

## **LESSONS FROM DAVID'S TROPHY ROOM**

Dr. John Allan Lavender

2 Samuel 5:1, 3-5, 10

*Then came all the tribes of Israel to David, saying, behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh (skipping over to the last half of verse 3) and they anointed David King over Israel. David was 33 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for 40 years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah 7 years and six months and in Jerusalem he reigned 30 and three years over all Israel and Judah (jumping down to verse 10) and David went on, and grew great, and the Lord God of Hosts was with him.®*

Of all the people who parade across the pages of the Old Testament, the figure of David looms the largest. As we peruse this Book, we find him in a variety of roles. Musician. Shepherd. Poet. Soldier. King.

To the prophets who came after him, he was a national hero. To his biographers, be they friend or foe, he was the most gifted and versatile personage in Israel's history.

He was a child of his time, and yet, in many ways he towered high above his time.

As a great oriental king, he founded a dynasty and established the principle of monarchy.

A man of strong impulses and great faith, he was at times full of fierceness, at times full of tenderness.

He placed religion above everything else in his life and trusted God implicitly.

He was, without doubt, the most lovable and luminous character in the Old Testament. And, nothing more important can be said of him than that which the bible says when it calls him,

AA man after God's own heart.®

What was the secret of his success? By what means did he conquer? For what reasons did he fall? How did he respond when faced with his own fragilities? These are some of the questions we will seek to answer as I invite you to come with me, via the magic carpet of your imagination, into David's trophy room. I want you to study some of the objects kept there. I want you to open your heart and mind to the lessons they teach.

There is much to be learned from the life of David which can help us in our desire to live victoriously. Unlike the pretentious palace of Solomon with its white marble towers, sunken gardens and colorful courts, the house of David was quite plain. We're told simply that he lived in a house of cedar. Undoubtedly, it was quite spacious. He had a half dozen wives, and I am sure it was quite a trick keeping them apart!

With that many women around, I suspect sheer self-preservation demanded that he have at least one room he could call his own. I've pictured it as a kind of den or trophy room. Not too large, but big enough to accommodate the many mementos of his amazing career, which lined its walls.

As was the custom of the day, David's trophy room probably opened onto an inner court where the waters of a little fountain flowed lazily into a pool below. Set in the opposite wall there was probably a window through which he could see the Judean Hills. I imagine David spending many long and pleasant hours gazing wistfully out of that window -- across the rooftops of Jerusalem -- past the city wall that gave protection to his people, and onto the rolling hillsides where he had spent so many years as a boy.

### **Shepherd's Crook**

Perhaps it was above that window that David kept his shepherd's crook. In all probability, it looked something like this one, for the shepherd's equipment was very simple. The average shepherd had but one garment, a kind of tunic made out of sheepskins and woven from wool. By day it was his cloak. By night it was his cover.

For protection against wild beasts and marauders, he carried a sling. If he was rich enough, he

had two Syrian dogs to help him. He led the flock and his two dogs followed after, keeping them together and protecting them from attack by wild animals. But rich or poor, his one indispensable piece of equipment was a shepherd=s crook.

As the years rolled by and David grew older, I can imagine how he often took this particular object from his trophy room wall. I imagine him fingering it lovingly as he recalled those early years when every circumstance seemed to be against him, and it looked as if he was doomed forever to a life of meaningless meandering among his sheep.

If ever the cards were stacked against a man, they were stacked against David. He was the youngest of seven sons. From the very start he was overshadowed by his brothers. He was a pygmy among giants. A boy among men. Because he didn=t appear to have much promise, he was denied the education which was granted to his brothers, and was turned out into the fields to become a red-neck shepherd, a poor, plodding, prosaic nomad.

While his brothers were taught the social graces and prepared for positions of honor and eminence, David was given the monotonous task of tending sheep. But, he did not succumb to the unfortunate circumstances which surrounded him. He didn=t bemoan his fate or grow cynical and sour. He didn=t cry out in bitterness against his brothers, nor did he accept failure because he had been denied the advantages which had been given to them.

On the contrary, he made the most of the chance he had. Instead of giving way to self-pity, he seized the opportunity which was before him. He turned those years of wandering into a period of preparation. He enrolled in the University of Nature and allowed everything about him to become his teacher. Out there, under the desert stars and among the lonesome hills, David became a student of the greatest subject of all -- God! He discovered the exquisite beauty of creation, but he also discovered the designer, the creator of it all.

