

# DAVID, THE MAN OF THE HEART

by  
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ESSAYS EXPLORING  
THE IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS  
OF THE SHEPHERD KING

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## Preface

*“But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature...for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for God looketh upon the heart...Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: and we will not sit down until he cometh hither. And he sent, and brought him...And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.”* (I Samuel 16:7-13)

Thus begins the saga of David, the man of the heart. God Himself identified him as such, when He said (as quoted by Paul), *“I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after Mine own heart, who shall fulfill My will”* (Acts 13:22). This was true of him even after the dark shadows of failure had clouded his brilliant career. And when his heart was breaking in the crushing reality of his sins, the man who seemed to know the depths of God, somehow knew He would not turn away from the broken heart.

More than anyone in the Old Testament, David opens up the meaning of the spirit. The use of the word “heart” throughout the Old Testament corresponds to our idea of the inner spirit—the essence of our being. It is to the heart, or spirit, that David the Psalmist makes his appeal in the thousands of lines that flowed from heart and harp in the magnificent Psalter. *In the Psalms of David we experience God: we do not merely read about Him.*

But David is more—much more. He is the type of Christ, as Shepherd, Prophet and King. *He is the one through whom Jesus received the right to the throne of Israel.* In addition to this, his very life was a revelation of the nature of God’s dealing with His people—of limitless grace and mercy in the midst of an era echoing the thunderings of Moses from Sinai. In his letter to the Romans, Paul picks up this theme of David’s when he writes, *“Even as David speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God reckons righteousness without works, Blessed are they whose lawlessness and whose sins are forgiven; blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not reckon sin.”* (Romans 4:6-8). On a number of occasions God seemed to apply to David, laws that went beyond the Mosaic Law—as, for example, when David and his men were allowed to eat the showbread in the Temple, which was unlawful; or when he was not stoned to death (as the law required) in the episode of Bathsheba. In these matters he became the foreshadowing of a principle which was later expressed in the Book of Acts where God urged the startled Peter to eat unclean food, with the words, *“What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.”* (Let the legalist take note!) In so many respects, David’s life did not conform to an established pattern, but through it all there is the constant flow of communion between the man and God—sometimes sweet and gentle; often wild and stormy; but always the refrain above the storm, “David is a man after my own heart.”

David and his writings provide the richest source of direct experience between man and God, of any character in the Bible, apart from Jesus Himself. Even with Jesus, there were certain aspects of His life that are not directly applicable to fallen man because Jesus was, of course, born with the nature of man before the fall. Almost, if not altogether, every mood of the human heart can be found in the Psalms—the bitterness and resentment and heartache, as well as the joy and gladness. There is the bitter resentment flowing in torrents from a crushed spirit; as well as the unquestioned acceptance of the Divine will and purpose. Without David and his Psalms, the Christian might be left to assume that anyone that felt such things could not be in fellowship with God.

Through the Psalms, we learn that God understands human frailties and we are not alone in our struggle. David thus becomes an oasis for every soul who chooses the wilderness of reality and refuses the path of mere religious conformity. That we are at liberty to use David in the New Testament context is abundantly clear from the numerous references to him throughout the New Testament (58 times). One of the most important of these (Romans) we have already alluded to above.

We are going to explore David's life as Shepherd, Soldier, Sovereign, Sinner, and Singer. We are going to examine these aspects of his life both as a *type* of Christ and as a torch for the believer—a guide in the labyrinthine wilderness of the human heart.

A.T. = Author's Translation  
K.J.V. = King James Version  
A.V. = Authorized Version

# DAVID, THE MAN OF THE HEART

David, the Shepherd

David, the Soldier

David, the Sovereign

David, the Sinner

David, the Singer

Epilogue

# David, the Shepherd

## THE SHEPHERD HEART

He began as a shepherd. He never got away from the shepherd's heart although time and again he fought with fury, the enemies of God. Even that infamous event, in the matter of Bathsheba, which would forever scar his sensitive soul, wrenched from him a cry of remorse that was out of keeping with the savageries of the surrounding monarchs and tribal chiefs. Perhaps this very episode served to keep him mindful of his own inadequacies and to keep him tender to his fellows. It is difficult for a strong man to bear with weakness. Paul had to be buffeted by Satan, *"lest he be over exalted,"* and Peter had to be sifted like wheat. God's men from of old were those who *"out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight and put to flight the armies of the aliens."* Even God's reapers must weep, but *"they that sow in tears shall reap with joy."* We hear much about being soldiers of the cross, but remember that we shall never be soldiers of the cross until first we have hung upon it, with hearts that are broken—broken over our own sinfulness and broken over the lostness of the world. It is sometimes supposed that great religious experiences must produce a spirit that is like the bubbling brook, skipping and laughing through the meadow, but remember that the joy which Christ wanted for His followers, was expressed by Him in a soul-searing soliloquy, spoken on the way to the cross, and experienced by men like Paul in the midst of the heartache and despair of a dying world. Their kind of joy was more like the subterranean artesian well that comes to the surface when it is drawn upon, for the moment of refreshing. If the world sees us laughing in the midst of its torment, will it not wonder if we really care? And that brings us back to the shepherd. The experiences through which David passed gave him the tender heart of the shepherd. Broken before God, he cried out, *"A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou will not despise."* (Psalm 51:17)

Oh, how the people need the shepherd! In the midst of grand religious ambitions and promotions, let it be remembered that above all other designations, God calls His people, *"My sheep."*

God puts a priority on the shepherd heart. Before He let Moses take command of His people, He made him tend sheep for forty years. God was not just interested in getting His people to the Promised Land, but in caring for them on the way. A cattle drover would not do. (I fear there is much of the cowboy in today's pastor!) Jesus lamented *"the hireling who cares not for the sheep"* (John 10:13). In fact, one of the most scathing judgments in Scripture was pronounced upon the shepherds who cared not for the sheep. God would hold them accountable (Ezekiel 34). James echoes the seriousness of the responsibility for the shepherd in the church, when He said, *"Be not many teachers, for ye shall receive the greater condemnation."*

## THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Jesus is, of course, the fulfillment of the shepherd type as the *"Good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep."* John 10, is the most beautiful and complete statement in the Bible concerning the shepherd role. The shepherd heart of Jesus was so deeply revealed in Matthew 9:36—*"when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd."* The Greek text reads, *"they were beat down and pursued."* The Pharisees had failed as shepherds, while they were specialists in the law. For this, Jesus scourged them with the same bitter judgment as Ezekiel's shepherds received. While He lashed the shepherds, He soothed the sheep. His ministry on the earth was marked with tenderness to His people and mercy to the sinners. While there are aspects of judgment to be considered, the element of damnation so often occurring in some evangelistic efforts, is not in keeping with the spirit manifested by Jesus toward the people. He reserved His thunderings for the leaders and spared them not; but to the people He was always the tender shepherd.

This concept of Shepherd and sheep begins in the New Testament with the glorious heavenly display to the shepherds at the birth of Jesus, and carries through to the last scene recorded in Scripture, of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords sitting upon the throne as *“The Lamb of God.”*

## THE SHEPHERD KING

Thus, the significance of David’s beginning of his life as a shepherd. This great type of shepherd king is so essential to the understanding of the Lordship of Christ. Otherwise we see him only as a sovereign and taskmaster. We must see him as Shepherd also, or we become sternly religious like the Pharisees. There has never been a force in the history of mankind, so cruel and evil as religion. Much of the tragedy of the Jews today is the result of a cruel and relentless pursuit of religious error by a form of Christendom that saw only soldiering and not shepherding. As a result, the Jew today sees the cross as a symbol of terror and persecution rather than sacrifice and redemption.

So David, before he can become the sovereign; must be the shepherd, and as a shepherd on the hillsides of Judea, God revealed to him what it means to be the sheep of his pasture. But why sheep? Why not horses for swiftness and strength? Or cattle for steadiness and service? Let the shepherd himself tell us. In Psalm 23, perhaps the most widely known passage in the Bible, God reveals to us what He wants us to understand in our relationship to Him as sheep. Let us examine it phrase by phrase, as translated from the Hebrew text.

## THE SHEPHERD PSALM

**The Lord (Yahweh) is my shepherd; I do not lack.** We do not always have what we want. What we want may not be best for us. But, the Shepherd has committed Himself to see that we have what we need. In forty years of ministry I have never known a Christian that God failed. They have always been sustained—sometimes in penury and distress, but always ultimately brought through. The Shepherd regards the nurture of our spirit more important than physical comfort, so if presently you are suffering, remember you will not perish, and the Shepherd will bring you through in the triumph of your spirit.

**He causes me to lie down in green pastures.** The Shepherd has committed Himself to provide our spirits with nourishing food. This does not only have to do with the Word of God; it has to do with the sustaining of our spirits in feeding upon Christ Himself. He is the Bread of Life. His very presence within us, like the green grass, is a source of continual nourishment to the believer. When we feed on Christ, it is not like the dry, buck brush of religion. That is for goats. It is rather the sweet refreshing of the tender green grass. The best kind of nourishment is that which we are not conscious of. Eating is a pleasurable experience, but then, quietly and efficiently the chemical processes of the body draw upon that nourishment continually, transforming it into energy. So with Christ. His presence within us provides an endless source of strength even when we are not consciously attending to the matters of the Spirit. The sheep in the pasture quietly graze and are satisfied.

**He brings me to the watering place and causes me to rest there.** The Shepherd has committed Himself to provide us with the Water of Life. The fulfillment of this, of course, is in Christ who promises to be a well of water within us, gushing forth into everlasting life. *“He that eateth of Me shall never hunger and he that drinketh of Me shall never thirst.”* Saturated thus with Christ, the spirit is at rest.

**He brings back my life.** By bringing His sheep to the place of nourishment and refreshing, the Shepherd brings back his life. The word in Hebrew is *“Nephesh,”* which means more than physical life and more than merely soul, as mind. It combines all the life processes, which in the New Testament would be designated as body, soul and spirit. When one is possessed with the Spirit of Christ, his entire being comes under the care of the Shepherd and is brought to the place of highest function and fulfillment in keeping with the purposes of God.

**He causes me to go in the wagon rut of righteousness for His name's sake.** The Shepherd sees to it that we go in the right way. The Hebrew word translated "*path*" in the King James really means the ruts made by the wheels of a vehicle. There is only one way—God's way. If it may be thought narrow, remember what is at stake. When we look to the Shepherd for guidance, we cannot look to the right nor to the left. It matters not what others do or say. It matters not how logical our way seems, or how illogical God's way: the question is, what does God want? The sheep must follow the Shepherd in everything, "*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them and they follow Me.*" (John 10:27)

**Though I walk through the valley of the dark shadow, I will not fear evil for you are with me.** To be without fear in the world—what a marvelous thing! The Hebrew word which is translated "*shadow of death*" in the King James version really means "*darkest shadows,*" as in death. What is referred to here is that part of the path which leads through the narrow defile or gorge where the sun is never seen. Obviously, the reference is to the times of affliction in our lives. The evils of Satan's world always surround us, casting dark shadows over us, but the Shepherd promises to be with us so that we need not fear. Let Satan do his worst; our spirits are safe in the bosom of the Shepherd. Though we be bereft of everything in this world, as Job was, yet our spirits are preserved, and that is what God wants. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, said, "*These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*" (John 16:33). We are never free from the evils of Satan's world; therefore, we must stay with the Shepherd. Whatever the evil, we need never fear as long as the Shepherd is near.

**Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.** The rod is for strength and the staff is for steadiness. The rod was primarily for guarding, guiding, and correcting; the staff is the walking stick to steady and to assist. The Shepherd comforts with both. What a great comfort to have someone with us who knows what to do and which way to go. Sometimes such a guide must be firm—maybe a little hard on us, but we accept this from someone who knows, because we realize it is for our own good. We are at peace, knowing there is a watchman on the walls. "*Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*" (Hebrews 12:11). Though ever so treacherous the way, when we stay with the Shepherd, He will never let us stray.

**Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies you anoint my head with oil.** The wolf and the bear are an ever present threat lurking in the shadows, but the sheep graze with unfailing trust in the Shepherd. Jesus said, "*I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*" (John 10:9). Right under the nose of the enemy, the Shepherd sees to the nourishment of the flock.

**My cup is overflowing.** The Hebrew expression means to be full of water. In the parched and arid wilderness of the Middle East, a cup full of water is the ultimate expression of bounty. "*And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.*" (Revelation 22:17). The water, of course, is a type of the Spirit of Christ whose presence abundantly satisfies. Let the drought be at its worst. The Shepherd has promised that His sheep will never thirst.

**Surely goodness and kindness shall pursue me all the days of my life.** The Hebrew word here means not so much moral goodness, but the good fortune or benevolence that God gives. And the word translated in the King James as "*mercy*" is really "*kindness.*" In other words, under the limitless care of the Shepherd. His sheep are in a continual state of well being. Even the adversities are turned into substance in the growth of the sheep. In fact, the Hebrew text reads that this benevolence will pursue His sheep. God sends His grace like a river to flood the lives of His sheep.

**And I shall dwell in the house of Yahweh for endless days.** Life on the earth under His watchful care and eternity in His presence—what more could His sheep desire!

## Epilogue

In a day when there is so much pressure for performance in religious circles, it is essential to stop and ponder the true nature of the relationship between the sheep and the Shepherd, lest the sheep be robbed of their peace. Nowhere in the Scripture is there the slightest indication that the chief reason for our salvation is to become great religious promoters, or that we are to strive for great experiences, or that we are to be continually working for Jesus. I fear there is a state of frenzy today about the matter of our spiritual lives. People seem to feel that they must always be riding the crest of the waves, and having great experiences, and performing to high levels of capacity. What the Bible really says continually is that God's people are to be at peace. The gifts which God gives will flow naturally through us and we will be used as He wishes, if we will go about in the quiet confidence of the presence of Christ within us. It is a mark of insecurity when we must be forever trying to prove something to God, or getting Him to prove something to us. Perhaps the greatest expression of devotion is going about our daily routines in the quiet confidence that the Shepherd is always there. Satan loves to wear out the saints by stirring up the religious flesh in a frenzy of activity. Jesus said, *"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."* (Matthew 11:28-30). Learn to quietly trust in the Shepherd. He will see to your every need, and under His care you will grow and fulfill His purpose for you.

# David, the Soldier

*“Behold, 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.” (I Samuel 16:18)*

*“And Saul armed David with his armor, and he put a helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. And David girded his sword upon his armor, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, ‘I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them.’ And David put them off him. And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd’s bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine.*

*And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield went before him. And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. And the Philistine said unto David, ‘Am I a dog that thou comest to me with staves?’ And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to David, ‘Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.’” (I Samuel 17:38-44)*

*“Then said David to the Philistine, ‘Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: But I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord’s, and He will give you into our hands.’” (I Samuel 17:45-47)*

## THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE ENEMY

David’s career as a soldier was launched in a contest with a nine-foot giant named Goliath (I Samuel 17). His training had been in the wilderness with the wild beasts that had threatened his flock. To David, the giant and the lion had one thing in common: they were neither of them a match for God. He had learned this, not from his father, who saw him as a sweet shepherd lad, nor from his brothers, who held him in contempt, but from God Himself, Who saw him, not as a youth, but as a mighty instrument for the fulfilling of His purposes on the earth.

On the Judean hillside, the keeper of sheep had been in touch with God, and through him, God touched the world. So powerful was this flow of divine energy that even as a youth he was able to drive the evil spirits from Saul with his harp. From the harp and heart of David the Spirit of God sang to the world. Now that same energy would bring down the strongholds of God’s arch-enemy, Satan. David the singer would become David the soldier and God would have another ally in the incessant battle with the forces of evil. The encounter with Goliath provides a very instructive insight into David as a warrior. We will consider: 1) The Soldier and His Enemy; 2) The Soldier and His Tactics; 3) The Soldier and His Weapons; 4) The Soldier and His Triumph.

## THE SOLDIER AND HIS ENEMY

Goliath was a Philistine. The Philistines were the relentless foes of Israel. They were the Gentile emissaries of Satan, whose principle assignment was to be the scourge of God’s people. In type, or symbol at least, we have the people of God and the people of Satan in battle array against each other. The people

of Satan are represented by Goliath, who has been shouting insults in defiance of God. Now the people of God will have their champion in David who comes to answer the challenge.

If David is a type of Christ, then Goliath is a symbol of Satan, or one of his agents. We have a good opportunity to take the measure of the enemy. (Knowing the enemy is an essential part of successful warfare). Goliath means, “uncovered,” or perhaps “conspicuous.” He was big, arrogant, and loud. He struck terror in the hearts of all the warriors of Israel. That is one of Satan’s major tactics. Satan’s power is totally limited by God. That is, he cannot do in the life of God’s people anything that God does not let him do. God lets Satan do things for various reasons. Sometimes His people must be chastened; sometimes they must be tested. But always God has a reason for letting Satan attack. What Satan cannot accomplish by force, he must do by fear. He causes the Lord’s people to think that he has more power than God, and that they are at his mercy. He does this by making himself so awesome and conspicuous that the Lord’s people run from him in terror.

**Goliath was a giant.** The people of Israel had been terrified once before by a giant, supposedly, in the land of Canaan. Satan ran them off and they kept running for forty years, because when they came to the borders of the promised land, after their long trek through the wilderness, the spies that they sent in reported that there were giants in the land, and the people refused to go in, out of fear. (If Satan has you on the run, stop immediately, turn around and face him, and you will find to your surprise that he really doesn’t have any power at all.)

**Goliath was not only big, he was loud.** He caused the children of Israel to listen to him instead of God. This is another tactic of Satan. He tries to outshout God. People often consider power and noise. If God has whispered something in your ear, the chances are that Satan will send someone around to give you an alternate opinion. And if he can’t make you listen to one person he’ll bring ten people. What you sense God wants for you, when you are in prayer, is more likely to be right than what you hear in the company of friends. If God whispers something to you when you are in communion with Him, don’t let Satan confuse you by contrary voices, no matter how many, even if they are Christian. A good way to test the word you have gotten privately is to go to some Christian leader whom you know to be in tune with God, and get a confirmation of the matter. Satan is very persistent. He will keep pounding your ear with his word, and, unless you are sensitive to the Spirit of Christ, you may be misguided. Even Christians often become instruments of Satan to misguide a brother or sister, if they speak in the flesh. Normally, the attitude you have about a matter while you are in prayer will be the correct one, while the attitude that comes from a logical discussion of the matter, could be quite faulty. Remember, it is knees not noise, that will make the difference.

**Goliath was also proud.** He stood on the hillside shouting his defiance at God. James says, *“God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”* (James 4:6,-7). Pride is of the devil, wherever it rears its ugly head in saint or sinner. In the Christian, the Holy Spirit continually checks our pride. He deals with us about it, and we work with the problem. In Goliath, the very epitome of Satan, pride has no check and reaches to heaven in defiance of God. For the believer, submission is the key point. The only significant question is, *“What does God want?”* The church today, like Israel of old, does not like to be meek and lowly. The Christian theologian wants the world’s intellectuals to think that he is smart, even if they don’t agree with his words. The Christian psychologist wants to be admired professionally by his colleagues, so he adopts their faulty methods in order to be classified as a professional. The pastor wants to build a sanctuary that the people of the community will admire as an architectural triumph. The pastor himself wants to be sophisticated and respected in the community. He wants people to know that ministers can have a little class too. (Paul considered himself to be the offscouring of the community. He wanted, not to be respected of men, but of God.) All of this is done under the guise of attracting people to Christ. Being attractive has nothing to do with winning souls to Christ. The Salvation Army in its early days brought thousands and thousands of people to their knees in the mud and snow of Eastern winters. Like the children of Israel of

old, the church today finds it hard to be ridiculed as simple servants of God. They want to be admired for their glorious appearance to the world. Any genuine service to God inspired and energized by the Holy Spirit leads to humility. Wherever there is a spirit of pride evolving out of our service, we must identify it as something of the flesh in which Satan has too much a part. If one is being tempted to pride in one's Christian work, it is a pretty good indication that there is too much flesh in it.

Thus we have taken the measure of the enemy. He terrifies by his appearance but he has no power. (The scarecrow is an object of terror—to a sparrow). He drowns out in God's instructions to His people by the volume and multitude of his deceptive words. He fosters a spirit of pride that puts the emphasis upon the works of the flesh rather than the ministry of the Spirit.

## THE SOLDIER AND HIS TACTICS

Looking at the situation through human eyes. Goliath had a right to sneer at David. Goliath was right. David was "*but a youth, and ruddy and of a fair countenance*"—hardly a decent meal for a buzzard! Nor would David be transformed by magic into a mighty warrior. This is not a fairy tale, nor a fantasy. The youth does not step behind a bush and emerge as Hercules or Samson. He is a youth. God does not transform clay vessels into brass. The vessel must always be clay that the glory may always be God's.

Goliath is shocked. "*Am I a dog, that you come to me with a stick?*" David is totally unperturbed, nor is he even insulted. He was not depending on his complexion. He had measured the enemy alongside of God. One smooth stone would do nicely. The fowls would feast sumptuously today. What tactics of this shepherd lad could give him such boldness in the face of the redoubtable giant—this veritable human fortress?

**He went for God's honor.** The warriors of Israel were smarting under the insults of this Gentile agent of Satan. Their honor was being challenged. It did not occur to them that it was not they but God who was being defied. Had not Goliath said, "*I defy the armies of Israel this day?*" Satan says many deceptive things to mislead the people of God. When will we quit listening to him? We must learn to listen for the hiss of the serpent in words that are spoken against us. David saw the issue. He went boldly to the battle because he was more concerned about God's honor than his own. Victory in any battle begins with a right cause. In the American Revolution (1776) a handful of "Minutemen" routed the armies of the greatest empire on earth because they had an adequate cause—they were fighting for their homes. The British soldiers were fighting only for some vague notion of British imperialism. David's cause was even more noble—the glory of God. In the face of Goliath's words, Saul and his soldiers "*were dismayed and afraid.*"

Are you dismayed or afraid, today, before some threat from the enemy? It is because you are seeking something for yourself. You will never go boldly to the battle until you forget what you want for yourself and focus on what God wants.

**He went by God's authority.** "*I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom thou hast defied.*" He did not go in the name of Saul. In fact, he could not because Saul was in the flesh and not in the Spirit. Had he gone by Saul's authority, he would have gone in the flesh and would have failed. How often ventures for God have failed, or been sidetracked, because they have been done at the word of a man and not God. People do many things, sincerely trying to serve the Lord at the request of men—mission boards, pastors, religious leaders, friends, relatives, and even the enemy. Not every Christian speaks from the Spirit. There was only one reason why Paul went to the work—"*the love of Christ presses me into it,*" Are you anxious to get to the work? Wait until you are absolutely certain that you are going by God's authority. If you go at the wrong time, or at man's insistence, you will surely fail. Do not even go just because of need. The need is overwhelming always—it will break you. "*Pray therefore that the Lord of the harvest will thrust forth laborers into His harvest.*" (Matthew 9:38). It is His harvest; He knows best how to dispatch the laborers.

**He went with God's armor.** When Saul finally had accepted the idea that David was going to go regardless, he offered him the finest armor that man could provide. In fact, it was his very own. For a moment David wavered. He tried it on. He almost tripped up. Human defenses would never be adequate. Many a servant of God has gone boldly to the battle for the right cause, and by the right authority, but they have lost the battle because they have used human methods. The church is full of schemes. How often I have heard the phrase, "What's good for business must be good for the church." I know of no statement more fallacious than that one.

Human ways and means are never adequate to win a lost world to Christ. When Jesus set forth on His mission to save the world, He began in ways that were absolutely contrary to all human reason. He went neither to the religious leaders, nor the political leaders, nor the wealthy, nor the clever, nor to the strong; He went to those who were totally inadequate for the task; to fishermen, to tax collectors, to craftsmen, and even to fallen women; to the weak and to the infirm.

*"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in His presence."* (I Corinthians 1:26-29). From time to time God has touched the lives of the great, and impressed them into His service, but by the time He is finished with their training, all semblance of human greatness has been crushed out. *"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."* (Zechariah 4:6) There is a good analogy for this truth in the realm of auto mechanics. One man can lift a ton and a half or more on a hydraulic lift with the touch of a finger. Personal strength or weakness has nothing to do with it. In fact, no human being could perform that task whatever their strength might be. Sometimes the ways that God directs us in Christian work seem quite foolish to others about us, even Christians, but remember: *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts. Neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."* (Isaiah 55:8-9). When you are seeking the ways and means of doing God's work, or solving some problem, the chances are that what comes to you in prayer, is what God wants. Do not trust the counsel of any unless you are sure that they are walking in the Spirit and that there are enough evidences of this to prove it. David's sensitivity to God prevailed, and he dropped Saul's armor immediately. The absurd weapon that he chose, in obedience to God, will be discussed later.

**He went under God's orders.** Surely David presented a ridiculous figure—going forth against this giant, as if he were going out after a quail. He must have been the laughing stock of Israel's army. It is important, to be sure, that we are going by the right authority, but it is not enough just to *acknowledge* authority; we must *obey* that authority. Saul learned a bitter lesson about obedience. He lost his kingdom over the failure to obey. Saul had been zealous in worship, but wanting in obedience. In a certain matter he failed to follow God's orders, and had tried to cover it with a grand sacrificial ceremony to God, but Samuel, the prophet, said: *"Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."* (I Samuel 15:22)

In his lifetime David made many mistakes, some of them quite serious, but all through his life, he respected God's Word, so that it was said of him, *"I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after Mine own heart."* (Acts 13:22) Many a battle has been lost through failure to follow orders. Sometimes the things God asks seem quite unimportant, as apparently the command in the Garden of Eden was to Adam and Eve, but it is not the incident itself that is the issue, but the condition of the heart. The pattern of obedience is usually established in the little things. If God has asked something of you, take care of it immediately. The success or failure of your service to the Lord may depend upon it. If God has blessed

you with a service of stewardship, be sure you are carrying out His orders in strict obedience. Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, once said, “God’s work, done in God’s way, will never lack God’s supply.”

