

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Lessons from the life of David: David's testimonies

Have you ever wondered why life is often so up and down? David's life certainly was. So far in this series on David's life we have learnt about David's testings, his triumphs and his troubles. Sometimes it seems like those three categories pretty much sum up life. Some of it is good, and we feel like we've succeeded and done well. Some of it is hard, but we feel we're learning and growing from it. And some of it is bad, sometimes because of our own faults and sometimes because of fault in others. Why is it that life is *like* this? The title of this morning's talk is David's testimonies, and I'd like to spend our time trying to see what David learnt from all the experiences of his life.

Close to the end of David's life, he gathered together all the materials to be used to build a spectacular temple for God (1 Chronicles 22:1-4). David had wanted to build the temple himself (2 Samuel 7:1), but God had other plans for him. Instead, his son Solomon would go on to build the temple. Nevertheless David was able to help in the preparations for the new temple. He arranged for the collection of many of the materials needed for it. The people of Israel offered their own possessions to be used in the temple (1 Chronicles 22:1-4). When much of the material had been collected, there was a time of public celebration. We can read about this occasion in 1 Chronicles 29. As part of this celebration, David leads the people in prayer and praise to God. The prayer lasts from 1 Chronicles 29:10-19. That's where we'll spend our time this morning.

I want to point out to you from this prayer four things that David had learnt over the course of his life:

- He learnt more about what God is like,
- he learnt about worship and thanksgiving,
- he learnt about serving God, and
- he learnt to value the right things.

I hope that as we study this prayer today, we can learn some of the lessons that David learned. Whenever we learn about biblical characters, we don't do so just because it is an interesting thing to do; we do so because God has provided for us examples in the Bible of important lessons we need to learn. So, we're not really interested this morning in becoming experts in the historical character David, King of Israel. We want to learn the important lesson that God wanted David to learn. If it was important for David to learn, it's important for us to learn too.

David learnt more about God

The first lesson to learn from David's prayer is all about God. David may well have grown up learning about God. Possibly Samuel the prophet told David about the unusual way in which God had told him that David was to be the next king. You can read about that event in 1 Samuel 16:1-13. Many of the psalms were written by David. In fact, 2 Samuel 23:1 calls David the "*sweet psalmist of Israel*." You only have to read the Psalms to get the impression that David knew about God. But I think we can learn from David's prayer a few specific things that David had learnt about God through the experiences of his life.

Let's read 1 Chronicles 29:10-12: "*David blessed the LORD before all the assembly and David said: 'Blessed are You LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honour come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.'*"

The first thing that David learnt was that God was eternal. David was nearing the end of his life and was, perhaps, all too aware of his own limitations and mortality. He had been a great king of Israel but he would soon die and his son would rule in his place. Not so God! He is great and to be blessed forever. David also had learnt that God was great, and that real power and glory and victory and majesty belonged to Him. This is an important point. David was a powerful king; he had won many glorious victories. You can read about all the honour he received for killing Goliath (1 Samuel 18:6-8). You can learn about his mighty men (2 Samuel 23:8-39), a select group of heroic soldiers who accomplished many great things in service for their king. David had many loyal subjects; he was a majestic king and yet, here he is acknowledging that God is greater (1 Chronicles 29:10-12). Whatever power David had, God's was

greater. Any glory David received paled into insignificance when compared to the incomprehensible glory of God. David's kingdom may have been great but it was limited. It was limited both in terms of its geographical boundaries and its duration in time. But David had realised that God's kingdom was different. God ruled over *"all that is in heaven and in earth"* (1 Chronicles 29:11). God was *"exalted as head over all things"* (1 Chronicles 29:11), not just the king over the people of one nation. Finally David had realised that any good things he had were only because God had chosen to give them to him. David had been made great and given strength by God.

I suppose the main lesson we can learn from this section is to rightly appreciate God. We can easily become absorbed in the importance of our circumstances. We can be occupied with the trials and testings and triumphs of our lives and not be able to see past them. That's not to say that whatever situation we find ourselves in at the moment is unimportant. It's not wrong to celebrate successes, whether that's in our careers, our families, achieving personal goals or whatever else we may pursue. Equally, it's not wrong to mourn failure and loss, or to admit to suffering during testing times. It seems clear to me that David experienced all of these emotions at various points in his life. But I think that the key lesson David had learnt was to always keep in mind that God is greater than any circumstances he might find himself in. All of our circumstances are temporary. God will continue to be great long after we have died and others have taken our place. Let's learn from David's example not to think too much of our own importance but acknowledge that God is the one who is truly great. In one sense, we might say that this is a key theme running through the whole Bible. Mankind thinks too much of his own importance and forgets about God! That really is a description of what sin is, rejecting God and going our own way. And yet despite our rejection, God wants to teach us that He is the great one. He is the head over all and anything good we have comes from Him.

