

LESSONS from the LIFE of DAVID



REV E. E. SHELHAMER

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DAVID'S DOWNFALL AND RECOVERY

By E. E. Shelhamer

Infidels in all ages have gloated over David's sin, though they have not "acknowledged" as did he their transgression, nor written their penitential Psalm.

"When it was said that David was 'a man after God's own heart,' he was a lad with a stainless record. His life as a whole was marked by rare humility and nobility. The wrong things which he did were things which were done by other kings and monarchs in his day, without rebuke and with little reproach. But for those things, David was smitten and doomed to perpetual trouble. The account of them has been written down in detail, without suppression, or apology, giving scoffers an 'occasion to blaspheme.' (2 Sam. 12:14), forgetting that some of their own records, if fully unfolded, might be as dark as his."

"When a man loses his footing and is swept into the vortex of evil desire, there is no telling how insane he will become. It is too late to reason with him. The time for putting on the brakes was away up the road, before the declivity of the incline was so steep. Satan takes as much delight in getting one to inwardly consent, under a whisper to let down just one rail and look over the fence for a moment, as later on when he becomes stone blind to a future good and ruthlessly tramples underfoot, or throws to the winds all semblance of restraint."

One step leads to another. Bathsheba "sent" word to David that caused the cold sweat to come. Now he must cover up his devilry as quickly as possible, so he "sent" to Joab,

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LESSONS

from the

LIFE of DAVID

Abbreviated by
REV. E. E. SHELHAMER

Author of many books and booklets

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take
heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. 10:12.

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PREFACE

While on one of our Evangelistic tours in England, I accidentally or rather Providentially ran across five volumes of Rev. Alexander Whyte, of Edinburgh, Scotland, on "Bible Characters." Though the author was a Calvinist, yet he was a deep thinker and brought out some very valuable lessons in the study of these characters. Personally I read them with much pleasure and profit and am now giving to you four abbreviated chapters on David. Trusting that these lessons may warn and enrich the reader, I am yours for a *clean*, rather than a *big* work.—E. E. S.

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CHAPTER I

DAVID—IN HIS VIRTUES

*"ARISE, ANOINT HIM; FOR
THIS IS HE."* 1 Sam. 16:12.

Jesse the Bethlehemite, the father of David, and the far-off father of Jesus Christ, was the son of Obed, who, again, was the son of Boaz and Ruth. Jesse had an illustrious past to look back to. He was the tenth in direct descent from his father Jacob, and more than one shining name stood in his illustrious ancestry. But it is not his so illustrious past, it is the surpassing splendour of his future that makes us look with so much interest on David's father. We are not told as much about Jesse as we might like. He is already an old man when we first see him. And it is somewhat remarkable that we are told nothing at all about David's mother. The more so, that there would seem to have been nothing about Jesse to lead us on to think of

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him as either transmitting the extraordinary ability of his youngest son, or as discovering or fostering his youngest son's extraordinary gifts and character. Jesse's sole interest to us is in this, that he had David among his sons. We bow before the old Bethlehemite because of the branch that grew out of his roots.

Latest born of Jesse's race,
Wonder lights thy bashful face,
While the Prophet's gifted oil
Seals thee for a path of toil.

Twofold praise thou shalt attain,
In royal court and battle-plain,
Then comes heartache, care, distress,
Blighted hope, and loneliness;

Wounds from friend and gifts from foe,
Dizzied faith, and guilt, and woe;
Loftiest aims by earth defiled,
Gleams of wisdom sin-beguiled,

Sated power's tyrannic mood,
Counsels shared by men of blood,
Sad success, parental tears,
And a dreary gift of years.

For the Lord has said to Samuel, Fill
thine horn with oil, and go, I will
send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite;
for I have provided Me a king among
his sons. God sees not as man sees.

and God works not as man works. In providing Him a king, God worked in a way strange and unlikely to our eyes. We would not have committed our coming King to Jesse to bring up. It was a strange school for him—the lonely sheepfolds of Bethlehem. So we think who look at the outward appearance. David was forgotten and neglected by his father; he was scoffed at and trampled upon by his brothers; but you cannot *sour*, or *starve*, or *poison*, or *pervert a nature like David's*. There is a well-spring of piety and of poetry in David that makes David independent of adverse circumstances. Nay, *he takes prosperity out of adversity and turns everything to his account*.

That ruddy stripling has his harp and his sling and his father's sheep, and what more does he need to make him happy? He has the glorious traditions of his far-off father Israel to dream about. Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and Joshua, and Jephthah, and Samuel: his poet's eye glances from the one to the other till they are all with him as he folds

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his flock under the stars of Bethlehem. "Now, as they were going and talking, they espied a boy feeding his father's sheep. The boy was in very mean clothes, but of very fresh and well-favoured countenance, and as he sat by himself he sang. Then said their guide, Do you know him? I will dare to say that this boy lives a merrier life, and wears more of that herb called *heart's-ease* in his bosom than he that is clad in silk and velvet. So they harkened, and he sang:—

The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want,
He makes me down to lie.
In pastures green; He leadeth me
The quiet waters by.

And, again, "When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon, and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" And, again, this: "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." No; that was not an erroneous school for David. All his days the remembrance of those days was dear

to him. A draught of the water of the well of Bethlehem, even to old age, would make King David pure, and free, and himself again.

"And Saul's servants said to him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. Let our Lord seek out a man who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well. Behold, answered one of Saul's servants, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him. Wherefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep. And it came to pass, when the evil spirit was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him." **There is** an inborn temper of masterfulness in David. *David never does anything by halves.* Energy, decision, resolu-

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tion, devotion, finish, scorn of idleness, scorn of ease, love of labour, love of danger—you will always find virtues like these in young David. David's harp had sounded farther than David ever dreamed. Plenty of shepherd-boys had a harp, but there was no man in all Israel who could make his harp play and work cures of the mind like David. David was a man of strong passions, good and bad. Harp, or sling, or sword, or sceptre, or psalmist's pen—it was all the same. David was a cunning man, and the Lord was with David. It would soon change the face of the world if all our young men would but determine to put on David's masterful mind.