And then, one day, this lad who seemed doomed to failure was selected by the prophet Samuel to become the future leader of Israel. What a strange sight it must have been as David stood

alongside his six brothers who were polished and prepared for positions of eminence. Instead of an ornate tunic such as they wore, David had on a shepherd's cloak. His hair was disheveled. His cheeks and arms burned bronze by the beating sun. His sling slung over his shoulders. His shepherd's crook in his hand. What a ridiculous figure he must have been compared to his proud and polished city brothers.

But you see, while man looketh on the outward appearance, God looketh on the heart. As a man of God, Samuel saw something in David which caused him to pass up the others. Taking the most unlikely candidate of all -- a simple, unlettered, uncouth shepherd boy -- Samuel anointed David -- king.

He didn't come into his kingdom immediately. The throne, the place of power, the position of prominence, were still far off. There were lessons he still had to learn. So God sent him back to the desert to tend his sheep. But, from that day on, David was a different man. He knew the Spirit of the Lord had come upon him!

During these additional years of wandering David became a poet-musician. He penned some of the most poignant poems of praise to the glory and power of God that have ever come from the soul of man.

During these years he learned to see God more clearly. Not as a distant deity, demanding and disgruntled, but as One who guards and guides his own. In the simple sentence "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" David gave mankind a view of God beyond any it had ever known.

During these years he also learned to deal effectively with adversity, injustice and intrigue. And, even though hounded by Saul who sought to kill him, David never once resorted to retaliation. Out of the crucible of life's most crushing experiences, David was able to write, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity."

During these years that he learned the way to meet heartache and heartbreak is not by growing bitter, but by committing oneself to the care of keeping of God. So he wrote such wonderful words of counsel as, Trust in the Lord and do good...so shalt thou dwell in the land and verily thou shalt be fed...delight thyself in the Lord and he will give thee the desires of thine heart.®

Oh, my friend, there is a lesson for us here this morning. Life does not come Amade to order® like a store-bought suit. It comes like a bolt of cloth, waiting to be made into something.

And though it may seem sometimes that the cards are stacked against you...that you just don't have a chance...that the other fellow gets all the breaks...that you are deprived of even the most rudimentary elements essential for success...that you are more sinned against than sinning...*even so...*the game is not lost!

When you are tempted to give way to discouragement and defeat, remember the shepherd's crook. Remember the greatness of David and how it began in smallness. Remember how he was overshadowed by his brothers, deprived of the benefits they enjoyed and looked upon as a pygmy among giants -- a boy among men -- and yet turned that trial into triumph by making the best of the opportunity which was his.

Remember how he climbed from the ignominy of a shepherd lad to the glory of a king. Not by some mysterious or magical formula, but by simple faith in and commitment to the will of God for his life. The thing that transformed David from a nobody into a Somebody was the wisdom to turn what seemed to be *no* chance, into the greatest chance of all. The chance to learn about God. To grow in wisdom and stature and favor with him, so when opportunity knocked, David was ready!

That's all God expects of you. There are some things you cannot control. Injury, injustice and adversity will come. But when they do, you can be ready to meet them -- not with whining self-pity -- but with faith and trust in the inevitable goodness of God. You can choose to seize each moment as it comes and, with determination, extract from it whatever blessing it can bring.

## Sling

The second souvenir I am sure we would see in David's trophy room is a sling. I had a terrible time finding one this week, because the sling David used is not anything like the slingshot with which most boys are familiar today. Instead of a piece of rubber attached to a forked twig, the sling of David was something like this: a piece of leather, wider at the center and cut so it could hold a smooth, round stone -- a good deal smoother and rounder than this one -- but about the size and weight of a man's fist. A strip of leather was attached to each end. And then, the sling was twirled round and round and round, like this. (*Whoops! Just kidding!*) But when one end was let go, the stone flew to its mark with amazing accuracy. It is said that some of the shepherds of David's day were so adept in the use of this weapon they could drive a metal spike into a tree from 50 paces.