## THE SOLDIER AND HIS WEAPONS

It was theoretically possible for one stone from the sling of David, if it hit exactly on the mark, to kill Goliath. It was not possible, or at least not probable, that David would have been so completely confident in the success of his encounter with Goliath, had he been relying only on that stone. (He had taken five stones, but it was not likely that he would have had a chance to use another one had the first one missed its mark.) When Goliath had greeted David with his contemptuous vow to make of him a feast for the fowls, David responded, *“Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand; and I will smite thee and take thine head from thee and I will give the carcasses of the hosts of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord sayeth not with the sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord’s and He will give you into our hands.”* (I Samuel 17:45-47)

**It is not the weapon that wins, but the God behind the weapon.** It was obvious that David’s confidence was not in the weapon itself. The nature of the weapon was such that it could not possibly be. David had put himself in such a position that he would have been totally destroyed had not God been with him. Goliath’s boast had been quite reasonable, in view of the circumstances; David’s boast had been totally absurd in view of the circumstances. In dealing with the weaponry of God’s warriors, the following principle is basic: *It is not the weapon that counts, but the power of God behind the weapon.* The more absurd the weapon, the more glory there is to God in the final victory. The apostle Paul understood this principle well, when he said to the church at Corinth, *“But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea and things which are not to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence. . . That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”* (I Corinthians 1:27-29, 31)

**It is not the might of the enemy that matters, but the might of God.** In the Old Testament, the nature of the battle was different, and the nature of the weapons was different, but the principle stated above, is everywhere the same. (Note: many Christians are in confusion about the Lord’s guidance in their lives, because they rely too much on circumstances rather than on principles. It is most important to establish certain principles that apply no matter what the circumstances are). The same is true with the matter of our conflict with Satan. In principle, we should never rely on how the circumstances appear to us, but rather how they appear to God. Satan seems to have the capacity to deceive us in regard to appearances. He can make the good things look bad and the bad things look good. He can make the enemy look strong and invincible, and make us look terribly weak. It is not the strength of the enemy that matters; it is the power of God. God sees the enemy as a footstool for His feet. God saw Goliath as a straw man, void of His Spirit, and therefore void of substance. One small stone from the brook would dispose of him quite nicely.

**God chooses the weapon to fit the warrior.** The weapon which God chose for David was in a special way appropriate to David. It would certainly not have been sound to assume that God had selected slingshots as the universal weapon for “giant-killing.” It is a common mistake in the church to assume that because a certain method has proven effective for one servant of God, it should be adopted universally by all. Thus we have a flood of “how-to-do-it” books, which only serve to make carbon-copy phonies. In the New Testament, the disciples had very different methods for fulfilling God’s purpose in their lives. There is absolutely no trace of the teaching of techniques or methods, in a specialized pattern. It was understood that God would use each one in the body as it pleased Him. The effort to fit people into a mold today only succeeds in making

them artificial and mechanical. There is no room for the Spirit to take one, and use him in terms of his own individuality. It is quite likely that if the episode of David and Goliath had occurred in the context of the modern church, we would have immediately established a “Sling-shot School for Giant-killing.”

**The weapon is whatever is in the warrior’s hand.** The weapon, then, was appropriate for David. God used many other kinds of weapons with his warriors of old. Shamgar slew 600 Philistines with an ox goad; Samson slew a thousand Philistines with a jawbone; Gideon used some lamps and clay pitchers; and Jehoshaphat and his people sang a hymn. The key point, of course, is that God used whatever was available at the time. When God wanted to give Moses a weapon for delivering the children of Israel out of the hand of Satan, He asked him, “*What is that in thine hand?*” (Exodus 4:2) Moses produced his staff, which he had been using as a shepherd, and with that, God delivered the children of Israel. The same question applies to every servant of God from that day to this, “What do you have in your hand?” It matters not how meager the instrument, in God’s hands it will be more than adequate. The widow of Zarephath had only a cruse of oil, but with it she saved the life of the prophet and her own as well. The little lad in Galilee had only five barley rolls and two small fish, but with it Jesus fed a great multitude. Today, God’s warriors are battling against tremendous odds. Evil seems more rampant than ever. Satan indeed stalks the land. The same question which God asked Moses of old, He asks of us today, “What do you have in your hand?” Whatever it is, bring it to Christ; it will be enough. From the encounter between David and Goliath, symbolizing the conflict between Satan and the people of God, we learn the following about the use of weapons in the great war against Satan:

- 1) It is not the weapon that counts, but the power of God behind the weapon;
- 2) The choice of weapons belongs to God;
- 3) The spiritual nature of the battle demands spiritual weapons;
- 4) God chooses the weapon to fit the warrior;
- 5) However weak the weapon, it is adequate in the hands of God.

## **THE SOLDIER AND HIS TRIUMPH**

The stone from the sling of David went straight to its mark. The warrior, using God’s weapons in God’s way, is invincible. David’s original motive was to glorify God, and there was not a question of a doubt that God would see the battle through to the end. The victory put to rout the entire army of the enemy, and gave such encouragement and strength to the army of God’s people that they were able to pursue the enemy and overcome him. When one member of the body is defeated; all are defeated. When one member is victorious; all are victorious. Once we come into the body of Christ, nothing we ever do again is really alone. All of our actions in one way or another affect the body.

David went out to battle an enemy who had defied the God of Israel; he went out in the name of God and for God’s glory; he came back in triumph and the name of God was glorified. Thus, David, the soldier, continues as “the man after God’s own heart.”

## **THE MEANING OF THE WARFARE**

### **THE OLD TESTAMENT SYMBOLISM**

In the Old Testament, the conflict with Satan took a more physical form, than in the New Testament. The seemingly incessant stream of battles between the people of Israel and the surrounding nations, was symbolic of the incessant stream of battles which the Christian fights, in the spirit realm, with the arch enemy, Satan. The whole issue of spiritual warfare was not applicable in the Old Testament, because the people of God did not possess the Spirit in the sense that the Christian today possesses Him, and therefore they were not in a position to engage in warfare with Satan at the spirit level. The battles in the Old

Testament were indeed physical battles, but they were still part of the same warfare with Satan, that has continued from the day that he was deposed from his heavenly position. (For further discussion of Satan's origin and nature, see the author's pamphlet, *The Great War*.)

The nations surrounding Israel were pagan nations. As such, they were actually agents of Satan and therefore governed by him in their attacks upon the people of God. Unless we consider this point, we will misunderstand the implications of all the Old Testament battles. When God ordered His people into battle and, in fact, was responsible for their victories, it was not an arbitrary aggression to gain land or vengeance, it was rather part of the great conflict between God and Satan. The nations that Israel fought were nations which were in many respects part of Satan's establishment. The people of the Old Testament did not have the same understanding of this spiritual battle that was possessed by the believers in the New Testament, because they did not have the Holy Spirit. Seen through the eyes of the Spirit, the Philistines, the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and the Babylonians, were symbols of satanic power. This, the New Testament believer, can see quite readily, whereas the Israelite of the Old Testament merely saw these as national foes. For them, faith consisted in God's deliverance from these foes.

When God asked the children of Israel to destroy utterly the Canaanite civilization in the Promised Land, He did so because these people, even according to historical record, were people of Satan, so possessed with evil that they would corrupt all that they touched. The unwillingness of the children of Israel to carry out God's orders in this matter, was the ultimate downfall of their nation. They became so affected by the pagan idolatries and wickedness around them, that they lost their place with God, and thus were taken into captivity in Babylon. No doubt, God's orders seemed much too severe to them. However, God must be seen as the great surgeon, who may sever a limb to save a life. In the conflict with Satan, there is no room for sentimentality, which is of the flesh; but rather spiritual sensitivity, which is of the spirit. To be successful in the conflict with the enemy, one must be completely submissive, in one's spirit, to God's orders, though often they go contrary to human reason. God must at all times direct the choice of weapons, because there is no possibility for our natural mind to be clever enough to handle Satan.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT APPLICATION

We have seen the application of these principles in the warfare of the Old Testament, but how do they apply in the New? While the Old Testament battles were physical, and only symbolic of spiritual warfare, the New Testament conflict is quite spiritual. That is to say, whereas Satan may use circumstances in various ways, the major conflict takes place in the attack by Satan, as an evil spirit, against the spirit of the Christian, which is occupied by Christ. Satan is laying siege to the citadel of our spirits. Of course, Christ will never allow Satan to penetrate our spirits because He is there. Christians may be affected by Satan but they can never be possessed by him. Nevertheless, in an attempt to get at our spirits, Satan uses every conceivable tactic. He attacks us on the physical, bodily level; he attacks us on the level of material circumstances; he attacks us in the realm of our minds, bombarding us with thoughts and temptations of every kind, including our emotions and motivations. Paul tells the church of Ephesus that *"our warfare is not with blood and flesh, but with rulers, with authorities, with the cosmic forces of this darkness, with spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies"* (Ephesians 6:12) In such a battle, we cannot use physical weapons. To the church at Corinth, Paul says. *"For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but mighty with God to the pulling down of strongholds..."* (II Corinthians 10:4) One must beware that every thought, or feeling, or motive, in the flesh, could be a messenger of Satan. We do not need to be anxious, or paranoid, about this, but we certainly must be vigilant. Peter tells the Jewish Christians of the Dispersion, *"Be alert, be on guard. Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom he may devour, whom resist, fixed in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are consummated in your brethren who are in the world"* (I Peter 5:8-9<sup>A.T.</sup>)

The primary weapon of New Testament warfare is God's Word applied to the enemy. When we use God's Word as a "sword of the Spirit," we are able to penetrate Satan's defenses. Again, to the Ephesians, Paul

says, “*And take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God...*” (Ephesians 6:17) In a certain sense, this means that the Holy Spirit within the believer works through the believer to be an effective force counteracting Satan. This may be done through the spoken or written word that God may give to the individual, or it may be the words spoken in prayer and praise, or it may be a word spoken to a brother or a sister—a word of comfort or exhortation. As the Word of God is the dynamic force behind the creation of the universe, so the Word again becomes the dynamic force overcoming the enemy of our spirits in this world. How this word is used depends on the individual, as in the case of David.

To apply the principles learned above, we see the following:

- 1) It is not the power of the Word itself, but the spirit behind the Word (1 Corinthians 2);
- 2) It is God who must choose the way in which the Word is to be used through the individual (Luke 12:11, 12).
- 3) The spiritual nature of the warfare demands the power of the Holy Spirit working through us (Acts 1:8).
- 4) God uses us in keeping with the measure of the faith that He has given us (Romans 12:3).
- 5) No matter how weak the warrior, he is adequate when the Spirit of Christ is within (Philippians 4:13).

## David, the Sovereign

*“Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, thus saith the Lord of Hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel: and I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are on the earth. Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more as before times, and as since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the Lord telleth thee that He maketh thee a house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men; but My mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee: Thy throne shall be established forever.”* (II Samuel 7:8-16)

*“For whatsoever things were written beforehand, were written for our instruction, in order that through the patience and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”* (Romans 15:4 <sup>A.T.</sup>)

*“And if children, also heirs; heirs of God and heirs together with Christ, if indeed we suffer together that also we may be glorified together.”* (Romans 8:17 <sup>A.T.</sup>)

*“For if we die together, we shall also live together; if we endure, we shall also reign together...”* (II Timothy 2:11-12 <sup>A.T.</sup>)

*“Blessed and holy is he who has a part in the first resurrection; the second death shall not have authority over these, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with Him for a thousand years.”* (Revelation 20:6 <sup>A.T.</sup>)

*“And there shall not be night any longer, and they do not have need of the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall shine upon them, and they shall reign forever and ever.”* (Revelation 22:5 <sup>A.T.</sup>)

One by one the enemies of David had been vanquished. The credit for this went not to David, but to God, according to the words of Nathan the prophet, who had been sent to declare to David a most far-reaching covenant that God would make with him. It was necessary that his enemies be vanquished, because he was the type of Christ, *“who must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.”* (I Corinthians 15:25)

David was the most significant king in all the history of Israel. The everlasting nature of his kingdom would be the symbol of the eternal reign of Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. But if he was the most significant king, he was in many respects the least glorious. On the surface it would seem that he was least likely to be identified as a type of our sinless Savior. He was constantly fighting. And he seemed to be constantly erring—in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba; in matters pertaining to his own family; in the matter of Michal; and in the numbering of the people. David was indeed a king, but he never had the opportunity to enter into the glories of his kingship. From the moment that God’s anointing was evident, David seemed relentlessly pursued by his enemies. Chief of these enemies, of course, was Satan, who pursued him, not only through the surrounding warring nations whom he controlled, but also in the battlements of David’s heart. But what sort of king was David? How is it that he can be identified as the type of Christ? We will examine the meaning of David’s sovereignty as follows: 1) What was the nature of his kingship? 2) In what way was he the type of Christ? 3) What are the parallels in the life of the believer today?

## THE NATURE OF DAVID'S KINGSHIP

David was obviously significant and unique. Two and one-half major books of the Old Testament are devoted to the history of his reign. In addition to this, the Psalter contains over a hundred of his psalms. A most important principle in studying the Scripture is “make much of that which God makes much of.” It is obvious that God wants us to give much attention to David. We will consider the nature of his kingship in terms of the following: 1) God took him from a lowly place and exalted him; 2) God brought him through many battles and vanquished his enemies; 3) God dealt with him in mercy and established his kingdom forever.

### GOD TOOK HIM FROM A LOWLY PLACE AND EXALTED HIM

When God anointed David, he was a shepherd. Throughout his reign he retained something of the shepherd's simplicity, and the shepherd heart. He was certainly not given to grandeur, like Solomon. As is evident from the Psalms which he wrote, David sought a glory which was not of this earth. He seemed always to be wrestling with the meaning of life. He seemed not content merely to pass through his experiences, but to savor them, and to sift out the meaning of them. He was a “vagabond king”—passing up and down the land, pursued, or pursuing. As he went, he sang of his deeds, and as he sang, the Spirit of God laid up a treasure for countless generations of God's people to come. All that there was of kingliness in David, came from God. According to the words of Nathan, the prophet in II Samuel 7, it was God who had made him great.

### GOD BROUGHT HIM THROUGH MANY BATTLES, AND VANQUISHED HIS ENEMIES

In recording the deeds of a king, the historian usually selects the events that enhance the image of the king—the accumulation of grandeur, power and wealth; his generosity to the people; his public works; his justice and mercy. In the case of David, however, the account of his reign is dominated by warfare—with the Philistines, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Syrians. It should be noted, however, that there was a continual seeking of God's guidance and help in those battles. We shall comment on this later.

In addition to the physical warfare, there was a constant spiritual warfare—a battle raging in the inner man. As the historical books (Samuel, Kings, Chronicles) record the physical warfare, the Psalms reveal the spiritual battles. Nothing was ever a simple episode to David. He lived out each experience in terms of its ultimate meaning in the process of life with God. This is evident in the Psalms which are David's soliloquy—a running commentary on his inner thoughts and feelings—the account of the journey of his soul.

### GOD DEALT WITH HIM IN MERCY, AND ESTABLISHED HIS KINGDOM FOREVER

At the end of the record of each of the kings after David, it is simply noted that he “*slept with his fathers...*” But to David, the promise had been made of an everlasting kingdom: “*And thine house and thine kingdom shall be established forever before thee: thy throne shall be established.*” (II Samuel 7:16) The prophet Isaiah carries forward the idea in 9:6 where David's everlasting reign is identified with Christ, and 55:3 where the promise given by Nathan the prophet is seen as an “*everlasting covenant.*” In view of the fact that his kingdom was to be an everlasting one, it is obvious that the nature of his earthly reign will be different than that of one whose kingdom is temporary. David's reign then was really only a preparation for the ultimate kingdom, which was, according to the prophet Isaiah, to be carried on by Jesus Christ Himself. It is important, then, that in the earthly phase of this kingdom, the focus should be on the vanquishing of the enemy. In the earthly phase of the kingdom, the enemies which were vanquished were earthly enemies, but, as the kingdom really was the type of the spiritual kingdom, so the enemies were the type of the spiritual enemy, which is Satan. If we do not see David's reign in this light, we will make

a very serious error in judging both David and his reign. It is essential that we understand that David's enemies were the enemies of God. In the wars that David fought, we are not dealing with ordinary foes. These nations and rulers were in a very specific sense the agents of Satan in the warfare between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Isaiah 9:7 says, *"Of the increase of his government (rulership) and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom."* There can be no eternal peace, unless there is the vanquishing of the foe forever. Thus, the nature of David's kingship must be seen in the light of its eternal quality.

## **TYPES AND PARALLELS TO CHRIST**

Throughout the Scripture, the sovereignty of David was identified with the sovereignty of Christ. The most sweeping statement is found in Isaiah 9:6-7, *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful [wonder, awesome], Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."* Right down to the very last verses in the Bible, this identity between David and Christ is maintained. Revelation 22:16 says, *"I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."*

Thus, the events of David's reign must be seen, not in terms of their earthly implications, but rather in terms of their symbolism concerning the eternal reign of Christ. It must be understood from the outset, however, that not every episode in the life of David is to be seen as typical of Christ. David, possessing the fallen nature of man, was often involved in conduct that could hardly be said to be typical of Christ. When Christ took upon Him the form of man, He took upon Him the nature of Man before the Fall, and was not subject to sin as fallen man is. Had he taken upon Him the fallen nature of man, He would have only been able to die for His own sins, and not for the sins of others.

When we eliminate the aspect of sin, however, it is reasonable to assume that David's struggles in the flesh, as reflected in his Psalms, could be symbolic of the struggles which Jesus went through in His human nature. A good example of this is Psalm 22, which reflected the agony of Jesus on the cross. Many believe that this entire Psalm was in the mind of Jesus as He hung on the cross. There are many other Psalms, which express an intensity of suffering that seems most applicable to Jesus on the earth. Notable among these are Psalms 88 and 89. Apart from the sin aspect, then, it may be said that David, the Sovereign, also typified, in a certain sense, the earthly struggles of Jesus in His human nature. Jesus was *"tempted (tested) in all points like as we are, yet without sin"* (Hebrews 4:15).

But now, in what ways was David, the Sovereign, the type of Christ? He was the type of Christ in: 1) the lowliness and simplicity of his life; 2) the vanquishing of his enemies; 3) the eternal nature of his throne.

### **THE LOWLINESS AND SIMPLICITY OF HIS LIFE**

David began his life as a herder of sheep; Jesus, as the carpenter of Nazareth. David, and his predecessor, Saul, are perfect examples of Psalm 75:6, 7. *"For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another."* Neither Saul nor David had any prior claim to the throne, nor, did either of them have any unusual measure of piety, as their record showed. Each of them was taken from a position of obscurity, and, for reasons known to God alone, put in a position of power. From each, God demanded not excellence but submission to Him. In David He found a humble heart; in Saul He found a haughty spirit. David met his failure with brokenness and contrition; Saul met his failure with defensiveness and rebellion. Saul became the classic example of the warning that "God resisteth the proud"—and passed into oblivion. David, laying bare his

soul in Psalm 51—“*A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou will not despise,*”—was met with the grace of God, received an everlasting kingdom, and became a blessing to God’s people for all time.

In addition to a lowly origin, David also had a simple life as a vagabond—a “shepherd king.” The great significance of David’s reign, as was indicated earlier, was in submission rather than in splendor. His life was a constant stream of hardship and affliction. From the days of his encounter with Goliath to the day of his death, he was a man marked by Satan for extermination. God never let him be exterminated by Satan, but He did let him face the relentless battering ram of Satan’s fury. In the Psalms, David reflects on the endless struggle between his spirit and flesh. On the one hand he challenges God’s apparent indifference to his afflictions, and then recovers his balance and realizes that in spite of all of this, God is yet to be praised and trusted, and that eternal purposes are being worked out, which cannot be measured in terms of this world’s fortunes. (See Psalm 73, for example). In His dealings with David, God was stripping away all of the veneer of earthly ambition and pride and self-interest. As in the case of Job, God saw one through whom He could teach the world that nothing of value exists apart from the inner spirit, and that the whole reason for our being is to glorify God.

This was, of course, the main thrust of Jesus’ teaching. The Sermon on the Mount is the classic expression of the imperative necessity of shifting our focus from the things of earth to the Kingdom of God. Jesus’ entire life was lived out in this simplicity, even though He had the legal right to the Throne of Israel. So He, too, was a vagabond King, like David.

All of this was, of course, in keeping with the express statement made by Paul to the Christians at Philippi. “*Let this state of mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who having His being in the form of God, did not consider it something to hold on to, to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, having taken the form of a slave, and having become in the likeness of man; and having been found in outward form as a man, He made Himself lowly, having become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him and freely given Him the name which is above every name, in order that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, both heavenly, and earthly, and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, unto the glory of God the Father.*” (Philippians 2:5-11 <sup>A.T.</sup>)

When Jesus had first emerged from the waters of baptism and begun His earthly ministry, He was sent for a period of forty days into the wilderness “*to be tempted of the devil.*” During this time, and as a part of the test, Satan offered to Jesus the kingdoms of this world. Jesus did not challenge Satan’s power to give it to Him. While in the ultimate sense, God will fulfill His purpose for the world and Satan will have to yield to His authority, yet in the interim period, Satan does exercise enough authority in this world to be able to back up his offer to Jesus. Jesus resisted the offer, not on the grounds that Satan could not make it good, but rather on the grounds that He could not possibly worship Satan; His allegiance was to God. Had Jesus been willing to submit to Satan, it is quite likely that He could have been a world ruler—greater than any ruler in the history of the world. It is quite possible that there have been a number of rulers in this world that Satan was grooming to be world rulers under his control. It is probably true that Satan was simply not able to control them, and they failed to live up to his expectations of them. What Satan offered to Jesus was a short cut to earthly power and glory. For Jesus, the road to royalty and to glory was via the cross. Paul gave the very heart of this truth in showing that Jesus must first empty Himself, and take on human form, and be slain, before He could return to His power and glory. Mankind has been made rich through Jesus’ poverty, and been exalted through His humiliation. The need of man on the earth was not for someone to come as Lord Protector of his earthly glory, but rather one who could rip off the false facade of temporal possessions and ambitions, and bring under submission the eternal spirit which man had from God and lost in the Fall, and which could only be recovered at the price of Jesus’ own humiliation and death.

Thus, the sovereignty which Jesus claimed, and which David typified, was primarily a sovereignty of the spirit realm, which is, after all, the only truly eternal reality. The kingdoms of this world, over which Jesus will also someday reign supremely, are secondary to the kingdom of heaven.

The ultimate exaltation of Christ is heralded in the book of Revelation, *“And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever. And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth”* (Revelation 11:15, 19:1,6). So Jesus Christ will ultimately be the absolute ruler of both the heavenly (or spiritual) and earthly spheres. However, in order to complete the redemptive purposes of God, it was necessary for Jesus to live a simple life on the earth and to experience these struggles of human flesh, before He could enter into His true glory.

## THE VANQUISHING OF HIS ENEMIES

In discussing the nature of David’s kingship, we pointed out that much of his reign was characterized with warfare. We also suggested that unless this warfare be seen as specifically directed against the enemies of God, we would grossly misjudge the meaning of David’s rulership. From the moment that Satan was exposed in the Garden of Eden, the whole of human history has been a long saga of warfare between the forces of God and the forces of Satan.

The battle was touched off in a declaration by God in Genesis 3:15, *“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”* The enemies of David were the enemies of God. In Psalm 83 we have a catalog of these enemies together with the statement identifying them as God’s enemies. *“Keep not Thou silence, O God: hold not Thy peace, and be not still, O God. For, lo, Thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate Thee have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against Thy people, and consulted against Thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee: The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites, of Moab, and the Hagarenes; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek: the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah”* (Psalm 83:1-8).

This list of names reads like a Who’s Who from Hell. The Edomites were descendants of Esau who had sold his right to God’s blessing for some stew, and whose progeny then became the perpetual enemies of Israel. Ishmael was the son of a godless union between Hagar and Abraham, and whose descendants to this day intend to destroy Israel. The Moabites were descendants of the incestuous relationship between Lot and his youngest daughter. The Ammonites were noted throughout the Middle East for their craftiness and cruelty as Bedouin marauders. Amalek, also a descendant of Esau, was the agent of Satan’s opposition to the children of Israel when they sought to escape Egypt. Exodus 17 says that Amalek was contrary to Jehovah and at war with Him from generation to generation. The Amalekites were the ones whom God had told King Saul to destroy utterly. Disobedience to this command cost Saul his throne and his life.

The wars that David fought were thus wars against Satan. They were not geographical or political or vengeful in nature. As in Aaron, we had earthly sacrifices and an earthly priesthood, typifying spiritual redemption, so in David we have earthly warfare and an earthly kingdom typifying the spiritual warfare between God and Satan, and a spiritual kingdom. Christ is Priest and King forever, of the eternal kingdom of the Spirit.

Whereas David encountered the enemy in the form of nations and kings; Jesus encountered the enemy in the form of a religious system and blind, faithless priests, who led the people into darkness and bondage. As David was merciless with his enemies, so Jesus was merciless in His attacks upon the Pharisees. To Jesus, the Pharisees were not merely misguided shepherds; they were agents from Hell.

In II Samuel 7 we are told that God cut off all of David's enemies out of his sight and gave him rest from them. Concerning Christ, it is said in I Corinthians 15:25, "*For He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet.*" Thus, David's reign, characterized by continuous warfare, is a type of the warfare between Christ and Satan, which culminates in the great victory shout of Revelation, "*The Lord God Omnipotent Reigneth.*"

## **THE ETERNAL NATURE OF HIS THRONE**

God had made a covenant with David, promising him that his seed would be on the throne of Israel forever. Over the centuries of Israel's history, there have been many changes in its political structure. For long periods of time, in fact, it ceased to be a nation. Though many leaders have come and gone, there has never been a king to replace the line of David, since last his descendants sat upon the throne. In a certain earthly sense, then, David has had an endless reign. This endless reign was typical of that which is an eternal spiritual kingdom over which Christ shall indeed reign forever.

In the prophecies of both Old and New Testaments, it seems quite certain that there will indeed be an earthly kingdom of God's people that will last forever. In Revelation 21, John says that he saw a new heaven and a new earth. He also says that there were nations on the earth that would bring their glory and honor to the city of New Jerusalem. God is apparently not finished with this earth. The earth, which He made, was good. It was devastated by the effects of evil, but will one day be restored to its original perfection. So also the people, whom God established as His own, spoiled by the world of evil in which they live will one day be restored as the family of God on the earth. Apparently there will be the Bride of Christ, the Church, in Heaven, and the restored Family of God, Israel, dwelling on the earth in an everlasting kingdom. Of course, Jews who have accepted Christ during the church age are part of the Bride. This kingdom will be ruled over by the Throne of David. Among the last words recorded of Christ in the Bible "*The King of Kings and Lord of Lords,*" lays claim to the Throne, as "*the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning Star.*"

## **TYPES AND PARALLELS IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER—KING**

It is obvious from the New Testament that the followers of Christ, the church, will reign with Him in some sort of regal position, forever. Exactly how this will be effected or on what basis is not quite clear, but what is clear is that every believer will be part of the royal family. In this respect, the kingship of David becomes symbolic of the position of the New Testament believers, who shall reign with Christ forever.

