

PLAIN TALK ON DAVID

by Manford George Gutzke

(Understanding The Ways Of The Lord)

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(Understanding The Ways Of The Lord)

Chapter 1

David As A Lad

As we note the record of how God dealt with the kings of Israel, we should keep in mind we have been made kings and priests unto God (Revelation 1:6). There is something in the way in which the king was to govern his kingdom which is like the way I am supposed to govern my life. There is something in the way in which the king was to be obedient unto God in the direction of his affairs that is like the way I am to be obedient unto God in the direction of my affairs. The young man David was given just as great an opportunity as Saul and on the same condition that he would obey. It is an inspiring story in David's case because he made it, and became the greatest king that Israel ever had.

Anybody that knows the Bible story and knows at all about David, knows of David's sin. In due time we shall discuss David's sin. We shall not try to cover it up. What we must not forget is that while David did falter and fall into that sin, in everything except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite, he was a man after God's own heart. He was totally and altogether committed to obey God.

The lesson in all this is plain enough. In the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ you and I are offered everything. God Himself offers to give Himself to us, and to see us through. The only condition that there is with us and God is that we respond to Him in faith. This means that we should yield ourselves to God, and let God have His way in us. Because "it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure." Even so we may stumble.

The story of David begins very much like the story of Saul, and that is with his anointing. In this anointing of David, Samuel came and poured oil on his head. In that dramatic fashion Samuel put his hand on him, touching him to say, "You are it, you are the man who is to be king." That was the beginning of things for David.

Our spiritual experience begins at that time when we have the feeling that the Lord is talking to us personally. That is when He seems to say to us, "You; you are it. You are the one I came for and I want you now." The believer then responds to God, without understanding everything and without knowing all that is going to happen, There will be other things that he is not able to see through, but he does see the face of Jesus Christ, he does feel his own need, he does trust God's almighty grace; he looks up into His face and says, "Here I am, Lord. Here I am. Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth." That attitude on the part of anybody attaches him to God. After that God takes over, gently, wisely, firmly, faithfully, everlastingly. "He that hath begun a good work in you will complete it"

When once you commit yourself to God He does not after that put you on probation. "He that hath begun a good work in you will complete it." When that assurance grows in your soul, and you come to where you are real sure in your soul that God will never leave you nor forsake you, there is a wide-spread confidence and joy that comes up inside of you that will carry you on all the way as long as you go. It is one of the blessings of the Gospel.

When Samuel went to anoint David, he did not know who the man was to be. This is a salutary truth for those of us who would walk and work in the will of God. It is never too assuring when someone serving the Lord leaves you with the impression he knows absolutely for sure just exactly everything God wants him to do. Old Testament men were not like that, and New Testament men were not like that. Actually those men searched the mind of the Lord: God did not always reveal everything to them. Samuel after a lifelong service was an old man experienced in the Lord with a wonderful record of constant faithfulness to God. When God sent Samuel, He told him only, "You go to the house of Jesse. He will be there."

So Samuel went to this man Jesse, and said that he wanted to find one of Jesse's sons. So they brought him the oldest son. When Samuel saw the oldest son coming, a fine upstanding man, doubtless mature and competent, Samuel felt in his heart, "This is a good one. This will surely be the one." But when he came before Samuel, Samuel again felt in his heart that this was not the one. Then Samuel turned to the father and said, "Do you have another son?" "Yes." And Jesse brought the second son. Again Samuel felt that this was a good man, but he was not the man. "Do you have another son?" He brought the third son, and the fourth son, and the fifth son, and the sixth son; and none of them would fit. Jesse was inclined to say, "That is all there is." Samuel was as mystified as he was. Samuel said, "Do you not have another?" "Oh, there is a boy, a lad. He is out taking care of the sheep." "Bring him in." And so they went for this lad, who was probably in his teens, out taking care of the sheep.

When David came in and Samuel saw him, the Lord told him in his heart, "This is the man." So Samuel took David aside and explained to him why he was doing this, and anointed him. So far as David is concerned, just a sheep herder, just a shepherd boy is all that he was when God told him he would be king. It is just conceivable that some thirteen, fourteen, fifteen year old boy or girl might have in his or her

heart all the issues of missionary service, all the issues of a long life spent for God. These can be settled with a person when he is very young. That is what happened with David.

When Samuel anointed him, something happened to David. Something happened to David's consciousness. David would never feel the same again. He was scheduled to be king. From that time on, David would conduct himself differently. A young person needs that sense of acceptance, and that sense of being identified as someone important. In David's case it was something real. As long as any young person, boy or girl, has the feeling he or she does not amount to anything it is mighty hard for that person to be virtuous.

It would be wonderful for every preacher, when he goes in the pulpit, if he could conduct himself in such a way that the young people sitting before him would get the impression and get the vision that they individually could have the Lord Jesus as a Companion. Some will not want Him, I know, and these we cannot help. But some will take Him. They would be transformed. That is what happened with this young man, David.

The next time we read of David, we read war had been declared with the Philistines. All his older brothers were in the army. David was too young for military service, so he would be around seventeen, eighteen, nineteen years of age, too young to be in military service, when his father sent him with supplies. In those days, the folks at home supplied the rations to the soldiers on the field. So his father sent David with the rations for his brothers.

Thus David was in camp, a country boy bringing in a hamper of food for his brothers who were in the service. While he was there, the regular morning activities took place. It was then that Goliath, the champion of the Philistines, came out within shouting distance of the Israelitish camp, and challenged any man in the Israelitish army to a duel. The whole battle would be decided on what would happen between these two champions. Goliath, a giant, came out brandishing his spear and sword, inviting any one of the Israelites to come out and fight him and settle this whole thing here. He would issue his challenge; nobody would take him up and then he would walk back into camp. The Philistines would taunt the Israelites for their cowardice. This happened every morning.

