

# Winning God's Approval - Part 6

by Zac Poonen

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*Winning God's approval is about being useful to God on earth, and it requires a deep concern for God's name being dishonored and faith to believe God will use us to bring down the enemy.*

**Duration:** 51:26

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 16:6-10, Isaiah 49:23, Isaiah 64:4, Matthew 1:1, Revelation 22:16

**Topics:** "Approval"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that God is in control of every aspect of our lives, including our relationships, jobs, and homes. He argues that if God, who runs the universe, cannot provide us with what we need, then He is not the God of the Bible. The speaker uses the example of David and Saul to illustrate the importance of not taking matters into our own hands and seeking revenge. He also highlights the need for humility and surrendering to God's will, acknowledging that even if we are at fault, God can redeem us and work things out for our good.

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## Transcript

This is study number six in our series on winning God's approval. Notice, as I've been mentioning each time, it's not winning God's acceptance. It's one thing to be accepted by God and quite another thing to be approved.

When Paul told Timothy to be diligent, to present himself approved to God, he wasn't talking about his salvation. He was talking about his being useful to God on earth. We all owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the Lord for all that he has done for us and we should never forget how much we owe him.

And the way we express our gratitude is by offering our bodies and our service and our lives to him in the way he wants us to serve him. And that's why it's important to understand what it is that wins his approval. We're not talking about the beginning of the Christian life, but the race.

Jesus spoke about a narrow gate that opens into a narrow way. Some emphasize only the way. Some talk only about the gate.

But Jesus spoke about a gate that leads to the way and we could say the gate is that initial step of salvation. You enter through a gate in a moment, but walking the way till you reach the goal is a lifetime, takes a lifetime to complete. So when we are talking about winning God's approval, we're not talking about

the gate.

There we come in by simple repentance and faith. We turn around from our sinful life and open our lives to Christ, turning from our sin and trusting that he died for all our sins on the cross, accepting him as our savior, believing that he rose from the dead, confessing him with our mouth, and we're safe. We've come through the gate, wanting to be his disciples.

But then starts a lifetime of seeking to win his approval. God takes us through various tests, and every test we pass leads us further, closer to our ultimate destination, which is not heaven, but becoming like Jesus Christ. God is going to populate heaven with many people who look like Jesus.

That's his goal. And so that's why we need to understand how God wants us to live on this earth before we reach that goal when Christ returns to earth. So today we're going to look at the life of David, and I want you to turn first of all with me to the first book of Samuel in the Old Testament.

You know, David was not God's first choice to be king of Israel. David wasn't even born at that time. Saul was God's first choice, and if Saul had been faithful and passed the tests that God gave him, for example, once he was tested, we read in 1 Samuel 13, his patience was tested.

Samuel had told him to wait until I come before you offer the sacrifice. I'll come. Saul was a king.

He was not a priest. No king was allowed to be a priest in the Old Testament. He was not permitted to offer the sacrifice.

But when Samuel delayed coming, he got impatient, and because he had been blessed as a king, he thought he could move into the ministry of a priest, offered the sacrifice, and he failed the test. Two minutes later, Samuel came and said, why did you disobey God? Why did you imagine that because God blessed you in one ministry, you could move into another? Just by the way, that's a very common mistake of many, many Christian leaders, preachers, because God's blessed them in one ministry, they think they can move into another where God has not given them grace. Well, that's what Saul did.

He couldn't remain within the boundary God had drawn around him as a king, and itself was a large boundary. He failed. God gave him one more chance.

You read in 1 Samuel 15, how God told him to go and kill all the Amalekites. And Saul spared some of them, spared some of the good sheep, with a good motive, he said, to offer it as a sacrifice. Again, Samuel came to him and said, why have you disobeyed the word of the Lord? God has taken the kingdom away from you, and given it to a man after his own heart.

He said that in chapter 13. And that one was not born yet. As far as we can understand the history of that Old Testament period, it was only after Saul was rejected, that God allowed David to be born.

And that was the one whom God chose. And he was called a man after God's own heart, the only one in the Bible who has been given that title. And yet, when we look at his story, it's not one of constant success.

There were tests he passed, and there were tests he failed. And that's the encouragement for us, that God uses people who fail, but who pass in certain crucial areas. And that's the thing, there's no man in the Bible other than Jesus, who lived a perfect life without failure.

