

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Lesson 26 – Part 3

David – The Intimate of God

The middle of seventh grade is a terrible time to move. On a cold December day in 1972, my father came to Burger Junior High to pick up my sister Kathryn and me and take us home to get Mom and Hollie. We left home and hustled to the Rochester, New York airport to make a flight to Texas before a blizzard hit.

This was the big move. After 4 ½ years in Rochester, we were moving to Lubbock. We knew the move was coming, but I was hardly prepared for it. Rochester had fully experienced the hippie movement. Woodstock, long hair, and a concern for the world's problems (Vietnam and the ecology) were a part of the New York culture. They were a part of my culture.

December turned into January and after the Christmas break, Mom and Dad enrolled us in Mackenzie Junior High School – Lubbock, Texas. The correct term for the experience is “culture shock.” Perhaps, it is better written as **CULTURE SHOCK!!!** The seventh graders at Mackenzie were totally different. They dressed differently, had different interests, and spoke differently. They even ate different food!

As is often the case in a smaller town, many of the other kids had known each other for years and years, and the cliques were well set and hard to penetrate. It was bizarre to leave a place where friends were everywhere, life seemed great, and the biggest question was who would play on whose side during the basketball game. Suddenly, I found myself in a place where I thought people were strange (I had never seen someone wear cowboy boots...and I had no *idea* what “dipping” was!) and people thought me strange (“Yankee!”).

This was a time where God did something most special in my life. I had left a school where I was on student council and had more friends than I could count, and I arrived at a school where I could easily go two or three days and have no one at all say one word to me at school. But, I was never alone.

My parents were careful to take us to church every time the doors opened. It was at church where I learned that Jesus was a friend who lived inside me and who would never leave me. He was not a clique that I had to break into, nor was he someone who would accept me only if I had his tastes. There was even a song we would sing at youth group that included the line:

Jesus is my friend, my one and only friend.

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That became my theme song. I would walk the halls of Mackenzie Junior High humming the refrain to myself.

It is hard for me to describe how real this was. Jesus moved into my heart and was truly my friend. I could talk to him about things good and bad. I could laugh with him and lament with him. I could rely on him 24/7.

Over time, my relationship with him changed as I grew in knowledge, and as I grew in experiences, but the changes never stripped away the intimacy. Over time, I developed some wonderful friendships in Lubbock, many of which I treasure to this day. However, no one ever replaced the deep friendship of Jesus forged in the fires of adolescent difficulties and pain. As we approach this lesson on David as the intimate friend of God, it is very personal to me. It is my hope that through this lesson, others will find the abiding and reliable relationship that God wishes to have with all of his creations.

DAVID'S INTIMACY WITH GOD

David was special among the people we study in the Old Testament. As we noticed in earlier lessons, when Samuel anointed David,

The Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward (1 Sam. 16:13).

This set David apart from many others in the Old Testament. God's Spirit did not indwell all his followers during the Old Testament. It is one of the profound meanings behind the prophecy through Joel that a day would come when God would pour out his Spirit on all flesh—male/female, young/old, master/servant (Joel 2:28ff; Acts 2). Pentecost saw the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel and also the promise of Jesus that “the Spirit of Truth” would come and *indwell* the believer in an intimate way (Jn. 14:15ff).

So David, infused with God's Spirit, maintained an intimate relationship with God that is rarely seen among the characters on the pages of our Old Testament. We see this intimacy in the things David shared with God. David shared his joys and his sorrows. He shared his confidences and his fears. He proclaimed his praises; he even challenged God with his frustrations. For David, God was ever present. God was involved in all David did and in all that happened to David.

In this lesson, we will pull out of the Biblical record some words of David that show this depth of intimacy before seeing if we can uncover some keys to help us in our own intimate walk with the LORD.

David's Prayer of Gratitude (2 Sam. 7:18-29)

After David was recognized as King over Israel, he had brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. David then sought to build a house for the Ark, but Nathan explained that David was not the one to build God's house (temple). As Nathan recounted God's words to David, the love and blessings of God were reinforced, even as David was declined the blessing of building the temple.