One morning, David came with his food. He saw this big man come. He heard this challenge, and David turned around to these soldiers and said, "Why does not somebody take him up?" His brothers said, "Listen, you young squirt, you go on home. You are too young to talk about these things." "I am young, but why does not somebody take him up?" And he kept saying this until somebody said, "You talk like you would take him up." "Sure I would take him on." Somebody went in to the king, Saul, and said, "We have a man out here that says he will take on Goliath." "Send him in. I want to talk to him." He was the first one that had that kind of courage, and Saul wanted to see him.

So they brought this young lad in, and the king asked him, "Are you serious about it? Are you willing to take on this man?" "Why, yes." So Saul said, "All right, if you are willing to go out there, I will put you in the service right now." So they got David ready to go out and fight this champion. Saul stood head and shoulders above everybody. Since this stripling, this young shepherd lad, was going out to fight the giant, they wanted to give him a suit of armor. Saul took his armor, broad shouldered, tall, and offered it to David. In addition to being a man of faith, David was also a man of good sense. David put that armor aside.

David was skilled with a slingshot. He went down to the brook and picked five smooth stones. Let us note this. It only took one stone to do the job. But David picked up five. Some would leave you with the impression that if you were obeying God, so that you were really in the will of God, you would just know that the first stone would just hit the spot. David was not like that. David was absolutely dependent upon God, and used the best judgment he had. The champion Goliath came out and saw this lad without any armor, without a sword, coming out against him with just a slingshot. The record shows that Goliath was insulted. With rage he shouted out, "What is the idea of making a fool of me? Sending out this boy! It is

his own hard luck in this thing. He is going to take it now, and I am going to give his carcass to the birds right here." David, we read, ran to meet him.

In combat, both personal and in the group, when a man is able to run out to meet the enemy, it shows that he has no reservations. As far as he is concerned, he is sure. All he wants to do is join the issue. Here is this young lad running to meet him. David called to him as he was running, "Who are you, Phillistine, to cast this challenge against the armies of God?" David did not say, "Who are you to challenge me?" No, what gave David his courage was he felt himself to be God's instrument, and as God's instrument God would certainly use him. That was the feeling that he had when he ran out to meet Goliath.

When David got within range, he threw one stone, and it sunk into the giant's forehead. No doubt there was providence, help from God in this. I am sure David was skillful, but God honored him, helped him at that time. He stunned Goliath. The giant fell to the ground stunned. Then David took Goliath's own sword and cut off his head.

When David killed Goliath, he suddenly shot into fame. He no longer went back to be a shepherd. He was now taken into the army and became a member of the headquarter's staff. Saul used him around his house. The people found out that this young soldier was not only a capable competent soldier, but he was a great musician also. This accomplishment indicates that David trained himself to be competent in different areas of activity. While David was tending sheep he was not just wasting time. He was playing a flute, and he was throwing stones with that slingshot of his. He became expert in those things. In his spare time, he was playing a harp and he did it well. Thus the young man became a court entertainer.

In addition to that, he was a very famous young man. The songs that they sang in the streets as the soldiers were marching along went like this: "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." David was a popular hero. Everybody honored him. This started a new phase in David's life. The people were singing "Saul is a great man all right, but David, he is really a great man." The Scripture records "Saul eyed David from that day forward." David saw the look and the record is: "David behaved himself wisely." That is always the thing to do for a young man who has success.

Saul probably was not such a bad man as men go. He probably was quite important. He was a great man. He had a marvelous son, Jonathan. Jonathan is one of the outstanding men you read about. He was the oldest son of Saul and the man who would become Saul's successor.

Samuel had said that Saul would not succeed but the people would not feel that way. Saul was still the great king, and Jonathan was a great fighter. Jonathan is the kind of a man that slipped down into the enemy camp to spy it out, to see what it was like. He came down again and saw what they were like at night, fell upon them, and got them to fighting among themselves. Single-handed he put several hundred of them to flight. Jonathan was a very courageous man, a very competent and great fighter, and a great leader in the army. Jonathan was a close friend of David.

The friendship of David and Jonathan is classic. No matter where you hear it anywhere in the world, anybody who has ever heard the Bible story will appreciate David and Jonathan. When they think of David and Jonathan, all the advantages were with Jonathan. But I will say for David there was something about him of such a nature that he could make great friends. For a man to have great competent men who were loyal to him, a man like that cannot be all bad. David was an outstanding man because among other things Jonathan was his friend. But in comparison, the advantage is always with Jonathan because David could not give Jonathan anything. Jonathan was a prince, David was a shepherd boy.

Jonathan said to David, "I know that you are chosen to be king in my place." Then what he said was, "I am with you all the way through." It is obvious about Jonathan that he did not have to be king to be kingly. If ever there was a man who showed selflessness, it was Jonathan. As Saul would be looking at David, thinking about David, he was jealous of him. This is what happened. It appeared that Saul had what I think would be called probably paranoia, some sort of psychological disturbance. When this spell came over him, Saul would do things that were irrational. He would act crazy, but he was crazy like a fox.

Saul put on this act and when he was in this seizure, he would throw that spear straight at David. So David decided to get out of there.

He called Jonathan to one side and said, "Your father is trying to kill me." Jonathan said, "Oh no, not my father. My father is too good a man for that." David said, "I tell you he is trying to kill me. I have ducked him each time, but I may not be so lucky next time. I am going to leave." Jonathan said, "Oh no." David said, "Well, we will put him to a test. Tonight there is to be a big banquet and I am supposed to be there. So, instead of being there, I will be out here all packed ready to leave to go over the border. And you V in my place. When your father comes in to this banquet, he will notice my empty chair and he will ask where I am. You tell him I am absent on business, and then you watch him. If his heart is all right toward me, he will accept that. But if, as I think, your father hates me and wants to kill me, when he hears I am gone he will get angry. You watch him and see. Jonathan said, "All right. I will put him to the test. But you are just foolish. It is not that way." Jonathan just could not believe that his father was that mean. So David said, "You just watch and you will find out."