They failed and they passed, and they failed and they passed, and sometimes God gave them another chance, like he gives us. He gives us chance after chance after chance, because he's determined that we should pass these tests and come through. So in 1 Samuel 16, we read about Samuel being sent by God saying, I finally rejected Saul now, go to the house of Jesse, and I'm going to select one of his children to be one of his sons, to be the next king.

And it's a very interesting story if you read 1 Samuel 16, because there you see how much David was despised, even as a young boy, in his own home by his father. If you see that carefully, read scripture, you'll see that. Samuel comes to the home of Jesse, and says, well, can you call all your sons here? And Jesse called them one by one.

He called them all together actually. And one by one, they came before Samuel. We read in verse 6, first Eliab came, and Samuel looked at his tall handsome person and said, this must be the king.

And God said, no. And one by one, all of them passed in front of Samuel. And no, he said, none of them.

And all seven of them passed by. God said, no, no, no, no, no. And Samuel was puzzled.

I told Jesse to call all his sons, they're all here. And God said, no, to each one of them. How could that be? And Samuel said, Jesse, you got any more sons? And Jesse says, oh, yeah, there's one.

I mean, he's good for nothing. He's just out there strumming his guitar and singing songs out in the field. I mean, he's not really capable of anything.

He just writes psalms and sings, and we send him to look after the sheep. I mean, he's not the one. Just Samuel said, call him.

We're not going to sit down until you come. And as soon as he came, the Lord said, this is the one. You know how many times in scripture, God chooses the one whom man rejects.

Many, many times, I have personally been in homes where parents have told me, this is the black sheep of the family. And I say, I've got more hope for that person than for all the others. So that's what scripture teaches.

The one whom men despise, very often, that's the one whom God chooses. So that's a great encouragement for us to see. And David was a young man, but there he was.

He didn't even know what was going on. He had no ambition to be a king. Whatever job his father told him to do, he told him to look after his sheep.

He looked after his sheep. One day there was battle going on, and his father told him in chapter 17, go and take some food for your brothers who are out there fighting the battle. He obeyed him.

We've noticed again and again in these studies that God first tests a person at home. And particularly if he's a young man, like we saw in the case of Joseph. Here with David too, obedience to parents when they are young at home.

We may think that's a trivial thing. It isn't. It's the first place where God tests a young man to see whether when he leaves that home one day, he can be an outstanding servant of God.

And that's where so many young people are failing today. They think, oh well, it doesn't really matter. It does matter.

The Bible says, honor your father and mother, and it will go well with you. And I would say that to all young people, particularly in the time in which we live. One of the greatest manifestations of Satan's work in the world today is not just in the drug culture.

It's not in the increase of demonic activity or terrorism or wars or any such thing. It is in the amount of disrespect that you find among young people towards their parents. It's very, very sad.

I want to say to all of you young people, you want it to go well with you? Honor your father and mother. Honor those who are older to you. It will go well with you because it's God's promise.

And throughout scripture we find this is the first area where he tests a person when he's called young. If he's called as a young man. God calls older people too.

He called Abraham when he was a very old man. He called Moses when he was an old man. He calls older people too, but there are cases of people whom he called young, and they were always tested at home.

And David is another example of a person who honored his parents at home. And that's where he started. That's where he passed the first test.

And then we read when he came to this place, he didn't go there to fight a battle. He went there to take food for his brothers. And there when he was there, he heard this mighty giant Goliath taunting the armies of Israel.

And Saul was scared and all the armies of Israel was scared. And Goliath said, send one of your people to fight with me and then we'll be your servants. But if I defeat him, you're going to be our servants.

And David heard this and he was concerned. We read here in 1 Samuel in chapter 17 and verse 26. Who is this Philistine that he should taunt the armies of the living God? David had, he was a young boy, we could say maybe 18, 19 years old, but he had such a concern for God's name being dishonored.

And that is another characteristic of anyone whom God calls to his service. The first prayer that Jesus taught us to pray was, hallowed be thy name. And that concern for God's name is what God looks for.

Are you concerned that his name is being dishonored? Are you concerned that the name of Jesus is being dishonored in your country? That Satan stands as it were defying the church around the world and saying, what can you do against my power? And many people in the church cower in fear. Oh, it looks as if Satan is so powerful. Where are the Davids who will say, who is this to defy the armies of the living God, the church of the living God? Who is this to dishonor Christ's name? Satan was defeated on the cross 2000 years ago.

