

Lessons from the Life of David - Chapter 1

Chosen by God

David's story is one of the most interesting and absorbing in the Bible. The name David means 'Beloved', which proved to be true of this fine Bible character that was beloved of so many during his very eventful life. It is worth noting that more Scripture is given to recording David's life and work than any person other than God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. David lived an intriguing life, filled with noble deeds, high aspirations, great accomplishments for his God and his people and yet having committed terrible sins. In describing David's life and personality, someone has said, 'In its elements and passion, tenderness, piety, generosity and fierceness - this shepherd, soldier, poet, priest, prophet, king, statesman, leader and devoted father, David stands alone. Such a man as this then, became God's choice to be the second King of Israel. Samuel, a great man of God describing David in 1 Samuel chapter 13 verse 14, said, "The Lord has sought out a man after His own heart and appointed him the leader of his people." We discover as we read the Bible, that God's choices are always, without exception, the most appropriate ones. This is because God is sovereign and in consequence is always right.

We are first introduced to David in 1 Samuel chapter 16, where we have presented to us a very clear description of God at work through His great servant Samuel, in choosing a future King to replace Saul, the then reigning monarch. Samuel was directed to the house of Jesse, a God - fearing man who had eight sons. God had briefed Samuel to interview each of these sons in order to discover who was to be anointed that very day as the eventual replacement for Saul. To do this, as one would expect, Samuel started with the eldest son, Eliab. He was a fine tall specimen of a man of fine appearance. But the Lord said to Samuel, "This is not the one." Samuel was taught a lesson here. We then read that Jesse made all seven of his sons pass before Samuel who had to tell Jesse that the Lord has not chosen any of these. Samuel then asked, "Are these all the sons you have?" Jesse answered, "There is still one, my youngest, who is out in the fields tending the sheep." On hearing this, Samuel said, "Send for him. We will not sit down until he arrives." David was then brought in. The Bible says he was fair with a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the Lord spoke and said, "He is the one. Rise, Samuel, and anoint him." This he did, taking the horn of oil and anointing David in the presence of his family. We are told that from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power.

I believe that there are some very important lessons that Christian believers can learn from this account of David's selection by God. We note the words of our Saviour in the Gospel of John chapter 15 verse 16 where speaking to his disciples, Jesus said, "You have not chosen me but I have chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit." How wonderful to know that we too are his chosen ones and that in choosing us He wants us to serve Him in the harvest field of this world. His great desire and intention is that we should be fruitful. First of all through the daily witness of our lives, and secondly as we share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others who need to know Him personally.

Paul, the great Apostle to the Gentiles, had an amazing conversion. It is described in detail in Acts chapter 9. We are told that as he travelled on the road to Damascus, suddenly a light flashed from heaven and as he fell blinded to the ground, he heard the voice of Jesus saying to him, "Saul, why do you persecute me." Saul replied, "Who are you Lord." And he was told, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do." His men led him into the city, and after three days a disciple of Jesus, named Ananias, was sent to help him. The Lord had given Ananias an instruction to find this new convert, Saul, and help him. We are told

that the Lord said to Ananias, "This man is my chosen vessel to the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel." For the rest of his life Saul, whose name was later changed to Paul, fulfilled that call and commission and as a result, countless numbers of people from many nations, became true, dedicated followers of Jesus Christ.

I trust that we have discovered in our study that every Christian believer has been chosen for a purpose. Let us then endeavour out of love for our Saviour and Lord seek to fulfil his expectation of us.

Lessons from the Life of David - Chapter 2

The Shepherd

In this series we are looking at the life of King David of Israel. We have previously noted that David lived a most eventful life, undertaking many roles as a servant of God whom he served faithfully for most of his life. One of these early roles was that of a shepherd. The first mention of David in Scripture, in 1 Samuel chapter 16 verse 11, we read that he was out in the fields tending his father's sheep. We discovered last time that this shepherd lad, the youngest member of his family, was the one whom Samuel, the prophet of the Lord, was to anoint as God's choice to become the second king of Israel. It was generally accepted that shepherding was a lowly occupation and not of great importance. However, minding sheep and caring for them called for diligence and vigilance. It could also be dangerous and the shepherd needed to display bravery. On one occasion when David stood before King Saul, he told him of his encounter with a lion, which he slew as he guarded his father's sheep. Here, then, was a teenager who was doing a man sized job in semi-obscurity, but doing it honourably and with dedication. He was a shepherd indeed and an honourable one at that.

The shepherds of the Bible were real men and it was clear that God was aware of the many qualities that they showed in their work. We can think of Moses, who for forty years minded the sheep for his father-in-law Jethro in the wilderness. He had been a prince in Egypt. But, for God's purposes, he learned many lessons as a shepherd, which put him in good stead for leading God's people later when journeying to the Promised Land. In Psalm 78 verses 70 to 72, we are told that the Lord took David from shepherding sheep to shepherding the people of God. To do this he would feed them according to the integrity of his heart and by the skilfulness of his hands. The dictionary tells us that integrity is complete sincerity or honesty, qualities that God looks for in men and women He wishes to use in His service. We read in Acts chapter 13 verse 22, where the Apostle Paul was talking about Israel's history, that God raised up David to be their king of whom he bore witness and said, "I have found David, a son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart who will do all my will and carry out my Chapterme fully." There is a lesson for all God's people today in this. Our work and service for Him must always be from the heart. We read in Colossians chapter 3 verse 23, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward."

It is not surprising that the shepherd who had a great heart for his sheep uttered the immortal words of Psalm 23, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." God had always desired to be accepted as the shepherd of His people looking upon humanity as His sheep. The prophet Isaiah, in his 53rd. chapter says, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way." It is sin that has separated us sinners from the God who loves us. But God by His grace sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the Good Shepherd who would willingly lay down His life so that we might have eternal life. David was able to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd," because through faith he had accepted personally God's provision for him. The prophet Isaiah, in his 40th. chapter, describes his God as being the "Lord God who comes with power, whose arm rules for Him and who tends His flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart and He gently leads those that have young."