David learnt about worship and thanksgiving

In our next section we will consider 1 Chronicles 29:13-15 and consider what David learnt about worship and thanksgiving. Let's read the section: *"Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You and of Your own we have given You. For we are aliens and pilgrims before You, as were all our fathers; our days on earth are as a shadow, and without hope."*

The things that David had learnt about God made him thank and praise God. That's an important lesson for us too! God hasn't given us the Bible so that we can simply learn more things about God. We've been given the Bible so that we can begin to appreciate the God described in it! As we learn more about God by studying the Bible, we should want to praise Him more. We learn to appreciate that He is great and that He does deserve honour and glory. It's right that we give it to Him.

This section has echoes of one of David's psalms. When David looked at the world around him and the splendour of it, he was inspired to write Psalm 8. In Psalm 8:3-4 he says, *"When I consider your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit Him?"* David already had a glimpse of the amazing fact that God is interested in people. Have you grasped how remarkable it is that God is interested in us at all? But in the prayer we are considering together this morning (1 Chronicles 29:10-19), we are learning something even more remarkable than this. We see that David has learnt that not only is God interested in people, but also that those people are able to offer things to Him. Not just that God knows about us, but that we can approach God!

I want us to consider, for a few minutes, some of the things David says in this section. The first thing we can notice is that David considers worship a privilege. He says, *"Who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this?"* (1 Chronicles 29:14). David had learnt that God is a great God, as we pointed out in the last section. Isn't it remarkable that such a mighty and powerful God should be interested in people like us? Not just powerful kings like David, but even everyday people. Isn't it amazing that we could have anything to offer God? What a privilege for the people of Israel that they were able to give some of their possession back to God. David realises the wonder of this fact. He recognises that everything he had, he only had because God had given it to him. Really he was only giving back to God, what God had given Him in the first place. We've already thought that David was a king who had great wealth (1 Chronicles 29:3). How humbling for him to realise that God had given it all to him. That's a good lesson for us to learn too. No matter how much, or how little we have, God gives it to us. We should be thankful for it and be willing to offer some of it back to Him.

Another important lesson David learnt was that we are privileged to be able to come to God at all! He says, *"we are aliens and pilgrims before You"* (1 Chronicles 29:15). I'm reminded of Paul's words in the letter he writes to the Christians in Ephesus. In Ephesians 2:13 he writes, *"But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."* Of course, David didn't understand this fully, since Christ had not yet come, but he realised how far off we naturally are from God.

Our rebellion against God has separated us from Him. What wonderful news the Bible contains then, when we learn that despite our sinfulness, God has provided a way for us to be brought back to Him. So serious was the extent of our failure and sin that it required that God send His Son to this world to die for us! (see John 3:16) It's good to remind ourselves this morning, or perhaps to learn it for the first time, that we don't deserve any of God's goodness. We don't deserve closeness to Him and a relationship with Him. We really were so far off, like an alien or a stranger. But Christ has died in our place. He took my judgement by dying on the cross for me, so that I could be brought near to God. What a blessing and a privilege! Let's be sure we know that to be true for us, that we who were once far off have been brought near to God by Christ's blood.

David learnt about serving God

In the next section of David's prayer we want to look at what David learnt about serving God. We've learnt a few lessons about who God is and the privilege we have of worshipping God and approaching Him. Now we see that David responded to God in service.

Let's read 1 Chronicles 29:16-17 together: *"O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have prepared to build You a house for Your holy name is from Your hand, and is all Your own. I know also, my God, that You test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart I have willingly offered all these things; and now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here to willingly offer to You."*

During the time that David was king, he decided that he wanted to build a temple for God. Up until this point, the tabernacle had been the place where the people understood that God dwelt. David had in mind something more permanent. God had other things in mind though. God didn't want David to build the temple. Rather, his son Solomon would build it (1 Chronicles 29:2). But David did have opportunity to gather the materials to be used for Solomon to build the temple. Sometimes the things God has in mind for us to do aren't always the things we want to do. It's good to desire to do great things for God. It seems to me that this is a natural response to learning more about God and realising how remarkable it is that we can come close to God. It's only right that we live our lives to serve God. That's really a significant part of what it means to be a Christian - to accept that Christ is Lord and that He is the master of our lives now. We serve Him and no longer serve our own desires. However, we must still be prepared to serve as He directs, not just as we want. Are we willing to let the Lord tell us what to do, even if it's not what we would like to do?