And God wants people who will stand up and proclaim that in our time. Very, very important. I believe God's looking for that in the church today.

And that's the type of person David was. He was concerned about God's name and that's what stirred a passion in him. And it is to such people that God gives faith.

I believe faith is a gift of God. God gives, gives such people faith to believe that he will use them to bring down the power of the enemy. And we may face situations like that, where it looks as if Satan is standing there defying in many a home.

He stands there defying you saying, I run this home and you can't do anything about it. I've got control of your children. I've got control of this member of your family.

You can't do anything about it. And so many Christians have just given up as if Satan has got to win. He doesn't have to win.

You can stand against him in Jesus name and overcome that. I want to tell you that. Don't fail in that test.

Let this concern be in your heart. Jesus name is being dishonored in my home by the way my son or daughter is behaving. I don't, I'm not going to be concerned about my son and daughter as much as the fact that Jesus name is dishonored.

You know, very often when a believer's children are not growing up properly, those parents are more concerned about what will other people think in the church think about me, if my children behave like this. It doesn't matter what they think about you. Think about the name of Jesus being dishonored by the way your children behave.

If that is your concern, you'll find God will help you. But if all your concern is, oh, we've got to get a good name before others in the church. You're not going to get God to help you to enhance your own reputation.

Have a concern for God's name. And there's something interesting we see here. When David came to King Saul and said, I'll go and fight with this person.

Saul said, you're a little child. You're a youth. How can you go and fight with this man? And see what David said.

It's amazing. The private experiences David had with God, when his parents, when his father thought he was just wasting his time strumming his guitar and singing songs. He had some amazing experiences looking after those sheep in obedience to his father.

You know, when you listen to your parents and you seek to honor God, God can lead you into some amazing experiences. I'll tell you that. It's exactly what we see here in 1 Samuel 17, 34.

David says to Saul, you know, oh King, I was looking after my father's sheep. And one day a lion came out and a bear and took a lamb from the flock. Now, what would you do as a young 18, 19 year old shepherd when a lion comes in and takes a lamb out of the flock? You know what David did? He said, I've got to look after this flock.

He's my dad's sheep. He's asked me to look after it. He went after the lion.

And it says here, when the lion rose up against me, he caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. How in the world could he do that? Unless God had helped him. Samson was not the only one, by the way, who killed a lion by faith in God's power.

Samson was a muscular man. David wasn't, but he had faith in the same God and he killed a lion. And he says, another time a bear came.

I did the same thing to him. The bear hadn't heard the story about the lion. So he came and he got killed as well.

And he says, this guy, Goliath, hasn't heard the story about the lion or the bear either. He's going to get the same thing. See, God trains us in private, away from the eyes of men.

The victory before Goliath was a great victory. And all Christians all around the world know David killed Goliath. 90% of Christians who know that story don't know that in private, David killed a lion and a bear before he killed Goliath in public.

You got to have a few victories in private before you can have a public victory before others. That's very important. And that's why I say your private life is important.

Are you winning the victory at home in overcoming anger, bitterness, gossip, jealousy, rude speech towards those whom you call your loved ones? Are we getting the victory there? Many who want to have a public ministry, want to teach the scriptures, preach and have great ministry for God. You can have it. God wants you to have it.

God wants many people in his service, but you've got to kill the lion and the bear in private. That's very important. So let's begin in that part of our life where nobody sees who saw David killing the lion and the bear.

And the amazing thing is, as far as we know, he didn't even tell his parents about it. That's quite a young 19 year old who went and killed a lion and never told anybody about it. You know, a lot of these victories we win in secret.

We don't have to tell anyone. God sees it. Jesus said, your father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

And that's exactly what he did here. And so the other thing I want you to notice here, this has been a little message that has come to my heart many, many times in relation to my life at home with my own family, and also in relation to the churches where I have responsibility. It says here that when the lion came and took this little lamb and ran away, to me, that's a picture of Satan, who's the lion, who's like a roaring lion, the Bible says.

Coming and taking away one of God's little lambs could be your son, your daughter. For me, perhaps a brother in one of our churches, a sister in one of our churches, grabbed by the devil. What do we do? Do we go and give lectures to the lamb? Didn't I tell you, you shouldn't go anywhere near the lion? By the time you had finished a sermon, the lamb would have been all swallowed up.