How much power is wasted; how many talents are let rot; how many opportunities are lost for ever for want of David's eager, onward, hopeful, masterful mind. How few men come to anything eminent, or distinguished, or praiseworthy. Jesse's son was not the only son in Israel who had an ear for music. But he was the only owner of an ear for music who did his very best by his

ear. All the men in Saul's camp had the best-made slings hung at their belts, but it was the *homeliest piece of skin and cord in all Israel that delivered the smooth stone into Goliath's forehead.*

How much half-finished work is gathering dust in all our houses! How many books, bought or borrowed, and let fall out of sight and unread! How many costly instruments of music that nobody can play! How many languages smattered over! What heaps of sluggard's litter lying all around us! How few of our children can translate a page to perfection, or polish a sentence, or play a tune, or patch a garment, or prepare, or eat a meal so that you can say, *The Lord is with them!* In His name, what your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. Whether it is learning a language, or preparing a speech, or singing a song, or composing a sermon or a prayer, or visiting a stair, or teaching and training up a class, or ploughing a furrow, or sweeping a house, lay it not down till you can say, *It is finished.*

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The eighteenth chapter of First Samuel contains some of the most difficult and dangerous passages in David's whole life, and four times in that single chapter David's *wisdom* is remarked on. David, we read, went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself *wisely*. And after the *foolish women* had aroused Saul's envy and endangered David's life with their thoughtless songs and silly dances, we read again that David behaved himself *wisely* in all his ways. Wherefore, when Saul saw that David behaved himself "*very wisely*," Saul was afraid of David. And then, summing up David's residence at Saul's difficult and dangerous court, the sacred writer says that David behaved himself "*more wisely*" than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by.

I feel certain that the extravagant and ill-considered songs of the excited women pained David far more deeply than they pained Saul. Their coarse chants must have grated painfully on David's finely-strung heart. Their singing and dancing drove Saul mad.

But all that—the women's folly and the king's jealousy—only made David a *wiser* and a *wiser* man every new day. If David could have shut the mouths of these mischief-making women, how willingly would he have done it. They could not understand what was the matter with the usually so open David, the victorious captain who rode past them in silence, and with a dark cloud on his countenance. It says much for David, and it says so little for the sound public opinion of Israel in that day, that David's name was so celebrated for his *wisdom*. Men of a cold, cautious, reserved character far sooner gain and far easier keep the name of wise men than their fellows do who are of warmer feelings and more generous impulses. The fullness and the openness of some men's hearts obscure to the multitude the lucidity and the solidity of their minds. We are ready to think the man wise and able who is silent, and reserved, and proud, and whose temper and tongue are edged in all he says and does with slight and scorn of other men. The warm-hearted

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man is a far wiser man than the cold-hearted man ever can be, but it takes a warm heart and a wise to see that. David must have had great strength and evenness of character and great solidity of judgment, and he must have had good and honest hearts round about him, fully appreciating him, and guiding public opinion concerning him, when, with so much openness, friendliness, geniality, and humility, he gained such a name for prudence and wisdom. *The voice of the people is sometimes, after all, the voice of God.*

David's fine humility is beautifully brought out in the matter of his marriage. Saul's diabolical design was to get David murdered in connection with his marriage. But, without having discovered that, *David's humility of heart and delicacy of mind became, unknown to himself, a shield to save his life.* A less humble, a less noble man, might very well, in David's place, have given loose reins to his imagination and his ambition, and let himself dream about the king's daughter. The more so, that,

after the coarse custom of the time, Saul had promised his daughter to the man who should rid him of Goliath. And David had done that.

But it had never entered David's fondest dreams that King Saul should fulfill his proclamation to an obscure man like him. Nay; even when Saul thought he saw a way of getting David killed in connection with his marriage, David scorned the proposal of the plotters. They might think as meanly of Saul and Saul's house as they chose; but let them not so speak to the king's armour-bearer. "Seemeth it to you *a light thing* to be a king's son-in-law, seeing that I am but a poor man, and lightly esteemed!" *David has not forgotten his father's house.* David has more place and honour already than he knows how to bear. He would lay it all down and return to the sheepfolds of his youth if he only could. Whatever he may be to those foolish women, *David is no hero to himself.* To himself he is still the youngest son of Jesse the Bethlehemite.

It is David's *lasting honour* also

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that the land of Israel was not plunged into all the horrors of civil war. His men were increasing in numbers every day, and their extraordinary devotion to David, added to the rankling of their own wrongs, made them ready for anything. David's *self-restraint was the one thing* that stood between Saul and the loss of his throne and the loss of his life. It happened one day about that time that David and his outlawed men were hiding in a cave among the rocks of the wild goats, when, as Providence would have it, Saul, who was pursuing David, came up to that very cave to sleep. Now is David's opportunity. The Lord, (said David's men,) hath to-day delivered your enemy into your hand. David drew his sword and stepped down to where the sleeping king lay, and cut off the skirt of Saul's garment, and withdrew again into the darkness. His men wondered why he had not brought the king's head in his hand instead of the lappet of his robe. When Saul rose from his sleep and left the cave, David went

to the mouth of the cave and called out, "*My Lord, the king!*"

Think of Saul's feelings when he looked up and saw David, whom he was hunting to death, standing on the spot where he had just risen from sleep, and standing with his sword in one hand and the skirt of Saul's robe in the other. When Saul looked up, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself. And David said to Saul, "Wherefore hearest thou men's words against me? See the skirt of thy robe in my hand, and know that though some bade me kill thee, mine eye spared thee; for I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed." "Is this thy voice, David?" exclaimed Saul. "My son David, thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil! If a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?"

In the court, in the camp, in the caves of Engedi and Adullam, on the throne, in the sanctuary—all hearts good and bad, fly open in David's presence. Like his New Testament

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Son, David's life, in its way, was the light of men. We see all the men and women of David's day in the light of David. All who came near David, ever after their hearts are naked and open to us. Saul, Jonathan, Merab, Michal, Nabal, Abigail, Abner, Joab, Uriah, Nathan, Shimei, Absalom, Solomon—we see them all in the light of David's blazing presence among them. There are some men who shut up every heart that comes near them. They chill, and cramp, and shut up every heart. But David warmed, and enlarged, and enriched, and lighted up, for good or for evil, every heart that came into his generation. Even Saul is no longer obscure after David enters Saul's court. *It was David's heart.* It was his talents; it was his character; it was his virtues; sometimes it was his vices; but it was always his heart. It was his magnificent and unparalleled power of sympathy. It was the divine nature in David: *It was Jesus Christ in David long before Jesus Christ came.* Bring my soul out of prison, sang David in one of his most solitary and for-

saken psalms. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name. *The righteous shall compass me about;* for Thou shalt deal bountifully with me. How well that prayer and hope was fulfilled in Israel: and how well it is fulfilled still among ourselves let David's psalms testify. *Look how the righteous everywhere compass about David, the sweet psalmist of Israel. "Arise, anoint him: for this is he!"*

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CHAPTER II

DAVID—IN HIS VICES

THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN

Butler has a sermon on self-deceit which you should all read till you have it by heart. If you will listen to him, Butler will prove to you and will convince you that self-deceit, or internal hypocrisy, as he sometimes calls it, is the greatest of all your guilt; and is, in addition, the corruption of your whole moral character. He will show you also, in a way that will startle you, that *David was guilty of this worst of all sins beyond any other saint or sinner in all the Bible*. In Butler's sober, but most convincing and most solemnizing words, David's is the most prodigious instance of the very wickedest and the very deadliest of all the vices of the vicious heart of man. All David's other vices were but skin wounds and surface sores that might soon have been bound up;

at their worst, to borrow David's own words about them, they were but so many broken bones. But David's self-deceit was deep-seated, and it would have been deadly to David, but for Nathan, or, rather, but for the LORD.