It is often said that David, in many ways, portrayed in his life the work of God's only Son the Lord Jesus Christ. We are told in Mark chapter 9 verse 34 that He "was moved with compassion when he saw the multitude because they where like sheep, not having a shepherd." Later on in His ministry, recorded in the Gospel of John chapter 10, Jesus described Himself as being the Good Shepherd who had come to lay down His life for the

sheep. He also said that He was the gate, or the means of entrance for the sheep and whoever enters through Him will be saved. Further He said, "I have come that the sheep might have life and have it to the full."

I wonder if you know the Good Shepherd yourself? You can have that assurance by recognising that, as a sinner, a lost sheep, by placing your trust in Him you can enter the gate of Christ's sheep-fold and receive his gift of eternal life.

We conclude this study by reminding ourselves again of Psalm 78. God chose David, his servant and took him from the sheep-pens, from tending the sheep. God brought him to be the shepherd of his people Israel, his inheritance, and David shepherded them with integrity of heart, and with skilful hands he led them.

Lessons from the Life of David - Chapter 3

The Soldier

We continue our studies, in which we are looking at the life of David. Today we will think about David the soldier. We read about his first experience of battle in 1 Samuel chapter 17. We are told that the Philistines, avowed enemies of the nation of Israel, had gathered their forces for war. Saul, king of Israel at that time, assembled with his army and camped in the valley of Elah. The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another, with the valley between them.

We are told that the Philistines had a champion named Goliath, who presented himself twice a day for forty days. He is described in the following detail:

He was in height, over nine feet tall.

His coat of armour weighed five thousand shekels (fifty-seven kilos) and was made of bronze.

The shaft of his spear was like a weavers beam, its head weighed six hundred shekels (seven kilos).

He carried a bronze javelin across his shoulder.

His huge shield was carried by a bearer.

Saul and the army of Israel, never for a moment underestimated his power and military potential. On hearing his voice and challenge we are told that Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.

One day, David, the shepherd lad, was instructed by his father Jesse to go to the field of battle with quantity of food for his brothers who were serving in Saul's army. Early in the morning David set out, obeying his father's instructions. On arrival, he sought out his brothers and as he was greeting them Goliath the champion of the Philistines stepped out from his lines and challenged the army of Israel yet again. David heard him and noted to his dismay that when the Israelites saw Goliath they all ran from him in great fear. David asked the men near him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel?" He was told that the king would give great wealth to the man that defeated and killed him. He would also give him his daughter, a princess, in marriage.

David then with great maturity, asked, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he would defy the armies of the living God?" On hearing this, his older brothers burned with anger towards him and accused him of being conceited. However, what David said was overheard and reported to King Saul, who then sent for him. David said to the king, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him." Saul said, "You are only a boy and he has been a fighting man from his youth." How true, he was only a shepherd boy. He was not officially in the army. He had never been trained as a warrior, but he was to prove that age is no barrier to becoming a spiritual warrior for God. He had not come to the battle scene to ask for conflict, but he was prepared to stand for his God. To see the armies of Israel, God's people, defied by a heathen champion, was to David the cause of great shame. It was the honour of the God of heaven, whom he loved and served, that was at stake.

Someone has said that on that day, "The boy who has held communion with his God on the hillside minding sheep becomes a man in the presence of that which threatens God's glory on the battlefield. He becomes bold before the enemy because he has been bowed before the Lord his God. He knew his God intimately and as a result was not deterred from undertaking exploits for him that others are afraid to face." The apostle Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 10 verse 4 come to mind. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of this world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. Paul also said in Romans chapter 8 verse 31, "If God is for us, who can be against us."

Our story tells us that Saul provided armour for David to wear but it was too heavy for him, so he took it off and went out to meet Goliath with his staff in his hand and a sling. Seeing a stream before him, he chose five smooth stones and approached Goliath who on seeing David coming said, "Am I a dog that you should come to me with sticks. Come here and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the fields." David replying said, "You come against me with sword, spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel. This day the Lord will hand you over to me and strike you down and cut off your head. For the battle is the Lord's." David then reached for a stone. He slung it and struck the Philistine on his head and he fell face down on the ground dead. Standing over him, David took his sword and cut off his head.

David's fight that day is a vivid picture of the constant conflict which every believer has to wage against the world, the flesh and the devil. It is our spiritual warfare. Thanks be to God that He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. David showed what a man born from above can do by the exercise of faith.

Lessons from the Life of David - Chapter 4

Obedient to the Lord

In a previous study we noted that it was in God's sovereign purpose that David the shepherd lad would one day become king of Israel. We need to remember always that God never alters His purposes and plans. When once He has resolved to do something, He always brings it to pass. This is because He is infinite and almighty. Man may fight against God's purposes, his enemies may oppose his plans and time might elapse, but inevitably He will prevail and implement his predictions.

We read in 1 Samuel chapter 16 verse 12 that God instructed Samuel his great servant to rise up and anoint David because He had chosen him to be the next king of Israel. This was one of three anointings of David. The second was at Hebron, when he became king over the house of Judah and the third was seven years after when the Elders of Israel anointed him king of Israel. However, we realise from the promise first being made to David the youth much time elapsed before God's promise was fulfilled. David's behaviour throughout teach us some important and vital lessons; here are some of them:

First, David would not anticipate God and become king by his own hand and effort. Twice we read in the Bible record of his life, that he had Saul at his mercy and could have taken his life. The temptation must have been severe. His friends urged him to avail himself of the opportunity. His nephew offered to strike the fatal blow for him while Saul was sleeping and defenceless. David resisted, for God's law to him was sacred and had to be obeyed. So he would not raise a hand against the Lord's anointed. David's resolve was to await with patience God's time. Knowing that his God would eventually honour him for his faithfulness. There are times in our own lives when we would like to hurry God, but we need to remember that often, God's wheels turn slowly but surely.