Jonathan said, "I will tell you what you do. You get your suitcase packed and be ready to leave. You be out there watching, and I will go in and find out. And if, when I find out that he acts in a way that shows that he feels kindly toward you, I will come out here and I will go out for target practice, shooting my arrow." It was his custom to have his archer boy run out and pick up the arrows and bring them back when he would be shooting at a target. Jonathan said, "If I shoot an arrow up into the air and my boy goes out to get it, and I say to my boy 'It is this way, come on in', you will know I am telling you to come on in. It is all right. But if I tell him when he is looking for it 'It is further on', then you will know what to do. You will leave." And so they arranged that little scheme.

Saul came to the banquet and David's place was empty. Saul saw it. He immediately asked Jonathan, "Where is David?" Jonathan told him he was away on business. Saul said, "You ought to know he is scheming to overthrow this throne. He thinks he is going to be king. He is going to take your place. You are just a fool to trust him." As he was talking that way, Jonathan knew with sickness and sadness of heart that his father really hated David, and would have killed him. So Jonathan, according to the plan, went out and shot his arrow up into the air and when it landed and the archer boy ran after it, he said, "Further, further." David understood and he left home. That is how David became a fugitive.

In this period of David's life, he was a fugitive from Saul. He was in danger of his life. Saul would have killed him if he had found him. David fled from pillar to post. The king sent out his army against him to catch him. David hid out, one time over here, another time over there. People came to join him. Various men came and made up a company until David became a leader of a host. The kind of people who came to join David were the people who were poor and the people that were in debt.

Yet later on in David's career, you will read that those people were rated as mighty men. It makes a very interesting character study to see the kind of men that came to David and the kind of men they were in battle. They became giants in battle. This indicates some of the remarkable capacity of leadership that David had. David was able to inspire them. They followed him until they became lion-faced as he was, with such courage as he had.

In his leaving home the way he did, he was without much equipment. He remembered Goliath's sword. When he was killed David took his sword and hung it up as a trophy, in what was called the Lord's house. He hung it up as a trophy in there to be seen. But now that he was going to be a fugitive, he went in there to the priest and asked for Goliath's sword. These were his words: "There is nothing like it. It is the best one I ever had." He went in and took Goliath's sword with him.

In leaving in haste the way he did, he did not have any supplies. There were no restaurants or any place to buy a meal on those days. He went into the tabernacle. The shewbread was put there every day for purposes of ceremonial commemoration of God feeding the people, and was part of the regular worship service just like communion bread is with our Lord's Supper. David went in and took those loaves of shewbread with him. And in the New Testament when our Lord was accounting for the fact that His

disciples were shelling out wheat on the Lord's Day, on the Sabbath Day, for their food, and the Pharisees accused them of harvesting on the Sabbath Day and said they should be punished for breaking the law, the Lord Jesus used these words, "Have you not read how David took the shewbread which was not lawful to eat?" The implication was that he took it, and it was not sin when he took it, because it was a necessity.

When Saul realized that David had escaped him, he gave lament to something like this, "Everybody is against me. Everybody is against me. If I had any friends in my companions here at all, they would show me where David is. I cannot find David because my own men will not tell me. My own men are not faithful." It was a lament which you would call self pity. Among his soldiers, there was one Doeg an Edomite. A man from Edom who was not a real Israelite, but one of the descendants of Esau. This Edomite said that he knew where David had gone and they came to the priest's house, to Ahimelech, and asked him about it. Ahimelech said, "Well, he was here, but he has gone. Where he has gone, I do not know." Saul commanded the soldiers to kill Ahimelech, and they would not do it.

They would not kill him because Ahimelech was a priest. Saul was enraged beyond reason. Then Doeg the Edomite, the man who came from a different brand of people altogether, volunteered to kill Ahimelech, and did. Later on, David dealt with him, but that was what happened at the time. And so David became a fugitive again. We need to remember the Bible says that in all points save in the matter of Uriah the Hittite, David was a man after God's own heart.

Chapter 2

David As A Fugitive

In the latter part of King Saul's life, he had been pursuing David, seeking to capture him and to kill him. David had been evading him, and successfully keeping out of his way. But that made David a fugitive. David had quite a company of men who followed him. It is not accurate to call them a group of bandits, because that is not true. They were more like a revolutionary army. They were responsible men. When David kept his men together in the outlying country, away from the big city of Jerusalem and out in the mountain, he occasionally fought with the Philistines.

The country of Israel was surrounded by enemies. Although David himself was a fugitive, every now and again he would fight with these enemies and destroy one or another of them, and in that way take the pressure off Israel even though the government of Israel was treating him as if he were a fugitive from justice. Nabal the sheep herder had his sheep up in the mountains and would have been subject to possible raids from enemies. But David hovered in that community, and when the enemies would come in view, David would chase them away. So the sheep herder Nabal was able to pasture his sheep up in the mountains in comparative peace because David was protecting him.

At a certain time of the year when it was sheep shearing time, David sent two men down to Nabal to collect tribute, receive a contribution for his campaign. He asked Nabal to contribute to David's expenses because David was having to keep his army going under the circumstances. Nabal acted in what we would call a churlish fashion; that is the word used about it in the scriptural record. He treated these men with disrespect, these delegates from David. He mocked them and ridiculed them in front of all others, insulted them, and sent them away without anything. Nabal said "One hears a good deal nowadays of servants running away from their masters and we are not much impressed by that kind of people," implying that that is what David was. Although David had been protecting Nabal, this was the kind of pay that his agents received. Nabal insulted them and sent them home in a disgraced fashion.

When Nabal had done this, one of his servants, seeing the whole thing and knowing what kind of man David was, betook himself back to headquarters to Nabal's wife, who was named Abigail. She was apparently woman of some discretion and understanding. This servant got back to Abigail as quickly as he could and said to her, "Your master has just done a foolish thing. David sent down two representatives to collect some contribution for his expenses. We are really dependent upon David. As a matter of fact, we have enjoyed peace and prosperity up there because David protected us. It would have been nothing more than right that we should contribute to him. But instead of your husband contributing to the campaign of David, which would have been perfectly proper, he treated his delegates with disrespect and sent them home in an insulting fashion. And you know what kind of man David is. David will come right down on us. He will just wipe us out because David is not going to take that." This shows that David's reputation was that of being a man of integrity, a man who paid his bills, so to speak, and he would be down to see Nabal. So this servant came and told Abigail.