In discussing the nature of David's kingship, we considered the following elements: 1) The lowliness of his origin and simplicity of his life; 2) Lowliness intensified in the struggles of the flesh; 3) The vanquishing of his enemies; 4) The mercy of God and the everlasting reign. Let us see now what parallels may be drawn in the life of the New Testament believer. It should be noted that we are not amiss in making use of David's life in this symbolic way. In the first place, considering Romans 15:4, we are authorized to use the Old Testament, wherever it is applicable, to draw lessons for the believer. In the second place, the use of David specifically, is quite common, not only prophetically in the Old Testament, but actually in the New Testament. A good example of this is Romans 4, where God's mercy and

forgiveness to David were very pointedly used by Paul as evidence of the way in which God deals with all believers under the New Covenant.

## THE LOWLINESS OF HIS ORIGIN AND THE SIMPLICITY OF HIS LIFE

It is certain from the very beginning of creation, that God's intention for the wondrous human beings, whom He created, was that they should be in a close personal relationship to Himself forever. What more noble or regal destiny could He have possibly devised? He breathed into the creature of clay, the breath of His own eternal Spirit, and man became very like God. That he should live forever in dominion over all God's creation was obviously the Divine intention. The influx of evil through Lucifer, the fallen and vengeful enemy of God, was a tragic, if indeed anticipated, interruption of that destiny. From the moment of that fall to the present hour, the limitless power of the Godhead has been engaged in the process of recovery. The history of mankind on the earth is, in reality, a redemptive history. Every episode in human history is, in one way or another, related to this great redemptive process. The godless historian does not see this, and all his sophisticated utterances about mankind are but the "sandbox sophistries" of childish prattle.

Thus man has had, from the beginning, a regal destiny. Now, in Jesus Christ, that destiny will be realized. In the course of human history there emerged a figure that would be God's object lesson regarding this destiny. He would be at once the example of the wretchedness of fallen human nature; the limitless grace of God; and the final triumph of redemption.

In the final triumph, man will be exalted to the glorified state which God had intended for him. But, before that glorification can take place, there must be a total realization of the lowly and helpless estate to which man had fallen. Jesus had to travel the same road as man. Philippians 2:5-11 gives us the complete statement of Jesus' humiliation and exaltation. He had to empty Himself of glory and plumb the depths of human wretchedness before assuming again the glorified state, which He had voluntarily left in spiritual presence with the Godhead. The difference between the humiliation of Christ and the humiliation of man was twofold. First, man's humiliation was involuntary as the result of a rebel act; the humiliation of Christ was voluntary as a sacrifice of love. Second, man's humiliation, spawned in disobedience, issued in sin and death; the humiliation of Christ, born of obedience, issued in salvation and eternal life. The humiliation of Christ reached its climax in the event of the cross, where the cup of human iniquity overflowed in the very brutalizing of the Son of God. The realization of human lowliness comes in one's recognition of his own wretchedness; the lowliness of Christ was realized in His becoming the object of that wretchedness. The exaltation of Christ came when, triumphing over death, He resumed His place in the Godhead as the One in whom would " *dwell all the fullness of that Godhead in bodily form.*" (Colossians 2:9). The exaltation of man awaits the final triumph over Satan, at which time man will be lifted to the state of glorification, which God had originally intended for him, thus to reign with Christ forever.

The parallel between David, the King, and the believers who are members of God's royal family, is obvious. Not so obvious is the parallel between David's humiliation and the humiliation of the believer. Psalm 51 graphically portrays the descent of David into the abyss of self-realization. He thus became the object lesson for all who would seek salvation. David's cry, "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou will not despise," is re-echoed by both Peter and James in their New Testament epistles. "*God resists the proud but gives grace to the lowly. Become lowly then under the mighty hand of God, in order that He may exalt you in due time.*" (I Peter 5:5-6<sup>A.T.</sup>) Jesus constantly emphasized that the only people He could help were those who truly saw their need. "*They who are strong do not have need of a physician, but they who are sick. Go and learn what it is, I will have mercy and not sacrifice; for I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.*" (Matthew 9:12-13<sup>A.T.</sup>)

## LOWLINESS INTENSIFIED IN THE STRUGGLES OF THE FLESH

In addition to the recognition of his human wretchedness, David symbolized the believer in the constant struggles that he had with that human nature all the days of his life. It is easy to condemn David for his misdeeds, but Jesus brought all the world under the same condemnation when He put the issue of sin, not in deed, but in the heart. He brought the entire world under condemnation, not that He might broaden the boundaries of judgment, but that He might expand the application of His grace. If all are guilty, then all need the Savior. If all need the Savior, His grace is adequate for all. No one is excluded from the outpouring of His love save those who do not want it.

The classic statement about the struggles of the flesh, or the natural man, is in the 7th chapter of Romans. With soul-baring honesty, Paul acknowledges the struggle that he has with his own natural man. Paul nowhere indicates that the condition of chapter 7 was true only of a bygone period in his life. The effort to cancel out chapter 7 with chapter 8 is only an attempt to cover an embarrassing necessity for total honesty in the evaluation of one's own life. Actually, chapter 7 and chapter 8 (which must be read) are true at the same time. Chapter 7 describes the condition of the flesh, or the natural man. Chapter 8 describes the position of the spirit, both of which exist at the same time in the believer.

In I Thessalonians 5:23, Paul says that we are made up of three elements—body, soul, and spirit. The soul (or psyche) refers to the thought processes of the natural mind. It includes the intellect and emotions. It is the seat of our personality (the total accumulation of habit and thought patterns). Paul says that in this natural being, or flesh, there dwells no good thing. The spirit, on the other hand, is the motivational center of our being. The human spirit is either controlled by God, or it is controlled by Satan. When Christ comes into our lives, He dwells within our spirit. That is His abode. With Christ dwelling in it, the spirit becomes an impregnable fortress of faith. Whereas the battle may rage in the flesh, or natural mind, and there may be an intense struggle, Christ reigns within our spirit if we are believers. In Ephesians 2:2, it speaks of Satan as the “*Spirit that now energizes the children of disobedience.*” If one does not have Christ within the spirit, then that spirit is going to be motivated by the “*god of this world.*” As long as he is on the earth, the Christian will struggle in his natural man, but as long as Christ is in the spirit, it remains invincible to Satan's attacks. (For a further discussion of this matter, see the Author's pamphlet, *The Struggle.*)

In I Corinthians 9:27 Paul indicated that all of his life he had to struggle to control his natural flesh. So David, even though a type of Christ the King, was also a symbol of the lowly path which the believer must tread upon the earth. God's attitude toward David, in spite of all the struggles, was that he was a man after His own heart. This was said of David by the Apostle Paul, long after David's record of failures was complete (See Acts 13:22). One of the great issues of our life on the earth is coming to understand how utterly dependent we are upon God. During his entire lifetime, David never got away from this continual communion with God. This reality of David's communion with God is most evident in the numerous Psalms which he wrote. One of the encouraging things about these Psalms is that they speak so much in the terms that we humans today would like to use, if we had the capacity. David articulates the cry of our own hearts.

Thus, David is a symbol of the believer in that his exaltation to the position of kingship was intertwined with the humiliation of his lowly origin and his lifetime of struggles.

## **THE VANQUISHING OF HIS ENEMIES.**

While David had his earthly reign, as a mortal king, the everlasting aspects of his kingdom would not be realized until after his death. So, too, there is a sense in which the believer today, during his earthly life, is *positionally* a part of the royal family of God. We are, according to Revelation 1:6, “*a kingdom of priests.*” (That is, priests who are reigning as kings.) We will not, however, enter into the realities of our eternal reign until after the resurrection. The essential task of David during his reign upon the earth, was the

vanquishing of the numerous enemies of God with which he was surrounded. So the believer today is engaged in a spiritual warfare with Satan and his hosts. In Old Testament type, the deliverance of the Children of Israel out of Egypt was symbolic of redemption, whereas the possession of the Land of Canaan, or the “Promised Land,” as it is called, is symbolic of the sanctifying process of our life now upon the earth. The Promised Land cannot, of itself, be a type of heaven, because there will not be any enemies in heaven. There is, of course, a heavenly counterpart to Jerusalem—“New Jerusalem.”

The vanquishing of the enemy by David is then, symbolic of the warfare of the believer against the forces of Satan. It is a life-long battle. If the Christian sees his life as a periodic engaging of the enemy with long periods of respite in between, he will not only be disappointed and frustrated with life, but he also will be caught off guard and overcome by the enemy. The armor must be worn daily, and there must be none missing. Ephesians 6:10-18 is the classic passage describing the various pieces of our armor. (For a complete discussion of this passage and subject, see the Author’s pamphlet, *The Great War*.) The Bible carefully points out that our battle is a spiritual one.

All of the frustrating and devastating events that transpire in the world of circumstances around us must not be seen merely as independent episodes. They must be seen as a part of the continual conflict with the enemy. The believer lives in a hostile world. He is in the enemy’s camp, so to speak. It is not reasonable to suppose that the enemy will leave us alone while we are in his world. Those who seek prosperity in this world, as a primary goal, will find that the only way to “beat the system,” is to cooperate with Satan, whose world it is. If Satan had his way, he would leave all the believers in destitution. The only thing that prevents him from doing this is the strong hand of “The Captain of Our Salvation.” So David lived in constant conflict with the enemies about him. These enemies of David were also the enemies of God. If we do not see this, and if we are inclined to judge David as merely a soldier who loved a good fight, then we miss the entire point. It is true that David got out of hand at times, but he was judged for this, and paid his penalty. We also, in this life, find ourselves tempted to “get out of line,” or go beyond God’s orders. But in the main, those whose hearts are open to God, like David, are fighting God’s war with Him against the archenemy, Satan.

In II Samuel 7, the Prophet, Nathan, assures David of the ultimate vanquishing of all his enemies. So we, as God’s children, are guaranteed the vanquishing of Satan and his hosts forever. The victory is secure. The triumph of the believer is given by Paul in his great victory chant of II Corinthians 2:14, “*Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place.*” Indeed, the whole of the book of Revelation is God’s great victory chant over the forces of Satan and evil in the world, and the total restoration of all things.

## **THE MERCY OF GOD, AND THE EVERLASTING REIGN**

Judging from the record of David’s life, it would not seem likely that God would have chosen him as the father of an everlasting kingdom. Here is, of course, where the limitless grace of God is manifested. It is also a great encouragement to the believer today. The great lesson of David is that God takes ordinary people, who make ordinary mistakes (and some extra ordinary), and secures for them a place in His everlasting kingdom. This message permeates the entire collection of David’s Psalms with unmistakable intensity.

The heart seems to be the key. David’s plea—“*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me*”—in Psalm 51, is the prophetic prologue to Ezekiel’s prophecy in 36:26, “*A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.*” In the Old Testament, the heart was used to stand for the inner spirit, which is the dwelling place of God within us. The heart had been the place of death and devastation in the fall. Jeremiah gives a concise summary of this in the 17th chapter of his prophecy, verses 9 and 10: “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the*

*Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings.”*

That is why salvation, of necessity, requires more than just belief in theological ideas; it requires the indwelling presence of the Spirit in our spirits or hearts. Everyone who has Christ dwelling in the spirit is saved, even though there may be the continuing struggle in the deeds of the flesh. But no matter how well controlled one may be in the natural man, if Christ is not in the spirit, there is no salvation. Paul makes this crystal clear in Romans 8:9, *“But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God is dwelling in you. But if one does not have the Spirit of Christ, this one is not of him.”* (A.T.) In Romans 7:18 Paul says, *“For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwells no good thing.”* The Holy Spirit does not come into our natural flesh, but into our spirit. Possessing Christ in our spirits, we have the right attitude toward the natural man, and we are enabled by His Spirit to control it. The Holy Spirit within us abhors the deeds of the natural man, or the flesh, and brings about within us an attitude of repentance and concern. The non-Christian, not possessing the Holy Spirit, is indifferent to God’s standards, and accepts the deeds of the flesh as valid. The most unassailable evidence that we belong to Christ is that we care about Him and we want to please Him. If we did not have the Holy Spirit in us, we would not care about Christ. We might care about certain religious standards, or matters of conscience, but we would not care because of wanting to please Christ. The unmistakable sign of the one who has taken Christ in his heart is that he does want to please Christ, even though, in the weakness of his flesh, he does not always do so. The Christ we are talking about, of course, is the Christ of the New Testament, and not the false christs of various religious cults. (For a more detailed discussion of the preceding paragraph, please see the Author’s pamphlet, *The Struggle*.)

The record of David’s sovereignty is a rich treasure house and continuous object lesson of the realities of man’s redemption and ultimate glorification. It reveals the necessity of humiliation and conflict; the certainty of victory over the arch enemy; the limitless grace of God; and our ultimate glorification in God’s everlasting Kingdom.

# David, the Sinner

**TO THE MUSIC DIRECTOR**—A Psalm from David on the occasion when Nathan the prophet went to him after he had gone in unto Bathsheba.

*“Be merciful to me, O God, according to Your loving kindness, according to the abundance of Your compassion obliterate my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from the sinful distortions of my ways and from my sin, purify me. For I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin stands out before me continually. Against You, You alone I have sinned and done evil in Your eyes, so that You may be justified in Your speaking and clear in Your judging. Behold in iniquity I was brought forth, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold—You desire trueness in the inner man, and in the hidden chamber You cause me to know wisdom. Purify me from sin with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall become whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which You have utterly crushed may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins and obliterate all my iniquities. Create for me a clean heart, O God, and renew within me a spirit that has been set aright. Do not send me away from Your presence and do not take from me Your Holy Spirit. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and lift me up with Your graciously willing Spirit. I will teach transgressors Your ways and cause sinners to return to You. Deliver me from mortal sin O God, God of my salvation; my tongue shall praise Your righteousness with a ringing cry. O Lord open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim Your praise. For You have not desired sacrifice or I would give it; You will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit—a crushed and broken heart O God You will not despise. Do good to Zion in Your acceptance of her; build the walls of Jerusalem. Then You will be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, burnt offerings, and whole burnt offerings; then they shall offer bullocks upon Your altar.” (Psalm 51<sup>A.T.</sup>)*

*“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23, 24)*

*Blessed is he, whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.*

*Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

*When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.*

*For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.*

*I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid.*

*I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.*

*For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found; surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.*

*Thou art my hiding place; Thou shalt preserve me from trouble; Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.*

*I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with Mine eye.*

*Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.*

*Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.*

*Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart. (Psalm 32)*

## PROLOGUE—THE PROBLEM OF SIN

### THE HUMAN PROBLEM

The most important single truth about the nature of man is that he was created in the “image and likeness” of God. This image has not so much to do with physical attributes, as with the psychical (intellect, emotion, will) and spiritual functions. The second most important truth about man is that he lost a large part of this function in an act of disobedience, when the evil force of Satan entered the picture. The third most important truth is that God immediately instituted a process of redemption which will

ultimately make possible the restoration to man of all that was lost. Meanwhile on the earth, during this process, man must contend continually with the weakness inherent in him as a result of the fall. If it is true that the central theme of the Bible is the revelation of God, and His relationship to man, whom He created, it is equally true that a large part of that revelation must of necessity deal with the forces which have alienated man from God, and the process whereby that alienation is recovered. The prevailing theme in the revelation of God, is absolute power and limitless mercy; the prevailing theme in the revelation of man, is finite weakness and constant dependency upon God. There will never be a time, either upon earth, or throughout eternity, when man will not be completely dependent upon God. Accordingly, the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, portrays man in this condition. The whole impact of his sojourn on the earth is related to the overcoming of evil in the process of redemption. The first man, Adam, failed the test. The first group of people which God gathered together—Israel—likewise failed the test. God had expected this, but it was necessary for man to go through the experience of failure, in order to recognize the condition of his nature, and to, therefore, turn, in dependency, to God.

## THE DIVINE SOLUTION

Jesus Christ came as the ultimate solution to man's problem. Through His sacrificial death on the cross and subsequent resurrection, He made possible an identity with God, free from the condemnation of sin, and forever united with Him in the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit. The failures of both the first man and the first family of God make evident the need of a power greater than human will, to fulfill God's righteous requirement. The Spirit of God, dwelling in man, makes this possible. However, even though man has been brought into this vital union with God, and the condemnation of his sin removed, he still must deal with the problems and tendencies of the flesh as long as he exists on the earth. Therefore, he continues to do those things that fall below God's standard for him, even though his desire is to do the will of God. The Spirit of God within him gives him an everlasting concern for God, but the inadequacies of the natural human person make it difficult for him to fulfill that desire. This struggle will continue until man is at last glorified and freed from the crippling results of the fall. If we use the failures of the natural flesh as a gauge of the reality of the presence of Christ within, we will be in continual difficulty. That is not to say that we can be indifferent to our fleshly conduct, but rather that our salvation lies in the power of Christ within our spirits. In fact, the very presence of Christ in our spirits gives us the desire and the capacity to continue the effort to please God in spite of the constant frustrations and failures that we do experience in our flesh. When one can come to the end of the day, and, in spite of weaknesses and failures, still care about Christ and want to remain with Him, then there has been a great victory.

## THE TIMELESS EXAMPLE

And so we come to David. That we may use David as an example of the human struggle against sin, is clear from the number of times that David is referred to in the New Testament (nearly 60). Perhaps the most important reference, relative to the matter of sin, is found in Romans 4, where David is quoted—*“Blessed [touched by God] is the one whose lawlessnesses have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered; blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not put to his account.”* (Romans 4:7, 8<sup>A.T.</sup>)

The Greek word, translated “blessed,” is *makarios*, which meant to the Greeks, “prosperity, as given to them by the gods.” This would have meant the entire pantheon of pagan deities. The New Testament usage of this word would, of course, mean touched by the true God. Since the touch of God does not always bring material prosperity and happiness as the Greeks saw it, we use the idea of merely, “touched by God,” to show that whatever one's lot as given him by God, is the right one for him. According to this text, which is actually a quotation from Psalm 32, man in his sinfulness is, nevertheless, touched by the hand of God, who does not hold this sinfulness against him. This does not mean, of course, that God is disinterested in one's conduct. Rather it means that in the struggle to control oneself, one does not have the added burden of feeling that God is condemning one. This theme, of course, was introduced by David in the Psalms. We have used the New Testament version of it because that would represent the way in

which Paul and the New Testament writers would have interpreted David's statement in the context of the New Testament relationship with God.

So David became the example of God's dealings with His people in the matter of sin, on the basis of grace rather than of the law. So much of our understanding of the things of God has to be given us by these great object lessons and illustrations, rather than in theological statements, because our human minds seem unable to really handle words with complete accuracy apart from such illustrations. One of the reasons for so much conflict in the church today, is this failure to come to terms with the words that are being used. People bring to words different backgrounds; different levels of understanding; different experiences. It is only by a great miracle of the Holy Spirit that we can understand anything at all about God. The Holy Spirit, ministering through the life of David, brings out to us a great deal about the meaning of the relationship between man and God.

## THE ENDLESS QUESTION

It is important for us to analyze the nature of David's sin so that we may better understand how to cope with it as it applies to the life of the believer. There are some who contend that a believer cannot, or does not commit sin. The controversy really lies in the definition of sin. The word, "sin," is used in the Bible as a translation of a great many different words both in Hebrew and Greek. It is quite true that in the First Epistle of John, it does say that the believer cannot commit sin, because the seed of God is in him. But if we examine the meaning of the word sin there, we will find that John defines it as "lawlessness" (*anomia*), John is saying, in effect, that where the Spirit of God has come into the heart, there can never again be an attitude of indifference to, or rebellion against, the law of God. However, there are other places in the Scripture where the word sin really means more of an offense, or a human failure. In this respect, believers are quite subject to displeasing God, and do need to get His forgiveness for these offenses. Furthermore, in the second chapter of 1st John, where the Apostle is definitely speaking to believers, he says, "*My little children, I am writing these things to you in order that you may not sin. And if one sin, we have an advocate [paraclete] with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous one:...*" (A.T.). Clearly, John is saying that believers should not sin, but if they do, they have help through Jesus Christ, who is their advocate and propitiation.

Now we will look briefly at the episode which brought David's downfall, and then we will go to the Psalm where David deals with God in anguish and repentance and becomes the symbol of God's limitless grace to man.

## THE NATURE OF DAVID'S SIN

### PRELUDE—HUMAN DESIRE

David, the man of the heart—the shepherd, warrior, king, stepped out on the roof of his palace, and in a moment of human weakness, shattered three lives. He had everything that the human heart could desire, including the unmixed blessing of God. But the self, an intolerable and insatiable taskmaster, is never satisfied. By any number of means, God could have prevented the tragic hour. David had stayed home from the battle. We are not told why, nor need we speculate, but had God, in some way, drawn him to the battle, this event would not have happened. However, since the sin was already in the mind of David, waiting only the opportunity of expression, it would not have mattered whether this event happened or another at another time. It was bound to take place, and God would use it in the refining fires of David's purification. In another Psalm David has said, "*Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting*" (Psalm 139:23, 24).

God had indeed found a wicked way in David. How often have people, who have been caught up in this kind of tragedy, said to themselves, “If only things had been different—if only this circumstance had not happened or that circumstance, I would not have done this thing. How I wish I could call back that hour.” The whole truth of the matter is, however, that if it had not happened on that particular occasion, it might have happened at some other time—because the sin is not in the circumstance, but in the heart. This, of course, is the whole issue of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus taught that the sin was in the heart and not in the deed. In Jesus’ frame of reference, hatred and murder, for example, were from the same source. As with all sin, the person who controls his actions will save himself from many problems. However, in God’s eyes, the one who does the deed and the one who thinks the deed are both coming from the same evil source. The one is no better than the other. The forgiveness of God must be extended to both with equal grace. It is necessary to see this point, not to increase the burden of guilt, but rather to broaden the scope of grace. Grace is God’s response to human weakness. Without the confession of weakness there is no extension of grace. According to the Apostle Paul in Romans 7, the law was issued, not as a call to human will power, but a confirmation of human weakness. David’s sin with Bathsheba was an impulsive act of human weakness. It would have been forgiven by God, had he confessed his weakness and sought God’s help. What brought the wrath of God upon David’s head was the willful attempt to cover that sin by the successive and more heinous crime of taking the life of Uriah. His pride had spun a web of deceit and treachery and death, the consequences of which would not depart from his house as long as he lived.

## **THE INFAMOUS EPISODE**

There was never any question about the humility of David. He was never portrayed in the scripture as one possessing an unusual degree of piety. In fact, quite the opposite, he was seen as a very earthy individual—an impulsive, impetuous warrior, fighting his way back and forth across the lands of the Mediterranean. The enemy, to him, was anyone who was the enemy of God. To these enemies he was merciless. It was this steadfast, unquenchable devotion to God that won for him the designation of “a man after God’s own heart”, nor has flawless conduct ever been the condition for God’s approval. It is obvious that God wants His people to conduct themselves properly, but the chief element in man’s relationship to God, is the heart, or spirit —the attitude. For example, as regards the law, the Pharisees were flawless. Paul himself claimed to be blameless as a Pharisee. But the Pharisees were totally rejected by Christ, because they erred in the matter of the heart. David, on the other hand, erred in the flesh, but his heart was open to God.

Thus, it was that David, the King of Israel, from whom one would expect dignity and discretion, became just another man, ensnared by an uncontrolled human desire. Perhaps David should have been at the battle front, perhaps Bathsheba should have been more discreet in her bathing, but no one could deny the reality of unchecked passion. Had it not occurred under these circumstances, it would doubtless have occurred under some other.

Indifferent to the consequences, and blinded by passion and self-interest, David plunged headlong into disaster. He did not think of the possible heartbreak of Uriah. He did not think of the consequences for Bathsheba. He did not think of the potential damage to God’s people. He thought only of self-gratification. Concern for others, which was Jesus’ chief emphasis in the Sermon on the Mount, would often prove a very important check against sin. If one does not care about the consequences to oneself, then the consequences to others should be an adequate deterrent. This is the true test of righteousness, as Jesus shows us in the Sermon on the Mount.

The incident of the original encounter is described in very few words. David’s conduct was not, at that point, acceptable to God, or justifiable in any way. But, had there been sensitivity on David’s part to the offense and confession made, the incident probably would not have even merited a place in the narrative. The pregnancy of Bathsheba sprang the trap that Satan had so cleverly laid for David. God could have

prevented that, of course, but it was evident that David needed to plumb the depths of this experience for the inward corruption to be thoroughly exposed. Vainly David tried to cover his sin. It would be obvious, of course, that the child could not be from Uriah, who was away at battle. In an effort to correct this, David brought his warrior home. But the very nobility which made the man a valiant warrior, also frustrated David's scheme. He had been trained by David himself. He would not go down to enjoy pleasure with Bathsheba as long as his comrades-in-arms were in the midst of the battle. If a man teaches his followers to be true, he had better be true himself. There had been plenty of time for David to repent of his sin against God and against the household of Uriah. It may be that had there been such repentance, God would have spared David the tragedy, but now David is going to have to eat the bitter fruit of his misdeed and drink to the dregs the cup of sorrow which he himself had so blithely pressed. The simple ploy of identifying Uriah with Bathsheba's pregnancy did not work. David the shepherd, the singer, the delight of God's heart, becomes the crafter of treachery and murder, and the blood-drenched shroud with which he sought to cover his iniquity would never pass from his house as long as he lived.

### **THE AWFUL CONSEQUENCES.**

It had seemed so simple on that night when David gave place to a moment of human desire. How piercing are the words of James! *"When desire has conceived, it brings forth sin, and when sin has come to the full, it produces death."* (James 1:15<sup>A.T.</sup>) How sweet seems the cup of sin when it touches the lips, but how bitter the dregs when it has been drunk to the full!

Penitence is the most precious commodity a human being can have, because it insures continual communion with God. David had bartered this blessing to capacity for a moment of human pleasure, and in the opening of his heart to Satan, had fallen prey to the blindness which Satan must always bring with him. Even after the death of Uriah, his heart was so utterly closed to the truth, that God had to send His prophet to blast him out of his prison. One of the frightening things about allowing Satan into one's life is this very blindness which prevents one from actually knowing the extent to which one is offending God. Even after Nathan had presented such a clear parallel to David's own situation, he couldn't see it until the prophet himself had to point it out to him in detail.