The second lesson we learn from David's example is that during the period of waiting for God's appointment, he sought guidance from his God in conducting his life at each step. As he waited, he was in a position of learning and preparation for the whole of the time. David was content to serve his apprenticeship diligently, knowing that the office of king would bring with it great responsibility and tremendous challenges. One feels that the result of this was that when he eventually became King, he turned out to be the greatest of all time.

Thirdly, David would teach us that when God's will is revealed to His waiting servant, he must be ready to obey and act accordingly. Someone has rightly said that it is a question of asking for a revelation of God's will, awaiting God's time, and then acting as God shows. It has been described like this: "Ask, Await and Act". Ask for God's will. Await God's time and act as God shows you.

So, in obedience to God's will, David and his men came to Hebron, chief city of Judah (Jerusalem at this time was still in the hands of the Jebusites). In 2 Samuel chapter 2 verse 1, we read that David enquired of the Lord saying, "Shall I go up to the cities of Judah." And the Lord said, "Go up." He sought and received God's guidance. Hebron, by the way, means "Union", "Communion" or "Association", quite appropriate in this instance.

The lesson here for us all, is that if we are to accomplish great things for God in our lives, we must, by prayerful exercise and direction from God's word, discover God's will for ourselves as David did. The result was that David with his wives and his faithful men went up there and they settled in Hebron and its towns. Then we are told the men of Judah came to Hebron and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. Thus

God's promise and prediction was fulfilled and His servant David honoured. This was stage one in uniting God's people. The next stage is described in 1 Samuel chapter 5 verse 1 where we read that all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said "We are your own flesh and blood. In the past when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the Lord said to you, 'You shall shepherd my people, Israel and you shall become their ruler.'" Then all the Elders came and they anointed David king over Israel. David at this time was thirty years old when he became king and he reigned for forty years. In all this he sought to honour God as he served Him and his people.

Lessons from the Life of David - Chapter 5

Dependant on God

Last time we were thinking about David's anointing first of all as king of Judah and then as king of Israel and the commencement of a forty year reign. Today we will observe from 2 Samuel chapter 5 verse 6, that David's first act as king was to capture Jerusalem, "The stronghold of Zion and the city of the great king."

It was the earthly centre of God's government and a type of the heavenly Jerusalem to which we as believers have come, according to Hebrews chapter 12 verse 2. Mount Zion the city of the living God. Says the writer further "you have come by faith to God the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect - to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant." How blessed we are as Christian believers, by the provision of our God! No city on earth, someone has said, can touch Jerusalem for interest and importance. In the Bible "Shalom" means peace, taken from Jerusalem which means city of peace or the foundations of peace. Yet no city has so belied its name. It has suffered more sieges and warfare than almost any other in the world. We are told in verse 6 that David and his men marched to Jerusalem to attack the Jebusites, who jeered at David and said with certainty, "You will not get in here. Even the blind and lame can ward you off." However, they underestimated David's military knowledge and skill and he and his army captured the fortress of Zion, the city of David. We are told further that David became more and more powerful, because the Lord God Almighty was with him, and his continuing story was one of success and prosperity. David recognised that God had set him as king in Zion and his eyes were ever to the Lord. Whatever his human faults were, and like all of us he had many, he maintained a devout reverence for his God, the Lord Jehovah.

Someone has said because of his reliance upon the Lord, he went on going and growing. From conflict to conflict and victory to victory he progressed. He grew to be a great conqueror because he was constantly endeavouring to grow into a good man. He would teach each of us that fellowship with the Lord of hosts can only be maintained in this way. While David realised his need of divine assistance in the encounters with the enemies of Israel, he was also conscious of needing the same grace in respect of his own life. One of the great dangers of life is that its outward activities can prevent the believer from engaging in communication with the Lord. We can try so hard to live so well before men, that we fail to make time for living before God. The call of the street is so loud that it drowns out the note that summons us to the sanctuary.

David's next victory in battle was with Israel's hated enemies the Philistines. We read that when they heard that David has been anointed king over Israel they went up in full force to search for him. However, David heard about it and went down to their stronghold. We note that 2 Samuel chapter 5 verse 19 tells us that first of all David enquired of the Lord, "Shall I go and attack the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?" The Lord answered him, "Go, for I will surely hand the Philistines over to you." So David went to Baal-Perayim and there he defeated them. He went on to say, "As waters break out, the Lord has broken out against my enemies before me." David showed yet again, his implicit faith in the Lord his God, and would not take a step without seeking his guidance and approval first. The chapter goes on to tell us that this was the first of two victories against the Philistines in the space of a very short time. On this occasion the Lord instructed David on the method of attack he would use. He did as God directed and prevailed victoriously.

Moving now to 2 Samuel chapter 7 we read of David's next great venture for God and Israel. It was to bring back to Jerusalem the Ark of the Covenant - the Ark of God.

Moses, the great leader of Israel, had been instructed by the Lord to build this most sacred piece of furniture and place it in the most holy place in the tabernacle many years before. Sadly, in a battle with the Philistines, Israel was defeated and the ark carried off. It finally was returned by the Philistines, who were afraid to keep it in their territory because of the judgement of the Lord God of Israel. It was eventually taken to the house of Abinidab, where it stayed for twenty years. As he reigned in Jerusalem, David longed for the day when the ark of the Lord could be brought to his royal city and given its rightful place in the midst of his people. So one day he set out with thirty thousand chosen men and they brought back this most sacred piece of furniture. Some have said that this was the most joyous event of David's reign. King and people united in glad thanksgiving that once again the sacred sign of God's presence was re-established in their midst. David himself was lost in joyous wonder and the work was done in the spirit of worship before the Lord.