As for David's fall, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints. But, past speaking about as David's fall was, *it was what followed his fall that so displeased the LORD*. In the words of Butler's latest editor, "It is safer to be wicked in the ordinary way than from this corruption lying at the root." As Thomas Goodwin points out in his great treatise on the Aggravation of Sin, it was the "matter of Uriah," even more than the matter of Bathsheba, that awakened the anger of the Lord against David. That is to say, it was David's *sin of deliberation and determination*, rather than his sin of sudden and intoxicating passion. It was both sins; but it cannot be overlooked that it was after a twelvemonth of self-deceit, internal hypocrisy, and self-forgiving silence on David's part that

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Nathan was sent to David in such divine indignation. How a man like David could have lived all that time *soaked to the eyes in adultery and murder and not go mad is simply inconceivable*. That is to say, it would be inconceivable if we had not *ourselves* out of which to parallel and illustrate David, and thus to make David both possible and natural to us. Before you begin to read and think; as long as you confine your reading and thinking to the reading and thinking of children and fools, you will think it impossible that all the self-deceitfulness and internal hypocrisy that could possibly be in David and in the devil taken together, could not have so blinded David to the blackness of his sin, and to the absolute certainty of God's dreadful judgments. But when you become a man in the books you read, and in the matters of your own heart; and especially in the superlative deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of your own heart, you will stop all your childish exclamations over David, and will say to yourself, I myself am

David; I myself am that self-deceiving man.

"What the particular circumstances were with which David extenuated his crimes, and quieted and deceived himself, is not related." No! They are not related; but we may guess at some of them to our own self-discovery and self-advantage. David would say to himself such things as these: "I am the king, and Uriah and his wife are both my servants. All that he has is mine. She is not for such as he. She should be a queen, and she shall be. And I can make it up to him, and I will." And then, after that, there was Uriah's disobedience and insolence to his king; his open disloyalty and his boasted indifference to his king's discovery and disgrace. "Yes, the sword devoureth one as well as another," David would say. "*And it might have devoured Uriah even if I had not written that letter.*" (II Sam. 11:14.) And then, to repay, and repair, and cover it all up, David fetched the woman to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. And, besides all that, it was all

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past: and why go back upon the past? David, you may be sure, had all these, and many more than all these, "distinctions to fence with."

And then, what was wanting in all that, himself came in to complete and carry off the case; *Self*, "the most disingenuous and abominable principle that ever was." *Self*, that utterly ungodly, diabolical, inhuman, inconceivably wicked, and detestable thing that was so strong in David and is so strong in you and in me. He who watches the workings of self in his own mind and heart, he will not be forward to throw a stone at David: he will not be surprised at anything he reads about David or any other man. He will not wonder either at David's fall or at his subsequent self-deceit. I am warned of God that, with all my study and all my watchfulness and all my prayerfulness, the deceitfulness and the internal hypocrisy of my own heart will still deceive me. Well, all I shall say in answer to that is this, that if my heart is worse than I know it to be, then the God of all grace, with all the blood of His Son,

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and with all the patience and power of His Spirit, help me! Me, and all men like me; if there is another man like me in this matter on earth.

My brethren, beware how you shield yourself from yourself, and use distinctions when you are conversing with your conscience about yourself. To be *pointed at*, and told to his face that he was *unclean*, and *cruel*, and *cowardly*, and *guilty of blood*, was *David's salvation*. And to have some one injured enough and angry enough; or friendly and honest and kind enough; to call you to your face *false*, or *cruel*, or *envious*, or *malicious*, or *hard-hearted*, or *ignorant* and *narrow-minded* and *full of prejudice* and *party-spirit*, or *sycophantic* to the *great*, and *supercilious* and harsh to the *poor*, or all that together, *might be the beginning of your salvation*. And would he then be your enemy who first told you that saving truth? Surely you will not think it. "*Let the righteous smite me*, and it shall be a kindness." Let him reprove me, and it shall be an excellent oil that shall not break my head. But, far

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best of all, let my conscience smite me.

Butler points out at the same time that, portentous as David's internal hypocrisy and self-deceit was, it was all the time local and limited in David. That is to say, his self-deceit had not as yet spread over and corrupted his whole life and character. There was real honesty in David all this self-deceiving time. David gave scope, in Butler's words, to his affections of compassion and goodwill, as well as to his passions of another kind. And, while this is some comfort to us to hear, there is a great danger to us in this direction also. The whited sepulchres fasted twice in the week, and they gave tithes of all that they possessed. They made broad their phylacteries, and made long prayers, and were always to be seen in the synagogues, with their mint and anise and cummin. They made clean, no men made so clean, the outside of the cup and platter. Many of them had begun, like David, with only one thing wrong in their life; but it was a thing that they

hushed up in their own consciences, till by that time the self-deceit was spreading and was well-nigh covering with death and damnation their whole life and character. David was rescued from that appalling end; but he was fast on the way to that end when the Lord arrested him.

David all the time was administering *justice* and *judgment* as *boldly*, and with as much anger at evil-doers, as if there had never been a man of the name of Uriah on the face of the earth. And just because he was making men who had no pity *restore the lamb fourfold*; just because of that he was *more and more confirmed in his own self-deceit*. We would need Nathan and his parable at this point. Only, your self-deceit would make you miss this point, till he drove it home into your deceitful heart. You are the man! You are all the more severe with one class of sinners that you sin yourself so much with another and opposite class. You are terrible to see and hear on the *sins of the flesh*, because you are up to the eyes in the far more fatal *sins of the mind*.

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You despise and detest publicans and sinners, while you dine and sup and *plot against Christ* with Pharisees and internal hypocrites. We all turn away our eyes and our ears from parables like that. Yes, but Butler warns us that it is as *easy* to close the eyes of the mind as those of the body. Also, that though a man has the best eyes in the world, he cannot see in any direction but in that to which he turns his eyes. Let the man, then, who would discover his own self-deceit, if there is one such here, let him turn his eyes in upon his own heart, and especially let him turn his eyes in the opposite direction in his own heart, to that in which his easy and untempted virtue displays itself.