Such was the anatomy of David's sin. Beginning with a tiny flame of human desire, it ultimately erupted as a volcano spewing out death and destruction everywhere. This, of course, is the very thing that Jesus warns about in the Sermon on the Mount. It is not the simple deed itself but what that deed reveals of the potentials of death and destruction within the human heart. Throughout the Scripture, the Holy Spirit peels back the facade of human respectability and lays bare this potential of destruction. It is done, not to bring discouragement or to overwhelm the soul with judgment. God intends rather to show the absolute necessity of the constant ministry of the Holy Spirit within us, to preserve us unto His coming. He also wants to show to us the great, limitless extent of His grace. Furthermore, He wants us to be fully warned of the awful consequences of carelessness.

### **THE EMERGING REVELATION**

As oil from the olive press, the crushed heart of David pours out a soliloquy of sin. This is no theological treatise written in the insulated seclusion of a book-lined workroom. It is the very heart of God, ministered through David in the midst of the shattering realities of the experience of total human failure. God wants us to know what David is telling us, but it had to come in the heart-breaking realism of human experience. It is not that God had caused David to sin, but rather, knowing the heart of David, He trusted him to plumb the depths of his experience and extract from it the truth. In the experience, David would not turn bitter, or hard, or cynical. He would come in brokenness before God, and allow God to use him as a channel of the Holy Spirit, in dealing with this most crucial issue in all the relationships between man and God. In another figure, God took a fragment from this broken vessel and used it to dip water for the refreshing of His people.

In his agony, as David plumbs the depths of his own heart there is an emerging revelation of himself, the sinner; the nature of sin; and the hope of restoration. All of this truth, learned at so bitter a price, he pours forth in the Psalms—a river of blessing from a broken heart. Hence, from the words of David, himself, we will explore: 1) the heart of the sinner; 2) the nature of sin; and 3) the hope of restoration.

## THE HEART OF THE SINNER

David, Shepherd of Israel, Warrior of God, Anointed Sovereign, had sinned—boldly, willfully, and inexcusably. There is no denying the offense toward God and the household of Uriah. Under the law, David should have been slain without mercy for his trespass. There was actually no sacrifice designated for the sin of adultery. The penalty was death, and it was, as far as the law was concerned, inexorable. Why then the exception with David? Was God playing favorites? Were there ameliorating circumstances? Had the law been set aside? The answer lies in the heart—*“God looks on the heart.”* In spite of his numerous failures, God had seen David as a *“man after His own heart.”*

The law is not an end in itself. It serves as a useful instrument in revealing the true nature of man. When this task has been accomplished, there is no further need of it, as was so clearly revealed in the New Testament. It took some rather drastic measures on God’s part, but David finally came to the full realization of the heinous nature of his sin. It is never God’s desire to destroy, or even hurt His creatures, but He must deal very effectively with the problem of sin lest it, in itself, become the destroyer of all His works. God saw the death penalty as such an effective weapon. It was a mighty deterrent to the wholesale spread of evil in the world. The modern sociologist, who argues against the death penalty as a deterrent, is listening to the voice of the tempter: *“Yea, hath God said?”* Human sentimentality, rooted in the fallen nature, foolishly and readily risks the lives of many in the effort to spare one. It is indeed a false sense of loyalty, borne out of the misconceptions of the mind that has been tangled by human error.

God is greater than the law, and, of course, applies it as His own discretion. He does not, for the sake of some human concept of consistency, allow the instrument to become the master. The law serves its purpose, but the one who is the Father of the law, must determine how best the service is rendered. If justice were the unyielding gauge of things, all of mankind would be consumed. Jeremiah, the Prophet, caught this facet of things in his lament over Israel—*“It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness.”* (Lamentations 3:22, 23)

The central purpose of the law was accomplished when David saw the ugliness of his nature and, with crushed and contrite heart, sobbed out his repentance and pleaded with God for mercy, which he did not deserve. We have no way of knowing how often God would have extended His mercy to any of His people who sought it. In episode after episode of failure throughout the Old Testament, we have few such anguished cries of penitence, as that of David in Psalm 51.

As we have looked at the nature of the sin, let us now turn to the heart of the sinner and determine what it is that brought the merciful response from God. As we see David’s heart bared in the midst of his failure, we find two crucial characteristics that set him apart: 1) genuine humility and openness in facing himself and his guilt; 2) genuine devotion to God in concern for the spiritual rather than fleshly consequences of his sin.

**Genuine humility and openness in facing himself.** From the beginning as a lad tending the sheep on the rocky hillsides of Judea, to the regal glory of his sovereign reign on the holy hill of Jerusalem, there flowed in the center of David’s life a prevailing stream of devotion to God. But there was another element, which was equally obvious to the careful observer of his life and reign. That element was the relentless reach for reality. Whether encountering the wild beasts that preyed upon his sheep, or challenging the Philistine Giant, or defending the honor of Jehovah with his mighty men, or struggling with the doubts

and fears and feelings of his faith, he sought always to go to the heart of things. He faced the realities of his own fleshly failures as unflinchingly as he faced the formidable foes of Jehovah. He was a long time in coming to the truth of his own sinful circumstances, but when Nathan, the Prophet, finally confronted David with the truth, he embraced it fully in all of its ugly reality. And, he sought not to justify himself, but God. In the words of Psalm 51, *“Against You, You alone, I have sinned and done evil in Your eyes, so that You may be justified in Your speaking and clear in Your judging.”* (v.4 <sup>A.T.</sup>)

If the power to redeem belongs to God, and God alone, the context of humility, in which that power can work, belongs to man. Jesus made it crystal clear that the main condition of receiving His help, was the recognition of need. For this reason, He totally ignored the religious prattle of the Pharisees, who had not even come to the first step of humility. In His own words, *“They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth. I will have mercy and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”* (Matthew 9:12, 13)

And Peter (who ought to know) reminds us that, *“God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.”* (I Peter 5:5, 6)

Nowhere in Scripture are we led to believe that we will be rid of the fallen nature as long as we are on the earth. In fact, the Bible teaches quite the opposite. In Paul’s discussion of the subject in Romans 7, he speaks in the present tense, when he indicates the struggle that he has with his old nature. Nothing in the text indicates that this was an experience from his past, which was overcome by the time of his writing. Quite the contrary, all through his Epistles, Paul is very clear about his lack of confidence in his flesh, and the consequent necessity of dependence upon the Spirit of God within his own spirit. His Epistles to the Galatians, and the Philippians are very thorough in presenting this picture.

When Paul says in Galatians 5:16 that *“if we walk in the Spirit, we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh,”* he does not say that fleshly desires will not be there, but rather that they will not come to fulfillment in our lives. That is to say, they will not consume us. In II Corinthians 10:5, his statement that our thoughts will be brought into captivity, does not mean that we will not have them, but rather that they will not be free to destroy us. They are like the prisoner who rages behind the bars, but is unable to get out and bring his rage to fulfillment. Again, the statement in Galatians 5:24, *“They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh,”* is offset by the reality expressed in Romans 7, that we have yet the dead body clinging to us. In II Corinthians 12:7, Paul speaks of the *“thorn in the flesh,”* the *“messenger of Satan”* that was buffeting him, but offsets it with the promise from God, that his weakness only made possible the expression of God’s strength within him.

Whatever isolated text one might find that seems to suggest a total elimination of the struggle of the flesh, the prevailing theme of Paul’s message in all of the Epistles, is that the struggle continues all through our earthly life. Any Christian who is honest about his experience, must confess that the struggle is there. It is tragic that the holding out of a false hope of total elimination of this conflict has brought so many to discouragement and despair, while they assume that there are those believers who do not struggle as they do, or that because they struggle, there is something wrong with their commitment, or that the Holy Spirit is not ministering to them as He should. The deliverance that Paul speaks of at the end of Romans 7, has to do with our ultimate fulfillment by God, in our glorified state, when indeed we will be rid of the flesh forever.

In Romans 8, the contrast is not between Christians, who are fleshly, and Christians who are spiritual. It is a contrast between the believer and the unbeliever. Because Paul makes it very clear that those to whom he refers as *“being in the flesh,”* are enemies of God, and not just carnal believers. Meanwhile, our victory on the earth consists of the prevailing reality of the presence of Christ within us in the midst of the struggles, and in the fact that we will care about Christ, however faulty and failing our expression of

that care may be. When one comes to the end of the day, and in spite of the failures of the flesh, still turns to Christ for comfort and forgiveness, He has, in very truth, triumphed over Satan.

The whole issue of David's failure must be seen in the light of the foregoing discussion. It was indeed David's openness and humility in the facing of himself and his sin, that brought about the mercy of God. Many believers are troubled by the problem of whether or not they have sinned beyond the forgiving grace of Christ, or have committed the "*unpardonable sin.*" There is such a condition mentioned in the New Testament. Jesus speaks of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit as "*having never forgiveness in this world or the next.*" He applies this to those who had accused Him of receiving His power from Beelzebub, or the Devil. This would be true of those who, acknowledging that Christ had performed a miracle, accused Him of receiving His power from Satan. It does not apply to those who do not know whether a given miracle is of Christ or of Satan. Some people assume that just because a thing is supernatural, it must be from God. Such ones should be reminded that Satan also has the power to perform supernatural acts, or miracles, as in Revelation 13. John, in his First Epistle, also speaks of sin, for which one shall not pray for forgiveness. Whatever the specific application of these passages may be, the evidence that one is not in this condition, lies in the fact that he cares. If one cares whether or not God will forgive him, it is obvious that the Holy Spirit is still working with him. The attitude of humility and openness in the face of one's sins and failures, is itself a gift of the Holy Spirit, and an evidence that the mercy of God is available to that one.

**Genuine concern for the spiritual rather than fleshly consequences of his sin.** From the beginning of his life, David cared about God. He cared more about the spiritual implications of his life than the fleshly, evidenced by countless expressions in the Psalms. Typical of these is Psalm 27:4, "*One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and enquire in His temple.*"

In Psalm 51, there is not one word of petition to be spared the judgments that Nathan, the Prophet, had declared to him as a consequence of his sin. But, his heart was crushed with the prospect of being exiled from the presence of God, and the loss of the presence of His Holy Spirit within. Every petition that David makes in this penitential prayer, shows the deep concern for the spiritual aspects of his sin. Specifically, these requests are as follows:

- 1) For thorough cleansing from his iniquities;
- 2) For God's forgiveness and forgetting of his sin;
- 3) For a clean heart and a right spirit;
- 4) For a continued presence of the Holy Spirit within;
- 5) For the restoration of the joy of salvation;
- 6) For being lifted up by the Spirit of God;
- 7) For the opening of his mouth to praise Him;
- 8) For the blessing of God upon Jerusalem.

Outwardly there had been no evidence of David's sin. It had been almost a year, and apparently, no one in Israel was suspicious. For reasons known to Himself, God allowed the matter to lie for this period of time. David did not have to be brought to repentance by the crushing weight of circumstances. He was instantly convicted by God's Word to him. The chastening circumstances came after the repentance. This in itself reveals the true heart of David in his devotion to God.

**The issue of the heart.** The central message of Scripture and the central purpose of redemption have always been personal identification with God. Every ritual, every commandment, every promise is concerned in one way or another with this relationship. The purpose of the ritual was to draw the heart of the worshipper toward God. The purpose of the commandments was to bring about harmony with God. The purpose of the promises was to encourage and assist one in fulfilling God's purpose for his life. David

was, for all of his problems, a superb example of the personalization of the relationship of man on the earth to the God of the universe. All of the complexities surrounding David's sin had their place in ripening this relationship to God. The sin itself was a revelation to David of his inherent weakness; the scathing rebuke of Nathan, the Prophet, brought David to his knees in humiliation; the penalties levied upon him taught him lessons that he would not forget. The end result of the entire matter, lived out in infamy, agony, and humility, was the ripening of the fruit of that tree planted by the rivers of water, *"For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish"* (Psalm 1:6).

In the spirit of David's request, God had indeed searched him, and known him. He did find in him a wicked way, and dealt with it effectively, if painfully, and demonstrated thereby His infinite love and mercy to those who seek Him with all their heart.

## THE NATURE OF SIN

While the 51st Psalm, is on the one hand, specifically related to David's sin in the matter of Bathsheba, it also serves as a summary of David's general attitude towards sin, and the principles which God taught him through the experience with Bathsheba.

Accordingly, we will take a very close look at this Psalm, and see what light it can throw upon our own condition, as human beings on the earth, and upon God's attitudes toward us.

**David's description of sin.** There are many words used in the Bible to describe the human condition, as it relates to sin. Some of these words are used interchangeably, at times, and yet there is often a special facet of human weakness that is intended to be focused on, by the particular word used. Thus, as we consider David's Psalm of penitence, we should look at some of the words that he uses, not as theological discourse, but coming from the depths of his own anguish and despair. But, it is well to note at the outset, that whatever the refinement of definition, it all adds up in David's mind, to total failure and total dependence upon the mercy of God.

**The first of the words that David uses in Psalm 51 is "Pasha".** This word is rooted in the concept of national rebellion, or revolution. It is a very strong word which indicates a direct act of the will in rising up against authority. In this respect, David sees his sin not as a simple, impulsive act of weakness, but rather as a willful disobedience to a known law of God. It is important for the Christian today to know that God's forgiveness extends even to such acts of willfulness. We may be inclined to think that God only forgives us for the casual slip, which we may be able to justify because of human weakness, but He must also deal with us in terms of willful acts of disobedience. It is most comforting to note that God uses David's condition as an example in the New Testament, of the ways in which God is able to blot out our transgressions. It is not beyond human possibility to extend forgiveness to one who has offended us, either unintentionally, or impulsively; it is quite another thing to forgive one, when the offense has been premeditated and intentional. To forgive where there is no reason to forgive requires Divine grace. Psalm 107 shows this kind of forgiving grace toward Israel when her afflictions were the result of direct rebellion and disobedience.

**The second word that David uses is "avah".** This word carries with it the idea of distortion and twisting—of getting off the track. As David looked back over the awful circumstances, he suddenly realized how much he had allowed his mind to be twisted and his view of things distorted. But that, of course, is the chief business of Satan—to deceive and distort. It was this twisting of things that got Eve into trouble in the beginning. Jesus' major defense against Satan was to adhere strictly to the Word of God and to resist the ways in which Satan attempted to twist the Word. Careless handling of the Word of God has been responsible for countless tragedies in Christendom. That is why it is so absolutely essential for those who are the teachers of the Word to be thoroughly schooled in it. Carelessness in the Word is a disaster to the church.

**The third word that David uses is “chatha”.** This word, which is almost the direct counterpart of the Greek word, *hamartia*, means “to miss the mark.” This word is the general word for sin applied to the sin nature, as received at the Fall, and also to acts of disobedience now applied to believers before conversion and after conversion. *Hamartia* is sometimes used interchangeably with other words denoting human failure. All human failure is in a sense *hamartia*, or missing the mark. On the other hand, the other words would not always apply where *hamartia* is used. In the first three chapters of Paul’s letters to the Romans, he describes quite thoroughly the human condition and then concludes that, “*All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). This is the meaning of *hamartia*. There is nothing that the human nature can ever be part of, that does not in some way “miss the mark,” but the great comfort that Paul gives in this matter is that “*where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.*” (Romans 5:20)

**The fourth word which David used is “ra”.** That word means “evil,” and refers to the consequences of wretchedness that are the result of the Fall and its heritage of sin. It is not so much used of misdeeds of themselves, but rather the consequences of those misdeeds which partake of the vast floodtide of human misery that engulfs the world. The Christian, though a member of God’s kingdom, and not of Satan’s, still cannot avoid the implications of evil that attend the offenses which he commits, which are in turn rooted in the human nature as a product of the Fall.

Such are the words that David uses to describe his condition. The Christian though saved, and a member of God’s kingdom, is not immune from any of these things. It is not a question of whether or not the Christian is ever involved in these offenses; but rather what is God’s attitude toward them. In another section we will examine in detail the extent and nature of God’s recovery of David, but let it be said immediately that God did, in fact, bring recovery to David. The recovery did not come without pain and penalty, but it did come. The comfort for the believer, of course, is not that we, possessing the Spirit of Christ are not so bad as David, but rather that the grace of God is at least as adequate for us as it was for David. It is quite futile to become technical about what constitutes an offense and what does not. The fact of the matter is that, “*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” (I John 1:8, 9)

**General observations.** There have been thousands of books and articles written which cover the issues of the human condition. But, when the subject has been thoroughly explored, we must always arrive at the same simple conclusions: 1) Whatever the terminologies, one thing is certain, man offends God before he is saved and he offends Him afterwards; 2) These offenses arise out of the condition of the human heart after the Fall, which rendered man unable to meet the righteous requirements of God from within himself; 3) There is a use of the word sin, which applies to the evil nature of the world and of the human heart as a result of the Fall (usually called “original sin”); 4) The sacrifice of Christ released man from the guilt and penalty attached to this “original sin” which has affected the entire race; 5) This sacrifice of Christ, which was the fulfillment of the Old Testament animal sacrifices, also makes provision for God’s forgiveness of the offenses which are committed even after conversion, as the result of the weaknesses in human nature left by the Fall; 6) As far as original sin is concerned, the sacrifice of Christ has completely covered our culpability, or blameworthiness, but as far as the daily offenses, or sins of the flesh, it is necessary for us to be continually sensitive to our weaknesses in the flesh, and to seek out God’s forgiveness and man’s, on a daily basis; 7) As long as we are in this life, we will never be free from the possibility of doing things, day by day, that displease the Lord and offend our fellow man.

## THE HOPE OF RESTORATION

### DAVID’S RESTORATION

Had there not been for man a Divine restoration, there would not have been a Divine revelation. Had man remained alienated from God, he would have been swept from the earth by the ravages of mortality, according to the word that God had given to the rebel pair in Eden. The Bible is thus the greatest discourse of human hope ever to come to the mind of man. Whatever the difficulties of understanding, and variables of interpretation, one thing is certain—had not God designed to restore man, He would not have given to him such a revelation. The meaning of that restoration is given in countless vignettes, or illustrations of life among God’s people from the beginning of His redemptive process. The life of David, as told to us in the Bible, furnishes us with a large number of enlightening lessons on the relationship between God and man. In this particular lesson we see man at his worst. Without the restoration aspect of this narrative, it would be disheartening indeed.

As Psalm 51 provides a revealing insight into the penitence of David, Psalm 32 shows us the extent of David’s restoration. When a life has been crushed as David’s, through the destructive force of sin, the crucial questions we want to ask are: Can God restore such a sinner? To what extent does He restore? How do we know He has restored? A study of Psalm 32 will give us sufficient answers to these questions, although there are many other passages of Scripture that could be cited. Here, as in Psalm 51, the heart of David spills over and we have from his own lips the spontaneous response to God—the hallmark of his life and writings. It should be noted here that the Psalms are not in chronological order. That is to say, they do not necessarily appear in the order in which they were written. It is generally assumed that Psalm 32 was written after Psalm 51. It should, therefore, give us some insights into the degree and nature of David’s restoration, which took place within David after his fall.

#### HOW CAN GOD RESTORE SUCH A SINNER?

In David’s own words, *“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”* According to David, who ought to know, God does restore, in the sense of forgiving our sins. In a more thorough statement, in Psalm 103, David says, *“The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy; He will not always chide; neither will He keep His anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.”* (Psalm 103:8-12) There is no doubt in David’s mind about God’s forgiving grace. In the case of such a heinous offense as David’s, we would expect that even if he did believe in the forgiving grace of God, there would be some reservations about the totality of that forgiveness, but there is not the slightest doubt expressed in the thoroughness with which God had accepted David and forgiven him.

David’s statements are, of course, in keeping with scores of other passages in the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. David’s statements in the first verses of Psalm 32 are picked up and repeated by Paul in Romans 4, thus putting the seal of God’s approval upon the fullness of forgiveness, even prior to the coming of Christ. In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah communicated very plainly God’s words to man in regard to this subject. *“I, even I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake and will not remember thy sin”* (Isaiah 43:25). *“I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee.”* (Isaiah 44:22) Again in the New Testament, John makes the classic statement in his First Epistle, *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (I John 1:9) If by restoration, we mean the restoring of peace with God through forgiveness, the answer is a resounding Yes! God can, and does, restore such a sinner.

But what about the restoration of the spirit within? In his penitential prayer, David had prayed for a renewal of his inner spirit. *“Create for me a clean heart, O God, and renew within me a spirit that has been set aright. Do not send me away from Your presence. Do not take from me Your Holy Spirit. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and lift me up with Your graciously willing spirit.”* (Psalm 51:10-12<sup>A.T.</sup>) With his prayer for the renewal of his spirit, David had associated the creating of a clean heart and the

restoring of the joy of salvation. In Galatians 5:22, joy is seen as a fruit of the Spirit. Now, in Psalm 32, David sings, *“Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.”* (v. 11) Thus, David acknowledges that God has answered his prayer in the restoring of the joy of his salvation, and with it, therefore, the renewal of his spirit.

It is evident, then, that God did restore David, both in terms of the forgiveness of his sin, and in the renewing of his spirit within him. But, for such a sinner? The measure of God’s mercy is seen by the measure of David’s guilt. For those who may be inclined to feel that their particular kind of sin is too much for God to forgive, it is comforting to realize that David’s sin was; 1) not just a simple, involuntary act of carelessness, but rather a willful premeditated violation of known laws of God; 2) carried out over an extended period of time with a complex pattern of deception and subterfuge; 3) apparently done with such a callous attitude that it lay concealed in his heart for a long period of time before God finally dealt with it; and; 4) carried with it the death penalty.

In Psalm 107, David gives us another insight into the height of God’s grace, and the depth of human failure. *“O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfieth the longing soul and filleth the hungry soul with goodness, such as sit in darkness and the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; because they rebelled against the words of God, and condemned the counsel of the Most High. Therefore He brought down their heart with labour; they fell down and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands asunder.”* This hymn of praise for God’s deliverance follows the recounting in Psalm 106 of Israel’s constant acts of rebellion against God. Not only was Israel willfully rebellious, but constantly rebellious. Yet was God’s mercy as constant as their rebellion. There was, of course, a cutoff point, but God bore with them for nearly a thousand years. Concerning God’s forgiving grace, David had no doubt. God can restore such a sinner.

## **TO WHAT EXTENT DOES GOD RESTORE?**

As indicated in the previous section, God did restore David in terms of divine favor and forgiveness; in terms of the renewal of his spirit within; and in terms of the joy of his salvation. The close personal ties that David had with God seemed to be restored. In Psalm 32:7 David says, *“Thou art my hiding place, Thou shalt preserve me from trouble, Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.”* The Psalms which followed David’s recovery seem, if anything, to possess a greater warmth and a deeper sense of the power and presence of God. Moreover, David profited from his experience to the extent that he could offer instruction and help to those who, like himself, were struggling with the sorrows and snares of life. In Psalm 51, David made a promise to God in return for his restoration: *“I will teach transgressors Your ways and cause sinners to return to You.”* (v. 13) Now, in Psalm 32, he says, *“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye. Be ye not as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked, but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.”* (vv. 8-10)

The essential meaning of our life on the earth is, of course, the growth of our spirit, in preparation for the eternity that we shall spend with God. In this most important aspect, David seemed to be completely restored. Indeed, he learned many valuable lessons and seemed to grown in stature. However, he paid a considerable price for his sin.

In terms of the life which he lived on the earth, there was much loss and sorrow. It must be said that he was not, in this area, completely restored. Nathan, the Prophet, had informed David of the penalties that God would bring upon him. *“Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house; because thou hast despised Me, and taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto*

*thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.*" (II Samuel 12:10-12) The record of the fulfillment of this awful prophecy against the house of David can be seen in the account of David's life in the books of Samuel and Chronicles and Kings. The tragedy of his son Absalom was, of course, one of the greatest of the sorrows that David suffered.

In terms of David's life on the earth, there was very little restoration. This should serve as a very solemn warning that while God's grace is measureless in the restoration of the spiritual aspects of our relationship to Him, yet there are often consequences which must be paid. These consequences are not always penalties. Sometimes they are merely the irrevocable effects of decisions that have been made and actions that have been taken. Sometimes even God cannot reverse these actions. Bad marriages, for example, leave a residue of problems that simply have to be lived out.

It might be important to consider for a moment how to cope with these consequences. The lives of most people have been adversely affected, in one way or another, by unsound decisions in earlier life. The result is that there are certain aspects of one's life that will probably remain fragmented as long as one is on the earth. To assume that everyone's life must come together in a neat and orderly pattern would be unrealistic. For example, carelessness and inexperience in handling human relationships, such as family and friends, may leave ragged edges and unresolved problems that remain with us. Unsound decisions about jobs, careers, money, education, etc. can affect our lives in irrevocable ways. The answer to this dilemma is that we must see these irregular patterns of our lives as part of the learning and growing process.

If the ultimate end of our lives is spiritual growth and harmony with God, then these circumstances can be very important in shaping our eternal spirits. Paul gives us a clue in Colossians 3:1-4—*"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things, above, not on things on the earth, for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."* If we focus on the things of earth, we find distress and chaos; disillusionment, and disappointment. If we focus on Christ, we find reality and truth and hope and peace. If our earthly life is in fragments, yet our fulfillment as spiritual beings is assured by Christ. Life on this earth quickly passes, and with it tragedies and sorrows and disappointments, but our spiritual life is forever. If we are temporarily in distress or sorrow over penalties and consequences in this life, let us rejoice in Christ and in the work of His Holy Spirit within us, shaping us for our eternal life with Him.

## **HOW DO WE KNOW GOD RESTORES?**

The clue again lies in the heart of David. He sensed that he had been forgiven, *"I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."* (Psalm 32:5) In all of the human relationships with God, there is probably nothing more difficult than to accept God's forgiveness. In the New Testament, John says, *"Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God."* (I John 3:21) Notice that John says, "heart." The word, "heart," is usually used to refer to the spirit. If, deep within the spirit, there is still the sense that God is with us, then we can be sure that He has forgiven us. It is quite possible, however, that in our emotions there may be misgivings. The real evidence is that we still care about Christ. The very fact that we are concerned about forgiveness indicates that the Holy Spirit is still working with us. If the Spirit of God were not working with us, we would no longer care. In such cases as David, where sin has totally shattered one or more lives, this is a most important point. The fragments of the life may never completely come together; the sorrows and agonies of the human emotion may continue to plague and haunt and distress; but deep within the recesses of the spirit, there continues to be the longing for the favor and forgiveness of God. This must be the work of the Holy Spirit within, because the natural mind does not receive the things of the spirit and cannot know them. One may forever feel unworthy, as in the case of Paul, who had brought Christians to their death, and through them had persecuted the Messiah, Himself.

