

WHO IS DAVID

by G.S. Byford

A collection of articles and writings by G.S. Byford from Who is David, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

3 Chapters

Table of Contents

- 0. Who is David
- 1. Who Is David? Part 1
- 2. Who Is David? Part 2

Who is David

Who Is David? Part 1

That prophet who had anointed David to be king over Israel was just dead. His long life of perhaps over one hundred years in the service of God and Israel had now closed. He had also anointed Saul, and had had to grieve over his disastrous failures. Thus had Samuel been used to preserve and renew the links between Jehovah and His people. Saul was still wielding the power of the kingdom, and nothing outwardly emphasized the serious fact that the Spirit of Jehovah had departed from him. For although God may tolerate that which He has already judged morally, sometimes indeed continuing for a considerable time to do so, yet He can never sanction by His presence powers contrary in principle to each other. Sometimes in long-suffering mercy, and sometimes as in the history before us, for the more effective moral preparation of His chosen instrument, He exercises and strengthens faith in the hearts of the faithful, and further uses it for the perfecting of patience.

We may trace these and other precious fruits in the heart of David through many of the Psalms, while, on the contrary, the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes manifest the results of experience—often bitter and disappointing—where the soul has not been chastened and tried in the school of adversity. David could say, “I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy, for thou hast considered my trouble. Thou hast known my soul in adversities” (Psalm 31:7). His character was thus molded upon a divine pattern, not always acceptable or intelligible to those about him (compare 2 Samuel 4:9-12 with 2 Samuel 19:16-23). Saul’s great failure had been impulsiveness and disobedience. He could not wait, though on one occasion this seems to have been not altogether without justification, as in his introduction to the kingdom.

God then gave him the opportunity for action, and His Spirit supplied the energy (1 Samuel 11:1-11). Action of this decisive character will always commend itself to men, and it was so in this instance. The people approved of it, and were proud of their king; but on another occasion, where the commandment required him to wait for Samuel, he yielded to mere religious impulse, as he confessed, “I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering” (1 Samuel 13:12). And again, contrary to explicit instructions, he yielded to thoughts of nature and spared the man whose destruction had been decreed by divine justice. Human energy is good in itself, but if not exercised in dependence upon God, Satan can and will make use of it in opposition to God’s revealed will; but to those who wait upon the Lord divine power comes in, and we are strengthened to obey where human energy proves itself powerless. “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon Jehovah shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:29-31).

This, then, was the lesson David was set down to learn in this chapter of his history, and God had His own way of teaching it. In a time of need David turns to man for help, instead of to God! He proves its unprofitableness, and very nearly exposes himself to the curse of Jeremiah 17:5. Let us

look at the circumstances.

“And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep. And David sent out ten young men; and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. And thus shall ye say to him, Long life [to thee]! and peace be to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast! And now I have heard that thou hast shearers; thy shepherds have now been with us, and we hurt them not, neither was there aught missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. Ask thy young men, and they will tell thee; wherefore let the young men find favor in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David. And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased. And Nabal answered David's servants and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be? So David's young men turned on their way and went back, and came and told him all those sayings” (1 Samuel 25:4-12).

A degenerate descendant of a man remarkable for faith in his day, Caleb, he offers an entirely unprovoked insult to David, who, in his resentment, at once prepares to avenge himself upon the churl. The flesh in David would meet the flesh in Nabal! Had such a conflict been allowed, who can tell how it would have ended? But God dealt graciously with David, softening his heart, and turning him from his purpose by an instrumentality prepared in secret but now fittingly brought forth. So David himself, too, had been beforehand prepared for the conflict with Goliath—not by the unproved accoutrements of Saul, but—by the pledges of God's mercy in his deliverances from the lion and the bear. That this is the divine way of using experience is manifest. The great apostle of the Gentiles thus exercised himself. “For we would not have you ignorant brethren concerning our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life: but we ourselves have had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver, on whom we have set our hope that he will also still deliver us” (2 Corinthians 1:8-10).

[G. S. B.]