What did David do? He went after the lion. And I want to say to you, when the devil's got your son or daughter, go after the devil first. That's the one you got to go after.

Even if you think the devil's got your wife or your daughter, go after the devil. Not after your spouse. If you think God's, the devil's got somebody in your church, are you going to spend your time criticizing him? Go after the devil.

Don't lecture to him. Go after the devil. Bind him in Jesus' name.

Bind his activities and set this person free. That's the authority the Lord's given us. And that's what we see here we can learn from David.

And that's something that we can keep in mind always. And that can be like a test to us in different circumstances. If you haven't done it right up until today, you can do it right from today.

That when you see someone captive by Satan, the Bible says that in the last few verses of 2 Timothy chapter 2, someone captive of Satan, you've got to fight against Satan to set him free. Don't fight against that man. We wrestle not with flesh and blood, the Bible says, but with principalities and powers.

And God will help us to overcome that. So when we do, when we have this attitude in secret, and we have won these private victories, and God has tested us and seen that we don't go and criticize the lambs, but we fight the lion. And we don't give lectures to the lambs, but we fight and release the lamb from the power of the lion.

Then we are ready for a public ministry. That's the type of person whom God will back up when he stands up in public to fight against a Goliath. And I believe God can do that with every one of us.

Remember this, the greatest man in the Old Testament was not David, under the entire old covenant was John the Baptist. Jesus said that in Matthew 11. And he said, every one of us can rise higher than that, because the same spirit that came upon David and John the Baptist, which very few people had in the old covenant, all of us can have today.

It's because the spirit anointed David when Samuel poured the oil upon him, he was the spirit of God came upon him. That's what happened. The Holy Spirit came upon him.

And that's what we read in 1 Samuel and chapter 16, verse 13, the spirit of the Lord came upon David. That's what made the difference. That's what produced faith in his heart.

And that's what we see right through the Old Testament and the New Testament. Even Jesus, he needed the spirit to come upon him in the river Jordan before he could fulfill his ministry. And I feel that many, many Christians have not honored the Holy Spirit sufficiently.

The devil has done a tremendous work by making the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the most controversial doctrine in Christendom today, and the most counterfeited of all ministries, the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And when many Christians look at this controversy and counterfeit, they back off and say, we don't want to have anything to do with it. And that's exactly what the devil wants you to say.

But that's not what we should say. The counterfeit proves that there's the genuine. And it also proves that the genuine is valuable.

Nobody counterfeits brown paper. People counterfeit gold and currency. So if there's a counterfeit, it must mean that the genuine thing is valuable.

I want to say to you, seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit. That's the secret of the Christian life. I know the tremendous difference it made my life when I knew what it was to be baptized and anointed with the Holy Spirit of God.

And that's what happened to David. When the Spirit of God came upon him, he became a different person and he could stand before Goliath and he had faith. I'm weak, but God's going to help me to bring this giant down because he's defied the name of the Lord.

And that's what he tells him in 1 Samuel 17, verse 45. He says to the Philistine, you can come to me with sword and spear and javelin. And humanly speaking, it looks as if your resources are a thousand times greater than mine.

Look at my size and look at yours. Look at my stones and look at your weapons. But I come to you in something more powerful, verse 45.

I come to you in the name of the Lord. And the Lord whom you have defied and taunted, he's going to deliver you into my hands. I believe that's what we should say in any situation where we are confronted by the work of the devil and we are surrounded by it.

We see the work of the devil in our homes. We still see the work of the devil in our places of work. We see the work of the devil in our churches.

So many of them. People gripped by Satan and if God has put you there and he has anointed you with the spirit, he expects you to confront the devil, not the lamb, not the sheep, but that lion who has grabbed that sheep or lamb and say, I'm going to come against you in Jesus name and I'm going to release this person. Whatever you bind on earth, Jesus said, will be bound, the devil will be bound and whatever you lose on earth, that person, that lamb whom the devil has gripped, you can lose it in Jesus name and deliver that person.

It is so important, so very important to learn this from here. And you know one thing that God always honors faith. And here was David who came with faith and how could God not honor him? And if you go with faith into that situation that you find, you'll find God honors you in exactly the same way.

These things are written for our encouragement and our instruction. They are very relevant and practical to the situation we are facing in our life. Goliath could also be looked at as some big sin that you always fall into.