Our service for God is to be joyful, thankful and done with all our might. David had been greatly blessed in his life by the Lord and here was another opportunity to show his gratitude. We are told then that David blessed the people and made sacrificial offerings to the Lord. We must always ensure that the Lord is honoured among his people. This is a great privilege that we, like Israel that day, can share in. David then with regal liberality provided food for every one of his subjects and then ventured home to bless his own household. Let us ever remember our responsibilities to our families - it is often said that love begins at home, where we should always be a witness and blessing to our loved ones.

Lessons from the Life of David - Chapter 6

The Songwriter

King David of Israel has often been called the "Sweet Psalmist". As we follow the life of this great Bible character, we gather that he was unusually gifted. In 1 Samuel chapter 16 we read that King Saul said to his attendants, "Find someone who plays the harp well and bring him to me". One of his servants answered, "I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem, who knows how to play the harp. He is a brave man and a warrior. He speaks well and is a fine looking man and the Lord is with him". As a result, David was brought before the King and became one of his armour bearers and Saul liked him very much. We are told that Saul was clearly often disturbed in his mind and David was asked to play the harp in his presence to soothe him. We read that he would feel better as he listened to the music.

Much later when David became king, he recognised the place of music in the worship of God. Praise to David was a celebration and included various elements in spiritual experience. David made himself responsible for choosing and establishing the various groups of singers and musicians for the temple services described in 1 Chronicles chapter 15. He arranged them into three groups under the leadership of three men from the tribe of Levi: Asaph, Hemen and Ethan. These men also wrote several Psalms. David himself wrote many songs, which often arose out of specific experiences in his life; in particular of his relationship with his God, who was always very real to him. We know many of them in our day thousands of years later, and as we study them we are greatly blessed. David's psalms allow us to understand his very heart-breathings and they portray to us his growing relationship with his heavenly father, also his obvious and intense love for God's name and honour.

These were the deep things that gripped and enriched David's spirit, which he sought to teach his followers. David's example in relation to praising God is perhaps one that all believers should seek to follow. Someone has said, "One characteristic of the life of God's people is that they constantly praise Him." Praise is an expression of homage, adoration and thanksgiving to God, either in prayer or in song and may be accompanied by various expressions of joy. Psalm 145 is entitled, "A psalm of praise of David." In verse 1 he says, "I will praise your name forever and ever"; and in verse 2, "Every day I will praise you and extol your name forever and ever." In verse 4, David says, "Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise." Then as the psalm closes at verse 21, David concludes his meditation by stating, "My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord forever and ever."

I read recently, that praise is the overflow of a joyful heart and was reminded that the Christian does not have to wait for the day when he will see the Lord to praise Him. He is worthy of our praise every day as we eagerly await His promised return. David's many songs have softened, melted and purified many hearts. They are inspired poems that show him not only to be an eminent prophet of the Lord, but a guide to the devotions of the people of God in every generation. The great Victorian preacher and Bible teacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon says in his wonderful commentary on the Psalms of David, "Only those who have meditated profoundly upon the Psalms can have an adequate conception of the wealth they contain." Said Spurgeon further, 'After spending twenty years on this study, a tinge of sadness is on my spirit as I quit the Treasury of David - never to find on Earth a richer storehouse.

Blessed have been the days spent in morning, hoping, believing and exulting with David."

In summary then, we recognise that David's psalms clearly convey to us the relationship that existed between him and his God. They bear out the meaning and validity of God's description of this former shepherd lad who became king of Israel. Said God; "I have found David a man after mine own heart."

Lessons from the Life of David - Chapter 7

His Love of the Scriptures

In our present series of studies of the life and work of King David of Israel, we have noted many of the reasons for his great achievements and successes as a dedicated servant of God. His growing love for God and willingness to serve Him, is an example for all believers to emulate. Today we will consider, particularly, David's obvious love of God's word in the scriptures.

In Psalm 12 verse 6, David writes, "The words and promises of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace, purified seven times over." He says further, in Psalm 18 verse 30, "As for God, His way is perfect! The way of the Lord is tested and tried. He is a shield to all those who take refuge and put their trust in Him." In Psalm 19, David writes about God revealing Himself to man in two particular ways. Firstly, through creation. This he describes in verses 1 to 6, and then through His word, this he details in verses 7 to 11.

The psalm opens with this great statement: "The heavens declare the glory of God ; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth." David was obviously a student of the stars. He must often have studied the heavens as he sat keeping watch over his father's sheep in the fields at night. So he tells us that the solar heavens are constantly preaching sermons.

Genesis 15 tells us that the stars are innumerable. It is therefore difficult for us to grasp their immensity and majesty. Scientists tell us that if we travelled at the speed of light - 186,000 miles per second - or roughly a trillion miles a year, it would take us ten billion years to reach the farthest point we can see with a telescope. Now, astronomers think that space may have no bounds at all. Our Earth is nothing but a tiny speck in a limitless expanse. We are amazed therefore at the wonder of it all. Someone has rightly said, "If creation is so great, how much greater is the creator," the Lord of heaven and Earth. Day and night, nature is declaring God's greatness, power, wisdom and glory. It is obvious then, that man is without excuse in the light of such unending revelation.

In verses 7 to 11 of Psalm 19, David writes about God's revelation to man through his word, the Scriptures, having told us that God's works reveal his knowledge and power, as seen in his creation, David now tells us in effect, that God's words reveal his love and His grace. David only had the first five books of the Bible and it is clear that he treasured all that he could read about in them. Today we, many of us as believers, have the complete and final revelation of God and his precious Son, Jesus Christ to read, meditate and act upon daily. We, like David, should value highly the living word of God.