Abigail, being the wise woman that she was, immediately cooked up a good many articles of food. She baked cakes and made bread and got meat and figs, she got raisins and all these things packed up together. Then she got on her mule and started out to try to meet David. Sure enough, David was coming down from his hideout and he was going to take vengeance on this man who had mistreated his servants. Abigail met him on the road. She met him with all these gifts for his men, food for his men. And then she spoke this word to David: she said, "Be careful what you are going to do. This man, Nabal, is not worth it. You are too important. You are going to be king. Everybody knows you are going to be king. And now is the time for you to act like a king. If you take vengeance on this sheep herder, who is a fool, you will lower yourself. It is not fitting to you. It is not a king's place to take offense at some foolish person. You will

dirty your hands, and you will go into the kingship with blood on your hands,. Accept these gifts of mine. Take this food for your servants and turn around and go back. Do not touch him. He is not worth it." It would take a wise woman to be that smart. David recognized the good advice when he heard it. He said to her, "You are a smarter person than I am. That is just the sensible thing to do." And I thank God I met you here today. I could have lowered myself down to the level of that fool. I would have been no better than he was. And I am much obliged to you, Ma'am." David turned around and went back. He let Nabal go.

In the providence of God several things followed. That night Nabal had a stroke or something of that sort, and died. This was the end of Nabal, a much better way to get rid of him than for David to kill him. David just left him in the hands of God. Later David married Abigail. He evidently recognized a woman with good judgment when he saw her. She became one of his wives and became one of his queens. Would it not be a wonderful thing if we as children of God in Christ Jesus could do the same? Suppose somebody talks loosely about us. How about just feeling that we are too important as having been died for, having been saved, and having been made a child of God to get down on the level of those gossipers. We are not going to pay them back in kind. They deserve anything we might do, but it is not worth it. We would muddy our own hands while dealing with them. Let them go. How wise that would be. That is what David did. David was smart enough to take a good woman's good advice. It is a wonderful thing to be just that smart: smart enough to take advice. David was, and he took it.

Saul was coming close to the end of his days. Trouble came with the enemy coming up against him. By now, Saul was so far alienated from God that he no longer got guidance from God as to what to do. I think you should keep in mind so far as Saul is concerned, he was the kind of man who needed guidance. When he did not get guidance, he was lost. Saul was not an unbeliever, and he was not a man who had no knowledge of God. Saul was a disobedient man, a rebellious man, but he had walked in the light of God's guidance. Now he was certainly in the dark. And Saul felt it. When he tried to find out what God would guide him to do, God would not guide him. That is the way God deals with rebellious people. He withdraws His favor. He withdraws His guidance. Saul was left alone.

That was the occasion on which Saul went to the witch at Endor to ask her if she could find out what God's will for him was. In the first place, I am quite perfectly satisfied that there was a witch at Endor just exactly as it reads. I am satisfied that Saul went to her. And I am satisfied that she had the insight that she had. But what I never have been able wholly to get into my mind is whether or not she actually saw Samuel. I now it says that Samuel was raised and I am not going to make any exception about that. But in this case, I am looking over the shoulder of someone at a spirit seance and I do not know for sure what I see. Whether or not this was a deceitful figure that appeared for her, I do not know. If you take it that it was actually really Samuel, it raises some amazing questions with reference to life after death. She had something like a vision. And in this vision that she had, she described someone whom she saw, and Saul said, "That is Samuel." That is what he said, and so he said, "Ask him what about this thing." This figure that she saw in a vision, in her seance, gave the message that Saul's career would end with calamity.

Saul went out from there depressed. And by the way, I think there is a great deal more there than I can interpret. I am satisfied that people who seek to know the mind of God any other way than through the Scriptures leave themselves open to being deceived. Because the devil is a deceiver, and he is the father of it. Not only that, but they leave themselves open to a great depression, dark gloom. There is not anything in the world that will fill the heart with such an awful sense of depression and gloom as the feeling that you have been God-forsaken. And that is what Saul had. He was a benighted person living in the dark, and went out that way.

Saul went out to battle. He went out to fight and in the battle that followed, Saul was wounded. Jonathan was killed. When Saul was wounded, rather than let the enemy kill him, he called on his armor bearer to kill him so as not to let the enemy have the pleasure of killing him. His armor bearer would not do it. Saul took his own sword and fell on it. So he ended his life as a suicide.

We remember Judas who also committed suicide. There are few cases in the Bible of anyone who committed suicide, but Saul is one of them. So this man who started out with great opportunity, this man winds up his career in the dark, at night, so to speak, in the gloom of an awful depression, and with a feeling of being forsaken by God. The secret of the whole thing: he was impatient and presumptuous. He could not yield himself to God's will. He wanted it his own way with the results that he wound up the way in which he did.

When Saul died, it was known all around the country that David was the man who was destined to become king. He was the man who had been anointed to be king. He was the one that Saul himself said was expecting to be king. Jonathan figured that David would be king. Abigail knew that he was going to be king. It was around in the hearts of the people that this man David would be the next king. With Saul dead, David was called into the forefront.

When we see David as king, we will watch him very closely, remembering that when you study David as king you see in a mirror, as it were, the way we ought to act. Every good thing he did is the way we should do, and every bad thing he did is the way we are not to do. We are made kings and priests unto God, and he was a king. So we will watch him as we read his record. When this young man was now called in to become king, we should note the first thing that he did. The man who brought him the report was an Amalekite, not an Israelite. He was one of the people with whom the Israelites were always at war. He came apparently to ingratiate himself with David. He came and told David that he had killed Saul in battle. The proof of it was that he had Saul's head with him. He cut off Saul's head on the battlefield, having doubtless come across the corpse when Saul had committed suicide. He brought his head in to David as proof that he had killed Saul, hoping that since David was his rival, Saul had been trying to kill David for years, that David would certainly reward him.