You know in Hebrews 12, it speaks about the sin which doth so easily beset us. I mean there are many sins we fall into, but there very often there's one particular sin in many people's lives which they are frequently falling into. Frequently.

It could be anger, it could be sexual sin, it could be stealing, it could be something which they don't seem to be able to give up. They fall no matter how many good resolutions they make, they fall into it, fall into it. The sin which doth so easily beset us, that's the Goliath.

I know there are other soldiers among the Philistines attacking the armies of God, but this is the Goliath. And notice what it says here, that when Goliath was killed and he fell down and David cut off his head, it says here in verse 51, when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they all ran away. And that's what happens.

If you go after that besetting sin and bring that Goliath down, you'll find many of your other problems are solved. It's really true. They run away because their champion is gone.

So aim for that sin which doth so easily beset you and say, Lord, in Jesus name, I'm going to come against that. I'm determined that he's going to come down. I'm going to chop off his head because he's dishonoring God's name.

This sin is dishonoring God's name in my life. Always think not of what your testimony being spoiled in the church. That's secondary.

God's name is being dishonored because the devil is pointing you out to God and saying, look at that fellow. Look at that woman. She calls herself your child.

Look at that man who calls himself your son. Look the way he's behaving. God's name is dishonored in the heavenlies, in heaven.

That's what should concern us more than, oh, somebody saw me fall there. That's not so important. That's the concern that David had.

And very often, God waits till you have that concern before he gives you the victory. So I want to encourage you to come to that place quickly. And the other thing I want you to see here is once David did that, you know, whenever we serve God in any way and God accomplishes something through us, it invariably provokes the jealousy of senior workers who have not been used so much.

This is an old story. It started with Cain and Abel. I mean, I think Cain could have borne it.

You know, Cain and Abel offered sacrifices to God, we read in Genesis 4, and the fire fell on Abel's sacrifice and didn't fall on Cain's sacrifice, and he got all worked up. I mean, he could have borne it if Abel was older than him, but he just couldn't stand that his younger brother was being blessed and he wasn't. That's what bothered Joseph's 10 brothers.

I mean, if he was the eldest brother, okay, but this young fellow, younger than us, how in the world is he having visions from God? It's a story that comes right through the Bible with David. And Saul, the older person who was so much senior to him, worked up in his heart, how can people praise this young man and not me? And Christian history is filled with examples of older Christian workers who are jealous of someone who is younger, who they feel is a threat to their ministry, whom people are appreciating more than him. Do you find somebody like that? You find is being appreciated more than you are, and you consider yourself to be senior and older, and you're a bit of a bore, and everybody thinks so.

But somebody younger comes along, and God's anointing him, and it disturbs you. Well, you're like Saul. You got to repent.

Saul was so angry. He wanted to promote his own son to be the next king, and here was this young fellow whom people were appreciating. He actually took a spear, a javelin, and threw it at David to try and kill him.

But David, you can't kill a man whom God has chosen. That's not possible. No matter how many spears or javelins you throw at him, if God's got a plan for a young man, he'll escape every javelin and spear everybody throws at him, because God will protect him, and he did that.

But God had to take David through many, many difficult experiences. In fact, for about 10 years before he finally came to the throne, when he was 30 years old, for 10 years, I think, we don't know the exact

number of years, he wandered in caves with a group of people. I don't know how much food he ate, and he was haggard, and run down, and fleeing from this King Saul, who had got all his armies to chase after this young man to kill him.

And that was part of David's education. And notice, I don't have time to show you all the passages, but it says here in 1 Samuel, twice, one example is in chapter 24, but twice in the cave in which David is hiding, Saul comes unknowing, not knowing who is there, just to lie down and rest. And David's young men, the soldiers who were with him said, now's your opportunity, kill this man.

God has given him into your hand. He's all alone in this cave. Let's kill him and take the throne and all of Israel will support you.

And David said, no, I won't do it. There God was testing him. Will you take the law into your own hands? Will you take revenge on somebody who has harmed you, who is seeking your life? A lesser person than David would have killed him, but not David.

You know, when somebody who has harmed you is one day at your mercy, that's the time God tests you. Not him, testing you. To see how are you going to treat him? God did that with Joseph.

The brothers who tried to kill him, one day had to come to him begging for bread and he gave them more than they wanted. And the same thing with David. Here's the one who has kept the throne from you.