In these verses in this psalm, we are thinking about, David uses six titles in describing God's word 1. As the Law of God. 2. It is the testimony of the Lord. 3. It contains the statutes of the Lord. 4. It lists the commandments of the Lord, as given to Moses, Israel's great servant. 5. It speaks of the fear of the Lord and 6. It tells of the judgements of the Lord.

David goes on to list eight qualities of God's word: It is perfect; it is sure; it is right; it is pure; it is clean; it is enduring; it is true and it is righteous. Little wonder that David was so thankful for and enthusiastic about the Scriptures.

It is very important to note further, that David in these verses reminds us of what results can be expected if God's word is accepted and applied to the life of the recipient. They are described like this:

1. The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul (or bringing about conversion.)
2. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple
3. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the soul'
4. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.
5. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever.
6. The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous.

David then sums all this wonderful truth up in this delightful statement. All these attributes of the Lord in His word are much more precious than gold and they are sweeter than honey. One Christian writer reminds us that that just as men have to dig deep to find gold, so the believer will need to search the word of God to find its treasures.

The section finishes by David saying to all his readers, "By these ordinances your servant is warned and in keeping them there is great reward." May we continue to learn from God's precious, eternal word.

Lessons from the Life of David - Chapter 8

The Sinner

We will look today at the subject of David the sinner. The full account of this can be read in 2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12.

David was a sinner, as indeed we all are. The bible states very clearly in the book of Romans that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We need to realise also that we are not sinners because we sin, rather we sin because we are sinners and are born as such. However, how wonderful it is to know that Paul wrote these words to Timothy, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" such as we are. The Apostle John, in his first letter writes, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. However, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." I wonder if you have realised this for yourself.

In studying Bible characters, we are never looking at perfect people and King David was certainly not without his faults and failures. In the account of his great act of sin, David, was perhaps, in a backsliding condition of soul when his great temptation came and in weakness, just as we do, he fell. As believers, we constantly need to remember that we are always safe from temptation as we abide in Christ and we can only be strong when Christ is our strength. When David committed his shameful sin he should have been leading his army in a battle with the Ammonites. Indeed Joab, David's general, had to send messages to encourage David to join him when he ought to have been there in the first place. David perchance had been slacking at home. Someone has said, "lazy times can be times of temptation."

In order for David's sin to be a lesson to all who followed, the Bible describes in detail what took place. We are told that he saw the woman Bathsheba and her beauty attracted him. He made enquiries as to who she was and having discovered that she was the wife of one of his army officers he sent for her and took her in adultery. This act was a grievous sin against God's law. The woman Bathsheba's husband was Uriah - a God-fearing loyal soldier. The woman conceived as a result of David's infidelity and when David realised this, he tried to cover his wrongdoing by having her husband placed in the forefront of the battle and he was killed. In summary, David took another man's wife and to hide his sin he took another man's life. The two terrible sins of adultery and premeditated murder, ignoring the fact that nothing is hidden from almighty God.

We next read of God's condemnation of David's sin through Nathan the prophet of the Lord, who God sent directly to David. Nathan used a parable to touch the heart of David and bring home to him the seriousness of wilful sin. You can read about it in 2 Samuel chapter 12. David became very angry on hearing about the injustice of the situation described by the prophet, and said that such an action was worthy of death. David did not know that he was pronouncing judgement upon himself, but on hearing the prophet's word, "you are the man", he realised that the Lord had seen his sinful act and had brought his sin to light.

There followed from David a confession resulting from conviction, "I have sinned against the Lord" ever David's priority - with all his failings David was ever God-fearing. Thus he pleaded guilty and awaited his sentence. It is interesting however to consider Nathan's reply: "The Lord has put away your sin. You shall not die." Someone has said "In wrath God always remembers mercy." The expression "put away your sin", points to Calvary where the Lord Jesus Christ died as a substitute for all sinners. Our Saviour's death was the only ground on which sin could be righteously forgiven.

At this time David wrote Psalm 51. One writer has said, "Nothing in the world or time has been written like it." The psalm is full of tears and shame, yet not despair. There is no word of excuse in it, but it is full of faith. One quotation from it is worth noting: We read in verse 17 "a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God you will not despise." So spoke David, the man after God's own heart.

Finally, we should recognise that forgiveness does not undo the consequences of sin. A drunkard may find mercy, but his poor wrecked body still shows the ravages of sin. Forgiveness did not undo the past for David, it did not bring back to life or restore the happiness of his ruined home. Forgiveness does not remove the reproach to the honour of God. Thus David, though forgiven, must be disciplined. So the prophet told him, "The sword shall not depart from your house." He had ruined by his sin another man's home, and his own after that was ruined by family factions. The Bible teaches, "Whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap." We do well to heed God's word.

Lessons from the Life of David - Chapter 9

The Supplicant

I have entitled today's study on David's life, David the supplicant. We have discovered so far in looking at the life of this great man of God, many of the things that made him a useful servant in the cause of his God. Among them is that he had a regular contact with God through prayer. Someone has said, "Prayer is that activity of believers, whereby they communicate with God, worshipping Him, praising Him, thanking Him, confessing to Him and making requests of Him." We who are believers pray because we know by experience that our God is the source of all good, the supreme sovereign of all that happens in time and is the omnipotent, all powerful one. Faith is the basis of all true prayer and is the means by which believers come to God and ask Him to exercise that power. We need to keep in mind that God promises to answer our prayers only if they are offered out of pure motives and are according to His will and with the genuine desire to bring glory to His great name. Also, we petition for our needs, not our wants and sometimes for His own good reasons, God will not answer in the way we would like Him to. These were important lessons that David had to learn in his life for God.