Paul never got over these feelings, but still he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Holy Spirit was in him, that he had been completely forgiven, and that in Christ he could rejoice forever more.

David knew that he had been forgiven. His heart and his harp sang the praises of God for the rest of his days, in the midst of an endless series of sorrows and tragedies. This was the irrefutable proof of a renewed spirit within him. *“Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart.”* (Psalm 32:11)

# DAVID, THE SINGER

## A SURVEY OF THE PSALTER

*“Now these be the last words of David, the son of Jesse. David said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.” (II Samuel 23:1-4)*

Through the heart and harp of David, the Spirit of God sang to the world. David, the Shepherd-King, with his songs, shared with the world the inner essence of his life with God. He sang in his triumphs, he sang in his trials; he sang when he was wounded and weary; he sang in his weakness, he sang in his sorrow, he sang when his heart was broken. He sang of the majesty of God and the perversity of Satan; he sang of the glories of heaven and the terrors of hell; he sang of the desolation of Israel and the deliverance of the Messiah. He sang of the transiency of the world and the wretchedness of the wicked; he sang of the blessing and peace of the family of God. He brought into focus the human condition and plumbed the depths of the soul. There was scarcely a human emotion that was not touched—love and hate; pain and pleasure: joy and sorrow, nor was any facet of sin left unexposed.

In his songs, he poured out his soul to God and to God alone. He had not the slightest thought that these songs would become the voice of worship for the people of God for all time and possibly into eternity. But therein, of course, lies their power—there is no pose, no pretense; only the Spirit of God singing through the heart of a man, those things that all God’s people would sing, if they could, and those things God would have all people sing, if they would.

The Spirit of God through the heart of a man—herein lies the key to the Psalms. In all the cares and conditions God’s people face on the earth, this is what God wants to hear from them. In the blackness of sin, He wants to hear penitence; in the flush of pride—brokenness; in doubt—openness; in anguish and sorrow—rest in His mercy; in anxiety and fear—trust in His loving care. And hearing the throbs of their hearts. God wants them to know His response; for their penitence—forgiveness; for their anguish—comfort; for their turbulence—tranquility; for their doubt and anxiety—faith and courage.

So David pours out his soul to God as the voice of mankind, and, for mankind, receives the response of God—an eternal river of love and grace. As David poured out his soul in his songs, so we shall receive them—not as literary works to be analyzed and classified and evaluated, but as songs of the heart to be shared, that our own hearts may be enlightened and enlarged; comforted and strengthened in our pursuit of God.

To derive the greatest spiritual benefits from David’s songs, we must group them according to the nature of their appeal, as follows: Songs of the Soul; Songs of the Battle; Songs of the Deliverer; Songs of the Altar\*.

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\*Not all of the Psalms were written by David, of course. There is some difference of opinion, but probably 75 or 80 of the Psalms were directly written by him. Of the rest, some of them are not labeled, but there is strong enough resemblance to David’s writing, that they could well be his. Other Psalms were written by his own musicians, and show his decided influence. There is no question but that all of the Psalms in Book One (1 to 41) are David’s. The rest are intermixed with other Psalms. Since it is our purpose to present the songs of David, we must confine ourselves to those Psalms which are either definitely his, or show his decided influence. This, then, is not intended to be an exhaustive study of the Psalms as a whole.

## SONGS OF THE SOUL

In a certain sense all of David's songs were from the soul, yet in another sense, some more particularly expressed the needs of the soul. These are the Psalms that reflect the depths of David's life with God. The word "soul" is here used in the Old Testament sense, embodying all that belongs to one's inner self. In the New Testament, there is a distinction between soul and spirit (see Hebrews 4:12) in which the soul refers more to the natural mind and body, whereas spirit refers to that special aspect of man that is the seat of the presence of God's Holy Spirit. Since the Old Testament believers did not possess the Holy Spirit in the sense that we do in the New Testament era, the word "soul," is a broader term that embodies all that pertains to the inner self, both mind and spirit.

David bares his soul for all the world to see. He shares his deepest feelings—penitence and brokenness; depression and discouragement; sorrow and anguish; joyfulness and confidence. He also offers instruction for the cultivating of the soul and comments upon the contrast between the godly and the ungodly. He seems not only to express the needs and desires of man, but also to sense the heart of God in His attitude toward mankind and His will and desire for them. Thus, he becomes something of a spokesman, or even a mediator between God and man in a simple way, and as such, a type of Christ who was the ultimate mediator.

Since David's songs are the spontaneous expression of the heart, and not intended to be formal statements of doctrine, it would not only be impossible, but inappropriate to try to classify them. However, they can be grouped in terms of the general moods of David that they reflect, or the themes that he is expressing. The "Songs of the Soul," which we are now considering, can be grouped together in terms of those songs that are refrains of the heart, and those songs that are refrains of the truth.

## REFRAINS OF THE HEART

These are the songs that poured forth spontaneously from David in the hours of crisis. He sang in times of trouble and in times of triumph.

### IN TIMES OF TROUBLE

Anguish flowed like a river through the life of David. Songs of sorrow tumbled from his lips in penitence and brokenness; depression and discouragement; distress over enemies within and without; and anguish over the human condition.

**Penitence and brokenness.** There were many things in David's life for which he could have been justly proud. He had been anointed by Samuel as the future King of Israel when he was but a youth. Also as a youth, he had slain the giant, Goliath, which none of the great warriors had been able to do. He was a favorite of God's, and carried with him the label of "*A man after God's own heart.*" He had acquitted himself most commendably in the contest with Saul, whom he steadily refused to harm as the Lord's anointed, and yet, whom he successfully eluded in the wilderness. He could have seen himself, thus, as a more righteous man than his pursuer, Saul, but never indulged that feeling. He had a brilliant record as a warrior and king, and had God's promise that He would establish David's line upon the throne of Israel forever. On top of all this, David had a distinct communion with God, of knowing that God was hearing him and responding to him, to such an extent that it could be the basis of the majestic songs that came forth from his heart and his harp. It is probable that God had to allow the brokenness in David and the crushing of his heart, to such an extent that the greatness of his person and his reign would not be the cause of an excessive pride that might ultimately destroy him, as it did his predecessor.

The tragic episode with Bathsheba and Uriah was the watershed of David's personal spiritual experience. The streams of David's life with God can be seen in terms of his experiences before his sin and afterward. At least six of David's Psalms were written in the anguish of his soul over this crushing experience. The

matter was dealt with extensively in a previous essay, “*David, the Sinner*”, but it should be noted again, in commenting on the episode, that this sin was in the heart of David long before the action, and that any change of circumstances that might have temporarily altered the situation would not have ultimately prevented this sin from coming out. God literally wrenched the evil tree from his heart, that its bitter fruit would not destroy David’s life. It had to come out in one way or another. God’s dealings with David in the matter left him utterly crushed and contrite, and the floodtide of his brokenness came tumbling forth in the Psalms that he wrote.

Psalm 51 is the most complete expression of his penitence. It was discussed in detail in the earlier essay, “*David the Sinner*”. The key thoughts are in verses 3 and 17—“*For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.*” Psalm 32 acknowledges God’s mercy and forgiveness. “*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*”

These Psalms, 51 and 52, are perhaps the most complete expression from David in the matter. However, there are several other Psalms that make pointed references to it. Psalm 6 is an expression of the depth of David’s suffering and a plea for mercy. Other Psalms that have to do with this theme are 25, 38, 39, 69, and 102. In all of these Psalms, David exposes the inner-most depths of his wretchedness, acknowledges his fleshly weakness and unworthiness, pleads for the mercy of God in forgiveness, and acknowledges God’s deliverance from his overwhelming burden.

When a believer is experiencing the anguish of human sin and failure and defeat, it would be well to read all of these Psalms and see the heart of David and the heart of God, mingled in mercy and forgiveness and deliverance.

Psalm 22 is in a somewhat different category, although it deals with the wretchedness of the human heart at a time when it seems that God has forsaken him. This Psalm deals with David’s sense of human failure, probably alluding also to his great sin. However, the Psalm is definitely one that could be called *Messianic*, since some of the words of the Psalm were repeated almost verbatim, by Jesus on the cross. It must be remembered that when Jesus hung on the cross, He was taking the place of the most wretched sinner on earth, plumbing the depths of human degradation, not because He Himself had been guilty of any offense, but because He was *bearing upon Himself the sins of the world*. Although He had no sin, yet in this awful world of darkness, He, bearing sin upon Himself, would feel what the sinner would feel, in that awful moment when the eyes of God could not look upon sin, but must turn away.

**Depression and discouragement.** Psalms 13 and 60 are songs that David sang when he was in a condition of despair. In Psalm 13 he says, “*How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord? forever? How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?*” In Psalm 60 he says, “*O God, Thou hast cast us off, Thou hast scattered us, Thou hast been displeased: O turn Thyself to us again.*” The encouragement to be found in these songs of despair, is that David does not maintain this attitude of discouragement, but turns in his attitude and begins to give thanks for deliverance. “*But I have trusted in Thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation.*” (Psalm 13:5) “*Through God we shall do valiantly; for He it is that shall tread down our enemies.*” (Psalm 60:12) This is a characteristic of David’s Psalms throughout. Almost without exception, even though David begins on a negative note in his Psalms, he turns and begins to praise the Lord. David shows us a key to overcoming depression. In the midst of depression, whether one feels like it or not, it is good to turn the heart to the Lord and begin to praise Him—not because of one’s difficulties, which might be a facade, but in spite of them.

**Distress over enemies.** Many of David’s troubles came, of course, from his enemies. Psalm 86 refers to this. Now these enemies, which were often God’s enemies, as in the case of the Gentile pagan nations around him, are in a certain sense a type of Satan, who is the enemy of all the believers. If the Old

Testament seems in general a book of blood baths, and therefore making God appear to be a blood-thirsty despot, let it be remembered that these physical battles were symbolic of the spiritual battle that God and His children have fought continuously with Satan. It is indeed a bloody battle from start to finish, and there can be no overstatement of the brutal nature of this battle. It must be remembered that the battle is for eternal souls, and is waged with great power and vigor and success, by the God of the universe. In fact, in the redemptive history of mankind, the entire history must be a history of war because that is the most prevalent aspect of man's existence on the earth—war within and without. Satan will battle relentlessly to the last moment, to overthrow God and to capture His people. He is no doubt unconvinced that he cannot possibly succeed.

So David is constantly troubled by his enemies. There are many Psalms that have to do with the battle and these we will consider in the group called *Songs of the Battle*. Now, however, we are looking at the Psalms that reveal the inner turmoil and distress of David as a result of these enemies. In Psalm 86 he says, *“O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul; and have not set Thee before them. Show me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed: because Thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me.”* (v. 14,17)

In Psalm 141, David cries out in utter desolation, *“Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth. But mine eyes are unto Thee, O God the Lord: in Thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute.”* (vv. 7-8). And in Psalm 142, *“Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I. 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.”* (vv. 6-7) So again, David in his desolation cries unto the Lord, and receives from Him the strength to turn his anguish into rejoicing. All depression and discouragement is an attack of the enemy. The believer would do well to read these Psalms of David in times of trouble.

## IN TIMES OF TRIUMPH

Although David seemed often overwhelmed with sorrow and anguish, yet he did have many moments of joy and triumph. He captures these moments in brilliant lyrics of praise and joyfulness. Later on we will consider the songs that have to do with general worship and adoration of God in the section called *Songs of the Altar*. The songs of praise differ from the worship Psalms in that they are direct responses to personal victories, rather than general hymns of worship. The believer would find great blessing in these Psalms as a guide to thanksgiving in times of joyfulness, when it is difficult to find words adequate to express one's true heart.

In Psalm 4 David praises God for putting gladness in his heart and for making him to dwell in safety. In Psalm 16 he is grateful for the lot which God has given him and for preserving him, and showing him the path of life. This Psalm is also a Messianic Psalm; that is, it is a reference to the resurrection of Jesus, and it is quoted in the 2nd chapter of Acts in this connection. David thus becomes also a type of the resurrection life of Jesus, in the fact that his lot from God was that he was to be given an eternal throne through his descendants. In Psalm 21 David praises God for giving him his heart's desire. In verse 6, *“For Thou hast made him most blessed forever; Thou hast made him exceeding glad with Thy countenance.”* Other Psalms of personal praise are:

*This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles* (Psalm 34:6).

*He brought me up also out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings* (Psalm 40:2).

*For Thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from my enemy* (Psalm 61:3).

*Because Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice* (Psalm 63:7).

All of these Psalms should be read in their entirety when one wishes to find voice for gratitude and thanksgiving to God in times of personal victory and rejoicing.

## REFRAINS OF THE TRUTH

As David lived out his relationship to God on the earth, he sought, through his experiences, to know God and to learn His ways. These he passed along in songs that lifted up the truth. Many of these Psalms were a contrast between the godly and ungodly. Other songs taught about the Word of God; the unity of the Spirit; and the attributes of God.

### THE GODLY VERSUS THE UNGODLY

In I Samuel 30:6 it says that *David encouraged himself in the Lord*. In the midst of a very rigorous and turbulent life, David often confronted the question of why he should accept such a life in the midst of enemies who seemed to prosper. The frequency with which this question arose is indicated by the number of Psalms that deal with the problem. As David openly expressed his concern and doubt and distress over this matter, he became unwittingly the spokesman for large numbers of God's followers who would face the same question in their own lives in the ensuing centuries. It is not really a sin to doubt. It is natural in the face of the very distressing elements of the life of the believers. Satan, of course, becomes the chief instigator of such doubts and questions. Sometimes doubts serve a very useful purpose in forcing one to review and clarify the issues of life. There are so many aspects to this question as David deals with it, that we cannot classify them, but rather will indicate the Psalms that have to do with this subject. When one is in a period of doubt, and wonders whether it is worth it to follow Christ, it is well to *encourage oneself in the Lord*. The following Psalms are excellent reading for this: 1, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 26, 36, 37, 53, 58. We have selected Psalm 1 for a more careful analysis.

### THE WORD OF GOD

The longest Psalm in the Book and the longest chapter in the Bible is 119. This is the most extensive instruction in all the Bible regarding the meaning and purpose and value of the Word of God. Even the mechanics of the Psalm are most remarkable. It is what we call an *acrostic*. The Psalm is divided into 22 sections corresponding to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. There are several verses to each section, and each line in the section begins with the letter of the alphabet of that section. It is not obvious in English, but there is a fairly close parallel in verses 65 to 72 where the first word in most of the verses begins with *T*. This is really coincidental, because only the Hebrew words would fit the pattern, but it illustrates the point. The value of the Psalm, of course, is to exalt the Word of God, and to renew one's appreciation of it.

### THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

A constantly recurring theme in the Psalms is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We cannot here accumulate all of the verses that have to do with the Holy Spirit, but there is a most refreshing song about the unity of the Spirit among His people in 133. "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*" (v. 1)

### THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

David tells us what God is like in hundreds of separate lines tucked away throughout his songs. It is not our purpose to collect and classify these statements, but one of the Psalms (139) is especially full of revelations about who God is and how He relates to His creatures. In this Psalm, David tells us that God is

omniscient—He knows everything about us; omnipresent—He is everywhere; omnipotent—all powerful, creating all things; and all loving in His dealings with us.

## EXPOSITION OF PSALMS 1 AND 139

### INTRODUCTION

David was not a theologian. Singing from the depths of his soul a thousand years before Christ, he cared not for the ideological intricacies that absorbed the Greek philosophers and the Rabbinic Scholars. And yet, in his artless and spontaneous lyrics, he opened up some of the grandest vistas of the Deity ever revealed to mankind.

In the Psalms, which we have classified as “refrains of the truth,” David sings as much from his soul, as in the songs we have called “Refrains of the heart.” But the expressions go far beyond personal feelings, as if the very voice of God were singing through him, revealing Himself to His creatures in visions beyond the capacity of the human mind to fashion. In Psalm 139 David admits to this—*“it is a knowledge awesome to me; being inaccessible high, I am not capable of it.”* (A.T.)

We are going to look at Psalms 1 and 139 as representative of the “refrains of the truth.” Eloquent in their simplicity, they establish guidelines for the earthly explorer of the vast reaches of spiritual knowledge. In Psalm 1, David shows the effect of the pursuit of God and contrasts it with the consequences of ignoring that search. In Psalm 139 he focuses on the nature and attributes of God, as they affect His creatures.

### PSALM 1—THE GODLY VERSUS THE UNGODLY

1. *Oh, the blessedness of the man.  
Who does not walk in the counsels of the ungodly;  
And does not stand in the way of sinners.  
And does not sit in the seat of the scorers.*
2. *But, his pleasure is with the law of Yahweh;  
And in His law does he meditate by day and by night.*
3. *And he shall be like a tree  
Transplanted by the channels of water,  
Which gives its fruit in season.  
Its leaf also shall not wither,  
And all that it does shall come to successful fruition.*
4. *Not so, the ungodly.  
For surely they are like the chaff which the wind scatters about.*
5. *Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,  
Nor sinners in the gathering together of the righteous.*
6. *For Yahweh knows the way of the righteous,  
But the way of the ungodly shall perish. (A.T.)*

Psalm 1 is, appropriately, placed at the beginning of this collection of David’s Psalms. The exact chronological order of many of these songs is not possible to determine. However, the order in which we

have them today was the order that had been established by the time of Jesus. It is assumed that Psalm 2 is, in reality, a second part to Psalm 1. Together, these two Psalms set the stage and the mood for the entire Psalter. They made a poignant contrast between the followers of God and those who either oppose him or ignore Him altogether.

David suggests that the followers of God take pleasure in the Word of God, in which they meditate by day and by night. Although David probably did not see his Psalms as being directly inspired of God, one senses in his writings that he considered himself to be a faithful representative of God, if not a prophet. The validity of his assumption is supported by the fact that Jesus accepted his place in the Old Testament Scriptures, and both He, and His apostles made important references to him, nor does aught of his message fail to harmonize with the New Testament.

## EXPOSITION

1. **Oh, the blessedness...** The Hebrew word here really has the idea of straightness, or rightness. It is in contrast to the “ungodly,” the word which, in the Hebrew, really means “ill-regulated.” We might say, “out of tune,” or “off base.” Ungodly is not really the best translation, though it is a familiar part of the Psalm. The idea here is not “ungodly” in the sense of impiety, or unethical behavior. It means rather, “without God”, nor, does the Psalm imply, anywhere, that the followers of God are especially pious. The thrust of the entire Psalm is that those who follow God are in harmony with His universe, and therefore are fulfilling their purpose in life, and are known of Him. The “ungodly,” on the other hand, miss the meaning of the universe, and, consequently, are unfulfilled, their works scattered to the wind, and their way lost from God’s view.

Obviously, the “Godly” are ill advised to seek counsel from those whose own lives are out of harmony with God’s universe, nor should they be following or sharing the path with them, or finding “*camaraderie*” with those who are the scorner’s of God’s way.

2. **His pleasure is in the law of the Lord...** The word “law” refers not specifically to the commandments as given on Sinai. Rather, it encompasses the broad scope of all which represented, up to that time, the collected writings of God’s spokesmen from Moses to David.

The expression, “day and night,” refers not to continuity of time, but quality of time. That is, one meditates both in the day time and in the night time. This is quite possibly symbolic of times of triumph as well as trouble.

3. **And he shall be like a tree transplanted by the channels of water...** “Transplant” is a more accurate rendering of the Hebrew word. It conveys the thought that one is removed from the arid wastelands of godlessness, and placed by the water courses, where one may be continually refreshed by the stream of God’s grace. The word, “channel,” suggests branches from the main river. God has, throughout the world, many such branches.

Such a one, nurtured by God, will inevitably bear fruit. Jesus uses this figure in His own teachings. It should be noted, however, that the tendency, today, to use “fruit-bearing” as a symbol of “soul-winning,” is misleading, and unfaithful to the analogy. “Soul winning” would better be symbolized by making other fruit trees. The fruit of a tree is that which is produced in keeping with the nature of the tree. Thus, a peach tree bears peaches, where a flowering tree bears blossoms. The seed of the fruit is a by-product, which does produce other trees, but it is not a main function. The correct application of the symbol is that all who possess the Spirit of God, are thereby “Godly” trees. Their fruit is “Godness,” or a desire to be identified with God. This quality of “Godness,” or identity with God, may not always be expressed adequately, but, the desire within, to be part of the family of God is only possible when the Spirit of God has come to dwell within. This is what is meant by being “born again.” It is the new life of the Spirit within, that identifies

that “Godly” tree, and not the quality of the expressions of that identity. The success of the “Godly” tree is based upon the power of the Spirit within, and not upon the capacity of the individual to be pious, or industrious. The leaves of such a tree “shall not wither.” It is the life within the tree that keeps them green, and not the capacity of the leaf to cling to the branch.

4. **The ungodly are not so...** Apart from God, one has no unifying meaning to life. Whatever one does, however noble, or excellent, if it has not its roots in God, it has no sustaining life, and is ultimately scattered to the winds.

It is not that God does not appreciate humanitarian efforts on behalf of His creatures, but rather that, unless such services are performed in response to the Spirit of God, within one, they are merely based upon human sentimentalities, which invariably neither tie one to God, nor make an adequate dent in the vastness of human misery. When one responds to the Spirit of God within, not only is God Himself pleased, but also, He will be able to coordinate such efforts in the fulfillment of His ultimate purposes. Humanitarian service that is performed for the sake of the solving of the world’s ills is so overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task as to be almost futile. But, on the other hand, service that is performed on the basis of nobility, or the adage that “virtue is its own reward,” could only find this to be true if God exists. The natural world, apart from God, proves only the thesis of “survival of the fittest.” The thesis of “the strong helping the weak,” only makes sense when applied to “spirit values.”

5. **Therefore the ungodly shall not stand...** From the divine point of view, the world is divided into two groups—the Godly and the ungodly. They are separated by an unbreachable chasm. This was made evident by Jesus in His famous story of “The Rich Man and Lazarus.” There was no way that Lazarus could cross the chasm and minister to the suffering, godless one in Hades. Those who make their choice on earth to ignore God will have their decision honored throughout eternity.

6. **For Yahweh knows...** “The ungodly, who, on earth prefer not to have God oversee their lives, will find themselves everlastingly out of His sight.”

The most tragic state imaginable on the earth, is for the human soul, created by God as a social being—that is, one who finds fulfillment in relationships with others—to be completely unknown and uncared for. For the one who possesses the Spirit of Christ within, this condition will never exist throughout eternity. There are many on earth who are lonely, but they are never alone if they have Christ with them. That may not always satisfy the fleshly craving for companionship, but it will always satisfy the spirit, and thus sustain one throughout the earthly condition of loneliness.

Thus, in his first Psalm, David establishes this vital truth, which sustained him throughout his entire life on the earth, tragic though it often was. And, in this reality, he became the living example—to all who would follow—of the imperishable unity between God and His children.

## **PSALM 139 - THE NATURE AND GLORY OF GOD.**

1. *Yahweh, Thou hast searched me and Thou knowest me.*
2. *Thou hast known my sitting and rising;  
Thou hast perceived my purposes from antiquity.*
3. *My journeying and my reposing hast Thou sifted out;  
And all my ways hast Thou known thoroughly.*
4. *For there is not a word in my tongue;  
Behold Thou, Yahweh, hast known it completely.*

5. *Behind and before hast Thou encompassed me;  
And Thou hast laid upon me Thine hand.*
6. *It is a knowledge awesome to me;  
Being inaccessibly high, I am not capable of it.*
7. *Where shall I go from Thy Spirit?  
And where shall I flee from Thy Presence?*
8. *If I ascend to Heaven, Thou art there;  
If I spread out "Sheol" as my couch, behold, Thou.*
9. *Should I take wings as the dawn;  
Should I dwell in the extremities of the sea;*
10. *There also shall Thy hand guide me;  
And Thy right hand take hold of me.*
11. *And should I say, "surely the darkness shall overwhelm me,"  
Even the night shall be light around me.*
12. *Yea, the darkness shall not be made dark with Thee,  
And the dark shall be made light as the day.  
The darkness and the light are alike to Thee.*
13. *For Thou hast created my reins (innermost being);  
Thou hast known me intimately in my mother's womb.*
14. *I give thanks to Thee for Thou art astonishing and wondrous;  
Thy works are awesome;  
And my soul is exceedingly aware of it.*
15. *My physical structure was not hid from Thee;  
Concerning which, I was made in secret;  
Skillfully interwoven in the depths of the earth.*
16. *Thine eyes did see my parts in embryo,  
And in Thy book all of them were written—  
Their days, that were fashioned—  
And there was not yet one of them.*
17. *How splendid are Thy purposeful thoughts to me, Oh God.  
How vast is the sum of them.*
18. *Should I count them, they are more in number than the sand.  
I awake and I am still with Thee.*
19. *Oh that Thou wouldst slay the wicked, Oh God;  
And men of blood, depart from me.*
20. *They who show rebelliousness to Thee with evil designs—*

*Thine enemies who blaspheme.*

*21. Should not I hate those who hate Thee, Yahweh ?  
Loathe those who raise themselves up against Thee?*

*22. I hate them with utmost hatred;  
They are to me as mine own enemies.*

*23. Search me, Oh God, and know my heart;  
Examine me, and know my anxious thoughts.  
See if there be in me, a hurtful way;  
And lead me in the way everlasting. (A.T.)*

## EXPOSITION

In the crush and press of daily life on the earth, it is easy to take our eyes off of God and focus on the weak and beggarly elements of the earth. It is such a time that one would do well to read Psalm 139 and let the eyes be lifted again to the majesty of the God of the universe in whose hands our souls and spirits rest secure throughout eternity. We give below an analysis of that Psalm.

