

David

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon highlights the importance of spiritual greatness in leadership, using the example of David's life to illustrate the characteristics of spiritual greatness.

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 11:1

Topics: "Spiritual Leadership", "Characteristics of a Leader"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes David's spiritual greatness as a key characteristic of effective leadership, illustrating how despite numerous obstacles, including familial rejection and personal failures, David's heart for God and sense of responsibility set him apart. He highlights David's respect for God's anointing, his lament over Saul's death, and his ability to adjust after mistakes as essential traits for leaders. David's deep concern for the House of God and his honest reflection on his own sins further demonstrate the qualities that God values in a leader. Ultimately, Sparks asserts that true leadership is rooted in spiritual measure rather than mere human appointment.

Transcript

1 Chron. 11:1-3; 1 Sam. 16; Acts 13:21,22

No one will dispute David's right to be included in the list of leaders in divine history. It was just a matter of David's having to come to the function because God willed it. Everything conspired to prevent it in the first instance and to overthrow it later. His family despised him and even his father left him out of account. Saul in jealousy sought his life for years. His own son, Absalom, treacherously schemed and acted for his dethronement. The devil himself seemed to have determined by any and every means to undo him. That he came to be Israel's greatest leader says clearly and eloquently that it was of God.

But it was not just and only naked sovereignty. There was ground in David upon which God could work. The sovereignty of God does not ignore the weaknesses, errors, faults and even evils in men. David was deeply culpable in quite serious evils and mistakes, and no man was ever more deeply disciplined than he. Nevertheless the divine calling had that in the man which meant enough to God to give ground for making a great leader of him. It is to that ground that we give attention as we proceed to gather the factors and features of leadership from the Bible.

Let us say here what we have said in other instances: we are not embarking upon a study of the life of David. All that we are doing here is to underline the characteristics of leadership as seen in him, and as

abidingly essential in all who will exercise that function of influencing others in relation to the purpose of God.

There is one characteristic in David which explains everything, and includes a very great deal. It is spiritual greatness.

Spiritual greatness

David rose to simply sublime heights of spiritual greatness and the occasions were of the most testing nature. This we shall see as we proceed.

Let us first examine the spring of this spiritual greatness which made it possible for God to refer to him as "a man after my [God's] heart".

Beneath David's spiritual greatness there was:

(1) A great sense of responsibility

There could much be made of the courage and devotion springing from that sense of responsibility in defending and rescuing the sheep from the lion and the bear. We can take it that in that hour when no public eye was upon him, when there was no other motive or incentive, if God had seen a willingness to save his own life, or forfeit the life of a single sheep as a matter of "discretion" or "policy", He would never have chosen David as the shepherd of His people Israel, and the type of "the great shepherd of the sheep ... even our Lord Jesus", who laid down His life for the sheep and who said: "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it".

Then, on the same principle of responsibility, with all that has been written and said about it, not too much has been made of the encounter with and assault upon the giant Goliath. This was the stuff of his later concern for the nation.

It is all too easy to sacrifice divine interests for personal security or gain; to throw away cheaply the things precious to God because of an inadequate sense of responsibility. If it can be said truly that any attitude or conduct of ours meant loss to the people of God, then we have forfeited all right to be regarded as a spiritual leader.

(2) A heart wholly for the Lord

In the instances of the lion and the bear, it is evident from his words to Saul that it was as before the Lord. "The Lord that delivered me..." The Lord got the glory.

In the case of Goliath the Lord and His honour were the motivating and activating interest. This matter of "the heart for the Lord" carries us into too many incidents, connections, and ways of expression to be tabulated here, but it is not necessary. In a sense it sums up his life and flows out in his psalms. How much that explains God's great patience and faithfulness! It was a sense of responsibility for the Lord's honour.