Many of David's psalms are prayers and he can teach us so much about our approach to God. For example, in Psalm 54, David prays, "Hear my prayer O God. Give ear to the words of my mouth." Someone has said, "As long as God has an open ear, we cannot be shut up in trouble." David at this time needed deliverance from his enemies, they seemed to be everywhere. However, he goes on to say in verse 4, "Behold, God is my helper." He recognised that God protects His people. Spurgeon comments on this and says, "What matters the number or violence of the believers' foes when God uplifts the shield of His omnipotence to guard us and the sword of His power to aid us. Little care we for the defiance of our foes while we have the defence of our God."

In Psalm 55, David implores the Lord to give ear to his prayer. Here, David is almost craving an audience with heaven and an answer from the throne. He goes on to say, "Attend unto me and hear me," knowing from experience that the Lord will listen and attend so carefully that He would understand the pleas of his servant. Our God will often fulfil desires, which we ourselves could not have expressed in intelligible words. As Paul puts it in Romans chapter 8, "Groanings that cannot be uttered" are often prayers that cannot be refused. In verse 17, David teaches us the importance of regular times of prayer. He says, "Evening and morning and at noon, I will pray." To begin, continue and end the day in communication with God is supreme wisdom. What David means here is that he will always pray. He finishes the statement by saying with confidence, again born out of experience, "And the Lord shall hear my voice." Spurgeon said, "When our window is opened towards heaven, the windows of heaven are open to us. Have but a pleading heart and God will have a plenteous hand." I read recently that developing prayer habits can be of tremendous help to those of us who want to develop a close relationship with the Lord.

David's life as king was never an easy one. He had many enemies to contend with and many battles to fight, most of which he won with God's help. In addition, David had to contend with many family problems, which brought him much heartbreak.

So it is that in several Psalms, we find him at prayer. I am sure that you, like me, need so often to come to the throne of grace where we seek the Lord's help in times of difficulty and distress. Joseph Schiven wrote a lovely hymn, which has been a great encouragement to the Lord's people for almost 200 years now. Let me remind you of the first verse:

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and grief's to bear,
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

The sentiments and truth of this hymn, was certainly David's experience.

We read of David's final prayer just before he died in 1 Chronicles chapter 29. It followed the gathering of all the moneys and materials collected by the people of Israel for the building by Solomon of the temple of the Lord. The gifts they brought along with David's own contributions were liberal and generous. This caused David to offer to the Lord a magnificent prayer of worship and thanksgiving. In this, David's final prayer, offered before his people, he offered worship and thanksgiving proclaiming the Lord as being worthy of all honour. He acknowledged the Lord as the source of all riches and honour stating that he and his people were unworthy to give to God. All that they gave had come from God anyway. He prayed finally that the present devotion of his people to their God would become a permanent practice. We would do well to follow David's example as a consistent supplicant.

Lessons from the Life of David - Chapter 10

The Fruits of the Spirit 1

In the first talk in this series on the life of King David, we recalled that he was chosen by God to do a great work as the shepherd of God's people, Israel. Samuel, the leader of Israel at that time, anointed him with oil to signify that God had selected him to fulfil a very special role in the service of the Almighty. The Bible then tells us, in 1 Samuel 16, that the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. The Bible teaches that no one is fit for God's work who has not been anointed. In the new Testament we read in 2 Corinthians 1 verses 21-22, that every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has received the Holy Spirit. Paul writes, "Now it is God who makes both you and us stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set His seal of ownership on us and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."

The Bible teaches further that no one can do God's work except by the Holy Spirit, and by God's work is meant living for God as well as working for God. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts." Our sinful hearts will always lead us astray unless they are cleansed and we are guided by the Holy Spirit constantly, if we are to please God and do His work.

In relation to David, at his anointing, we are told that from that day on, the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power. It was inevitable then that evidence of the Holy Spirit working in David's life could be seen. I think it is best described in the words of St Paul the New Testament, as the fruit of the Spirit. We read about this in Galatians chapter 5 verse 22. The fruit of the Spirit, Paul explains, is nine-fold. Notice it is the fruit of the Spirit - singular - indicating the unity of the qualities and their connection with each other in contrast to the works of the flesh. This fruit, Paul explains, is the product of an inward power - the Holy Spirit, described in detail as - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. They can be seen in three groups:

1. Those which look towards God: Love, Joy and Peace.
2. Those which are in relation to others: Patience, Kindness and Goodness.
3. Those which personal: Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self control.

We can find it helpful in our study to look at these attributes in the life and work of David in some detail.

Firstly: Love. This Paul teaches is AGAPE (God's love) and there is no other love like it. The Apostle John in his first letter, chapter 4, tells us as believers to love one another, for love comes from God, he says further, "Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God, because God is love, and this is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him."

So we gather that the practice of love is godliness. David practised it and others responded. We are told that Saul, the king, loved David greatly, also that Jonathan, Saul's son, loved David as his own soul. Further we are told that all Israel and Judah loved David, and all found their hearts won and knit to him. In this David was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, "The altogether lovely one", as scripture puts it. I believe that people in his day showed love like that of his God to them.

Someone has said that David's heart of love was perhaps best seen in his grieving over the loss of those he loved dearly. When Saul, the king, and Jonathan his son and David's great friend, were killed in battle, David said, "The beauty of Israel is slain. How are the mighty fallen." Here, David displayed his love for his enemies because Saul had sought to kill David on a number of occasions. But now David recalled the tremendous love bond that existed between him and Jonathan saying, "Your love to me was wonderful more wonderful than the love of women. I grieve for you Jonathan my brother, you were very dear to me."