David had learnt that God sees our heart. Perhaps he'd initially learnt this from Samuel as he was anointed the future king (1 Samuel 16:13). He certainly learnt it over future periods of his life. He had to learn that God sees our motives. He sees straight through any attempt to put on a show and perform in a religious kind of way. God is most interested in the motives of our heart. When we serve Him, do we do it willingly, or grudgingly? Do we really want to serve Him or do we just do something out of habit, or a sense of obligation? Clearly, sometimes we won't feel like serving the Lord. We won't feel like doing something we know we should do. If that thing is right, then it's still good for us to do it! Let me give you some examples.

It's a good practice to spend some time each day reading the Bible and letting God speak to us through it. Naturally, some days we will feel tired or busy and be tempted not to spend time alone with God, but it's still good to read and pray. Perhaps God will use the time to soften our hearts and prepare us for the busy day. Perhaps we might come across an opportunity to show some kindness to someone, maybe helping a friend or family member. But to do so will cost us some time and money and we don't feel like it. It's still good to do what we know to be right.

I think the main point from this section is that God will soon see if we try to fool Him with religious behaviour. The point isn't to only ever do anything for the Lord if our motives and desires are completely perfect. Rather it's that we shouldn't try to put on a show to impress others. Our service is for the Lord and He sees it. We don't serve to impress other people. There would have been no point in the people of Israel bringing all their gold and silver to offer to the LORD if they were only doing so to look the most impressive people in the country. God would have seen that. How commendable that they offered willingly to the Lord's service. How willing are you and I to serve the Lord?

David also had joy in the fact that other people were willingly offering to God (1 Chronicles 29:17). It didn't matter to him that he wasn't providing all the materials for the temple. He was happy that other people felt a similar desire to honour God. When we serve God, let's be careful to appreciate the service of others too. We serve the same God and the important thing is that we each bring what we can contribute to the Lord's work.

David learnt to value the right things

In our final section we will look at the values that David had learnt during the experiences of his life. Perhaps they had changed quite a bit from when he was a young shepherd boy.

Let's read the final part of David's prayer: "O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep this thought forever in the intent of the thoughts of the heart of Your people, and fix their heart towards You. And give my son Solomon a loyal heart to keep Your commandments and Your testimonies and Your statutes, to do all these things, and to build the temple for which I have made provision."

In this section I just want to point out the things that David prayed for his people, and for his son Solomon, who would rule after him. Remember that this prayer is offered close to the end of David's life. You might like to think of these closing words as passing on to his people and his son, the lesson he had learnt from all of the trials, testings and triumphs of his life. Above all else, he wants his people to "fix their hearts" towards God. As we've already mentioned, David experienced so many different things during his life. What he had to learn was to keep his heart fixed on God, whether those experiences were good or bad. His prayer for Solomon was that he would keep God's commandments and testimonies and statutes (1 Chronicles 29:19).

Above all else in life, David had learnt to value what God said. He had learnt to appreciate God and listen to what He said. We can find occasions earlier on in his life when this wasn't the case but what a valuable lesson he had learnt by the end of his life. Fix your heart on God and follow His commandments! What a vital lesson for us to learn. We all have very different lives, and at some point or other will face trials and testings and enjoy triumphs. Wouldn't it be good if our testimony through all of that was that we fixed our hearts on God and followed His commands!

A modern Christian song has the chorus:

*So I thank God for the mountains
And I thank Him for the valleys.
I thank Him for the storms He's brought me through
'Cause if I never had a problem
I wouldn't know that He could solve them,
I wouldn't know what faith in His Word could do.*

*Through it all,
Through it all,
I've learned to trust in Jesus,
I've learned to trust in God.
Through it all,
Through it all,
I've learned to depend upon His Word.*

Andre Crouch © 1971, Renewed 1999 Manna Music, Inc

I think that captures pretty well the experience of David. As we've thought this morning, David had plenty of problems in his up and down life. But he had learnt that God did help in them. He had learnt that he could trust in God and depend upon His word. In the good times, David had learnt that he couldn't forget about God or think he didn't need Him. In the bad times, he'd learnt to commit his problems to God. In all situations he had learnt to set his heart on God and trust Him.

So then, we finish with a challenge for us. What have the experiences of our life so far taught us? Have we learnt to trust in God whatever the circumstances? David's testimony was that God knows best. He's the greatest and we should set our hearts on Him and follow His commands. Is that your testimony?

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