Because David had redeemed the time and made use of the opportunity which was his, it was not an accident that he needed just one stone to kill Goliath. He was ready. He knew how to use his weapon and he also believed that where *his* ability left off, the power of God began. *“The Lord hath delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear,”* he said to Saul when his brothers scoffed at his chances against Goliath. *“He will deliver me out of the hands of this Philistine.”*

David didn't expect God to work a miracle. He simply dedicated his sling, and whatever ability he had in using it, to the Lord, knowing that *little is much when God is in it.*

How pitiful he must have looked compared to Goliath who was ten feet tall. How insignificant his sling and stone must have seemed compared to the massive spear and armor of the giant. But, as I have already said, little is much when God is in it. As Paul so boldly asserts,

*“If God be for us, who can be against us!”*

One man together with God makes a conquering majority. And so, with faith and trust in the living God, with confidence in the ability he had learned while tending sheep, David went forth

to fight Goliath and won the day.

Oh, my friend, I don't know what giant stalks you this morning. It may be the giant of guilt. Or fear. Or doubt. Or temptation. I don't know what giant stalks you. But I *do* know evil *always* assumes gigantic proportions. It *always* comes in the form of a Goliath. Laughing. Ridiculing. Belittling. Taunting. And it's easy to think about surrender. The Fifth Column of fear is always at work. Evil always seems so great and goodness always seem so little. The challenge always seems so vast and you always seem so small.

But when Goliath comes, remember the sling of David. Remember that little is much when God is in it. Remember that when God is for you, nothing can stand against you. Remember that together with God, you make an undefeatable team and an unconquerable combination.

Yes! Compared to a ten-foot giant this little sling and stone seem terribly inadequate. But placed in the hands of a man who knew how to use it, and who had perfected his faith and trust in God, a simple sling and a stone like this one completely changed the course of history!

Do you as a Christian have a comparable weapon with which to overcome evil? Yes! It's this Book, the written word of God, which is sharper than any two-edged sword. Do you know how to use it? Are you prepared to hurl it in the face of some Goliath when he challenges you to come out and fight? I know the odds are tremendous. I know the risk is great. Evil always comes in the form of a giant. The Goliath of fear or doubt or guilt or temptation always looms ominously large. But in this Book you hold a weapon which can slay the giant and win the day! Make sure you know how to use it. Write its promises upon the fleshy tablet of your heart for ready reference when the giant comes. Inscribe its wisdom upon your memory for quick use when Goliath hurls his challenge in your teeth. And then, go forth to meet him, knowing that when God is for you no one can stand against you, and that together with him you are more than conqueror!

**Baby's Sandals**

I imagine that if David were showing us through his trophy room this morning he would turn aside when he came to this third object. In fact, I imagine it would probably be stashed away in a corner somewhere, out of sight. But, nevertheless, I think we ought to pause and look at it for a moment, for here we have the tiny sandals of David's infant son.

No man in all scripture rose as high or fell as low as David. God took him from a sheepfold and put him on a throne. He gave him riches and lands and power and prominence. He placed him on a pinnacle of glory and made him the object of love and honor for an entire nation. And yet, one evening while David was walking on the roof of his house, he saw Bathsheba and lusted after her. He allowed a look to become a thought. A thought to become a deed. The result, was a child born out of wedlock.

And then, as if he had not done enough, David contrived to murder Bathsheba's husband to cover up his sin. In writing about this sad episode in David's life, someone has called him *'the prodigal son of the Old Testament.'*@ For after his double crime against Bathsheba and Uriah, David lived for over a year without a word of confession or contrition.

Having conquered all of the nations round about him, he failed to conquer himself. And, because of this sin, a long train of painful consequences fell upon him and his people. The son he had borne out of wedlock lived seven days and died. Later, he was forced to abdicate his throne and flee to exile. The morale of an entire nation was undermined. The name of God was besmirched and brought low. One of his sons committed incest with a sister. Absalom, David's third son, became his mortal enemy, committed adultery with one of David's wives, and was finally murdered with a dagger through his heart.

It is one of the immutable laws of the Spirit that

ANo man liveth unto himself and no man dieth unto himself.@

It is equally true that no man sinneth unto himself. When David allowed a look to become a



thought and a thought to become a deed, he not only tumbled from a place of prominence but he took an entire nation with him. And from that day, until the day he died, the tiny sandals of his infant son were a reminder of the terrible consequences of his sin.

Perhaps that's why David kept these tiny sandals in his trophy room, as a reminder that he was so very human, and that without God's help he could do nothing but falter and fail.