You've been anointed by Samuel the prophet. You should be the king. What's wrong in your grabbing what God has already anointed you for? David said, no.

God is able to give me what he wants without my having to grab it. You know, that's the principle you need to understand. Whatever you grab, it may be God's will, but it'll cause you a lot of problems.

God wants you to have what he has for you, but he wants you to get it his way. You remember Jacob? How he was, God had said even before he was born, Jacob is going to be the one who's going to be the leader. He saw his elder one, the elder of the two twins, is going to be junior to him.

Rebecca knew that. And yet, when the time came for Isaac to give the birthright, Jacob and Rebecca schemed to cheat their father, his father, and to get the birthright. Was it God's will for him to get the birthright, Jacob? Yes.

Was it God's will for him to get it the way he got it? No. And because he grabbed something without waiting for God to give it to him, think of all the trouble he had after that. All the trouble which was caused just because he grabbed.

And I want to say to you, these things are written in scripture to warn us. When we studied Abraham, we saw how he had the opportunity to grab the land, and he didn't. He told Lot, I will not grab anything.

We remember when we studied about Abraham, we read how Lot chose for himself, but God chose for Abraham. That's what we see here. David would not choose for himself.

He would not grab for himself. His attitude was an attitude of faith. We saw that in Hebrews 11 39.

They gained God's approval by their faith. And our faith is seen here. Can I believe that God will give me that which he has planned for me without my having to grab it in some unrighteous way? Without my

having to disobey God's word somewhere? The end does not justify the means.

The end must be godly, and the means by which we get there must also be godly. So it's not enough that David should be king. The way he gets there must be in a godly way.

And that's very, very important, because sometimes Christians don't follow that principle, and they fail. And when they fail, they cause a lot of problems for themselves, and they could even frustrate God's plan for their lives. So is he here? He said no, I'm not going to do it, even though he's urged by his friends to kill Saul.

Okay, that was over. A few weeks later, a second time, again Saul comes into the cave. Again he says no.

In fact, he did cut off a small corner of Saul's robe, just to show Saul, listen, I could have killed you. But that convicted him. It says here in 1 Samuel 24 5, that David's conscience bothered him, because he had cut off a little part of Saul's robe.

And he said, oh I'm sorry, I should not touch, I should not stretch my hand against the Lord's anointed. Yeah, but David, the kingdom is yours. This man was anointed, he's not anointed today.

Yeah, you may say all that David would say, but I'd rather let God give me the kingdom with his own hands. This, can you believe that that which God has planned for you, you don't have to grab? Whether it's a job, or a girl, or a boy, or a house, or anything, it's very relevant. Can you believe that, that if God Almighty, who runs the universe, I mean if God Almighty, who runs the universe, can't give you the girl he's planned for you, he's a pretty poor God, if God Almighty, who runs the universe, can't give you the job he's planned for you, the house he's planned for you, that's not the God of the Bible, let me tell you that.

The God of the Bible runs the universe. Jesus said, all authority in heaven and earth is given to me. And if you go in that name, I'll tell you something, I'm not telling you this lightly, not just because it's written in scripture, I have personally experienced this for 47 years, that if you wait for God, he'll give you the best.

One of my favorite verses is Isaiah 49 verse 23. It's been my favorite verse for a long time. Those who wait for me, Isaiah 49 23, will never be ashamed.

Remember that, in the time when you're tempted to grab something, those who wait for me will never be ashamed. Isaiah 64 and verse 4 says, I have not seen, nor you heard, nor has entered into the heart of man, the wonderful things God has prepared for those who are willing to wait for him, to give it to him in his own time. So don't grab, that's the other thing we see here in David's life, promotion does not come from the east or the west.

It comes from God, it says in Psalm 75, God exalts one and puts down another. Then we come to Psalm 66. I want to show you one of the Psalms that David wrote, which is the experience of his life.

Finally, God brought him to the throne, gave him what he had planned for, but how did he get there? It says, David writing this Psalm says something about his own experience. This by the way is a very wonderful passage of scripture. If you're not familiar with it, I encourage you to remember it.

Psalm 66 and verses 10 to 12. Lord, O God, you have tested us. David knew he was being tested in many situations.

And in those tests, you have refined us as silver is refined. He's thinking of the many trials and difficulties he went through. You and I go through trials, which are like a fire which God wants to refine us in.