But so bold, and towering, and self-deceived is our self-deceit, that it invades and entrenches itself, not in the matters of morals only; it comes to its fulness and to a positive grandeur in our devotions; in our daily dealings with God Himself. Nothing can be more open and notorious than the self-deceit and utter hypocrisy of our psalms and our

prayers. David says, and he says it, no doubt, from his own devotional experience, that if he regards iniquity in his heart, the Lord will not hear him. How much less would the Lord have heard him if he had carried out his iniquity openly, and had put all the deepest deceit of his heart into his psalms and his prayers. *I do not read that David composed any penitential psalms during those self-deceiving twelve months.* And yet there is no saying. There is no limit to the sacrilege and profanity of an infernal hypocrisy. Be that as it may, if David did not, we do.

“Julius goes to prayers, he confesses himself to be a miserable sinner, he accuses himself to God with all the aggravations that can be, as having no health in him; yet Julius cannot bear to be informed of any imperfection, or suspected to be wanting in any degree of virtue. Now, can there be stronger proof that Julius is wanting in the sincerity of his devotions? Is not this a plain sign that his confessions to God are only words of course, an humble civility of speech

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to his Maker, in which his heart has no share? If a man was to confess that his eyes were bad, his hands weak, his feet feeble, and his body helpless, he would not be angry with those that supposed he was not in perfect strength, or that he might stand in need of some assistance. Yet Julius confesses himself to be in great weakness, corruption, disorder, and infirmity, and yet is angry at any one that does but suppose his defection in any virtue. Is it not the same thing as if he had said, You must not imagine that I am in earnest in my devotion?"

He was a happy preacher whose pulpit awakened David and brought David back to God. Nathan took his life in his hand that day. But he had his reward. And what a reward it was! Think of having David's soul set down to your account at the great day! What shall we ourselves owe to Nathan at that day for that sermon? We would never have had David's psalms but for Nathan's sermon. And what should we have done, I cannot conceive, without David's psalms.

Preaching is magnificent work if only we could get preachers like Nathan. If our preachers had only something of Nathan's courage, skill, serpent-like wisdom, and evangelical instancy. But even Nathan himself would be helpless with some of you. You would have turned upon Nathan; you would have taken his good name and his life; you would have written a letter about him to Joab at Rabbah.

Brutus never read a book but to make himself a better man. When will that be said about your coming to church? Happy the preacher who has so much as one Brutus a Sabbath day among his hearers! Happy the preacher who has David among his hearers from time to time, so that he can pass on and say to him, "*The Lord also hath put away thy sin!*" We ministers must far more study Nathan's method; especially when we are sent to preach awakening sermons. *Too much skill cannot be expended in laying down our approaches to the consciences of our people. Nathan's sword was within an inch of David's conscience before David knew that*

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*Nathan had a sword. One sudden thrust, and the king was at Nathan's feet. What a rebuke of our slovenly, unskilful, blundering work! When we go back to Nathan and David, we forget and forgive everything that had been evil in David. The only thing wanting to make that day in David's life perfect, was that Nathan should have had to come to David. Now, what will make this the most perfect day in all your life will be this, if you will save the Lord and His prophet all that trouble, so to speak, and be both the Lord and His prophet to yourself. Read Nathan's parable to yourself till you say, *I am the man!* (II Sam. 12.) And so ever after with every parable, and with every psalm, and with every prayer, and with everything of that kind. When we preach anything of that kind, all the time we are preaching, be you fast kindling your own anger against yourself. And as soon as we are done preaching, speak you out in yourself and at yourself, and say, *As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die.* And*

he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

And, always, when the thirty-second psalm is announced to be sung, and when innocent men and women and children are getting their instruments of music ready, be you getting yourself ready till you cannot wait for them. "Blessed is the man!"—lead the congregation, and sing. And, when, by a happy inspiration the fifty-first psalm is again given out, do you ejaculate up to David's God your daily thankfulness that there is such a psalm in existence. Just hear a verse of it, and say if it is not. "Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me."

And, then, David's "way of lying." Did any of you ever suppress and keep silent about your principles, say, at an election time? Did you ever

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hedge and double in your public life in order to get a position, or in order to stand well with those who have positions and pieces of bread to give away? Did you ever tune a speech or a sermon or a prayer to turn away the anger of a man whose anger you feared, or with an eye to a man you wished to stand well with? Or, did you ever tell a vain lie upon yourself, ascribing something falsely or exaggeratingly to yourself through vanity or other self-interest? And, alongside of that, when and where did you last put forward, or allow another to put forward, a detracting word about your friend or about your rival, *and hold back what you felt would be his advantage?*

Then, the story of David and the priest of Nob is, in that case, written for your learning. (I Sam. 21.) You will see in that chapter how David obtained hallowed bread of Ahimelech, and what that bread cost Ahimelech and his house. "Remove from me the way of lying, and grant me Thy law graciously." "He points to the sore of his guileful heart," says

Goodwin, "wherein his grief lay. David, among other corruptions, had a lying spirit sometimes."

Or, again, were you ever driven to simulate sickness, or even madness, in order to get out of some dreadful crime or scrape you had fallen into? See, then, God's compassion for you at David's cost, in His having had that so humiliating chapter put into your Bible. What a state of mind must David have been in that day when the servants of King Achish led David like a madman or a wild beast to the borders of their land, and then let him loose, as you would let loose and hound out a madman or a wild beast you were terrified at! O, what a bottomless mystery and misery and agony of sin and shame the heart of man is. From the same fountain will spring forth, on sufficient temptation and opportunity, the noblest deeds, and the most debasing and despicable. Had it not been in the Bible, we would have denounced that chapter as the cruelest, the most blasphemous, and the most utterly impossible slander. And, then, to have two

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LIFE OF DAVID

splendid psalms as the immediate outcome of that sickening chapter! Truly they would need to be men in understanding, and not children, who read the Bible.

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CHAPTER III

DAVID—IN HIS GRACES

A MAN AFTER MINE OWN HEART

(It was while David was a pure shepherd boy, that Samuel said to him, "The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart."
—Editor.)

