing and eager to forgive our sins, if we confess them and ask for His forgiveness. This also needs repentance (a change of direction) with the commitment to try to do better. Although sins may be forgiven, we may not escape punishment for them, and the retribution will most likely be the consequences of our own actions.
4. We need God's guidance in our lives, and so prayer to Him should not merely be to request His help in times of trouble but also to thank and praise Him for His goodness to us. David's Psalms provide wonderful examples of this.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered... Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous (Psalm 32:1, 11).

David was a man greatly loved by God: that certainly makes him someone from whom we can learn!

Laura Morgan