If the knowledge and power of God is awesome, as Master of the Universe, His capacity and willingness to involve Himself in the microcosm of His creatures is, to David, beyond all human understanding, nor is it likely that any human creature would assume this kind of involvement by the Creator of the Universe, did he not have some special insight from God Himself. The incomprehensible magnitude and precision of the Universe while not absolutely proving a Divine Creator, certainly would lead one rationally to that assumption. (For any human being to use the word, “absolute,” in connection with proofs or knowledge of God is highly questionable). It would not take a divine revelation to postulate the existence of a Supreme Being. But, for one to assume that such an Infinite and Supreme Being would be interested in the minutia and trivia of the creature, does not follow the norms of human logic, nor has any religious leader, or philosopher, other than those who have been influenced by the Judeo-Christian tradition, come to such a conclusion. In all the range of the Eastern mystic religions, for instance, while there is a deep commitment to the existence of deities, and to the spirit realm, there is never any indication that the deities who occupy that spirit realm ever involve themselves in a personal way, in the daily life of the worshipper, nor does the worshipper, in fact, ever see the deities as offering themselves in sacrifice for their redemption, nor taking any responsibility for securing their souls. Essentially, most religions, outside the Judeo-Christian tradition, assume that the individual is more or less on his own. And that, of course, would be a logical conclusion. Were it not for the direct revelation, by God, through the Bible, that He does, in fact, both relate to the creature and provide for his redemption, very few people would consider themselves worthy to receive His help.

In Psalm 139, David explicitly and confidently declares God’s relationship to His creatures as one in which He knows them intimately; abides with them incessantly; guides, guards and governs them unfailingly; and tends to their spiritual growth. Carefully translated from the original Hebrew, in keeping with contemporary language and idiom, the Psalm seems not to need further commentary. Let the Spirit of God speak through the Psalm to each, as He will.

# SONGS OF THE BATTLE

## INTRODUCTION

The central theme of the Bible is the conflict between God and Satan, over the souls of men. Against Satan and his demon forces, God sends forth Christ and His myriads of angels to wage a spiritual warfare which often expresses itself in the earthly conflicts. Whereas the Old Testament seems to be a constant battleground with wars upon wars, and battle upon battle, it must be understood that these battles are symbolic of this spiritual warfare. Over the centuries that God's people have been identified on the earth, there has been a constant siege of them, to the present hour. If these wars were only wars and nothing more, God might be seen as "The war God," indulging Himself in the sadistic pleasure of bloodletting. Battle after battle is described in the Old Testament, with God often participating in the fray. But let it be well understood that God is no "celestial chevalier" indulging His adventuresome Spirit, and neither is He a "demonic despot" driven by a lust for power. Rather, He is the Lord of the universe, with an eternal interest in mankind, and an inexorable commitment to deliver His people from the bondage of Satan into which they had fallen as a result of disobedience.

The defeat of Satan is, essentially, a spirit warfare. That is to say, that it is fought in the heavenly, or spirit realm (see Ephesians 6:10). But, the spiritual warfare does, of course, involve the people of earth, and is therefore "blooded," or given material reality in the conflicts that occur between men and nations. It is important to understand that there were those people who were essentially God's people and those nations that were essentially motivated by, and in allegiance to Satan. This would not be a moral judgment about those nations, but rather an accurate analysis of their religious forms. They were certainly not worshipers of God as presented in the Bible. They were rather worshipers of other deities, many of whom would have been openly acknowledged as Lucifer, or Satan. The Babylonian empire would be a prominent example of this. In modern times the Nazi regime which was demonically opposed to the Jews, and executed some six million of them, was led by a man called Hitler, who was violently opposed to both Jews and Christians, but made the statement, *"I went the way providence dictated with the confidence of a sleep walker."* Since he was certainly not an agent of God, we can only conclude that he was an acknowledged agent of Satan. Warfare against Hitler in World War II even by pacifistic standards as applied in later wars, would have been regarded as something of a "holy" war. There have been many such figures, as Hitler, throughout the history of the world, who seemed demonically motivated to wage war against mankind. It was just such wars that occupied a good deal of the Old Testament Scriptures.

The common foes of Israel in David's time were the "goyim" or heathen nations that surrounded Israel—the Philistines, the Edomites, the Ammonites, the Moabites and the Syrians. All of these nations were violently and often unreasonably opposed to Israel and, of course to her God, whom they challenged openly and repeatedly (as in the case of Goliath). And, it was not that Israel was more righteous than the surrounding "goyim," but rather that the nations that opposed them were really not so much opposing another nation as they were stirred up by Satan to oppose God through His representatives on earth.

David, the warrior king, battling God's enemies on the earth, was a type of Christ, the eternal Sovereign, overcoming all the forces of Satan, and ultimately bringing into subjection all things under the power of God. *"For He must reign, until He hath put all enemies under His feet."* (1 Corinthians 15:25)

As David was a type of Christ, so the surrounding nations were a type of the forces of Satan. The nations that David confronted were not simple, agrarian people tending to the common pursuits of survival, but rather they were idolatrous people, *en masse*, in the pursuit of such bizarre and perverted practices as the offering up in sacrifice of their own children. These nations were spawned in evil and nurtured in corruption. This is not just a Christian value-judgment. In our own nation, the Federal government would bring the sentence of imprisonment or death upon the practices of those nations, which were the common daily course of life. The most immoral and perverted practices that have ever been indicted by our Federal,

State and local courts, are yet mild compared to many of the *mores* (that is the standard customs of the day) of those nations.

Two of the nations that were mentioned—the Moabites and the Ammonites—were the descendants of the children of an incestuous relationship between Lot and his two daughters. The Syrians were the descendants of Ham, who was under a curse from God because of immoralities against his father, Noah, the survivor of the flood. The Edomites, descendants of Esau, had nurtured a bitter hatred against the descendants of Jacob, which was ultimately expressed in assisting the enemies of Israel, in savage attacks upon the holy city of Jerusalem. So bitter and constant was the animosity against God's people, that ultimately God allowed the Edomites to be totally devastated and obliterated as a nation. (For a further discussion of the subject see the essay, "David the Warrior".)

David, a type of Christ as the eternal "King of Kings" is also a type of Christ as the eternal "Lord of Lords" vanquishing Satan and all his forces forever. The battle is brutal and bloody, but so are the ravages of sin. The final conflict between Christ and Satan, as depicted in the prophecies, will be bloodier yet. But the enemies of God's people have been merciless and must be utterly obliterated before peace and righteousness can prevail upon earth. That peace and righteousness will prevail upon earth, one day, *and the earth be delivered from the bondage of corruption*, is guaranteed in hundreds of prophetic statements throughout the Scriptures, including a large number in the Psalms. There is nothing in the Scriptures more certain than the concept of a restored earthly kingdom for Israel. There are literally thousands of verses in both the Old and New Testament that make reference to this earthly kingdom. If these verses are only symbolic, then we are left in a wilderness of human speculation about the exact meaning of these symbols. In fact, even among those who accept the idea of a literal restoration of Israel, the effort to press uncertain symbolism has left the area of prophecy in chaos.

A very important rule learned early in the study of the Scriptures is as follows: "When the literal sense makes good sense, don't look for any other sense." (Author uncertain). Another rule to follow in interpreting the Scripture is to let the Bible be its own interpreter. It is best to avoid symbolisms that are not expressly allowed in the Scripture. The use of David, as a type and symbol, is very clearly given in the New Testament. There are nearly sixty verses in the New Testament that expressly speak of David in terms of his relationship to God's New Covenant and Eternal Kingdom. The same is true of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and the sacrificial system. Much of the prophetic symbolism is immediately interpreted by angelic revelation, as in Daniel, for example. It is all right to speculate at times when there is some uncertainty, but it must be made quite clear that one is speculating, and by no means giving the final word on the matter. If the students and teachers of prophecy would follow these simple rules, there would be much less confusion and many less errors.

The understanding of prophecy is crucial to the understanding of David, as we have already observed. David stands as the great symbol of God's dealing with His people, both in terms of the spiritual aspects of the kingdom, in the process of redemption, and the material aspects of the kingdom, in the restoration of Israel. The spiritual symbolism is very prominent in the book of Acts where, Peter, on the day of Pentecost, uses Psalm 16 to reveal the new relationship between God and man as produced by the coming of the Holy Spirit. And, in the book of Revelation, David's name is identified with the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. In fact, he appears among the very last verses in the Bible.

With these thoughts in mind, we turn now to a consideration of those Psalms of David which we have called the "Songs of the Battle." Since the ultimate meaning of these battles must be seen in the light of the final victory of God over the forces of Satan, we must consider futuristic aspects of the conflict. Flowing out of the universal conflict with Satan, also come the intense personal battles that God's people must fight day by day in the process of redemption that is going on in their own spirits. We will therefore divide the songs of the battle into those that have national and universal significance and those that have to do with the

personal, private battles that David had with friend and foe, with spirit and flesh. The national conflict is symbolic of the universal conflict between God and Satan.

## THE NATIONAL CONFLICT

### PSALM 68—THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH

Psalm 68 is the key to the understanding of the Songs of the Battle as they pertain to the national conflict. It stands as the majestic summation of all that God intends in this conflict. If we are to grasp the ultimate implications of these Songs of the Battle, we must begin here. The grand sweep of Psalm 68 lifts one far above the clash of earthly conflict, to the mountain peaks of promise—the promise of God’s ultimate victory over Satan and his agents in the world; the promise of everlasting salvation for Israel and the restoration of her holy land, as given her by the very God of Creation.

**Victory Songs.** Psalm 68 is one of a series of majestic Songs of Triumph that stretch like a range of mountain peaks from Genesis to Revelation. The mountain range begins with the Song of Moses in Exodus 15 and continues with another Mosaic Song in Deuteronomy 32-33. Then there follows the Song of Deborah in Judges 5 at the defeat of Sisera; the Song of Hannah in I Samuel 1 at the birth of Samuel; the special Songs of David in II Samuel 22 (Psalm 18) and Psalm 68; the Song of Habakkuk (Chapter 3); the Song of Zacharias, the priest, at the birth of John the Baptist; the Songs of Mary and Simeon at the birth of Jesus; and the Song of Moses, repeated in Revelation 15. Amidst many songs in the Bible, these all have in common a focus on the future deliverance of Israel beyond the immediate circumstances that occasioned the Songs. They are high peaks in the glorious mountain range of worship—music that poured forth from God’s people through the ages. We will not have opportunity here to pursue all of these songs, but the reader is urged to compare them for a grand mountain top experience. Psalm 68 is one of these peaks. We will explore it together in some depth as a key to understanding the Battle Songs of David.

**Comparison with Deuteronomy 33.** Psalm 68, was written at the successful conclusion of a battle, probably the war with the Syro-Ammonite confederacy. It is obvious, however, that under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, David went far beyond that episode.

To understand the Psalm and to put it in its proper perspective, we must begin with the prophetic Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32-33. Moses is giving his final message to Israel, warning them of judgment to come as the result of rebellion, and the final triumph of God in her complete recovery. There are many parallels between this grand victory Song and Psalm 68. In fact, in many respects, Psalm 68 is the complement of the Song of Moses. That is, it adds additional pieces that complete the picture. Like Psalm 68, Deuteronomy 33 has both past and future references. What God began on that holy day on Sinai, when He chose to reveal His heart to the people and laid before them the terms upon which they could relate to Him in peace, will be fulfilled when He finally writes that Law on their hearts and establishes them in His Eternal Kingdom.

Sinai is the starting point. It symbolizes God’s righteous requirement for the earth. God’s redemptive process will not stop until the whole earth is freed from the bondage of corruption. But, Israel has been the positive proof that the human spirit is not capable of meeting God’s holy requirement. Thus, there is to come the great deliverer—the Messiah—who will not only purge Israel from its unrighteousness, but also establish His dominion over all the earth. Deuteronomy 32-33 and Psalm 68, along with most of the other deliverance Songs, have a three-fold reference: 1) the failure and judgment of Israel; 2) the coming of the Messiah in spiritual deliverance; 3) the deliverance of Israel from her earthly enemies and the restoration of the land in the establishing of the everlasting kingdom of David, ruled over by the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Deuteronomy 32 tells of the judgment of God upon Israel; Deuteronomy 33 tells of the deliverance.

Far from being a symbol of legalism and bondage, the Law was a symbol of the grace of God. Sinai, of course, represents the Law. The very giving of the Law to Moses on Sinai was couched in an episode which revealed the fathomless nature of the grace of God. While Moses was on the holy mount, receiving the Law from God, the people, weary of waiting for him, turned to idolatry. Even Aaron, the High Priest, not only joined in their apostasy, but actually made the golden calf which was a symbol to them of deities which they hoped would lead them back to Egypt. When Moses returned with the stone tablets, on which the Law had been inscribed, and saw the incredible spectacle of God's people in idolatrous revelry, he shattered the sacred tablets in holy outrage. However, in one of the most remarkable expressions of devotion in the Bible, Moses interceded for the people, pledging even his own soul, if necessary, to stand by them. God (who had expected Moses to so respond), expressed His fathomless grace in replacing the tablets. (It is interesting to note that during this episode, Sinai is referred to as Mount Horeb, which means Desolation.) God's restoration of the tablets, symbolic of His enduring attitude of grace toward His people, was accompanied by a magnificent revelation of that grace: *"And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin..."* (Exodus 34:5-7)

In this episode on Sinai, we have a marvelous symbol of the full impact of God's grace and deliverance for His people. From the very beginning of their establishment as a people of God, and the receiving of the Covenant, Israel followed a course of continual rebellion and idolatry right up until the coming of Jesus, the Messiah. The final expression of Israel's apostasy was the group known as the Pharisees who reflected all that had been wrong with Israel's relationship to God from the beginning—arrogance, willfulness, deafness to the voice of God, and a self-righteousness which led them to depend upon the flesh. The Children of Israel had started out on this road of apostasy right from the beginning of God's revelation to them. Moses stands as a type of Christ, who takes His place with the people and intercedes for them. Moses would not accept the idea of God's abandoning the people and beginning over again with himself to make a new nation. Rather, he took his place among the people and accepted their guilt upon himself with them—*"Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book, which Thou hast written."* (Exodus 32:32)

Moses' prayer was heard. Along with the spiritual deliverance in the forgiving of the idolatry, God also renewed His covenant in promising them ultimate triumph over all of their enemies, even to the point of doing *"marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art, shall see the work of the Lord: for it is a terrible (awesome) thing which I will do with thee."* (Exodus 34:10) Since these marvels have not as yet been done in such a way as to be obvious to the people around them, we conclude that they are yet future. Someday, according to Revelation 1:7, *"Every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him."* Thus, the scenario at Sinai was of the entire process of God's redemption from the first revelation of His will at Sinai, through the centuries of rebellion and idolatry, to the coming of the Saviour, Jesus Christ, and the future restoration of Israel in the eternal kingdom.

Sinai is where it all began and Sinai is the point to which we must return as we seek to comprehend the fulfillment of God's redemptive process. God has never minimized either the righteous requirement nor the burden of guilt. He rather moved to share the burden of guilt through His Son, Jesus Christ, and sent His own Holy Spirit to fulfill His righteous requirement within us.

The symbolism of Deuteronomy 33 now becomes quite clear, especially as we compare it with the Song of Deborah in Judges 5 and the Song of Habakkuk in Chapter 3. *"YAHWEH came from Sinai and rose up (like the sun) upon them from Mount Seir; He shone forth upon them from Mount Paran, and came with tens of thousands of saints; from His right hand went fiery rays to them."* (Deuteronomy 33:2 <sup>A.T.</sup>) Sinai, Seir, Paran—all in the course of Israel's deliverance from Egypt; all scenes of failure for Israel; all, one day to be scenes of victory. As the sun, rising in the east, bathes the mountains of Seir and Paran in glory, so one day

God shall shine forth from them in deliverance. The myriads of saints and the fiery rays are clearly prophetic. Daniel saw the same things in this vision of the coming of the Son of Man in glory, as recorded in Daniel 7:10. *“A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousands and thousands ministered unto Him and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set and the books were opened.”* David echoes Moses in Psalm 68:17—*“The chariots of ELOHIM are myriads upon myriads and thousands of thousands. My Lord is among them—on Sinai the holy place.”*<sup>(A.T.)</sup>. Compare also Jude 14, 15; and Revelation 5:11. The rest of Deuteronomy 33 speaks of future recovery and blessing upon each of the tribes separately, and concludes with a very definite promise concerning the total deliverance of Israel in the future. *“Happy art thou, O Israel: Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help and who is the sword of thy excellency! And thy enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon thy high places.”* (Deuteronomy 33:29)

## PSALM 68

### Concerning Conquering: A Psalm of David for Singing.

1. *ELOHIM (God) shall arise, His enemies shall be scattered.  
And those who hate Him shall flee from before Him.*
2. *As smoke is driven by the wind, Thou shalt drive them away.  
As the melting away of wax before the fire,  
The wicked shall perish from before ELOHIM.*
3. *But the righteous shall rejoice; they shall exult before ELOHIM;  
And they shall be glad with rejoicing.*
4. *Sing unto ELOHIM, make music unto His name;  
Cast up a highway for the One who rides on the steppes (Arabah)  
And in His name, YAH, exult triumphantly before Him.*
5. *A father of the fatherless, and a judge (defendant) of the widows,  
Is ELOHIM in His holy habitation.*
6. *ELOHIM is causing those who were alone to dwell in a house;  
He is bringing out the prisoners into prosperity;  
Surely, the rebellious have dwelt in a parched land.*
7. *ELOHIM, in Thy going forth before Thy people,  
In Thy marching along in the wilderness,—Selah—*
8. *The earth shook,  
The heavens dropped their rain, before ELOHIM;  
This Sinai was moved before ELOHIM, the God of Israel.*
9. *Generous rain, Thou wilt pour out, ELOHIM,  
And when Thy possession is exhausted, Thou wilt establish it.*
10. *Thy creatures will settle down in it.  
Thou, ELOHIM wilt prepare a place for the afflicted.*
11. *My LORD will give the proclamation;  
The women who will herald the victory are a great host.*
12. *Kings of armies will flee, will flee;  
And she who dwells in a house will divide the spoil.*

13. *When ye shall lie down between the stakes (of the sheep fold),  
The wings of the dove shall be covered with silver.  
And the feathers with glistening gold.*
14. *When the ALMIGHTY shall scatter kings in it,  
It shall become white as snow on Zalmon.*
15. *A mountain of ELOHIM is the mountain of Bashan;  
A mountain of peaks is the mountain of Bashan.*
16. *Why, mountain of peaks, do ye watch with hostile envy,  
The mountain ELOHIM has desired for His dwelling?  
Surely, YAHWEH will dwell there forever.*
17. *The chariots of ELOHIM are myriads upon myriads and thousands of thousands.  
My Lord is among them—on Sinai, the Holy Place.*
18. *Thou hast ascended to the heights;  
Thou hast led captive, the captives; Thou hast received gifts among men;  
And even the rebellious ones dwell there, YAH, ELOHIM.*
19. *Blessed be My Lord—day by day He bears the burden for us—The God of our salvation. Selah.*
20. *Our God is a God for the work of salvation:  
And as for YAHWEH, my Lord,  
He is for ways of escape from death.*
21. *Surely, ELOHIM shall shatter the heads of His enemies—  
The hairy crown of him who strides boldly in his trespasses.*
22. *My LORD said, From Bashan, I will bring back,  
I will bring back from the depths of the sea;*
23. *In order that thou mayest bathe thy foot in blood,  
That the tongue of thy dogs may have its portion of the enemy.*
24. *They, behold Thy procession, ELOHIM.  
Thy procession—my GOD, my KING—into the sanctuary.*
25. *Before went the singers; behind, the players on stringed instruments;  
In the midst, damsels playing timbrels.*
26. *With the choirs, bless ye ELOHIM:  
My LORD, from the fountainhead of Israel.*
27. *There is Benjamin, the youngest, ruling them;  
The princes of Judah—their crowd;  
As well as the princes of Zebulon and the princes of Naphtali.*
28. *Thy GOD hath ordained thy strength—Be strong, ELOHIM.  
This Thou hast done for us.*
29. *From Thy temple above Jerusalem—  
Kings shall present gifts of homage to Thee.*
30. *Rebuke the wild beast of the field;  
The group of bulls, with the calves of the people;  
That they may prostrate themselves with bars of silver.  
He has scattered the people who delight in war.*
31. *The great ones shall come from Egypt;  
Cush shall stretch out its hand, hastily, to ELOHIM.*

32. *Ye kingdoms of the earth, sing to ELOHIM:  
Make music to my LORD—Selah—*
33. *To the One who rides in the heaven of heavens from antiquity.  
Behold, He will sound forth with His voice—a voice of might.*
34. *Ascribe ye might to ELOHIM—His majesty upon Israel.  
And His might in the cloudy sphere.*
35. *Awesome art thou, ELOHIM, from Thy holy places;  
The God of Israel is He.  
He giveth strength and vast might to His people.  
Blessed be ELOHIM! (A.T.)*

## PSALM 68—EXPOSITION

**Introductory Comments.** After a comparison of various translations of this Psalm, the author felt that none of them did justice to either its grandeur or its meaning. Furthermore, even the best of English translations will suffer certain ambiguities that must be clarified by the exploring of the original text. So, in order to fully grasp the deepest meaning of the Psalm, the author has had to translate it for himself, and felt that he should make his translation available to the readers. Without presumption, the author can assure the readers of sufficient experience in the Hebrew language to justify the boldness of this attempt. A word might here be said about the problem of translation. To translate accurately from the original, is more than a matter of scholarship. There are often several ways that a word or a phrase can be translated, and the translator is faced with the problem of selecting the phrase that exactly conveys what the Holy Spirit intended to say. Thus, a text might be made to say something that, taken by itself, is true, but still does not convey what this particular passage is trying to say. One can preach a good number of sermons from this Psalm, for example, and still not say what the Holy Spirit had in mind. Thus, in order to make a completely accurate choice among several possibilities, it is essential for the translator to have a deep grasp of the overall impact of the passage. In addition to this, one must have a very real dependence upon the Holy Spirit. It is not enough merely to be an expert in the language. Furthermore, some of the best scholarship available is itself in other languages and has to be translated into English, thus allowing the possibility of further misunderstandings.

With reference to the translation itself, a few comments are in order. The introductory words of the Psalm are quite different from the standard translations. The phrase, chief musician, is from a Hebrew word which has to do with continuity, or perpetuity, or fulfillment. It also has to do with preeminence, from which the idea of overseer or chief musician, was derived. The question is, whether it was a musical instruction, or a title indicating the content of the Psalm. We have taken it to mean the latter and are in agreement with the Septuagint (a translation from Hebrew to Greek used by Jesus and the Apostles), which takes it to refer to matters of the end time. These titles above the Psalms were quite possibly added later and, therefore, are not as crucial as the Psalm itself, but are quite instructive. It should also be noted that we have taken the original Hebrew name for God—ELOHIM—and used it throughout the Psalm without translating it, because there are a number of names for God in the Old Testament, and each has its special meaning. In Psalm 68 we have a number of such names, and, in order to properly distinguish them, have left the original Hebrew name. The basic name for God is EL which conveys the meaning of strength. ELOHIM is the plural of that name, and is sometimes called the plural of majesty. It conveys the idea of the many facets of God's being. He might be regarded as a multiplex personality. In our very first encounter with God, in Genesis 1:1, where He is presented to us as the Author of the Universe, this is the name that is used. The majesty of this name is appropriate to the majesty of the Psalm. All of the limitless facets of God's being, as presented throughout the entire Bible are embodied in this one grand word—ELOHIM. The names YAH and YAHWEH express the eternal quality of His being. This is the name that He revealed to Moses when He called him to be the deliverer of His people out of Egypt (see Exodus 3). It was to be the sign of His authority. Still another name used in this Psalm is "ADONAI". By itself this name can be used merely as a title of respect to one's earthly master. However, the form in which it is used in this Psalm can well be translated, "MY LORD". So used, it was a beautiful expression of David's close and personal relationship to the God of the Universe.

**"Song of Triumph."** Through David—Soldier, Sovereign, Singer—God sings to the world of His own ultimate triumph over all the forces of evil. Through this grand battle hymn, He reveals to the world His intentions, not only for His people Israel, but also for the nations that surrounded her. God did not bring into being this marvelous creation to have it swallowed up by Satan. God has a firm grip on the universe He created it (contrary to present appearances), but will fulfill His purpose in purging the earth of evil and establishing His eternal Kingdom. He will not be thwarted in His purpose, but will therefore find it necessary to use strong measures in carrying out His will.

The question of the sovereignty of God versus the free will of man has troubled many. In response to this it should be noted here that in the course of purging the earth of evil, God has employed many tactics which are not always understood by man. He has made many administrative decisions about individuals and nations, which may seem on the surface to be discriminatory, and even, sometimes, ruthless. But, the forces of evil are ruthless. God is not deceived nor misled by appearances—He knows the heart; He knows the end from the beginning, and He judges accordingly. But, in all of His administrative decisions, He has never excluded any individual, who wants to follow Him. For instance, God’s decision to destroy Jericho, was essential for the preservation of His people. However, His sparing of Rahab, who assisted His agents, indicates that individuals within the city, who desired to identify with His people, would have had that opportunity. So, also in the matter of Esau. Esau seemed to have been passed over by God in the administrative choice to select Jacob as the titular head of His people. However, God did give to Esau a large portion of land (Seir, or Edom) and, through Isaac, a generous blessing. But, Esau had chosen a rebel course, even prior to the selection of Jacob, and he, and his descendants after him, continued in rebellious deeds for centuries, so afflicting God’s people, that finally He had to destroy Edom.

Now, in Psalm 68, we have the great victory song, heralding God’s triumph over all the earth, not only restoring His own people, but bringing into subjection all of the surrounding Gentile nations. This is not just a prayer of expectation by David; it is a prophetic revelation given in the positive terms of divine assurance that all will be fulfilled.

**Elohim shall arise; His enemies shall be scattered...** Psalm 68 must be seen as a hymn of victory and not as a prayer of petition. David is declaring God’s victory in a prophetic utterance, rather than entering into a prayer that he would have victory over his enemies. The use of the hortatory, “let God,” is a weak translation, and reflects lack of understanding of the full impact of this Psalm. As far as the Hebrew verb form is concerned, it could be translated either way, but the triumphal force of the rest of the Psalm requires the more positive “shall”, nor is this a general appeal involving unspecified enemies. David’s own victory on the battlefield is seen by him as a foreshadowing of God’s ultimate triumph.