(To be continued)

Who Is David? Part 2

God was not slow to avenge His tried and suffering servant. He took the matter into His own hand and made it clear that He would not allow any to revile His anointed with impunity. The purpose of God concerning Israel and the kingdom then in course of development did not interest such a man as Nabal in the least. God was not in his thoughts. Inordinate love of self had shut out every other object as unworthy of consideration. Clearly he had no sense of the responsibilities attaching to his position as an Israelite, for had this been so, at such a season he would have gladly responded to the appeal David made to him, and have been overjoyed that he had it in his power to fulfill such an obligation of God's law (Deuteronomy 26:12-15). His own blessing he would have found greatly increased by so doing. His serious fault was assumed ignorance of the divine purposes, and of the personality of David, affected as it evidently was, for his admissions betrayed and convicted him of impiety. His heart was not interested in what God had already wrought for Israel, nor in the blessing yet in store for His people. Selfishness had closed his heart against the stranger. He was "willingly ignorant," and like those of whom Paul writes (Romans 1:28) he "refused to have God in his knowledge." In his case it was not simplicity or ignorance, but enmity. Knowledge, however unwelcome, fixes responsibility upon the soul, and exposes to judgment. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant.... Wherefore then gavest thou not my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?... For I say unto you, That to every one that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him" (Luke 19:22-26).

Nabal had claimed full and absolute right and control over all that God had given him in His fruitful garden ("Carmel"), speaking of them as "my bread," "my water," "my flesh," etc. God gave him an opportunity (which would not have been unrewarded) of owning, and of ministering to, His anointed, the future king; but he had no faith, was here proved wanting, and failed to seize the occasion, and so lost everything, even his own life. Both folly and wickedness are manifested here. God alone has absolute right over all things. He says, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine," yea, "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." Man is but a steward, and must give account of all to God. David asks for but a small part of what would all be at his disposal by and by. Nabal might perhaps have acceded to David's request if the latter had given him guarantee that it would turn out a profitable investment. All hangs on the personality of David. "And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master." All depended upon his estimate of the one who asked the favor. Blinded as to this, Nabal exposed himself to God's righteous judgment; but the Spirit of God reveals the truth to Abigail, and causes her to take immediate action that should avert the threatened judgment on the entire household, excepting its guilty head upon whom destruction so shortly descended.

"And when Abigail saw David, she hasted, and lighted off her ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground. And she fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me be the iniquity; and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine ears, and hear thou the

words of thine handmaid. Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal; for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. But I, thine handmaid, saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send. Now therefore, my lord, as Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing Jehovah hath withholder thee from blood guiltiness, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now therefore let thine enemies, and them that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal. And now this present which thy servant hath brought unto my lord, let it be given unto the young men that follow my lord. Forgive, I pray thee, the trespass of thine handmaid; for Jehovah will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord fighteth the battles of Jehovah: and evil shall not be found in thee all thy days. And though a man be risen up to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul, yet the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with Jehovah thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as from the hollow of a sling. And it shall come to pass, when Jehovah shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee prince over Israel; that this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offense of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself; and when Jehovah shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid" (vers. 23-31).

It is beautiful to see that not only did Abigail save the lives of herself and her household by this timely and judicious action, but she obtained a good degree in Israel, becoming indeed the chosen companion, in adversity as well as in prosperity, of Jehovah's anointed, while David not only avoided the guilt of shedding innocent blood, but his heart was inexpressibly comforted and strengthened by this evidence of God's guard, care, and working, on his behalf. The danger past and his necessities met, David's heart was now filled with such a sense of the goodness of Jehovah that he could only worship where he had thought to fight. "And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed be Jehovah, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept back his servant from evil: and the evil-doing of Nabal hath Jehovah returned upon his own head. And David sent and spake concerning Abigail, to take her to him to wife" (ver. 39).

How remarkably does all this illustrate the character of this present age! Materialism, progress and development, science and religion occupy the minds of men, but a stolid indifference prevails with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ and His claims. Questions and learned disquisitions, speculative theories without number, have to a great extent taken the place of the simple and precious gospel which has gladdened the hearts and saved the souls of myriads of poor guilty sinners, who have turned to, and believed on, the Savior. "Faithful is the word, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first. But for this reason mercy was shown me, that in me, the first, Jesus Christ might display the whole long-suffering, for a delineation of those about to believe on him to life eternal" (1 Timothy 1:15, 16, N.Tr.). Man's great responsibility is to believe and obey, not to reason and deny, and so lose the blessing. The exalted Savior is also the Judge of living and dead, to whom all must give account. "Because he has set a day in which he is going to judge the habitable earth in righteousness by the man whom he has appointed, giving the proof of it to all in having raised him from among the dead" (Acts 17:31). The wisdom which the fear of God gives to the simple and believing soul delivers from the world's doom and implants the confident expectation that they shall also obtain the complete "salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

G. S. B.

(Continued from page 354)

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net