The Amalekite gave one account of Saul's death. If anyone wanted to reconcile the three accounts of Saul's death, he would have no trouble with two of them. They can be articulated all right, and if he will remember the third is a lie, he will be all right. The third one is the Amalekite's story and this is what he told. He said that he came on Saul and killed him in battle, and here was his head. David turned on him and said, "So you admit that you killed Saul? You admit that you laid your hands on God's anointed?" And David called on his soldiers to fall on him. They fell on the young man and hewed him in pieces. It was the end of the Amalekite.

That was David's first reaction. He found no pleasure in the death of his enemy. Saul had tried to kill him. Saul had lied to him. Saul had unmercifully hounded him. Saul had been unfair to him. And David had Saul under his hand and could have killed him twice. He refused to lay his hand on God's anointed man. Now when God's anointed man is actually killed, and David actually has the throne open before him, he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. That is like God, no pleasure in the death of his enemy.

David also composed an ode in memory of Saul. It is a very fine piece of literature.

The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon (2 Samuel 1:19-20)

Those two cities were cities of the Philistines and David said: "Do not let this report spread down there and give the enemy any rejoicing about these things." We have a common saying with us today; "Tell it not in Gath." If you are having some fuss inside your congregation, do not tell it to the neighbors. Just keep it inside. Do not tell it outside because it will give the enemies of the church pleasure when the people in the church fall out with each other. "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives;" that is the way David talked about the man who tried to kill him. That is the way he talked about him when he was dead. We all should speak well of the dead. The Scriptures give us very wonderful guidance about this. Here David, who knew just exactly what kind of a man Saul was, on the day of his death would repeat no evil of him.

It is perfectly all right for a preacher to get up at a funeral service and not say anything bad about the man that has just died. The preacher has a good pattern right here. This is what David said:

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided; they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions (2 Samuel 1:23).

Praise! I think everything he said was true. A lot of other things could have been true, but he did not say them. He just said the true things that were good.

"Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul." David called upon the whole community to mourn the passing of the king. Surely Saul had been a mean character to David, but David does not let that come up at this point.

How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan (2 Samuel 1:25- 26).

He did not say that about Saul. He did not say he was distressed about Saul. He told the people to weep for Saul. They had lost a king. But when it was Jonathan, David had lost a friend. "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me." He did not say that about Saul, but he could say it about Jonathan. "Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." That is a classic utterance. No higher thing could he say of one man to another man than to say that that man's affection and love toward him was a greater love than a woman's love. That was the way Jonathan had been with David and David appreciated it.

David had now gotten everything in his hands. His rival, so to speak, had been wiped out. David was in his place. The first thing David did was to take off his hat and stand in mourning at the passing of his enemy. David found out that the men of Jabeshgilead, a certain city near this battlefield, when they heard about the death of Saul and Jonathan, they went out on the battlefield and took up their bodies. Saul's body was minus his head, but they took up their bodies and gave them a burial. David sent special messengers to the city of Jabeshgilead, and gave them a special handout from the king's coffer, in appreciation for them having taken care of Saul.

David did more. He came there and had Saul and Jonathan given a state funeral, so to speak, an open honorable burial that would give everybody the impression that David would honor Saul. When David was installed as king, he was king over one part of the country. David was from the tribe of Judah, so when he was installed as king the men of Judah crowned him as king, and the men of Benjamin stayed in with him together with half of the tribe of Manasseh. But all the rest of Israel would not go with him, although he was anointed to be king. The rest of Israel took up one of the sons of Saul, a man by the name of Ishbosheth, and made him king. He never amounted to anything much.

Ishbosheth was the son of Saul. So he was chosen and he was enthroned as king. He probably never would have gotten anywhere with his campaign against David if it had not been that Saul's commander-in-chief, the man who was head of all the armies of Israel, a man by the name of Abner, a great general, supported this young man Ishbosheth because he was Saul's son. Abner had a loyalty to the house of Saul and so this great general Abner supported Ishbosheth and put him up as king. There was war between Ishbosheth on one side and David on the other side for seven years. Abner was a capable competent man. David had a general commander-in-chief in his army whose name was Joab.

Actually, Abner was the senior officer, something like a five-star general, and Joab about a four-star general. Abner actually outranked Joab so far as the nation was concerned. In the days when they were all one, Abner was commander-in-chief and Joab was one of his assistants. When the break had come Joab came to be head of David's army. Incidentally, Joab was David's uncle. It was sort of a family affair.

It was a civil war, and that is always bad for the simple reason that one side is just as good as the other. Each side would fight just as hard as the other, and that is the way it went with Israel. David was going to be king and he fought with the hosts of Saul in such a gentlemanly way as not to alienate them. David felt he had the responsibility for the nation as a whole, and tried to conduct himself in such a way as not to permanently alienate certain sections that were opposed to him.

When Ishbosheth had been set in this prominent place, he did a foolish thing. He criticized Abner, his great general. In this Ishbosheth showed the limitations of a small man, he did not appreciate greatness in another. When Abner saw that Ishbosheth criticized him, he recognized in Ishbosheth one of the weaknesses that would be fatal to him as king. Any man that cannot appreciate the worth of other people cannot really rule. And when he saw that Ishbosheth had no sense of the fitness of things, no sense of proportion, Abner knew that he was backing a lost cause, even if they won, Ishbosheth would not make a good king. And Abner shows the stature of the man he was, he came to see David and talk it over. And David shows the kind of man he was, he opened his door and took Abner in.

These men who had been fighting one another for years, talked over their situation. David made him a proposition. David gave him amnesty, that is to say he would forgive him, with no penalty. He would allow Abner to walk out with his sword. There would be no treating him like a captive and they would work together for the good of the country. So Abner walked out with the feeling that this man David was after all worthy to be king. A man so big that he harbored no ill will or grudge because of the fight that he was in. A man so big that he saw the unity of Israel bigger than his personal feelings. That is the kind of man that can heal a rift in a congregation. The man who does not take sides, the man who stands up, he may be standing even with one group, but he stands with one group in such a way that the moment that the conflict is over, he can bring the others in and they work together. That is the kind of man David was.