I would fain begin David's shining graces by saying that faith in God is the true and real and living root of them all. I would fain begin with David's faith, were it not that there is no word in all our tongue that carries less meaning and less vision to most people's minds and hearts than just this so frequent sound—faith. As Pascal says, We all believe in that dead word God; but there is only one here and another there who really and truly believes in the *living, ever-present, and all-present God*. But this is David's shining distinction above all God's saints—unless there are two or three in the New Testament. In his pure, courageous, noble youth;

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all through his hunted-down days; fallen and broken and full of the pains of hell; filling up his dreary gift of years,—David is always the same *unconquered miracle of faith in God*. Take and read and hear what David says to the Philistine giant about God, and you will see somewhat of his youthful faith in God. (I Sam. 17: 37, 45.)

Then pass far on in his life, and open the hundred and thirty-ninth psalm; and I am safe to say that David, the author of that psalm, and Jesus of Nazareth, whom I may call the finisher of it, have been the only two saints and sons of God on the face of this earth who have ever taken up, understood, and imaginatively and unceasingly employed in their prayers that great believing psalm.

Jesus Christ was out of sight the greatest and the best believer this earth has ever seen. But the best of it is He has beholden to David's psalms of faith, and trust, and resignation, and assurance to support and to give utterance to His faith in His Father. *The psalms of David, says*

Isaac Williams, were our Lord's constant prayer-book. When, therefore; you begin to ask after and to enter on the life of faith, open and read David's life and David's psalms, comparing them together; and then pass on to Jesus Christ, and then to the Apostle Paul. Faith is the modestest of all the graces, says the princely preacher I began with, and, at the same time, it is the most masterful. Wherever true faith is, it frameth the heart to the most childlike and friend-like disposition towards God.

But, who is that roaring all the day long on the murderous wheel? Who is that stretched and stretched again on the rack all night till all his bones are out of joint—out of joint and broken to pieces with a hammer and the anger of God? The voice of whose roaring is that—"According to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions?" And that—"For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me?" Do you ask who it is? Do you not know? That is the prodigal son of the Old Testament. That is the

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same man who sometime went out against the giant, and against the bear, and against the lion in the name and in the strength of God. That is the anointed of the Lord. That is the King of Israel. That is the man after God's own heart. And he lies roaring on the rack—

Thus on us to impress
The portent of a blood-stained holiness.

For, holiness it still is; a true, a great, and an ever-growing holiness, though a holiness ever after to be stained with blood; but, also, to the end to be washed whiter than the snow in better blood. And a holiness, too, with a height, and a depth, and a fire, and an inwardness, and a solemnity, and a far-sounding psalmody in it, all of which would seem scarcely to be attainable in this life unless under the stain of blood, or of something that stains still worse than blood. Dreadful sin! that can only be propitiated by blood, and then washed off heart and life by blood upon blood! Dreadful holiness! that can only be attained (obtained) through tears and blood! *But, blessed holi-*

ness that is still attainable by us all at that, or at any other price possible to be paid by God and man! As David's holiness was, and as all their holiness is, to whom David is set forth as a portent, and at same time as an encouragement.

If you ask me concerning the graces of the Christian character, I would answer firstly, secondly, and thirdly, and for ever, Humility. And thus it is that God sets open His school for teaching us humility every day. Humility is the grace of graces. There is nothing again like it, and we must have a continual training and exercise in it. You learn to pronounce by your patrons complaining that they cannot hear you, and that they must carry their cases to another advocate unless you learn to speak better. And, as you must either please your patrons or die of starvation, you put pebbles in your mouth and you go out to recite to yourself by the river-side till your rhetoric is fit for a Greek judge and jury to sit and hear.

And so with humility, which is harder to learn than the best Greek

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accent. You must go to all the schools, and put yourself under all the disciplines that the great experts practise, if you would put on true humility. And the schools of God to which He puts His great saints are such as these: You will be set second to other men every day. Other men will be put over your head every day. Rude men will ride roughshod over your head every day. God will set His rudest men, of whom He has whole armies, upon you every day to judge you, and to find fault with you, and to correct you, and to blame you, and to take their business away from you to a better—to a better than you can ever be with the best pebbles that ever river rolled. Ay, He will take you in hand Himself, and He will set you and keep you in a low place. He will set your sins in battle-array before your face. He will exact silence, and your mouth in the dust, and a rope on your head, and your heart a pool of tears, long after you had thought that you were to be set in a wealthy place.

But let me say David at once. For

it is David who rises before me as I speak of injuries, and insults, and detractions, and depreciations, and threats, and yet sorer, and yet severer and more immediate handlings by God Himself. David might have put Joab, and Shimei, and all the rest of his tutors and governors, in the front of the battle as he put Uriah; but he could not cast a piece of a mill-stone on his Maker from the walls of Rabbah, and he would not now if he could. And no more will he seek to silence a single one of his many reminders and accusers; no, not the most malignant, insolent, and unceasing of them all.

Once let David, or any other man, begin to taste the heavenly sweetness of true humility over against *pride*, and over against *rebellion*, and over against *retaliation*, and he will become positively enamoured and *intoxicated with his humiliations*. What once was death and hell to him will now be life and peace and salvation. What at one time he had almost committed murder to cover up, he will now hearken for from every housetop.

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When I was a child I used every Sabbath-day to read David's challenge to the giant, and I thought I was sanctifying the Sabbath over that Scripture. But for many years now, and more and more of late years, my Bible opens of itself to me at the place where Shimei casts stones and dirt at David, till David says, *Let him curse, because the Lord hath said to him, Curse David.* My children still read Goliath on Sabbath evenings, but I am on the watch to see how soon I can safely introduce them to Shimei. *Shimei is the man for me and mine!* Only, may I endure my schoolmaster to the bitter end better than even David did. Let me take insults, and injuries, and slights, and slings from men, and God's hand itself, as David that day took Shimei's curses. Let me have David's holy instinct, let me lay down David's holy rule, to look at everything of that kind that comes to me as so many divine calls and divinely opened doors to a deeper humility. Graces also grow by what they feed on; and humility grows by deliberately dieting itself on such humiliations

as these, both human and divine. If any one has the spiritual ambition to penetrate into this, he will find a field rich in these and in many such like spiritual blessings in Jonathan Edwards' *"Religious Affections."* I shall close up the grace of David by this specimen of mighty Edwards: "Evangelical humiliation is the sense that a Christian man has of his own utter despicableness and odiousness, with an always answerable frame of heart. This humiliation is peculiar to true saints, for it is always accompanied with a sight of the transcendent beauty of divine things. And then, God's true saints all see, more or less, their own odiousness."