Nathan assured David that the LORD was fully invested in David. The LORD had pulled David from pasturing flocks to be prince of the people. The LORD accompanied David everywhere David went, cutting off David's enemies from harming him. The LORD promised to make David's name great in history, and promised that David's throne would endure through all eternity.

In response to this, David "went in [before the Ark?] and sat before the LORD" and lifted up an intimate prayer of gratitude to the LORD saying:

Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord GOD. You have spoken also of your servant's house for a great while to come, and this is instruction for mankind, O Lord GOD! And what more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Lord GOD! Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have brought about all this greatness, to make your servant know it. Therefore you are great, O LORD God. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears. And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name and doing for them great and awesome things by driving out before your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, a nation and its gods? And you established for yourself your people Israel to be your people forever. And you, O LORD, became their God. And now, O LORD God, confirm forever the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house, and do as you have spoken. And your name will be magnified forever, saying, 'The LORD of hosts is God over Israel,' and the house of your servant David will be established before you. For you, O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, have made this revelation to your servant, saying, 'I will build you a house.' Therefore your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you. And now, O Lord GOD, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant. Now therefore may it please you to bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you. For you, O Lord GOD, have spoken, and with your blessing shall the house of your servant be blessed forever (2 Sam. 7:18-29).

In the prayer, we note several matters. First, the prayer is David's response to Nathan's report. Nathan had informed David of God's plans, where they conformed to David's plans and where they differed. For many, that would have ended the story. We might expect to read, "And David did as he was instructed by Nathan." Yet, David hears this news and doesn't simply take it to heart. David goes into a separate place to have private prayer with God. We miss something if we fail to see David in communication with God about life, rather than simply living.

Second, as David prayed, his attitude was one of humility, service, faith, and praise. David's **humility** is seen in his recognition that his life was God's work, and that his "arrival" was unearned, but graciously given. "Who am I...and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?" In David's life, he had moved from obscurity to the pinnacle of fame. David appreciated that this was the hand of God, not something "David had coming."

David's heart of **service** to God is seen in his constant usage of the term "servant." More than anyone else in the Old Testament, David used the phrase of himself as a servant or slave of God.¹ Ten times in this passage David places himself as God's servant. We should remind ourselves that the one sitting quietly before the Lord saying, "your servant" is the *King* of Israel. Every physical person in David's life rightly called himself or herself a servant to King David, yet David was acutely aware that he as king was the servant for God. David's actions were ones of service to God.

David's attitude reflects a deep **faith** in God keeping his promises. David recounts the historic faithfulness of God in redeeming the people from Egypt and setting Israel up as a nation. David is confident that in like manner, the LORD would keep those promises he had just delivered through the prophet Nathan. In faith, David calls on God to do the very things he promised, "And now, O LORD God, confirm forever the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house, and do as you have spoken." It might seem bold to call God to do as he says, but it is not boldness from David's assertive rights. It is the boldness of faith. David knew God was faithful and had made promises; therefore, it was David's courageous faith that brought forth this call to God.

In calling forth God to fulfill his promises, David's faith moves readily into praise. "Your name will be magnified forever." David calls God the "LORD of hosts" also translated "LORD Almighty." Here, we also see David using the phrase "O Lord GOD" repeatedly. This Hebrew combination of *adonai* ("God") and *Yhwh* ("LORD") is somewhat rare in the Old Testament. It denotes an intimacy with the

¹ See count by Bergen, Robert D., *The New American Commentary – I and II Samuel*, (Holman 1996).

LORD, but even more, denotes the praise that flowed from David's lips. Yahweh was not simply Yahweh, but was David's Lord as well as the God of Israel.

POINT FOR HOME

We can assume that most people involved in this lesson will be eating every day this week. Can we move toward ensuring that just as we daily consume physical bread, we will daily make a point of sitting before God in prayer? Let us do so making a point to express true humility and thankfulness for his graciousness, as well as our committed service to him and our praise arising from our confidence in his faithfulness.

This daily time will change our intimacy with the Father, the LORD of Hosts, our God.

David's Song of Deliverance (2 Sam. 22:2-51)

Have you been rescued from some impending harm or danger? Have you had a time where your friends were not too friendly, where resources were not meeting the needs, or where health seemed too fragile to make it through the challenges of daily life?