Another example of David's love was seen much later when his rebel wayward son Absalom was killed after leading a revolt against him. We hear him cry, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son. Would to God that I had died for you." There was only one love greater than this - love for rebels, love for sinners, the love of Christ for me. Little wonder that the Apostle Paul wrote in one of his letters, "I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." David, in his life, manifested some of the love of God to others, but his greatest love was for his God.

Lessons from the Life of David - Chapter 11

The Fruits of the Spirit 2

We continue today looking at the fruit of the Spirit in David's life, having discovered last time something of the practice of "love", we now can think about "joy" in David's experience. This joy, the scholars tell us, results from one's knowledge of and fellowship with God. It has to do with deep delight and contentment in the ways of God. David says in Psalm 43 verse 4, "Then will I go to the altar of God, my joy and my delight. I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God." David, we know, was an accomplished musician and he expressed his joy in playing his instrument. In Psalm 16 verse 11 he says, "You have made known to me the path of life and you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." David loved to be in God's house, worshipping so he says in Psalm 27 verse 6, 'I will offer in God's tabernacle sacrifices of joy. I will sing and make music to the Lord. In the New Testament, in Philippians chapter 3, Paul calls upon all believers to rejoice in the Lord always. At that time, Paul was suffering in a Roman gaol, not happy circumstances for him physically, but spiritually, he had everything and it caused him to express his joy in the Lord.

Having thought about love and joy in David's spirit controlled life, we discover that David experienced "peace" in his life, another fruit of the Spirit. This is not the peace with God through our salvation, but rather the peace of God in our lives. The tranquillity or contentment enjoyed by those who live in harmony with the will of God.

So we note that David who faced many difficulties in life and had many enemies to cope with could, in spite of such things, say in Psalm 4 verse 8, "I will lay down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." That was David's personal experience, but in Psalm 29, verses 11 he says further, so as to encourage others, "The Lord gives strength to His people, the Lord blesses His people with peace." David's mind was often in turmoil and he sometimes reached great depths of despair but beneath it all, just like the oceans, the deep waters were tranquil. Let us remind ourselves now of the second group that comprise the fruit of the Spirit, namely: Patience, Kindness and Goodness.

The first of these then is "patience", or long-suffering. This is patience in dealing with others - even if we find them difficult or opposed to us. Peter, the great follower of Jesus, reminds us in his first letter in chapter 3 that God is long-suffering in His dealings with mankind. Peter says that God waited patiently for over a century while Noah built his ark for the people to respond to his message and repent. However, only eight souls were saved because they heeded God's message through His servant, while others ignored it and scoffed.

During his life, David on a number of occasions demonstrated this God-like patience. For instance we read in 1 Samuel chapter 24 that Saul seeking David's life, gathered some three thousand men and they went out to seek David and his men, no doubt with a view to killing them. When night came, Saul lay down to sleep in a cave and David with his men found him. David's followers said to him, "The day which the Lord promised you when He would deliver your enemy into your hands has come, do to him what shall seem good to you." David could have killed him there, but he believed that God would protect the Lord's anointed. It is well said that the flesh spontaneously reacts, but the Spirit forbears as Christ our Saviour did.

Moving on, we come to "kindness" or gentleness and "goodness." This can include gentle-kindness, compassion to others, kindly activity for the benefit of others and kindly disposition to one's neighbour. David was a perfect exponent of such graces as these.

We have evidence of this in 1 Samuel chapter 22, where we read about David in exile and he was fleeing from Saul who was seeking his life. He found refuge in the cave of Adullam. We are told that when David's family heard that he was there, they came and sought protection with him. He freely received them. In addition all those that were in distress or in debt or discontented, gathered around him and he became their leader also - some four hundred people.

This reminds us of one who was yet to come, "Great David's greater son", the Lord Jesus Christ, who one day, in Matthew chapter 11 verse 28, gave this wonderfully kind, all-embracing invitation to the people of His day: "Come to me all you are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls." That invitation still stands today, respond to it, and you will benefit greatly.

Lessons from the Life of David - Chapter 12

The Fruits of the Spirit 3

Today we will look at two further examples of David acting in kindness and showing compassion to others. The first of these is recorded in 1 Samuel chapter 30. David, his followers and their families were living in Ziklag, a town which King Achish, a Philistine ruler, had given to David. While David and his men had left Ziklag to fight in a battle with enemies of Achish, another enemy of David, the Amalekites, burning Ziklag to the ground, carrying off much spoil, including David's loved ones. His home was burnt, his wives and children were taken captive. His people were discouraged and spoke of stoning him. David had been immensely popular, but popularity can be a fickle thing and cannot always be relied upon. Directly David's success failed, popularity waned. Let us remember the crowd that shouted praises to Christ one day, shouted "crucify him" the next. On his discovery of all that had happened, David was understandably greatly distressed, but as ever he knew what to do.

In Psalm 18, written about this time, he says, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress, my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust." Ziklag may have been utterly destroyed, but he has a better stronghold in his God. He says further, 'In my distress I called upon the Lord and cried unto my God: He heard my voice. This is the experience of all who have ever put God to the test.

David in this experience, would teach us how to act in trouble. We observe firstly: He did not restrain his grief - he wept until he had no more power to weep. Tears can bring relief and are a good way of showing loving and tender sympathy, but faith rises above the tears and acts wisely. Secondly: David encouraged himself in the Lord his God. He remembered God's love - this is the way all the saints have strengthened their hearts in sorrow. He remembered that God never changes. David had proved God often in his life - someone has said, 'His love in time past forbids me to think He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink. He knew that his God was very gracious, so because I have made a mistake, that is no reason for thinking that God will not help me to recover. God loves to help his saints to recover from their failings.