"The grey-haired saint may fail at last"; and the last we see of David is his deathbed shipwreck on that very same sunken rock he had steered past so often in the stormy voyage of his life. Here David failed in that very grace which had been such a strength to him, and such a boast to us. And it was exactly where David so sadly struck and sank, that his divine Son touched and attained

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to the top of His obedience, and gave to Himself the finishing touch of His full sanctification. "Father, forgive them, He said, and gave up the ghost." I do not know that of all the bad blood, there is any that lasts longer than anger, and resentment, and ill-will at our enemies, at our detractors, and at those who despise and deride us.

We would draw the curtains of David's deathbed if we dared. But we dare not, and we would not if we could. For, after all, David is not our surety. David is not our righteousness. David did not die the just for the unjust. Nor at his very youngest and best is David set forward as an example to the disciples of Jesus Christ. David at his best, as at his worst, is one of ourselves. He was a man of like passions with us, and, like our passions, his were sometimes at his heel, but more often at his throat. David held back his bad passions at Saul, and at Shimei, occasion after occasion till we were almost worshipping David. But, all the time, and unknown to us, they were there. Till,

of all times and of all places in the world, David's banked-up passions burst out on his deathbed, that no flesh might glory in God's presence. But that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. We shall awake in His likeness who died, not cursing Judas, and Annas, and Caiaphas, and Herod, and the soldier with the spear, but saying over them all with His last breath, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. For even hereunto were we called."

There is one thing, so far as I remember, that David never failed or came short in. Though the prophet David was guilty of murder and adultery, and many others of the most deadly sins, he abounded more and more with *thankfulness* than any other that is mentioned in Holy Scripture. As may appear in this book of Psalms, where there is such a commixture of his confessing of his unworthiness, and thankfulness for God's pardon and mercies. And let us, in that, labour to be as like David as we can.

Would you know? asks William

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Law in his beautiful chapter on singing Psalms—would you know who is the greatest saint in the world? Well, it is not he who *prays most* or *fasts most*; it is not he who *gives most* alms, or is most eminent for *temperance*, *chastity*, or *justice*; but it is he who is ALWAYS THANKFUL TO GOD, WHO WILLS EVERYTHING THAT GOD WILLS, and who receives everything as an instance of God's goodness, and has a heart *always ready to praise God for His goodness*. And then Law winds up with this, and I wish it would send you all to the golden works of that holiness-laden writer—Sometimes, he adds, imagine to yourselves that you saw holy David with his hands upon his harp, and his eyes fixed upon heaven, calling in transport upon all creation, sun and moon, light and darkness, day and night, men and angels, to join with his rapturous soul in praising the Lord of heaven. *Dwell upon this imagination till you think you are singing with this divine musician*; and let such a companion teach you to exalt your heart unto God every new morn-

ing in his thanksgiving psalms. *Or, make a morning psalm suitable to your own circumstance out of David's great thanksgiving psalms.* You should take the finest and the selectest parts of David's finest and selectest psalms, and adding them together make them every morning more and more fit to express your own thankful hearts.

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CHAPTER IV

DAVID—IN HIS SERVICES

"WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT"

God is the only master with servants who accepts the intention for the action. God alone of all paymasters pays as good wages for the *good intentions* of His servants as He pays for their best performances. One of David's greatest and best services to God and man never went further than the good intention. But David was as much praised and as much paid for his good intention to build the temple as if he had lived to see the golden towers of God's house shining in the Sabbath sun. It will help comfort every good and honest heart to be told that good intentions form some of the surest of stepping-stones to heaven. Give, and it shall be given you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and run-

ning over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you mete, withal it shall be measured to you again. After which, Bengel acutely annotates, that it is *by our hearts* that we both mete out to others and have it meted out to ourselves.

It would have gone hard with the poor widow if she had only had a farthing meted out to her in her Lord's judgment on her. But her Lord looked on her heart. And thus it is that she sits in heaven to-day among the *queens* who sit there on their *thrones of Gold*, because she had such a *queenly heart*. Both from David's intended temple; from the poor widow's actual collection at the door of David's temple; let us learn this spiritual lesson, that our hearts are the measure both of our work and of our wages in the sight of God. You cannot build and repair all the churches and mission-houses and manses at home and abroad. You cannot endow all the chairs of sacred learning you would like. You cannot contribute to the sustentation and

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spread of the Christian ministry as you would like. You cannot visit and relieve all the fatherless and widows in their affliction as you would like. You cannot stop all the sources of sin and misery in this world as you would like. You cannot make the reading, or the devotional life of your people what your heart is full of. You wish you could. So did David. David had magnificent dreams about the temple. He built the temple every night in his sleep. And had he been permitted he would not have slept with his fathers till he had dedicated a most magnificent house to the name of the Lord. But it stands in God's true and faithful word that *it was in David's heart*. His own personal gift in gold and silver, not to say anything about the abundance of iron, brass, timber and precious stones, was over one hundred and ten million dollars. And He who looks not so much on the action as on the intention, He saw in this also a man after His own heart. May all David's good intentions, and generous preparations be found in all our poor people. For

the heart is the measure. And as we measure out good performances in our heart, so will it be measured back to us by Him who sees and weighs and *measures the heart and nothing but the heart.*

"Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars; thou shalt not build an house to My name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in My sight. But, behold, a son shall be born to thee, and his name shall be Solomon, and he shall build an house for My name." When I first read that sentence of such terrible disappointment to David, I looked to see David all that night on his face on the earth. But I did not know David; I had not yet got into all the depths of David's deep heart. For, instead of refusing to rise up and eat bread with the elders of his house, David was never in a happier frame of mind than he was all that night. David not only said, "It is the Lord," but his heart broke forth in a psalm such that there is nothing nobler in his whole book of Psalms. David not only consented that it was

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both good, and right, and seemly, that hands like this should not touch a stone of the house of God; but, that his son should be chosen of God to build Him an house—that set David's heart on fire as never Old Testament heart was set on fire. As we read the psalm that poured out of David's heart that chastised and disappointed day: A psalm of *resignation*, and *self-sacrifice*, and *thanksgiving*. Then went David in, and sat before the Lord; and he said, "*Who am I, O Lord God*, and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in Thy sight, O Lord God; but Thou hast spoken also of Thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of a man, O Lord God?" Would God we all had a heart like that! "I have found David, my servant."

It makes it possible, and, more than possible, pleasant to a father to lie down and leave his work unfinished when he sees his son standing at his bedside ready to take up his father's unfinished work. Nay, I suppose a father who loved his son aright and

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enough would almost rather leave all his work and all his hope unfinished if he saw his son able and willing and chosen and called to take it up. This, no doubt, greatly helped David to resign his great hope of being spared to build the temple, that Solomon, his greatly-gifted, wise-hearted, pure, and noble-minded son was standing ready to take up and to carry out his father's long-intended task.