(3) A great concern for the House of God

David had come to a clear apprehension of God's eternal desire to have a place of dwelling in the midst of His people. He felt so deeply that he should take responsibility for God's satisfaction in that matter that he

expressed himself thus:

"Lord, remember for David all his afflictions: How he swore unto the Lord and vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob: Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids; until I find out a place for the Lord, a tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob" (Psalm 132).

We know of his labours and longings for the House of God; it forms a large part of his psalms. Such abandon to what was, and still is, so dear to the heart of God, brought God alongside of him, and although he went through times of rejection, persecution, discrediting and in the episode of Absalom, exile and heartbreak, God vindicated him eventually. Such responsibility for God's satisfaction is a major factor in divinely chosen leadership.

(4) A great respect and regard for the anointing

The anointing was to David a very sacred thing. If it had been given even to one who had made himself unjustifiably David's enemy and who had done him untold harm and caused him unspeakable suffering, David would not put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed; not though it would have been immensely to his advantage to do so, and when that enemy was completely at his mercy.

David may have known that the dishonouring of the anointing, wherever it was, would return upon the head of him who dishonoured it, but he sought no such judgment. The anointing was a very responsible matter with David and he would not touch it in word or deed.

(5) An honest lament over the fall of his enemy

Perhaps at no point did David's spiritual greatness rise to greater heights than in his lament over Saul's death. He was far from the spirit which says, "he deserved it"; "it is God's righteous judgment on him", and so on. There were no innuendoes, no condemnations, no remembrances of Saul's evil deeds, no self-vindications, no gloatings and rejoicings. Sorrow, grief, regret, and kindness almost sobbed themselves out in that lament. In the light of all that he had suffered at Saul's hands only real greatness could account for this spirit. History may put a very different complexion on the end of Saul, and the chroniclers make no romance of it, but for David it was a grievous thing.

Yes, spiritual greatness was truly characteristic of David.

(6) Disappointed ambition

We have seen what a large place God's house had in the heart and life of David. But when it came to the actual realization of his holy ambition and the building of the house, he was forbidden, and deprived of the privilege. In almost peremptory words God said: "thou shalt not build the house" (1 Kings 8:19). What would a smaller man have done? We leave the reader to answer that question. As for David, no doubt greatly disappointed and saddened, he rose above his personal feelings and prepared with all his might for the house (1 Chron. 29:2), and gave a private possession in addition to all his public funds and resources.

To see another doing what has been our greatest desire in life is testing of spiritual measure, but to help that other with all our might is a proof of stature, provided of course that the Lord has definitely marked out that other with anointing for the work.

(7) Adjustability when mistakes have been made

More than once did David make a grievous and costly mistake .We do not enumerate these failures. An outstanding instance was the bringing of the ark up to Jerusalem on the "new cart", contrary to the way prescribed in Scripture. The motive was pure and the purpose was right. But the method was wrong and disaster overtook the project. Uzzah lay dead. David was angry with the Lord. But he sought in the Scriptures an explanation, and having found it, he forsook his aggrievedness, made the necessary adjustment and did the thing in the Lord's ordained way. Thus again he showed that he was spiritually big enough to be a leader. He could confess his mistake. He could let all Israel know where he had been at fault. And he could act accordingly.

A very great factor in leadership is this grace and ability to adjust when mistakes are made. Even great men make them, but their greatness is shown in how they deal with them.

(8) Sensitiveness to sin

This needs only to be mentioned for very much in David's psalms and history to leap into mind. The most plaintive, heart-rending, and devastating outpourings of a sorrowful heart in all literature are to be found in some of David's utterances. And these are usually in relation to his sins and failures. Such sensitiveness to wrong in oneself is very necessary in God's judgment.

A forcing on when wrong should be righted is to make the spirit hard and callous. The Spirit of God is very sensitive. Finer susceptibilities are a mark of noble souls and spiritual refinement.

I think that what we have said is enough to give further substance to the matter of leadership, and it only remains to be re-said that leadership with God is not official and by human appointment, but, in principle, is always a matter of spiritual measure.

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