**“But the righteous shall rejoice...”** God’s people are here seen as righteous. The mood of the entire Psalm is recovery—both in a spiritual sense, and in a material, or earthly sense. It is no less a recovery of righteousness, than it is a recovery of the land. The beautiful prophecy of the coming of the Messiah in Isaiah 61 promises that the recovery of God’s people will be such that they will be called *trees of righteousness, and the planting of the Lord*. And Hosea promises that the adulterous wife will be *betrothed in righteousness and in judgment (justice), and in loving kindness, and in mercies*. And God promises to her—*I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord*. There are literally hundreds of verses in the Bible promising this kind of spiritual recovery to Israel. Here in Psalm 68, as in many of the other Psalms, the righteous people of God are contrasted with the wicked, *who shall perish from before ELOHIM* while the righteous *shall exult before ELOHIM*. Again the point must be firmly established that this is not some wistful petition of hope for the future, nor is it an exhortation to a limited number of the faithful in Israel to rejoice in their condition, but rather it is a sweeping promise of Israel’s future destiny as the redeemed people of God. With this, many passages of Scripture through the Old and New Testaments concur. For example, in the New Testament, in addition to the numerous passages that are obvious in their promises to Israel, Paul confirms the future restoration of *all Israel*, in Romans 9 to 11.

**Cast up a highway for the one who rides on the steppes (Arabah)...** This line is one of the hidden clues to the meaning of the Psalm. Why should the Holy Spirit ever hide the truth? Jesus Himself gives us the answer in His use of parables—*“By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see and not perceive: for this people’s heart is waxed gross and their ears are dull of hearing and their eyes they have closed: lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them, but blessed are your eyes,*

*for they see: and your ears, for they hear.”* (Matthew 13:14-16). The meaning is quite clear, and Jesus expressed it often. Only those who seek the truth with diligence and humility and sincerity will find it\*

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\*There are many today who attempt to interpret the Bible, and yet there is continual confusion and conflict and error. The truth cannot be acquired cheaply. God does not reveal His Word to the casual inquirer. Many do not come to the Word with deep enough respect. This is evidenced by the fact that the Bible is given a secondary place to personal experiences and revelations. It is further evidenced by the fact that many teachers (so called) come to the Word with inadequate equipment, and spend an inadequate amount of time studying it. It is not a matter of time in preparing the Sunday sermon, but time devoted to the mastery of God’s Word in general as befits the kind of respect that it deserves. We would not allow one to take out our appendix, for instance, with only a first aid course as a preparation. The standard response to this is, of course, Oh, but we have the Holy Spirit to teach us. But does the Spirit replace preparation? Is He revealing truth to everyone? Then, why, is there such confusion and conflict over the Word of God? There are many levels at which one may communicate the truth. God uses people with many different degrees of knowledge and understanding. The issue is a matter of authority. If one is going to presume to be an authority in interpreting the Word, then one must have adequate preparation and give an adequate amount of time to do so. This, of course, is one of the gifts. Those who are gifted to evangelize, are not necessarily gifted to teach. And, those who are gifted to teach; are not necessarily gifted to evangelize. The reason for this entire discussion is the deep concern for the divisions within the Body of Christ over these matters of interpretation. The question always comes up. Who is right? Whom can we depend upon? In part, the answer is the same as in the field of medicine. What are the qualifications? If a teacher possesses adequate knowledge of the Word, and if the Holy Spirit seems to anoint the message, then one may have confidence in what he says. The question will no doubt arise in the mind of the reader regarding the authority of this author who differs in his translation and interpretation of Psalm 68 from commonly accepted points of view. The reader will have to trust the witness of the Holy Spirit, but we must leave it to the reader to be the ultimate judge.

In a certain sense, the entire meaning of the Psalm is opened up by the above sentence. Therefore, it is crucial for us to explore it in some detail. It is possible to translate this line as follows: *Lift up a song for the one who rides in the evening*. Some translators have seen it this way. However, the Hebrew word in question, **salal** had its primary usage in connection with casting up a highway. In fact, the word for highway, **messillah**, comes from this verb. The other crucial word is **steppe**, or Arabah. It refers to an arid wasteland, and is an actual place-name of that description. The Arabah located just south of the Dead Sea, is the beginning of the crevasse, or ravine, that becomes the Jordan Valley, stretching the full length of Palestine to the mountains of Lebanon. It was a natural caravan route between northern Arabia and the Sinaitic peninsula. The Israelites started to use it as a practical route to the Promised Land, but were refused passage by Edom and had to go another route, which was much more arduous. The idea of casting up a highway through the Arabah, over which God would ride to the Holy Hill of Jerusalem, is quite in keeping with Isaiah 40, where the Prophet foretells the coming of John the Baptist, the voice in the wilderness, who cries, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God*.

Here the Prophet uses exactly the same words as in Psalm 68—**Arabah** and **Messillah**. There is no question then but that this line in Psalm 68 is a direct reference to the coming of the Messiah, as outlined in Isaiah 40.

In the introduction to the Commentary on Psalm 68, we discussed Deuteronomy 33, and indicated that Psalm 68 was a complement to that passage—that is, that it completes the meaning of the passage. Geographically, Psalm 69 takes up where Deuteronomy 33 leaves off. Deuteronomy 33 speaks of Mt. Sinai, Mt. Paran, and Mt. Seir. The Arabah begins at Mt. Seir and leads up through the Jordan Valley to Mt. Zion, which is identified in Psalm 68 as the ultimate dwelling place of God. In other words, the Arabah is the threshold of God’s triumphal entry into the Holy Land, whose recovery is symbolic of the redemption of mankind.

**“Elohim is causing those who were alone to dwell in a house...”** From this point on, the Psalm portrays the return of God’s people to their land in triumphal procession. Israel, once alone, once rebellious in a parched land, will be brought back to dwell in the house that God has prepared for her.

**“Elohim, in going forth among Thy people...”** The Psalmist then takes us back to the arduous, epic-making journey in the wilderness. The wilderness wanderings were a foreshadowing of the spiritual wanderings—the faithlessness and idolatry—that would characterize the centuries of Israel’s relationship with God. Early in the journey they had come to Sinai, the Holy Mount where God had met them with His Law and His glory. But in the revelation of His Law, there was also a manifestation of His grace. The mercy of God

rained upon His people in a revelation of Himself, which, though in some aspects awesome and fearsome, was never the less a glorious manifestation of the purpose of God to identify with His creation.

**“Generous rain thou wilt pour out, Elohim...”** Looking beyond the centuries of physical and spiritual drought, David sees God’s abundance poured out upon the people, and the exhausted wanderers established in their land.

**“My Lord will give the proclamation...”** God’s triumph is heralded by the customary procession of women who go before to sing the victory song. It is an exact parallel to the episode in Exodus 15, where Miriam went out with the women to sing the victory song of Moses after the triumph of the Red Sea. (The verb, in the feminine gender, requires women as a subject. This has to do with the victory march and not with evangelism). God’s enemies will indeed flee from before Him (see verse 2), and Israel, who has been brought back to her dwelling, *will there divide the spoil*.

**“When ye shall lie down between the stakes...”** Continuing the prophetic theme of victory, Israel is safe in the fold, and the dove, symbolizing the Holy Spirit and peace, flies overhead on wings of glory\*.

**“It shall become white as snow on Zalmon...”** The scattering of the kings will bring about the purifying of the land. But why the use of Zalmon? Zalmon, no longer identified on the maps, was located near Shechem between Mt. Ebat and Mt. Gerazim. It was less than 3000 feet in elevation, much lower than the mountains of Lebanon, which were usually the reference point for the symbolism of snow. A study of the only other Biblical reference to Zalmon will give us a clue. It was the scene of the tragic episode involving the son of Gideon—Abimelech (see Judges 9). After the death of Gideon, Abimelech had sought to strengthen his own claim to leadership, by slaying 70 of his kin who dwelt in Shechem. Abimelech did take over the leadership, but the men of Shechem later turned against him. Abimelech then went up on the nearby Zalmon with his army and gathered branches with which he burned Shechem to the ground. In His wrath, God had Abimelech destroyed by being crushed with a millstone. This sordid episode represents the ultimate debasing of a sacred site which stood as a symbol of God’s covenant relationship with His people. When Abraham had first come to dwell in the land of promise, he built an altar at Shechem, and there God gave to him the initial promise (see Genesis 12:7). The site was sacred also to Jacob, who erected an altar there, and there buried the strange idols that he had stolen from Laban. Its memory became tarnished in the shabby episode of Joseph and his brethren. His brethren had gone to Shechem to find pasture for the sheep. Joseph had been sent there with food for them. In a fit of jealousy, they had sold Joseph as a slave to the Midianites. Not content with their foulness, they then dipped Joseph’s coat in the blood of an animal, and brought grief to

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\*The Hebrew of this verse is difficult. However, a comparison with the parallel victory song of Deborah in Judges 5, gives a clue. The word which we have translated “stakes” (shephatayim), is the same word that is translated by sheepfolds (v. 16). In Ezekiel 40:43, the same word is translated by hooks, or pegs. The idea of stakes is in keeping with the construction of the sheepfold. (This idea is in agreement with Keil and Delitzsch **Old Testament Commentary**). Other translations are not in keeping with the triumphal theme of the Psalm.

Jacob by claiming that Joseph had been killed. Honor was restored later by Joshua who reclaimed Shechem as a city of refuge and gave there his farewell address. But, a further blot on the name comes with Gideon, who kept there a concubine and by her bore Abimelech. The restoration of Shechem as a possession of ELOHIM is prophesied in Psalm 60 and 108. The significance of the snow on Zalmon then, is that when God restores His land, even the blood-drenched Zalmon shall be as white as snow. The Prophet Isaiah echoes this theme—*“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow...”* (Isaiah 1:18)

**“A mountain of Elohim is the mountain of Bashan.”** And once again—the mountains. Once possessed by Israel and then lost to the Gentiles, even the mountain of Bashan belongs to God. In fact, David saw God as inhabiting all of the mountains. It was the theme of one of his Psalms (125)—*“As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is roundabout His people from hence forth even forever.”* The Gentiles were trespassers in the foothills. God never relinquished the mountains. What a glorious picture! To this

day, God hovers in the heights about His people still caring, still in control, awaiting the moment when all of His enemies shall be swept from the land, and His people established therein in glory forever\*.

**“Why, mountain of peaks, do ye watch with hostile envy?”** In a striking figure of speech, David sees the mountains around Jerusalem as looking with envy at Mt. Zion, which God has chosen for His dwelling place. In comparison with the majestic peaks of Seir, Bashan, and Lebanon, Zion seemed but a lowly hill. But this, of course, is in complete accord with the whole theme of the Bible where God takes the lowly and exalts them for His glory.

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\*The translators have failed to understand this marvelous point. The King James uses a simile—*the hill of God is as the hill of Bashan...* The New International Version takes even greater liberty, and uses the word “majestic”, in place of God. These translations are not true to the original text, but are rather efforts to modify a statement which was not understood. The Hebrew phrase—*har elohim har bashan*—must be translated. *A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan*, if we are to preserve literal accuracy.

**“The chariots of Elohim are myriads upon myriads...”** The almost infinite number in the entourage of ELOHIM is symbolized by a phrase that involves multiples of tens of thousands. It is not easily translatable, and appears in various ways throughout the Bible. The word, myriads, is a unit of ten thousand. The phrase does not, however, involve an exact number. The idea of God surrounded by a numberless host of victors is associated throughout Scripture, with the final triumph over Satan and the establishing of the new Kingdom. This great host is made up of several diverse elements. There are the angelic beings of the primordial universe, who remained faithful during the revolt of Lucifer; there is the great cloud of witnesses spoken of in Hebrews 12:1—no doubt the spirits of those who were the overcomers in the Old Testament times; and then there are the victorious saints of the New Testament—the members of the Body of Christ, who have gone on before.

The plain teaching of Scripture is that God does not dwell alone in solitary holiness, nor is He left with a small handful of the faithful, salvaged from the ravages of Satan. God’s power sweeps heaven and earth, and will ultimately triumph in the vanquishing of all the elements of evil, and the establishing of a new heaven and a new earth *wherein dwelleth righteousness*, peopled by the numberless host of overcomers. While the percentage of the faithful may, in each successive generation, seem small, nevertheless the cumulative effect of thousands of years of human history is a vast multitude of those who are members of the family of God. These hosts appear with God in both heavenly and earthly activities. Deuteronomy 33 and Psalm 68 seem to portray them in connection with the triumphal sweep of deliverance for His people. And yet, the connection is unmistakable with the myriads of Daniel 7:10 that appear with him at the judgment seat when the books will be opened. Again, in Revelation 5 we have an identical picture of the same hosts surrounding the Throne, whereas in Revelation 19 there is the great company of saints that follow Christ in His earthly assault upon the enemies of Israel. The truth of the matter is that the hosts of God fill heaven and earth. They are seen in several passages (Genesis 28:12 and John 1:51, e.g.) as ascending and descending between heaven and earth. An outstanding example of the earthly activities of God’s hosts is given us in connection with the Prophet Elisha. Benhadad, King of Syria, had sent his own hosts of horses and chariots to capture Elisha. Elisha’s servant, seeing the great army approaching, was terrified. Elisha prayed that the Lord would open the young man’s eyes—that he would see what was really out there. *“When the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, he saw and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”* (II Kings 6:17) Heaven and earth are filled with the hosts of God. There is no reason for His children ever to be afraid. *“The Lord is on my side; I will not fear; What can man do unto me?”* (Psalm 118:6) The chariots of ELOHIM in Psalm 68:18 are the heavenly hosts going forth to conquer.

**“My Lord is among them—on Sinai, the Holy Place.”** Mt. Sinai comes up a number of times in these victory songs. The wording of this line is difficult. The ancient writers used words sparingly, often compressing whole phrases in a preposition, or sometimes even omitting prepositions. But, whatever the exact reading, Sinai as the holy place of God, is definitely a focal point. Zion and Sinai both share this prominence as the earthly focus of God’s glory. It must be remembered that the whole of Palestine from Mt. Lebanon to Mt.

Sinai is, geographically, a very small dot on the map, relative to the whole earth. The sun light of God's glory rising upon Sinai and Seir, breaks out in brilliance over the entire land. Zion and Sinai can never be separated. The Holy Hill of Zion is the fulfillment of the revelation of righteousness on Sinai.

**“Thou hast ascended to the heights: thou hast led captive the captives... ELOHIM”** comes now triumphantly to Jerusalem—to the Holy Hill of Zion—all of His enemies now captive; *all their rule and authority and power vanquished.*

**“Thou hast received gifts among men...”** In symbol, the victory of ELOHIM over His physical enemies portrays the spiritual victory of Christ in redemption. That victory, culminating in the death and resurrection of Jesus, purchased with the price of His blood and the right to pour out on His people the spiritual gifts that would enable them to function effectively and victoriously in their mission upon the earth. Happily, the Apostle Paul, in Ephesians 4, verifies to us the correct interpretation of this difficult line.

**“And even the rebellious ones to dwell there, YAH, ELOHIM...”** In keeping with the rest of the Psalm, which depicts Israel—once rebellious, now desolate and alone—being brought back home to dwell in the house God has prepared for her, even the rebellious are seen as being brought back by YAH, ELOHIM to dwell in the Holy city. The name, YAH, means “the living one”. The people of God, reborn and recovered for God, will share eternal life with God in the New Jerusalem, which has been prepared for her as a *bride adorned for her husband.*

**“Day by day He bears the burden for us...”** If it is true that God brought into existence a world fraught with the potentials of corruption, it is also true that He has borne upon Himself the burden of man's predicament. It was especially true of His people, Israel. Speaking of God's care of Jacob, as symbolizing His care for Israel, Moses extolled the grace of God in bearing Israel's burden, *“For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land and in the waste-howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.”* (Deuteronomy 32:9-12) The Hebrew construction in Psalm 68:20 suggests that the burden here referred to, is Israel herself, with the continuous and calamitous circumstances that were the consequences of her constant rebellion and idolatry. The idea of God helping us in our simple daily afflictions is appealing, but not nearly strong enough to convey the far grander theme of God's power exhibited in the ceaseless care and ultimate recovery of His people from destruction. God bears the responsibility for His people, and exhibits His deep caring all through the Old Testament, right up to the coming of the Messiah. The Prophet Isaiah foretold the deep suffering of the Messiah for His people. *“Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.”* (Isaiah 53:4). We catch a glimpse of the inner agony of Jesus for His people in a revealing episode as recorded by Luke. In response to an especially discouraging encounter with the Pharisees, Jesus cries out in frustration and heartache. *“O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and ye would not!”* (Luke 13:34). This theme is further carried out in the rest of the stanza of Psalm 68:20, 21. The One who bears the burden for us is committed to the task of salvation and providing escape from death.

**“Surely ELOHIM shall shatter the heads of His enemies...”** The bold and arrogant opposition to God on the part of the surrounding heathen nations, will be utterly crushed. God will gather together His enemies from the heights of Bashan and the depths of the sea, so that the battlefield will run with blood and their flesh will be a feast for dogs. If it is an unspeakably terrible scene, it is just recompense for those who, as agents of Satan, have terrorized the earth. The symbolism of the dogs is used in the story of Jezebel, the demonically malevolent priestess of Baal and wife of King Ahab. Her arrogant rebellion against God and cruelty toward His people, was justly recompensed by the ultimate humiliation accorded her in death. *“This is the word of the Lord, which He spake by His servant Elijah, the Tishbite, saying, in the portion of Jezreel*

*shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel; and the carcass of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field, in the portion of Jezreel; so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel.”* (II Kings 9:36-37)

**“They behold Thy procession, ELOHIM.”** Comes now the glorious and triumphal procession to the sanctuary in the Holy city. Choirs and maidens of music herald the victory. Israel, the weak and lowly, the desolate and driven, returns now in triumph. In symbolism, Benjamin, the youngest and least significant of all, is seen as a ruler. The people of God, who went out in humility, return now in power and glory. So weak and lowly were they, that all the world must now see that only ELOHIM has given them their strength.

**“From Thy temple above Jerusalem...”** And from His Throne on the Holy Hill of Zion—New Jerusalem—God rules over all the earth. The kings of earth bring gifts of homage to Him. The parallel with Revelation 21 is too strong to overlook, although there is some question about the meaning of the temple.

*“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the Holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”* (v. 1, 2) Then continuing the description, John says, *“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”* (vv. 22-27)

The grand sweep of Psalm 68 takes us all the way from the coming of the Messiah with redemption and spiritual recovery, through the purging of old Jerusalem from the Antichrist, to the establishing of the millennial reign of Christ and, after one final confrontation with the nations, the glorification of all things in the Eternal Kingdom. That eternal glorification will encompass the entire span of heaven and earth—the heavenly aspects ascribed to the Church, the Bride of Christ, and the earthly aspects, with Israel and the nations all now restored.

## OTHER SONGS OF NATIONAL CONFLICT

Psalm 68 has emerged as the key to the understanding of the Battle Songs, or Psalms, of David. But, there are other Psalms that deal with this theme. As we examine them, it will be discovered that they are supportive of the grand concepts of Psalm 68, and therefore, will not need to be examined in detail. It must be further observed that the Psalms that we consider under this heading are Psalms which have this national conflict as their major theme. The idea of God's victory over His enemies is a constantly recurring refrain throughout all of the Psalms. Of course, the Messianic Psalms, or Songs of Deliverance, are very much a part of the victory theme. This is why it is very difficult to classify the Psalms, because they are like a giant tapestry with the entire scenario of the process of redemption portrayed in vivid detail. As it would be impossible to separate the elements of a great tapestry, so it is really quite impossible to separate the elements of the individual Psalms. In general, the following Psalms are primarily focused on the national conflict: 9, 11, 60, 108, 144. (The reader should follow along with a Bible as these Psalms are discussed.)

**PSALM 9**—In this Psalm, David sings of the everlasting destruction of the enemy in verses 5 and 6. Verse 7 should properly be translated, *But YAHWEH shall sit (enthroned) without end, establishing His throne for judgment.* The word used for world in verse 8, refers to the entire earth, and not just the land (the Middle Eastern area). In verses 9 to 11, the people of God are seen as dwelling in Zion, delivered from oppression, and not forsaken. Verse 12 has to do with the avenging of God's people—*When He has demanded satisfaction in blood, He has remembered them, He has not forgotten the cry of the afflicted.* In verse 14, David sees himself as rejoicing over God's salvation in the very gates of Zion. Verses 15 to 17 show God's enemies as totally destroyed and returned to Sheol. Verse 19 should be translated: *Arise, YAHWEH, mankind (mortal man) shall not prevail; the nations (Goyim) shall be judged before Thee.* Psalm 9 has many parallels to 68. Its major theme is the deliverance of God's people from their enemies, and restoration of them to their land. This Psalm, like Psalm 68, has its spiritual analogy. God's deliverance of His people is more than an earthly kingdom. It is the spiritual deliverance that is of greatest importance.

**PSALM 11**—is really the contest between David and his son, Absalom, over the Kingdom of Israel. Absalom was attempting to usurp the throne. David's friends had urged him to flee to the mountains in the face of the problem, but David chose to stand his ground. As usual, the Psalm takes us far beyond the historical episode to the time when God will Himself conquer all competitors for the everlasting Kingdom. Verses 4 to 6 take us to the end of the age, where YAHWEH, in His holy temple, exercises His judgment over all the earth, separating the just from the unjust, and establishing His everlasting Kingdom in righteousness.

**PSALM 60**—This Psalm was written at a time of defeat—probably one of the battles in the Syro-Ammonite war. This was the longest and most important of the wars of David. But, whatever the historical reference point, the Psalm has a valuable place among the Battle Songs, because it lifts the eyes from the defeat of the immediate battle to the assurance of ultimate victory in the larger war. Israel has suffered almost continuous defeat in one way or another, spiritually, physically, and materially, for 2500 years. David has the faith and courage to look far off into God's horizon and sing of valiant victory.

But, if David looks off into far horizons of victory, he also sees defeat, far more devastating and universal than the immediate battle would have allowed. He saw Israel scattered, the land shaken; and the people experiencing hard things. The phrase, *wine of astonishment*, in verse 3, should be translated—intoxicating wine,—or perhaps better, reeling, that is caused by wine. It refers to the state of the people, so totally beleaguered as to make them reel as though they were drunken.

Beginning with verse 6, there are place-names most important in the future of Israel. The rest of the Psalm, from this point on, is exactly duplicated in Psalm 108. These place-names are all in the Gentile sector. Shechem, Succoth, Gilead, Manasseh, Ephraim—all had once belonged to Israel and were lost by them to the Gentiles; Moab, Edom, and Philistia had been the proud and perpetual enemies of God and His people

from the beginning. Their arrogant animosity will be brought to the dust. Their contempt for God's people will bring them down to shame. Israel, who herself had despised God's help in favor of the horses and chariots of Egypt, having become convinced that they are helpless without God, will one day cry out, *Give us help from trouble, for vain is the help of man.* The symbolism is unmistakable. Jesus, Himself, lamenting over Jerusalem, cried out, "*Ye shall not see Me henceforth till ye shall say, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.'*" (Matthew 23:39) When they finally do turn to the Lord, they shall do valiantly, and their victory over the enemy shall be complete.

**PSALM 144**—was supposed by some to be an early Psalm of David actually sung in consideration of his battle with Goliath. Whatever the occasion of the song, it does seem to be the reflection of a moment, possibly before a battle, when David is *strengthening himself in the Lord.* But, it also has a prophetic ring that reaches out quite beyond the immediate circumstances.

Verses 5 and 6 are quite familiar to us in connection with many prophetic passages which indicate the manifestation of great power and destructive force as God enters earth's arena to engage the enemy in the final conflict that will bring down the curtain on the entire scenario of Satan in the world. (The reader is referred again to Deuteronomy 33:2 and Daniel 7:10) The mountains are again in view here, as they were in Psalm 68. Throughout the Bible, the mountains have been symbols of power, not only of God, but also the enemy. But, those mountains which do represent Gentile powers, such as Bashan, are yet, ultimately, mountains of God. They are strongholds of the enemy only as far as God allows them to be. Jesus' expression in the Gospels, "*If ye shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done,*" (Matthew 21:21), coming in the context of His battle with the Pharisees, who certainly represented the enemy, was doubtless referring to the mountains as symbols of the earthly power of Israel's enemies.

Verses 7 to 11 have many parallels in the prophecies of Daniel regarding the Anti-Christ, and the enemies of Israel in the last days. The mouth speaking vanity, the falsehoods and the expression, sons of the strange land, all have a familiar ring. The contrast between the glorious land of Israel and the strange land of her Gentile enemies is common in the prophecies.

Verses 12 to 15 with their description of the limitless abundance with which God blesses Israel, is certainly parallel to numerous descriptions in the prophecies which definitely refer to the final restoration of all things in Israel. With equal certainty it can be stated that such abundance goes beyond even the glories of Solomon's earthly kingdom.

All of the Psalms which we have been discussing have a primary focus on the entire subject of the conflict between God and Satan over the souls of men. There are many other Psalms that refer to this conflict, but they are better grouped under Songs of Deliverance and Songs of the Altar.

## INDIVIDUAL CONFLICT

Throughout the history of Israel, prior to the coming of Jesus, God had His agents in the world, who seemed to be something like commanders in chief to whom God gave a very primary responsibility in the executing of His plans on the earth, especially in regard to His people, Israel. Such Titans as Noah, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua and David, were, in a special sense, types of Christ in a more complete way than the many other characters, who typified Christ in some partial sense (as e.g. Solomon). Such was David, who was destined of God to play a major role in the conflict with Satan. As the Spirit of God set forth His revelation through the writers of the Bible, He made no effort to conceal the weaknesses and afflictions of these men, giants though they were in God's economy. The great importance of this point is that we learn that though these men were greatly used of God, they were nevertheless no stronger in themselves than we are. One of

the constantly recurring themes throughout the Bible is the truth that God likes to use the weak in the overcoming of the strong, because He then is glorified, rather than man.

The test of a man's true mettle is not altogether what he does on the battlefield in conditions of intense and heroic motivation, but how he copes with life in the routine. What happens when he comes home to the drudgery of daily labor, and the give and take of human relationships? Enemies can be readily eliminated, but friends and loved ones must be lived with, and the problems resolved rather than simply swept out of the way. A man is one thing with his weapons and another thing with his words. David represents for us not only the grandeur of the heroic and universal conflict with Satan, but also the grinding realities of the daily struggles of the human heart. The enemy is the same, but the nature and scale of the battle is quite different. David reveals this tortured heart in the Psalms that have to do with his personal conflicts. The great blessing of these Songs is that 1) we see ourselves mirrored in the heart of David; 2) we see the continual triumph. However low the starting point, David seems able to rest in the invincibility of God's forces and to close each song on a note of triumph.