When Joab saw Abner go in and talk to David, and he knew they were closeted there together for a length of time, Joab suspicioned and correctly, too, that David and Abner would reconcile their differences. So Joab bided his time and laid wait for Abner. When Abner came out of David's headquarters to go back home, and to effect the stopping of hostilities, Joab came along with the face of a friend and the heart of an enemy. Joab walked with Abner and invited him to come into his tent. He wanted to talk something over with him, some practical detail probably. He got him in there and when he had his back turned, he smote him under the fifth rib. Thus Joab killed him. And it was a shock. The man came in under free conduct, guaranteed immunity, but Joab took the law in his own hands and killed him. Well, now what can be done, after all, he was an enemy of the crown, after all he was against David.

Could David now make an example of Joab? David again showed an insight and a wisdom that is almost beyond human. He realizes he must get along with Joab. The country needed a certain strength of leadership and a strength of unity. It is difficult when you are in a program, and one of the men you are working with commits a foolish act. You cannot disown him. To disown him would shake the whole program to its foundations. After all, the work is more important than even that, and David sets an example. He did not particularly deal with Joab then, but he never got over it; and in due time he gave Joab his due.

David insisted that Abner be given a state funeral. He arranged a big solemn procession, and David walked bareheaded on foot behind Abner's coffin. It was his way of showing the public as a whole he had no part in this, ignominious and perfidious slaughter, the assassination of this good man. Furthermore anybody that would think could see that he was disassociating himself from this man Joab. He personally humbly mourned the death of Abner.

From then on, David continued in his place as leader. Even with Ishbosheth gone and the war at an end, David waited until the other tribes came to make him king. He just waited patiently. He would not go in and take the throne until someone raised the question, "Why do you not talk about bringing David in here? He is the man." And so there was popular acclaim, all twelve tribes in one great big celebration, calling for David. Then David walked in. That was wise. To push himself forward is not for a leader; and

it is not for you and me as believers in Christ. What God is going to work out, let us take the way God works it out. Let us not push it. David did not. So they called him in, and he walked in and took over. For instance, when he began to establish his kingdom he selected the strongest spot in the whole nation for his citadel. The center of his government was to be up in the hills, up in the mountains, among the crags, a strongly fortified spot. This city of Salem afterwards was called Jerusalem. That implies a man who in organizing his life gets his heart right. The interior part of himself was to be solidly committed so far as God was concerned. No matter how flexible he might be on the outside, some things on the inside could never be shaken.

David enlisted the help of competent men. In reading of the life of David one of the things that will strike you is his great friends. It is a tremendous thing to be able to have friends, but it is a very wonderful thing to have friends among great men, because great men do not hand their friendship out easily. The Scriptures say a man to have friends must show himself friendly. David was a man who conducted himself in such a way that strong competent men came to support him. He was the kind of a man that many of his own profession supported, an Army's General. He was a businessman's leader, executive. The kind of man that commended himself to competent men.

David never treated these men as if he were better than they. Time and again he treated them as if they were better than he. He was a humble man. Do you remember the story when David was wounded in battle on one occasion? He was lying wounded and the fever doubtless mounting up and he expressed a wish, "Oh, how I wish I had a drink of water from that well at home back at the home place." But the home place was in the hands of the Philistines. Their armies were all around him. Three of his men hears that David just wished that he had a dipper full of water out of the old well, the old oaken bucket. The three of them cut their way through the enemy lines and they got a jug, so to speak, of water and cut their way back and brought it to David. Those men risked their lives to have David have a drink of water. But I want you to see what David did. When they brought that water in and gave it to David, David looked at it. He said, "This is too precious for me to drink. You men should not have done this. That is not the kind of loyalty I deserve. I cannot take this. That kind of loyalty belongs to God." And he poured that water out on the ground as a sacrifice to God. His men would have gone through anything to follow a man like that, a man who refused to take personal advantage, even of their loyalty. This can happen to a pastor in a church and if you were all preachers I would tell you that is the way to have it. Refuse to take advantage of your folks, refuse to take advantage of the cloth, be one with the people. The people will lift you up, and will rejoice in lifting you up, and making something of you because the people love to honor their leaders when the leaders are humble.

Chapter 3

David As King

David can well be remembered as the greatest king Israel ever had. He was a great man of God, just as Moses, Abraham, Peter, Paul and Stephen were great men of God and are recorded in the Scriptures for our learning. What happened to them is available to us. It does not mean that we can leave the Chaldees to come to Canaan, like Abraham did; nor that we can lead the children of Israel out of Egypt as Moses did, nor that we are to be kings of Israel as David was, nor that we are to be a fisherman and an apostle as Peter was. But as human beings on earth with whom God would deal, to whom God would show His will, in whom God would work His purpose, through whom God would accomplish His plan, and whom God would bless, that is for us. As we look at these men in turn, we will note that they, as men, had human traits, and we may in each case acknowledge them.

David was doubtless a strong, intelligent, gifted young man, as we shall note. Abraham was doubtless quite a man. As a man Moses was undoubtedly a great man among men, wise and strong and able. But in no case was the life of any one of these men a consequence of himself. It was not that they had in them certain capacities which were trained and developed to accomplish great things. It was that God used them in turn one after another, did certain things to them, and certain results followed in their lives. They were blessed in certain ways because of what God would do. The Scriptures at no point ever describe anybody in such a way as to make us understand that what he accomplished was because he was so big and so strong and so smart. It never comes that way. When we look at these men, we can see certain weaknesses about them. This is of interest to us, because we ought not to discount these matters entirely. Just because a man is poor does not mean God cannot use him, or just because a man is rich does not mean God cannot use him. Just because a man is sick does not mean he cannot have the blessing of God.