David lived through such difficulties. He spent many months on the run from King Saul. He lived through family struggles and a difficult marriage. He knew hunger and lack. He knew solitude and abandonment. Yet as God's intimate, none of these were struggles he faced simply as David. He was David with God's Spirit. As such, he walked through his turmoil knowing the victory of God. After a time of these struggles, David composed a song of deliverance which we have in 2 Samuel 22:2-51.

This song is worked into a form for corporate worship and placed in the Psalms as Psalm 18. David did not simply write it as a Psalm/song for the people to use. 2 Samuel tells us that David, God's intimate, "spoke *to the LORD* the words of this song." This was another example of David expressing himself to the LORD in the ordinary course of his life.

The song begins with a proclamation that recognizes God as David's deliverer. Over and over, in a multitude of ways, David gives praise to God for his role in David's life. David calls God his:

Rock - Fortress

Deliverer - Place of refuge

Shield - Horn of salvation

Stronghold - Savior

Deliverer from violence

Repeatedly in the Hebrew of these words, David attached a personal ending that comes from the Hebrew *ani* meaning “I” or “my.” In Hebrew, one can add this ending to a noun and personalize the noun so that “rock” becomes very personal. It is one word—*my rock*. David does this over and over. His relationship with God is very personal. The roles God took in David’s life were personal roles for David and to David.

David then explains how he was endangered. “The waves of death encompassed me, the torrents of destruction assailed me.” David was living just a razor’s edge from death.

This danger drove David to the LORD. David called out to God and God heard him. God’s intervention in David’s life is equated with the most profound natural disasters and events. Earthquakes, volcanoes, fires, storms with lightning, thunder and fierce winds marked the divine attention paid to David and his problems.

The LORD reached out and rescued David from foes too strong for him. God honored David’s faithfulness and humility. When David was inadequate for the task, God stepped in and made David all he needed to be to find the victory. David knows it was God who made his feet run, his hands fight, sent the arrows straight, and held his feet secure.

David closed his song to the LORD with praise for God’s steadfast love. The love that was witnessed and experienced firsthand by David in a life saved from danger.²

POINT FOR HOME

Intimacy with God gives a direction in the face of life’s struggles. God is a personal rescue device. He becomes a rock of refuge, a fortress of protection, and a deliverer.

Where does this song of deliverance find you in your life? Are you facing hardships? If so, then lean on your intimate God. Have you lived through

² Chiasms, discussed in earlier lessons, run throughout this poem. The structure of this and other Psalms add a depth of understanding and appreciation we will consider in our lessons on the Psalms.

difficulties before finding yourself now in a more positive place? Then, take time out to speak these words to God, as David did. Go to an intimate place and quietly and privately proclaim the redemption of the LORD and his faithfulness. Give him praise and full credit for rescuing you from the dangers and turmoil of life.

David's Song of Thanksgiving (1 Chron. 16:8-36)

Sometimes things are right. The sun is out, the wind is behind us, and flowers are blooming. That is not to say that things are perfect, for every day has a share of troubles, but some days it just seems to click into place. Sometimes these "right" days can come and go without a significant pause to worship and praise the source of all good things. Intimacy with God, however, cries out for thanksgiving and praise on the good days, as well as for prayers of deliverance on the bad days.

David was having a great day. The Ark of the Covenant was finally moved successfully into Jerusalem. David had a tent pitched to house the Ark. Burnt offerings and peace offerings were set before God, and Jerusalem was at peace. David was moved to offer gifts to all the men and women of Israel. He distributed bread, meat, and raisin cakes. It was a great day!

This was the day that David set out ministers to worship. He appointed a set of Levites to "invoke, to thank, and to praise the LORD" (1 Chron. 16:4). Some were playing harps and lyres, some were sounding cymbals, and some were blowing trumpets. This was David's appointed day of Thanksgiving! David knew the source of the goodness, and he made sure that all Israel took time to acknowledge the LORD in worship.

1 Chronicles 16:8-36 gives a song of thanksgiving that is attributed to David. Whether all of this passage was David's actual song, or whether it is representative of the song David gave the people is not told to us.³ We do know that the song as written is a composite of major sections from three different Psalms.⁴ The song contains elements of thanks, praise, encouragement, recounting of God's past great deeds, along with an exhortation to an entire community or group of people to join with creation in worship of the LORD.