David did many other services, both intended and executed, both in the field, and on the throne, and in the house of God; but by far David's greatest service *was his Psalms*. The temple was built, and built again, and built again; but for two thousand years now not one stone of that so sacred and so stately structure has stood upon another. The very foundations of the temple have been razed out, sown with salt, and for ever lost. But the Psalms of David shine to this day with a greater splendour than on the day they were first sung. And long after the foundations of this whole earth shall have been ploughed

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up and removed out of their place, David's Psalms will be sounding out for ever beside the song of Moses and the Lamb. What a service has David done, not knowing that he was doing it; and not to his own nation only, but to the whole Israel of God. And not to Israel only, but to the God of Israel, and to the Redeemer of Israel. "I have found David My servant, with My holy oil have I anointed him. I have exalted one chosen out of the people."

I have said that David did a great service to the Redeemer of Israel, and I intended to say it. When I think of that service, all the other services that David has done by his Psalms shine out in a far diviner glory. I bless David's name for the blessing my own soul gets out of his Psalms every day I live. But when I trace that blessing up to its true source, I find that true and grace-gushing source in Jesus of Nazareth, whom I see growing in grace every day as He goes about in Galilee with David's Psalms never out of His hands. Think, people of God, of the honour to

David, higher far than all the thrones on earth and in heaven,—*the unparalleled and immortal honour of being able to teach Jesus Christ to sing and to pray.* For, when the Holy Child said to Mary, "Mother, teach Me to sing and to pray." What did Mary do, hiding all that in her heart, but put into her Child's hands David's golden Psalm beginning thus: "*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*" And then, think of Him as He grew in wisdom, and in stature, and in strength of spirit *beginning to discover Himself in this Psalm of David and in that.* Think of the sweet start, the *overpowering surprise,* the *solemnity,* the *rejoicing with trembling,* the *resignation,* the triumph with which the growing Saviour was led of the Spirit from *Psalm to Psalm* till He had searched out all David's Psalms in which David had prophesied and sung concerning his *Messiah Son.*

See Jesus of Nazareth on His knees in the Sabbath synagogue with this place open before Him for the first time,—*"Lo, I come; in the volume of*

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the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart." And, having once begun to read and to think in that way you will go on till you come to the cross, where you will see and hear your dying Redeemer with one of David's Psalms on His lips when He can no longer hold it in His hands. And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that "all things must be fulfilled which were *written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me.*" And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?

O, two disciples, on your way that same day to Emmaus, how I envy you your travelling Companion that day! My heart burns to think of your Divine Companion opening up to you David's Messianic Psalms that memorable day. And when I think also of the multitudes that no man can number to whom David's Psalms

have been their constant song in the house of their pilgrimage; in the tabernacle as they fell for the first time hot from David's heart and harp; in the temple of Solomon his son with all the companies of singers and all their instruments of music; in the synagogues of the captivity; in the wilderness as the captives returned to the New Jerusalem; in the New Jerusalem every Sabbath-day and every feast-day; in the upper room, both before and after supper; in Paul's prison at Philippi; in the catacombs; in Christian churches past number; in religious houses all over Christendom at all hours of the day and the night; in deserts, in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth; in our churches; in our Sabbath-schools; in our families morning and evening; in our sick-rooms; on our death-beds; and in the night-watches when the disciples of Christ watch and pray lest they enter into temptation. *A service like all that is surely too much honour for any mortal man!* Then David went in and sat before the Lord; and he said, "Who am I,

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O Lord God? And what is my house? And is this the manner of man, *O Lord God?* And what can David say more unto thee! for Thou, Lord God, knowest thy servant."

Then, take David's *knowledge of God*, and his *communion with God*. There is nothing like it in the whole world again. There are many mysteries of godliness not yet revealed to us; but, to me, the mystery of David's knowledge of God and his communion with God is one of the most mysterious. Had Paul sung David's Psalms, and sent, now the twenty-third Psalm to the Philippians, and now the thirty-second and the hundred and thirtieth to the Romans, and now the forty-fifth and the seventy-second to the Colossians, and so on, I would not have wondered. I would wonder at nothing *after* the coming of Christ, and after His death and His ascension. But it baffles me to silence to see such Psalms as David's *before the day of Christ*. And I have never, with all my search, seen an intelligent attempt made to face that mystery.

No; David is scarcely second to the

Man Jesus Christ Himself in this mystery of mysteries, the mystical communion of the soul of man with the Living God. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is so high that we cannot attain to it. "O God, Thou art my God. Early will I seek Thee. My soul thirsteth for Thee; my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is; to see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary. Because Thy lovingkindness is better than a life, my lips shall praise Thee. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow fatness, and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips when I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches. My soul followeth hard after Thee." That would not have stumbled me had I come on it in the heart of the seventeenth of John itself. To David in the sixty-second, and in its sister Psalms, there is only *I AM David himself*, in all heaven and earth. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, David says in another Psalm. And, Thee only, is the sum and the sub-

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stance, the beauty and the sweetness of all David's communion Psalms. To know God and to be in constant communion with God is life to David.

Then, again, it is told of Luther in his Table Talk, that being asked one day which were his favorite Psalms—Why, to be sure, he answered, Paul's four Psalms,—“Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sin is covered,” “Have mercy upon me, O God,” “Out of the depths,” and “Enter not into judgment with Thy servant.” Do you not see, he demanded, that all these Psalms tell us that *forgiveness comes without the law and without works?* Forgiveness and peace come to him that *believeth*. “That Thou mayest be feared.” That dusts away all merit; that teaches us to uncover our heads before God and to confess that forgiveness is of His grace and not of our desert at all. “Even as David describeth the righteousness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed is that man.” David knew it experimentally. It was Paul's privilege to

know it both historically and experientially, as we say, and then to set it forth doctrinally. And it is our privilege to have it in all these three ways, if we love and value such things above all other love and value. "My covenant shall stand fast with him. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips. Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie unto David."