We note further that David sought for guidance. He called for Abiathar the priest to bring the ephod. This was one of the priestly robes. It is described in Exodus chapter 28 verses 6 to 30 and was worn by the high priest of the Lord. Wearing this the priest, speaking for David, enquired of the Lord; "Shall I pursue the enemy?" The Lord answered, "Pursue and you will recover all." As David and his followers pursued them, they found in a field an Egyptian who had been wounded and had been left to die without food and drink. He was brought to David and was given water to drink and food to eat, for he had had nothing for three days and nights. David asked him to whom he belonged. The man answered, "I am the slave of an Amalakite. I became ill and my master abandoned me. We had been raiding and we burned Ziklag." David asked, "Can you lead me to this raiding party?" He did and when David's men came upon them they were partying and revelling. After some twenty four hours of fighting, David outfought them and recovered everything they had taken, including his wives, his children and his livestock.

We discover in this incident something of David's kindness and compassion towards this poor Egyptian slave. Surely here is the picture of the sinner in desperate need of God's deliverance, and we are reminded of the Saviour's words, "The Son of Man is come and to save what was lost." We notice that David's men gave bread, reminding us of the bread of life which Jesus brought and which sinners receive by faith in Him. He was given water, reminding us of the water of life received after conversion and the fruit of

the vine in the raisins he was given, speaking of the joy experienced by all who feed upon the Lord.

In 2 Samuel chapter 9, we have a second example of David's love, kindness and compassion. There we read the story of Mephibosheth, the son of David's greatest friend, Jonathan. He had been crippled as the result of an accident when he was but four years old. David had asked his servants one day if there was anyone left in the house of Saul to whom he might show a kindness. He was told about Mephibosheth and immediately directed his servants to find him and bring him to his palace. On arrival his David cried out, " Mephibosheth!" The young man replied, "Your servant!"

"Don't be afraid," David said, "for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father, Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather, Saul, and you will always eat at my table." Mephibosheth bowed his head and said, "What is your servant that you should notice a dead dog like me." Later, we are told that Mephibosheth and his family were sent for and they became David's guests also.

This heart touching story reminds us of God's great kindness to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. As sinners deserving God's judgement for our sins we, like this crippled man, were helpless and lost. But the love of God rescued us and through faith brought us also to be treated as sons and daughters of the King of Kings. For our spiritual growth and development, we sit daily at God's table by His grace.

Lessons from the Life of David - Chapter 13

The Fruits of the Spirit 4

Today we come to our final study in this series on the eventful and fruitful life of King David of Israel. In recent studies we have discovered examples of the fruit of the Spirit in David's life for God. The Apostle Paul cites these in Galatians chapter 5 verses 22 and 23 they are, writes Paul: Love, Joy, Peace, Longsuffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness and Temperance (i.e. the act of avoiding excesses).

In this study, we will look at the final three examples, which have to do with personal practices in the life of the believer. First then, what can David teach us about faith? We understand the word faith here to mean faithfulness, fidelity, loyalty or trustworthiness - even reliability. All these characteristics someone has said have to do with the habit of mind which does not doubt that God is working all things together for good to those who love and honour Him. Suspicion of God is a work of the flesh - where as faith is a work of the Spirit.

In looking at David's long life in scripture we see that it is marked from youth to old age by evidences of faithfulness and fidelity to his God. We readily recall the day, when as a mere youth, on discovering on the field of battle that no one in the army of Israel was prepared to stand for God against the champion of the Philistines, Goliath, David went out alone while his countrymen cowered in their tents in fear. With the knowledge that his God would give him the victory. God rewarded him accordingly and he defeated and killed Goliath and Israel that day prevailed.

There are many other examples, during David's reign as king, of his faithfulness as a servant of God, perhaps summed up in his final words of advice to Solomon his son who followed him as king. We read of these in 1 Kings chapter 1. David says, "I am about to die and in following me be strong, show yourself a man and observe what the Lord your God requires: walk in his ways and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements as written in the Law of Moses so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go." David's example is one we would all do well to follow. It requires faithfulness and loyalty to God alone.

We then come to another great fruit of the Spirit - meekness - (note not weakness) meekness is the opposite of arrogance, assertiveness and violence. It is positively to do with submission to God. Meekness has been described as strength under control. In classical Greek history, it is used of a spirited stallion - responsive and obedient to its rider's slightest touch. We recall from an earlier study that David manifested meekness during the long period of waiting, before, under God's direction he eventually was given the throne as king. In particular on the occasion when Saul was at his mercy while sleeping and David could have taken his life, but David wishing to comply with God's ruling would not raise his hand against the Lord's anointed. In meekness, he was prepared to wait for God's time.

The final example of the fruit of the Spirit is temperance - better rendered as self-control. In the life of the believer, it has to do with mastery over every sinful desire, impulse, appetite and longing. It enables a person to walk through this world completely in control of himself, so that he triumphs when others around him are falling. - this quality produced by the Holy Spirit spells victory.

Sadly, self-control was not always seen in the life of David and there are examples of his failings in this respect. Like him we must all recognise the weakness of the flesh in our own lives and be conscious of the warfare between the flesh and Spirit within us daily as

we live the Christian life. For this warfare, the Apostle Paul reminds us in the Ephesian letter, God has provided a full armour. He says, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the Devil's schemes. Remembering as David discovered so often in his life that we prevail in the strength of the Lord.

As we look back over this series of studies on David's life, we have seen that from humble beginnings as the youngest son of a Bethlehem shepherd named Jesse, David rose to become Israel's greatest King. He established a dynasty out of which, according to God's plan the great Messiah, the Son of David who was Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. His career was one of romantic, colourful incidents and surprising contrasts. It is essentially a human story, illustrating the weakness as well as the strength of a character of unusual capacity.

I trust that we will all have benefited from this study of David - "The man after God's own heart."