Now David was not unusually big, as Saul was. Saul was head and shoulders above all: he must have been a tremendous man. It does not say that about David. However, he was probably a considerable man among men. You have his own account that when he was just a lad out watching sheep, when he was still too young to be in the army, that was when he was challenged to go out and slay Goliath. He said that in his time he had faced a bear; and he had faced a lion. When the lion came up to attack his sheep, he took him by the beard and killed him. So I suspect he was quite an active young man, as men go. When he was an old man, in flight before Absalom, in humiliation, dejection and fleeing with a few hundred of his followers away from a well-organized rebellion, it was said about him in the counsels of Absalom, "Be careful how you crowd him now. He is like that old man of war, he is like a bear robbed of his whelp. You get him in a corner now and you will get hurt, get more men before you tackle him." So you see in his old age, he was doubtless considered a great warrior. And it was also reported in the days of his youth he was a great man of war. After he killed Goliath and was taken into Saul's army, and continued with his military career, they made up a song about him. The song was "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands".

David was also a man of intelligence and good common sense. When he was thrust into the forefront because of his victory over Goliath, and people began to praise him and Saul became jealous of him, we read he conducted himself wisely. There was no harm in a young man who has suddenly achieved prominence walking softly. That means he is wise. David, among other things, had a great facility as a musician. He played the harp. And Saul was a man who was very moody. I expect in our day and time we would have said that he had psychological difficulties. He would have seizures when he would throw things around. Among other things he threw around would be his spear. It happened that every time he threw everything around he threw his spear right at David. And when David played for him, Saul quieted down. "Music hath charms to soothe the savage beast." Orpheus with his lute made trees and mountain

tops that freeze bow themselves when he did sing." David was something like that in his capacity with a harp. Despite the fact he was playing that harp he kept his eye on Saul who was acting so crazy. When Saul threw that spear David jumped every time.

Right there you might see something else that showed good sense and intelligence. He did not believe in pressing his luck too far. After he had ducked a few times he went to his friend Jonathan, Saul's son, and said, "Listen, I have to get out of here. One of these days I am not going to duck right and he is going to get me." Jonathan said, "Oh my father would not do you any harm." He said, "Don't you worry; I am the fellow at the end of that spear. I can see that thing coming." That was just good common sense. Some folks have it. And David had it.

David also had wisdom in conduct. When Saul was chasing him, and David was in a position where he could have killed Saul, he would not do it. That was not because he was specially afraid, and it was not because he liked Saul. It was because Saul was the Lord's anointed, and David would not raise his hand against the Lord's anointed. That was wise. Do you know how wise that is? That is as wise as a man who will not repeat a story he has heard about another business man. A wise man would keep his mouth shut. That is as wise as a woman who will not repeat gossip. That person you are talking about belongs to God. You run a terrible risk of spiritual judgment when you raise a hand against the Lord's anointed.

Everybody belongs to God. I do not have the privilege to despise any human being. That is God's judgment, not mine. I could be a fool in no quicker way than to repeat something to the hurt of somebody. God will not take that from anybody. Saul was trying to kill David and David had Saul right in his hand, but he would not touch him. On one occasion, David got into Saul's tent and by way of having proof he reached down and cut off a piece of Saul's tunic while Saul was asleep, and stuck his spear right beside Saul, and then got out of the camp. The next morning when Saul woke up he saw David's spear right there. David was up on the hills and he said to Saul, "Look, here is a piece of your coat here. The evidence is here. I was right there and I could have killed you."

This was a time of civil war. Ishbosheth was a weak king warring against David. Abner was a great chief of staff of the original armies and indeed a great man. For some time now Abner had been supporting Ishbosheth and it soon became clear to Abner of the weakness of Ishbosheth and the foolishness of continuing the civil war. Abner took himself in hand to meet with David. He said, "It just does not make sense for us to go on killing off good people for this situation. It is not worth it." David thanked him in effect, treated him royally and made his peace with him. David sent Abner on his way to go and work things out so they would end this war. Joab followed Abner along and under the guise of a private goodwill conference Joab assassinated Abner. When this story was brought to David, he organized a state funeral for Abner. David had them carry Abner's body in honor through the streets, while David walked barefooted and bareheaded behind the casket as the chief mourner. It would touch everybody. He had no part in and would not condone anything that was done that was evil, even if it was to his advantage.

Later on, on one occasion when Absalom, his own son, turned against him, and David was fleeing away from him, when they were going through a canyon an enemy of his, Shinei, one of the old servants of Saul, was up on the hilltop rolling stones down at him, cursing him, yelling at him, hitting him when he was down. One of David's soldiers said to him, "Let me go up there. I will silence him." And David said, "No, leave him alone. Maybe God told him to curse me. Leave him alone." That was wisdom, not willing to repay an evil deed with evil conduct. Now David could fight and David could kill, but when it was personal, no, "maybe God told him to do it."

David was a humble man. And all of that, I repeat, is the man. I am talking about him and want to bring him before us because then I want to say when it is all done, this is not what made him great. Compared man to man, I think he was a very considerable man, he would compare very well. But that is not what made him great. And on one occasion when he was going to offer up an offering to the Lord, he went in and found a nice threshing floor, a good place to have an altar and he asked for it and was going to

buy it and the farmer said, "I will give it to you, glad to give it to you. You are the king, you take it." David said, "No, you put a price on it and I will pay for it. I would not offer to the Lord something that cost me nothing." This is the man David. He is a man that could be appreciated.

After he had reached his position in the kingship, when his throne was established, he turned around and asked, "Is there not someone of the house of Saul to whom I can show the grace of God?" He had promised Jonathan that when he came to the throne, he would remember his family. "Isn't there someone left?" And they said, "Yes, there is a crippled boy here by the name of Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan," "Bring him here." They brought him in and David told him, "I made a promise. I promised your father that I would treat you well." He turned to the others, "Whatever family heritage was taken from this man, return it to him." His land had been confiscated because he was an enemy at war. "Let it all be his. But he does not have to live there. See to it that there is a place set at my table. From now on, this man is going to eat at my table." And so from that day on, Mephibosheth sat at the king's table and the Bible says, "and was lame on both his feet." As a believer, I am sitting at the king's table. I could be crippled in my feet. My walk is not always what I want it to be. I can sit at the king's table because a promise which the great son of David, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, made about me. He is going to bless me. He is going to bless you.