Ultimately, to his credit, David came to himself and confessed his sin. When he did, there was nothing impersonal about his confession. It was not like so many of our confessions, full of generalities and clever words, David's confession was deeply intimate and painfully personal. Instead of Awe have sinned,@ he said, I have sinned.@ Listen to his repeated use of the personal pronouns me, my, I --

Have mercy upon me, oh God,@ he cried. Wash me from my iniquities and cleanse me from my sin. For against thee and thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight. . Purge me with hyssop and I shall be cleansed, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Create in me a clean heart oh God, and renew a right spirit within me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me by thy free Spirit. Oh, Lord open thou my lips: and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, oh Lord, thou wilt not despise.@

Nineteen times David uses the personal pronouns me, my, I., and because David was willing to acknowledge, confess and forsake his sin, he was raised to a new level of intimacy and usefulness to God. He was forgiven. He was made new again. By the grace of God he was taught how to be King, not only over Israel, but over his own heart, his own passion, his own pride. And, in the end, he was remembered as Aa man after God's own heart.@ Wow!

Is there a lesson in all this for you? There is for me! Have there been times, as there have been for me, when you have been brought low by sin? When the giant of temptation has loomed large

before you and you have succumbed? You may not be guilty of the heinous sins of David. You may not have fallen prey to the lusty sins of the flesh. But whatever your sin, be it large or small, public or private, it always accomplishes the same results. It alienates you from God and destroys the fellowship between you and him.

But listen, there is still forgiveness! As Paul so powerfully proclaims, Awhere sin did abound, grace did all the more abound.@

If God could forgive David of the double sin of adultery and murder, God can forgive you.

If God could take this one who had risen so high and had fallen so low -- redeem him, recreate him, make him whiter than snow -- then God can redeem, reclaim and remake you.

If God could make a beautiful thing out of the impossibly shattered life of David, then God can make a beautiful thing out of your life.

If God could restore David to his throne, make him king over Israel, and also over his own passions and pride and temptations, then God can make you more than conqueror too.

If God could use David, even after he had sinned so grievously, then God can use you -- if you will only let him!

One thing is necessary. You must join David in the prayer, AWash me, purge me, cleanse me, restore me, oh, God, for against thee and thee only have I sinned.@ Yes, there is a lesson for all of us in the tiny sandals of David's infant son.

### **Crown**

But as I've already said, the usefulness of David did not come to an end because he sinned. Instead, because he confessed his sin and received God's forgiveness, he was restored to a place of usefulness. He actually came into an intimacy with God beyond anything he had ever known before. Not *because* of his sin, but *in spite* of it. As a result, as I said a moment ago, he earned

the greatest accolade ever given to a citizen of earth, for David became known as, AA man after God=s own heart.@

So I think the most precious object in David=s trophy room would be his crown, set with emeralds and diamonds, sapphires and rubies. To David that crown must have been the cause of constant wonder as he contemplated the amazing grace of God. How God had taken him, a poor, unlettered, uncouth sheperd boy, and made him king. And, when he had sinned so grievously, how God forgave him and restored him to his throne and crown.

Oh, my friend, listen B

If you have ever doubted the greatness of God, remember the crown of David.

If you have ever doubted the forgiveness of God, remember the crown of David.

If you have ever doubted the love of God, remember the crown of David.

For here is glorious evidence of the fact that with God --

The first shall be last and the last shall be first.

The mighty shall be forgotten and the meek shall inherit the earth.

The proud shall be brought low and the humble shall be exalted.

Yes, it was a long way from the shepherd=s crook to the royal crown, but it illustrates what God can do in the life of someone who is willing to let God have his way. How about you? Are you willing to give God your littleness so you may have his bigness? Are you willing to give God your want in order so you may have his all? Are you willing to give God your sin so you may enjoy His salvation?

God has something better for you than you can plan for yourself. He wants to make you a winner in your battles with the Goliaths of life. He wants to bring you into a closer, more wonderful intimacy with him than you have ever known. So turn your life over to him, right now! He can do so much more with it than you can. And, remember, ALittle is much when God is in it!@

**Note: for this teaching you will need a shepherd's crook, a sling (see description above under the heading Sling, a smooth round rock about the size of your fist, a tiny pair of leather sandals, and a Kingly crown. Most, if not all, of these can be made by someone in your congregation, or rented from a theater costume supply house. To enhance the dramatic effect, I kept each Trophy out of sight until I was ready to use it as a visual aid.**