³ The Hebrew makes clear that the responsibility for singing Thanksgiving was given by David to Asaph, not this particular song. See, Bergen.

⁴ 1 Chron. 16:8-22 comes from Psalms 105:1-15; 1 Chron. 16:23-33 comes from Psalm 96:1-13; and 1 Chron. 16:34-36 comes from Psalm 106:1, 47-48.

The song begins with a call to worship. The people are called to “give thanks” and “call upon” the name of the LORD. They are to sing songs, not just about God, but also *to God*. They are to seek him and his strength.

This phrasing in the Hebrew, as we will discuss much later in lessons on the Psalms and Hebrew poetry, is structured in a “parallel” pattern that gives some added meaning and emphasis to the passage. There are couplets, two groups of lines, which use the same basic thought in different words in ways that convey an added depth of meaning. For example, the couplet at verse 12 reads:

*Remember the wondrous works that he has done,
His miracles and the judgments he uttered.*

This gives two lines that show differing shades of one idea: the wondrous works of the Lord are not just his miracles, but also his judgments.

A similar parallelism is in the next verse (13):

*O offspring of Israel his servant,
Sons of Jacob, his chosen ones!*

The parallel structure is shown in the obvious repeated thought that the offspring of Israel are the sons of Jacob. But the continued repeated thought adds the extra depth: they were not only God’s servants, but God had actually chosen them!

This parallel structure teaches a point that David knew well as God’s intimate, and therefore, we highlight it in this lesson. Verse 11 provides:

*Seek the Lord and his strength;
Seek his presence continually!*

The Hebrew uses two different words that are each translated “seek.” They convey the idea to look for, inquire about, or diligently try to find. The parallel structure teaches us more of the thought. Seeking the Lord is seeking his presence (literally his face). David recognizes that we seek the Lord, and even more, we seek the strength of God as we seek to be intimate with him, as we seek time before his presence.

This is David’s own experience, and one he calls all to imitate in worship. We are to exalt God and seek his presence. We seek intimacy and we find his strength.

From here, the song moves to the recounting of God’s great deeds throughout the earth. Woven into those memories are renewed calls to sing *to* the Lord, declaring his glory, his marvelous works, his greatness, splendor and majesty.

It is God who has strength and joy “in his place.” This passage teaches an important concept. We find God’s strength and the Lord’s joy in his “place” or presence. As we draw near to God, as we share intimately in him, we find ourselves growing in his strength and joy. The blessings of intimacy!

The song ends with repeated cries of worship—a worship known by the heavens, the seas, the earth and the trees—a worship that places God where he belongs, as both creator and sustainer. May God continually allow praise from his people!

POINT FOR HOME

David’s song of worship contained both proclamations of praise *about* God as well as *to* God. In other words, David not only sang about God’s goodness; he sang directly to God about his goodness.

This is a good lesson for us in our worship. A worship of intimacy is not simply a worship that tells others about God’s wonders. It goes further and in intimacy tells God directly. It is the difference between me telling you I love my wife and children, or me telling my wife, “I love you” and my children, “I love you.” This greater intimacy does not leave us unaffected. As we draw near to God, we draw near the place of his strength and joy. Intimacy with God makes us stronger for this world. It instills a godly joy that is inaccessible anywhere else.

Let us make a point to not only praise God to others, but also to intimately praise him directly.

CONCLUSION

David’s intimacy drove him to God in good times and bad. In his joys, he rejoiced with God. In his troubles, he sought God’s deliverance. In his fears, he sought God’s peace. In his blessings, he showered God with thanks. In his sin, he sought forgiveness from God.

For David, God was a companion. This is the picture Jesus offers for the believer today. Jesus was not simply the Rabbi or Teacher for the apostles. He was their companion. For the seventh grade boy lost among well-established cliques of very different people this was a solid lesson learned from Scripture and learned from church. But this was a lesson learned even better by experience. God through his Spirit is a companion to those who follow him. He wants to be a close and intimate companion! May we, like David, find him to be such.

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