David was a man after God's own heart. I expect nobody would want an epitaph better than that. "A man after God's own heart." The Scripture says about him in so many words that in all things he did the will of God save in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. In all things he walked in the ways of the Lord his God. But David was not great because of his personal character, his personal fitness, his strength, his wisdom, his common sense: the gifts that he had were not what made David great. The secret of David was in the Lord his God. It was not only that God's blessing gave David the victories, but that David in his believing obedience received the blessing of God. You want to know the secret of David, he will tell you, "The Lord is my Shepherd. Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever," God revealed His will in His promises to David and David lived his life within the will of God.

When Samuel came looking for a man he would anoint as king, he anointed David when David was a teenager. He was so young that when Samuel came asking Jesse for one of his sons, and Jesse brought them in from the eldest on and had brought in seven of them and stopped, Samuel asked him, "Do you not have another?" "Well, yes, there is a boy." "Bring him in." And Samuel took David and anointed him. We should never underrate the significance of the spiritual experience of a teenager. We should never underestimate what can happen in the heart of a teenage boy or girl. They may be anointed of God! Do you know what happens when an evangelist preaches the Gospel?

Do you know what happens when a soul receives Jesus Christ? Do you recognize that that person is being anointed? Do you think David was anointed to be king? Well, when you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, what did you get? Do you remember? "To as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the children of God." When I became a Christian I became a child of God. "Beloved, behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God." I think I can pretty well tell the state of my own spiritual condition is the way in which I evaluate or appraise my personal relationship with God. And I want to tell you that if a man knows in his soul "I am a child of the King," there is going to be something royal in his walk. Just as the woman who deep down in her soul knows "I am one of the King's daughters." There is no church, no preacher, nothing that is going to be able to hurt her spiritual life if she knows that she is a child of the King. Can you think what happened to David when Samuel anointed him to be king? Do you think he ever got over it? He was not supposed to get over it. That is why it was done then. David went back to herding sheep. But you know what he knew in his bones? This boy that was herding sheep was the "king of Israel herding sheep."

And when the day came as he faced Goliath and astonished everybody by his courage by going forward to meet Goliath, do you think David did that because he was full of self confidence? Have you ever

interpreted that to mean to see what a young fellow could do if he was just full of himself? That is the last thing that was true about David: that he was full of himself. He was not full of himself. He said to Goliath, "Who art thou that challenges the army of the living God?" How did he get that way. Now does anybody get that way? It is when you are conscious of what God has done for you. He has made you king. Young people need not shrink from the challenge of unbelief anywhere. There are giants in the land even to this day. They walk on the campuses of our universities in spite of what anybody says. Just let your young people come and tell you the truth. These giants are in our university classrooms, they are everywhere. Unbelief is around all over and they come with threatening gestures to anybody, boy or girl, that dares to say that they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

When David was a fugitive from Saul and was being chased from pillar to post in a humiliating, disturbing fashion, he was an example of a person who has everybody against him, and he is being treated unfairly. Such a person would get bitter, be mean, fight back; it would show on his face. David did not get bitter. He did not get mean. He could be talked to and he was not any shallow character. David was a great soldier. Men were killed in battle with him, but he was not bitter. At any time he could stop. He could always be guided. We have the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit will guide us. There will be some times a believer will be offended, and there will be times when he should be offended, he would have every right to be offended, and the Holy Spirit could speak to his heart, and say, "Wait, you are a child of God! It is not fitting, it is not proper for a child of God to get into a fuss like that, to dirty your hands with this mud slinging." And if he were a man or a woman whose heart was conscious of the fact that he belongs to God, he would be given the grace to turn around and say, "Well, thank you, Lord. I could have made a fool of myself. I could have said things that would have hurt for years." The believer in Christ belongs to God. It does not depend on him. It is Christ. This is what you can see in David.

There may be some who would wonder "Are you going to tell us all these things about David and not even mention his sin?" Do you realize that I would have good scriptural ground if I did not? When I was teaching this in the Seminary, I sometimes would have the students doing research on certain questions. The books of I & II Chronicles cover the same period of history as I & II Samuel, I & II Kings. We read about David's sin in Samuel, so one of my questions sometimes would be to locate David's sin in Chronicles. Every now and again, a student would come to me and say, "Where is this? I could not find it." That is what I wanted them to find out. It is not there! In the whole book of Chronicles, with all the things that are told about David, there is not one mention! That is God's Word.

Let us take time to think about your sins. Are any of you by any chance half-way embarrassed about getting to heaven because everybody is going to know all about you? Well, I have news for you; no one is going to know anything that is evil about you. God has cast all my sins behind His back. Anybody who can get around the back of God can find them. "I have removed their transgressions as far as the east is from the west." That is a far piece. "I have forgiven them their sin and will remember their iniquity against them no more forever." That is a long time. Christ Jesus died for your sins. The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ cleanses you from all sin. There are no spots. Do you realize that that is the way it is with you before God? David knew it. He said, "My sin is ever before me" in his own consciousness. He was humbled by it. And he yielded himself to God about that. And Nathan had told him immediately that God had forgiven him his sin. And you can read I & II Chronicles from end to end and you will not find it mentioned. It was wiped out.

David's life was marked of course with worship and praise. He is the sweet psalmist of Israel. The psalms were an expression of the worship of God which prevailed in David's own heart. I hope that my discussion, and I have gone over this life of David with you, will not in any wise complicate the simple truth with you, that when a man willingly, humbly yields himself to God, God will do more for him than he can ask or think. Certainly, we will use every gift we have, every strength we have: nothing is too good for God. We will put ourselves out and with every effort we have we will try to serve Him, but our significance to God, our usefulness in God, the things we do and the things that are used do not depend on

us. We will give ourselves over to do all we can, some pint size, some quart size, some gallon size, we will differ with each other, the Lord will fill us. And the blessing is in the fullness of God which is from God and for everyone. And remember you can always overflow a lot, just as much as anyone else.