But, with all that, the half, and the best half for you, has not yet been told you. After all that, listen to this. *"In that day he that is feeble in Jerusalem SHALL BE AS DAVID, and the house of David shall be as God."* Does Feeble-mind hear that? Then let him receive and rest on that. Let him wake up psaltery and harp at the hearing of that. And let all that is within him sing and play like David. Let him sing and play, and that with the mind and the heart and the spirit like David. Let him sing and play to God, and to God only, like David. Let him who is feeble in faith, and in repentance, and in holiness, and

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in communion with God, be much in the Psalms. Let the Psalms dwell richly in the feeblest among us, *and the feeblest among us will yet be a man of more spiritual strength than David.* Sing a heart-strengthening Psalm every morning, and a heart-cleansing and a heart-quieting Psalm every night. Seven times every remaining day of your earthly pilgrimage sing a Psalm. Let no place, and no conversation, and no occupation delude you out of your heart-refreshing Psalm. Fill the house of your pilgrimage with the sound of Psalms. Let the prisoners hear you! Let the angels hear you! Let God hear you! Let Him bow down His ear and hear you! And let Him say to His Son, and to His angels, and to His saints, over you and over your house, *"I have found a man after mine own heart; with My holy oil have I anointed him."*

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CHAPTER V

DAVID—THE PRACTICE OF SELF-CONTROL

"Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible."—St. Paul.

Outside the grace of God, nothing will so develop sturdiness of character as the practice of self-restraint. Saints and rascals are not made in a day. We wonder why so many fall away even after having admonished others for years. Where did it start? The foundation was laid back there in the cradle when the child was permitted to cry at the top of its voice because it could not have its own way. Oh, that parents could only realize that they are fitting or unfitting their children for the tests in future life.

Many a man gets saved and perhaps sanctified, then fails, or to say the least, struggles through life, fighting a

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warped disposition that was largely developed in childhood. Mrs. Wesley did not allow her children to cry aloud after they were one year old, except when in pain. Her son John remarked that they were all "highly spirited enough," and the wise mother did not rob them of their personality, though she did suppress their carnality. No marvel then that they became real Methodists! There was a real mother in the background.

Why do men curse, commit adultery and suicide? Why do fair women fly into a fit of anger and act like Jezebel? Because they were not properly taught in youth to repress and restrain their feelings. Drunkards, gamblers and harlots did not just happen to become such all at once. Lack of self-control from infancy prepared the way for open violence in after life. They ate, drank, slept and spent money just as they pleased.

On the other hand, evenness of spirit is not acquired in a moment. Little by little we either build up or pull down the bulwarks of character.

Even after entire sanctification, in eating, sleeping, sightseeing, and a dozen other ways we strengthen or weaken the citadel of the soul. Thus we become either susceptible, or impregnable under the artillery of hell.

Dear Friend, resolve now that through grace you will take your self in hand afresh! Crush as you would a viper the first suggestion to evil; yea, the least departure from purity and righteousness. Remember all sin *begins in thought!* Like mother Eve or David: First, *attention*; then *consideration*; then *gratification*; then *humiliation*. If you would preserve integrity to the end, avoid getting near the border line of temptation. Detest a spirit of curiosity and prying into matters not your own. Be too dignified to itch for news or meddle with the affairs of others. Refuse to look the second time, as did David, in the wrong direction. Cultivate the ability of bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Control your own mental household and call back every wandering

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thought, as a wise parent would a child who goes beyond a safe limit. He who can do this in the Spirit, will not find it legal and irksome, but rather a blessed, wholesome rest and strength of soul. Yes, he who through grace reaches and retains complete self-mastery, as did St. Paul, will as surely be able to say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." (2 Tim. 4:7, 8.)

"I CAN'T AFFORD IT"

E. E. Shelhamer

We frequently hear the expression, "I can't afford it," but it generally pertains to money matters. Let us now apply it to spiritual values.

I can't afford to neglect secret prayer; for here is where I take on strength and am fortified against sudden and subtle attacks from men and devils.

I can't afford to hear or speak evil; for, if I only realized it, I am stepping down to a lower plane and doing a greater injury to myself than to the other party.

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I can't afford to write a cutting letter; for the more I fight my own battles, the less God will defend me. If I want the job, He will step aside and give it to me, but in the end I will be the loser.

I can't afford to lend my eyes or ears to an unseemly thing; for, years later, Satan may take delight in recalling it by flaunting the thing before the soul's vision, even while I am in the attitude of prayer.

I can't afford to give less than I ought; for, though it eases the conscience, my soul is shrivelled and I limit God in working miracles. "The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."

I can't afford to think an ignoble thought; for, though it be unknown, yet the harboring of the same may so weaken the power of resistance as to lead to something more serious. Rule thy thoughts lest they rule and ruin thee.

I can't afford to get out of Divine order and go here or there at my own choosing, for the unlikely place may be God's place, and the small crowd may be the crowd in which a mighty minister or missionary may be in the making.

I can't afford to trifle with the first suggestion to do evil. I am as innocent as an angel, though my attention (as in the case of Eve or Joseph) may be called to a thing. But if I dare to do as did David or Judas, consider it for a moment, then Sin lieth at the door. Oh, that man could see that a fleeting, earthly profit or pleasure is not worthy to be compared with the lasting peace of mind, where there is no reaction or remorse.

I can't afford to waste precious time; for idleness leads to lecherous living. Had David been at the forefront of the battle he would

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not have sinned. But he "tarried at Jerusalem," ate big dinners, "arose from off his bed," and, "saw a beautiful woman"—enough to ruin any man. This was what ruined Sodom. "Pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination before me; therefore I took them away as I saw good."

I can't afford to become distant, or pull off in spirit from any of my brethren, yea, even from opposers, for this may give place to pride and thus hinder us from being a blessing to each other. I must not allow myself to think or speak of their faults as being greater than mine. If they feel it their duty to reprove or contradict me, and I take it well, this will only enlarge and enrich me, so that in the end I will be the winner. What a pity then if on my deathbed I find that I defended my position to my own hurt. Good Lord, save me from an exalted opinion of myself!

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saying, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." Five times did he "send," then God began to send sickness, sorrow, and sedition upon him and his household.

It is a dark picture, but there is another side to it. David was a great sinner, but he was also great at confessing. The penitential Psalm (51) is one of the sublimest pieces of literature ever written. In it we find the personal pronoun thirty-five times in the first sixteen verses. This, perhaps, was the chief reason why David was "restored" to the favor of God and the throne, while poor Saul lost everything—because he could not humble himself. Some men fall so hard and low that they cannot be gathered up and put together again. Saul, Absalom, and Judas were such men. But though David and Peter went down, they were too sincere to stay down. There was something left, out of which to make a saint. Their repentance was so genuine that God could consistently restore them.

According to the Mosaic law, anyone found guilty of adultery was to be stoned to death. But David so humbled himself that the death penalty was transferred to the illegitimate child. What a thought! That we can so abase ourselves and plead the merits of Jesus, that living faith will seize and sheath the uplifted sword and, instead, receive the kiss of reconciliation.

Friend, if we can truly say, "I acknowledged my sin, and mine iniquity have I not hid," perhaps God will yet rule and overrule so that in the end others may take warning and profit from our sad mistakes.

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