A notable example of this is Psalm 13, where David begins with the plaintive cry, "*How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? forever?*" (v.1). And he closes the song with a victory cry, "*But I have trusted in Thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation. I will sing unto the Lord, because He hath dealt bountifully with me.*" (vv. 5, 6)

In these songs of personal conflict, David bears his heart in many ways. All of the doubts and fears; the anxieties and sorrows and tears; the disappointments and despair, as well as the courage, and hopes and prayers—all are woven together in one great hymn of the heart. As we study more deeply this river of devotion, a certain pattern emerges that may help us to bring together the ideas in a comprehensive way. There are certain fundamental responses that keep emerging again and again. In these songs, David makes his appeal to God, he acknowledges his own failures and fear; he makes his charges, or allegations against his enemies and, as a matter of fact, on occasion he challenges God. He also has his admonitions to his people, and always the praise and adulation, which turns his trial into triumph. Accordingly, we will examine Psalm 31 as an example of the Songs of Personal Conflict. We will use the following headings—**Appeals, Admissions, Allegations, Admonitions, Adulations.**

### PSALM 31—A SONG OF PERSONAL CONFLICT

1. *In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed, deliver me in Thy righteousness.*
2. *Bow down Thine ear to me; deliver me speedily; be Thou my strong rock, for a house of defense to save me.*
3. *For Thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for Thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.*
4. *Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for Thou art my strength.*
5. *Into Thine hand I commit my spirit: Thou has redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.*
6. *I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the Lord.*
7. *I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy: for Thou hast considered my trouble; Thou hast known my soul in adversities;*
8. *And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: Thou hast set my feet in a large room.*
9. *Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly.*
10. *For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.*
11. *I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbors, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me.*
12. *I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.*
13. *For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.*

14. *But I trusted in Thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my God.*
15. *My times are in Thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.*
16. *Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant: save me for Thy mercies sake.*
17. *Let me not be ashamed, O Lord; for I have called upon Thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.*
18. *Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.*
19. *Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou has laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!*
20. *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man: Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.*
21. *Blessed be the Lord; for He hath shewed me His marvellous kindness in a strong city.*
22. *For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Thine eyes: nevertheless Thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto Thee.*
23. *O love the Lord, all ye His saints: for the Lord preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.*
24. *Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord. (K.J.V.)*

**Appeals.** Without a doubt, the most important single reason why David remains steadfast through the great many years of conflict within and without, was that he continually resorted to God. There is no question but what Satan's chief reason for attacking the saints is to get them to back away from, God. He will try to tell them that they are not worthy of God, or that they have now failed so miserably that God could not be expected to listen to them, or that their past is catching up with them, or anything to get them to quit praying. Discouragement is probably Satan's most lethal weapon against the believer.

By the very nature of our identification with God, we are admittedly reaching out far beyond human capacity, and therefore, feel at times that we are quite over our heads. We may sometimes feel, accordingly, that the slightest misstep will send us plummeting to oblivion. It does not take much, then, for Satan to convince us that we have made such a misstep and have therefore fallen outside the range of God's interest. The slightest adversity will send us scurrying for cover, assuming that God has abandoned us. David had many such moments, but though he often expressed his concern that God had forgotten him, he always seemed to be able to recover, and to continue appealing to God for help. And, as the record shows, he was well justified in his faith. He never ceased appealing to God and God never ceased responding to him. Certainly we have as much right as David to maintain our touch with God, in spite of the discouragements that Satan brings our way. David's appeals to God follow a rather consistent pattern. Here in Psalm 31, he appeals to God for **deliverance from his enemies** (v. 1). His enemies were in general God's enemies, and this appeal is part of his continual confrontation with Satan's forces, both privately and nationally. Deliverance is, of course, the central theme of the entire Bible. God's deliverance of David in countless conflicts is typical of His deliverance of the believers in their confrontations with the enemy. In this respect, David asks that God **would not let him be ashamed** (v. 1). In a sense, the idea of being ashamed, means to be let down, or to be left without defense. As we consider these various appeals of David, it is well to realize that the believer today has the right to the same kind of help from God as David sought. He asks God for **strength and guidance** (v. 3). He asks for **release from the snare** (v. 4) that his enemies had laid for him.

The believer today is not free from such snares. Non-Christian families and friends and associates will often do things and say things, sometimes unwittingly, that Satan will use as a snare. Sometimes offers that come to us—often attractive—are Satan's snare for taking us away from that which God originally wants of us. Satan will do anything to keep us from doing what God wants us to do. We do not always avoid the traps, but, once recognized, we may seek God's help to pull us out. (He may delay the deliverance momentarily, to help us remember the lesson.)

There is also the **appeal for mercy** (v. 9), and, judging from the numerous times that David praises God for His mercy, his appeal did not go unrewarded. David asks **that God's face should shine upon him** (v. 16), including that he was not satisfied merely with a caretaker relationship between himself and God, but valued the sense of God's personal presence with him. Then, his appeal for the **silencing of the wicked** (v. 17), is again to be seen in terms of the conflict with Satan, rather than a vengeful spirit against his enemies.

**Admissions.** David was always ready to admit his failures and sins, his weaknesses and wanderings, his anxieties and angers. He was totally open with God. And, as a result, God was totally open with him. He freely admitted that he needed God's help. Over and over again, in the Gospels, Jesus makes His strongest case against the Pharisees in that they did not recognize their need of God's help. In the case of the rich young ruler, it was not his unwillingness to give away his money that was the problem, but rather his unwillingness to acknowledge his inability to give away his money. This point Jesus confirmed to the disciples with the expression, "*With God all things are possible.*" (Matthew 19:26) In Psalm 31, David admits that **he is in trouble** (v. 9), **that he is consumed with grief** (v. 9), and that much of **his trouble is the result of his iniquity** (v. 10). He admits that **he is a reproach among enemy and acquaintance alike**, and that **his distress is such that people flee from him** (v. 11). He sees himself as a **broken vessel, slandered and pursued** (vv. 12, 13). Finally, he confesses his false allegations against God, whom he accused of **cutting him off**. He realizes that he spoke in alarm, (so the Hebrew) and **exhibited therein a very feeble faith** (v. 22).

**Allegations.** David is bold to make charges against his enemies. If his constant allegations may be seen by some as expressions of negativism and lack of charity, let it be immediately understood, again, that David is dealing with the forces of Satan. The naive notion that everyone has good in them and that we must always look for that good, and be slow to criticize, has no place on the battlefield. There are people around us, as there were around David, who would be used by Satan to destroy us, if he could. These ones are not always, themselves, aware of the fact that Satan is using them, but it is well for the believer to be on his guard.

Many a nation has come under tyranny for its failure to recognize threats to society that are masked in a false veneer of humanitarianism. Russia, China, and Cuba are a constant reminder to us that the tendency to regard revolutionists as justified reformers, is perilous and foolhardy. Common causes make strange bedfellows, and the Church has been no less guilty of teaming up with godless elements for what appeared to be worthy causes.

Part of David's survival was due to his willingness to recognize the deceitfulness of the enemy, and to expose him wherever he could. In Psalm 31 he charges his enemies with **laying a snare for him, slandering him, taking counsel against him, seeking his life, speaking against him, and possessing lying lips, which speak against the righteous, with insolence, and pride, and contempt**. The modern psychologist would consider David paranoid, but Satan has an uncanny way, as seen throughout the history of mankind, of condemning the guiltless and defending the guilty.

But, alas, it is not only the enemies that receive his allegations. It is most important for us to consider honestly the fact that David also challenges God, **"I said in my haste, I am cut off from God"** (v. 22). Whenever David does so charge God, he finally comes to the realization of his sin, and confesses it, and seems always to receive forgiveness. It is important for us to note this, because it is very common among believers to do the same thing. Commonly the Lord's people charge Him with abandoning them, or ignoring them, or demanding too much of them, or being unfair. It is a rather natural phenomenon of the human psyche that people often turn on their benefactors. It is not difficult to find examples of this, both at the social level and at the personal level. It is comforting for us to know that David was not above such allegations, and that he also was quick to confess them and receive forgiveness abundantly from God.

**Admonitions.** Out of his vast experiences with God, David offered many helpful suggestions and instructions and warnings to the people. In spite of his own turbulent relationship with God, David can freely recommend that love for God and faithfulness and trust and courage will bring abundant reward (vv. 22, 23).

**Adulations.** The Songs of David are a rushing torrent of praise and adoration and adulation of God. Cries and confessions and charges and challenges seem like rocks and debris churning up the waters—but the cascade of adoration tumbles relentlessly over the obstacles and flows ceaselessly through the centuries, an endless source of refreshing to all of God’s saints through the ages. Psalm 31 is an excellent example of this truth. Midst the painful admissions and caustic allegations there runs a constant thread of praise. Freely, David puts his trust in God, who is **his Rock and Fortress** (v. 3). Into His hands he readily **commits both the times** of his earthly sojourn, and the realities of **his eternal spirit** (vv. 5, 15). David’s priceless expression here became the grand finale on the Cross, as Jesus consummated His life and death upon the earth—“*Into Thy hands I commit my spirit*”. David rejoices in the **mercy of God**. Especially in the wonder of God’s **attention to him in his trouble and in consideration of his adversities** (v. 7). Throughout the Psalms, David is very much aware of the truth that God does know him, even though often David expresses the despair of his heart in momentarily thinking that God has deserted him. He marvels at the goodness of God and the refuge he finds in Him, *as in a strong city*. (v. 21)

There are a number of other Psalms of David that have to do with personal conflict. Some are general, as in the case of Psalms 13, 17, 31, 35, 70, and 71. Others are more specific. Psalm 7 relates to a moment when David was cursed by a Benjamite. A number of others have to do with the time when David was a fugitive from Saul, as in the case of Psalms 56, 57, and 59. Still others were written during the agonizing alienation between David and Absalom—Psalms 61, 140-143. The reader is urged to take these Psalms and study them as we have done with Psalm 31. The headings that we have given should be applicable to all or most of these Psalms. In such a study, one should be comforted by the realization that David was very much like ourselves, and was the object of God’s ceaseless flow of grace and mercy, even unto death.

## CONCLUSION

This section on the Songs of the Battle has been very heavy. The author is well aware of this and yet makes no apology for it. The whole concept of the conflict with Satan is central to the entire Bible and needs to be explored in depth. A foundation has had to be laid deep in the bedrock of careful scholarship, so that when statements are made in the future discussions of these themes, the reader may be assured that what is being given is not merely another opinion. Many of the ideas that have been discussed are relevant to the subject of prophecy, about which there has been so much careless teaching. The tendency to place popular and inspirational ideas above scholarship has left the student of the Word without adequate foundation for his beliefs. One may wish to read this section on The Battle Songs several times, or merely keep it as a reference point. Let the reader be assured that this section has been the result of weeks of concentrated research, which research has been made possible by four decades of intensive study of the Bible. May the Spirit of Christ Himself assist the reader in the grasp of the truth.

## SONGS OF THE ALTAR

It would seem, from the incessant flow of David's Psalms (happily, if incredibly, preserved through the ages) that David's life was an open book before God—an endless stream of communication between Creator and created; Master and servant.

Apparently, God was to him, a constant companion—in pasture and palace; battlefield and banquet hall. He shared with God his moments of triumph and elation, when his heart sang with joy. He held not back from Him, the bitter cries of disappointment or the explosions of anger, nor did he hide from Him the secret longings, anxious fears, or base desires that often ravaged the recesses of his heart.

In a sense, all of David's Psalms were a type of worship. His whole life might be seen as a living sacrifice, since his entire being was given to God. Even the dark and reprehensible moments of inordinate fleshliness and sin became, in time, part of the sacrifice—the loathsome parts of the sacrificial beast, consumed by the fire, as well as the more noble and comely parts. All that was the human soul of David became, at last, purified in the refining fires of the earthly pilgrimage. One thousand years later, Peter, who quoted David in his epochal address on the day of Pentecost, wrote an insightful commentary on the earthly gauntlet—*“for he that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin...”* (1 Peter 4:1) It would, of course, be totally unscriptural to say that all earthly affliction is the result of sin. On the other hand, there is nothing like pain to touch the raw nerves of earthly ambition, and bring into focus the true purpose of God for His creatures.

While the preponderance of David's Psalms are such a running soliloquy of his inner struggles, and thus, appropriate in any intercession with God, there are some that more purely reflect a spontaneous tribute to the glories of God. They seem not to be tied to any particular episode in David's life, nor to expressions of gratitude, as such, but rather emote from the deep wellsprings of his irrepressible wonder at the infinite magnitude, and limitless mercy of the Master of the Universe. A certain number of the worship Psalms were attributed to David, though many, such as the “Hallel” Psalms, were traditional hymns sung by the Jewish people. We are going to consider two of David's Psalms, that are representative of different facets of his praise and adoration of God: 1) the glory and majesty of God in His essential Being; and 2) that glory expressed in His relationship to His creation.

Psalms 103 and 145 are good examples. Psalm 145 deals with the greatness and majesty of God. Psalm 103 focuses more on the mercy and grace of God as it is expressed in His relationship to His people. Accordingly, we are going to take Psalm 145 first—reveling in the glory of God, and conclude with Psalm 103—exploring the spiritual implications of God's Glory as it affects us, His creation.

PSALM 145—THE MAJESTY AND MERCY OF GOD

1. *I will exalt Thee, My God, the King;  
I will bless Thy name for the ages of eternity.*
2. *Every day will I bless Thee;  
And I will praise Thy name for the ages of eternity.*
3. *Great is Yahweh and worthy of exceeding praise;  
And His greatness is unsearchable.*
4. *One generation shall praise Thy works to another;  
And they shall declare Thy mighty deeds.*
5. *On Thy splendor, glory, majesty;  
And Thine awesome works, will I muse.*
6. *And they shall speak of Thy dreadful might;  
And I will recount Thy mighty deeds.*
7. *They shall pour forth the remembrance of Thine abundant goodness;  
And they shall cry aloud of Thy righteousness.*
8. *Full of grace and compassion is Yahweh;  
Slow to anger and great in mercy (kindness).*
9. *Yahweh is good to all;  
And His compassion is upon all His creation.*
10. *All Thy creation praises Thee Yahweh;  
And they bless Thy merciful kindness.*
11. *They speak the glory of Thy Kingship;  
And recount Thy mighty deeds.*
12. *To make known to the sons of men His mighty deeds;  
And the glorious splendor of His Kingship.*
13. *Thy Kingship is a Kingship for all the ages of eternity;  
And Thy dominion for all generations upon generations.*
14. *Yahweh is a Supporter for all who fall;  
And a Raiser-up for all who are bowed down.*
15. *The eyes of all wait upon Thee;  
And Thou givest their food to them in season.*
16. *Thou openest Thy hand;  
And Thou satisfiest every living thing with goodwill.*
17. *Yahweh is righteous in all His ways;  
And shows kindness in all His deeds.*

18. *Yahweh is near to all who call upon Him;  
To all who call upon Him in truth.*

19. *He gives favor to all those who fear Him;  
And He hears their cry and delivers them.*

20. *Yahweh preserves all those who love Him;  
But all the ungodly He destroys.*

21. *My mouth shall speak the praise of Yahweh;  
And all flesh shall bless His holy name for the ages of eternity. (A.T.)*

It is not possible for the human mind to adequately articulate the Divine Glory. It is essential to understand that true worship can only come through the Spirit. Jesus made a point of this in His conversation with the Samaritan woman by the well of Jacob. In response to an issue which she had made, of the place of worship, He said to her, “*God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*” (John 4:24) It is essential for us to understand that there is a distinction between the spirit and the natural mind. The spirit is the essence of the life. It is the place where the Spirit of God dwells in all those who have identified with Him. The mind is the instrument with which we think and feel and communicate with the outside world. In a sense, the mind is the instrument through which the spirit expresses itself. The psychologist might call this the overriding consciousness. It is in the spirit that we possess our primary experience of God. The mind records such aspects of this experience as it is able to handle, but it is limited in its capacity to appropriate things of the Spirit realm. This is why there is so much division and debate in the circles of religious truths. It will always be so, as long as we are on the earth. It would be wise for theologians to understand this, and thus to be less insistent upon the absolute accuracy of their expressions.

In the worship of God, we must understand that the spirit is able to experience and express communication with God, beyond the capacities of the mind. Unfortunately, our only means of verbalization of worship is the limited equipment that our brain affords. Thus, we must articulate our praises in human terms, and trust that God will receive them as only symbols of that which our spirit truly senses within.

It is in this light that we must experience the Psalms of David. We read, or sing the words, but only our spirits can fully assess the meaning, and thus, any effort to expand upon the meaning of the words might only beggar the reality. We must depend upon the Spirit of God to communicate with our spirits, beyond the words.

While, in the main, it must be left to the reader to experience the Psalm, personally, some expressions need to be explained more fully.

**Grace and Mercy.** In verse 8, David uses several words which have to do with God’s attitude toward His people. These are variously translated by grace, compassion, mercy and kindness. Grace and mercy seem almost synonymous terms. The Hebrew word for grace is “chanan”. It signifies God’s benevolent attitude toward His people. The word, which is usually translated, mercy, **chesed**, really means the expression of the attitude of grace, in deeds of kindness. So then, grace has to do with God’s attitude, while mercy has to do with the expression of that attitude. In this Psalm, we have translated the word “chesed” by merciful-kindness.

**Compassion.** The Hebrew word for compassion, “racham”, is the word used for womb. It introduces the tenderness and warmth in God’s benevolent relationship to his people.

**Goodwill.** This word occurs in verses 16 and 19. In some versions, it is translated by the word, desire. The Hebrew word—“ratzon”—means favor, or acceptance, or goodwill. The word, desire gives a false impression. God never does promise to satisfy all of our desires. That would be as harmful to us as it would be impossible to fulfill, given the random desires of the human heart. But God does promise to look upon His people with favor and to deliver them in their distresses.

**All flesh shall bless His Holy name.** The word, “flesh”, simply means all living beings. Here David uses a prophetic concept, which occurs throughout his Psalms (notably, e.g., Psalm 68). The day will come when all the enemies of God shall be vanquished, His creation restored, and everything that hath breath, shall praise the Lord.

We leave it now to the reader to read the Psalm, and let the Holy Spirit communicate its truth to the spirit of the worshipper.

## PSALM 103—THE GRACE OF GOD AND THE HUMAN PREDICAMENT

1. *Bless my soul Yahweh;  
And all my inward parts, His Holy name.*
2. *Bless my soul Yahweh;  
And forget not all His benefits –*
3. *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;  
Who healeth all thine infirmities;*
4. *Who redeemeth thy life from the pit;  
Who crowneth thee with merciful kindness and compassion;*
5. *Who satisfieth thy mouth with good;  
Thy youth renews itself, as the eagle.*
  
6. *Yahweh executeth righteousness  
And justice for all, who are oppressed.*
7. *He made known His ways unto Moses,  
To the children of Israel, His mighty deeds.*
8. *Full of compassion and grace is Yahweh;  
Slow to anger, and abundant in merciful kindness.*
9. *He will not remain in contention perpetually;  
And He will not keep anger indefinitely.*
  
10. *He hath not done to us according to our sins;  
Nor hath He dealt out to us according to our iniquities.*
11. *For as high as the Heaven is above the earth,  
His merciful kindness prevaileth over all that fear Him.*
12. *As far as the East is from the West,  
So far doth He remove our transgressions.*
13. *As a father hath compassion upon his children,  
Yahweh hath compassion upon them that fear Him.*
14. *For He, indeed, hath known our form;  
Remembering that we are dust.*
  
15. *As for mankind, his days are as grass:  
As a flower of the field, so he blossoms forth.*
16. *For the wind passeth over it, and it is not;  
And its place regardeth it no more.*
17. *But the merciful kindness of Yahweh is from  
Everlasting to everlasting  
Upon those who fear Him;  
And His righteousness shown to children's children;*
18. *To those who keep His covenant;  
And to those who remember His precepts to do them.*
  
19. *Yahweh hath established His throne in the Heavens;  
And His Kingdom ruleth over all.*
20. *Bless Yahweh, ye, His angels;  
Ye strong men of valor, who executeth His orders,  
Attending to the call of His word.*
21. *Bless Yahweh, all ye His hosts;  
Ye servants of His who do His will.*

*22. Bless Yahweh, all His creatures;*

*In all places of His dominion.*

*Bless my soul, Yahweh. (A.T.)*

In all of the Bible, there is probably no character who more illustrates the human predicament than David. The greatest problem that mankind faces on the earth, is the inadequacy of human nature to cope with the problems of living together. We have learned, alas, how to annihilate one another, and we have not learned to relate to one another. Of all phenomena that might require evidence, there is never any question about the reality of evil in the world. In assessing the meaning of life, the acknowledging of evil is a pretty good place to start. David had plumbed the depths of this human curse. We have dealt at length with this facet of David's life in the essay on David, the Sinner.

For a Psalm, such as this one, to come forth from David's lips, is remarkable indeed. And, not only remarkable, but certainly comforting to his fellow man, caught in the same predicament. If the ravages of sin are great, the grace and mercy of God are greater. Apparently, from the prayers and Psalms of David, subsequent to his tragic experiences with human degradation, the sinner has yet access to God, and in this access, the willingness to acknowledge the offense brings the willingness of God to forgive, and to expunge the guilt. Probably the greatest single hindrance to worship is the sense of unworthiness on the part of the worshipper. This Psalm should be a great encouragement. If God could deal thus in grace and mercy with David, and a thousand years later with one who regarded himself as the chief of sinners—the apostle Paul—then, there is hope for anyone who truly desires to be reconciled with God. In fact, the very desire to be forgiven, and to be reconciled to God, is, itself, an evidence of the work of the Spirit of God within the human heart. The very desire to pray is from the Spirit of God.

So, Psalm 103, a great hymn of tribute to the mercy and grace of God, becomes a welcome oasis in the wasteland of human wretchedness. Again, this Psalm, as in all Psalms, must be personally experienced by the reader. This Psalm has been as accurately translated as is possible within the framework of human limitations, and, therefore, should be a usable instrument in the exploring of Divine Grace. But only the Spirit of God can truly make it live in the heart of the believer. Nevertheless, a few words of explanation might be helpful.

**“Who healeth all thine infirmities...”** The word, infirmities, is often translated “diseases.” It can mean diseases, but more broadly, general human weaknesses. And that, is in keeping with the context. Not everyone, unfortunately, experiences physical healing, even though they may be strong in faith. Everyone, however, who comes to Christ, is restored from the alienation that came upon the human race, as a result of the Fall. It is not that all human weaknesses are eliminated, but rather that the alienation from God is resolved, and the human spirit restored to its rightful relationship with God. The inadequacies of the human nature will be with us as long as we are on the earth, but the eternal purposes of God for His creatures, can now be realized. The disease of sinfulness has been checked, though there may be some residual effects of that disease.

**“Kindness, compassion and grace...”** Once again we meet these crucial terms in the revelation of God's attitude towards mankind. Remember that grace, refers to God's essential attitude of benevolence toward mankind; kindness, or mercy, as it is often translated, refers to the expression of God's attitude in ministering to the needs of His children; and compassion, from the Hebrew word for womb, adds the note of warmth and tenderness, to the flow of Divine goodness.

**“As far as the East is from the West...”** It is hard to imagine that God could, so completely, eradicate the infamous record of one's guilt. The expression here, leaves no doubt as to God's intention. Again, it must be pointed out that there are often scars and consequences from careless actions, with which one may have to live during one's life on the earth. However, these are bearable, when we realize that our relationship to God is completely restored, and that we may have peace in our spirits. We must not mistake unhappiness,

or turbulence in our earthly conditions, as a result of sin, or lack of restoration of spirit. In other words, we have peace with God in our spirits, but not always tranquility in our natural minds. David surely experienced this inner restoration, else he could not have written such lines.

**“He, indeed, hath known our form...”** Here is an essential reason for God’s extension of grace to us. He understands the helplessness of the human condition. He remembers that we were made of clay, and that the original pair, having forfeited the life of the Spirit within that clay, the rest of the human race, for all time, has been affected. No one will ever be condemned for the failure of Adam and Eve. One only falls into condemnation, in failing to accept the free gift of God’s restoration. If one refuses the Spirit-life that God offers, there is no other recourse for recovery.

**“Ye strong men of valor...”** The entire Host of Heaven is martialled by God, to see to the safe and successful pilgrimage of His children upon the earth. While we are yet prisoners of this physical body, in this space-time cosmos, we must suffer, as did Jesus, the unfortunate consequences of the ravages of evil. One day we will be released from this temporal prison, and will come into our complete fulfillment, sharing the universe with God, for eternity. But, meanwhile, God’s Hosts of Angels are engaged in preserving His children on the earth. We are not always spared from suffering, but our spirits, where Christ dwells, are impervious to the forces of evil, and are preserved by God for eternity. This concept is clearly presented in the New Testament in Hebrews 1:14, where it says, referring to the angels, *“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”* We are perfectly secure, and at peace, in the refuge of our spirits, while the storms of evil rage without. Let the words of David (who ought to know) minister to your own heart. Remember that God’s comment on David, at the end of his life, as recorded in Acts 13, was—*“I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after Mine own heart, which shall fulfill all My will.”* (Acts 13:22)

## Epilogue

The foregoing study on the life of David, has been, by no means, exhaustive. To do such a study, complete with a thorough analysis of all of David's writing, would occupy many volumes, nor has this been our intention. It is rather hoped, that these studies will have opened up new insights, not only into the life of David, but, of course, into parallels in the most difficult struggle which all of us face in our earthly pilgrimage. In many ways, David was unique, but for the most part, he was very much a kindred spirit with us. Perhaps one of the most significant insights we have gained from the study of David's life, is that God uses imperfect instruments to accomplish His purposes on earth. And, that no matter how imperfect the instrument, when it is given to God, it can fulfill its purpose, in spite of human weakness. It is also obvious, as we learned from our study of Psalm 103, that God understands the human predicament, and seems to accommodate it in His dealings with His creatures on the earth.

It is hoped that the review of David's life will give great encouragement to the reader. While David's assignment on the earth was unique, and unusually significant, the humblest servant of Christ is equal before God and receives equal treatment. There are no favorites with God. Each has his own assignment, and each is judged, not by the magnitude of the assignment, but by faithfulness in fulfilling it. Jesus, Himself, made this quite clear in His comments about John the Baptist. Concerning John, He had said, *"Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist."* And then after that, Jesus added, *"Notwithstanding he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than He."* (Matthew 11:11)

Ultimately, the Holy Spirit must minister to each reader, through these pages, according to the need and quite beyond the capacity of the instrument to ever articulate the truths of God.