You brought us into the net. Brought us into the net means like a fish caught in a net, which could swim freely in the ocean. Maybe you're in a situation where you're trapped in a situation.

You can't escape. You feel like a fish caught in a net. Your movement is limited.

You laid an oppressive burden upon our loins. It could be a physical difficulty that you have, which is like an oppressive burden. You made men ride over our heads.

You allowed people to just crush us down without any thought, batter us and take advantage of us. We went through fire and as if that was not enough, into cold water after that. But through it all, you brought us to a wealthy place.

You brought us to a place of abundance. I remember many years ago, one of the first things I bought when I started studying the Bible, 45 years ago, as a young man, was a concordance, a young's concordance, which also had the Greek and the Hebrew. I don't know Greek and Hebrew, but it had the Greek and Hebrew at the back for English speaking people.

And I looked up this verse. What is this wealthy place? It's a Hebrew word called Reviah. And very interestingly, I discovered from the concordance, it occurs only twice in the whole Bible.

Here, it's translated as wealthy place, or place of abundance. And the other place is in Psalm 23, where it's translated as cups running over. Thou hast anointed my head with oil, my cup runs over.

So, I put these two verses together and I really found a wonderful truth. I want my cup to run over all the time, with the joy of the Lord, with blessing to other people, and with the power of the Holy Spirit. And I discovered that the way to come to the place where my cups run over is by submitting to God when he tests me, when he refines me, when he brings me into the net not to complain, but say, Lord, this is your will for me right now, I accept it.

When he lays an oppressive burden upon my loins, when he allows men to ride over my head, and when he takes me through the fire and then dumps me into the ice cold water, and I say, praise the Lord, Lord, your ways are perfect. Are you facing that now? All Christians face these things. The difference is some Christians accept it, others grumble, like the Israelites in the wilderness.

Constantly, why we've done this, why we've done that? There are some who say, Lord, I accept it. Do you know the meaning of that verse which says, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time? The meaning is that, what is the mighty hand of God, by the way? Just in case you didn't know, the mighty hand of God are those difficult circumstances he takes you through. A person, a circumstance, that's the mighty hand of God.

What should you do? Humble yourself. Say, Lord, you're sovereign. This couldn't have happened without your permission.

And even if it is your fault, even if you're suffering the consequences of something you've done, you know, God can redeem you from that as well. And he can make it work for your good. This is the amazing truth of scripture.

Okay, Lord, this is my fault, I'm sorry. And he can make that work for your good. Just humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and he will exalt you at the right time.

He will set you free from that situation at the right time and bring you to this place of abundance, place where the cups are running over. Then, of course, we know the well-known story of David's sinning. And that's what I want to say finally.

David failed miserably. It's very interesting if you have the time to look at it sometime. In 2 Samuel 12, you read that.

Notice the time when he sinned. It says in 2 Samuel chapter 11, at the time when kings normally go to battle, David did not. That's where his failure began.

At the time set apart for prayer, he watched a movie. It's something like that in today's terms. Well, no wonder he fell.

At the time when kings should have been going to battle, he stayed at home. And he got up. Other people were fighting the battle.

He was a king now. That's when he fell. You know, he never fell when he was in the caves.

He was writing psalms in the caves. We're not in danger when we are under pressure, difficulty, adversity. Our greatest danger is when we become kings.

We're more in danger in the palace than in the cave. We're more in danger when we have plenty, when we are in a position of power, when we have people under us. That's the time we are in danger.

That's the time David fell. And these things are written for our instruction. And the time when kings go to battle, we should go to battle because we're kings in Christ.

And so it says he didn't go to battle. He got up and walked around, got up from bed, walked around, and he saw this pretty woman. And instead of turning his eyes away and say, well, that's not my wife, he didn't.

That was his second mistake. When you see someone whom God has not given to you, you got to turn your eyes away. Say, Lord, that's not what you gave me.

You give me someone else. He didn't do that. And step by step, he fell into sin.

He discovered she's somebody else's wife. It still didn't stop him. He went because he was the king.

He had power. He sinned. And then when he discovered that she was pregnant, he gets her husband killed, marries her.

Can you imagine? Is there anybody in the Old Testament who committed sins like this? What was Saul's mistake compared to David's? Saul offered a sacrifice two minutes before he should have done it. He shouldn't have done it, that's all. He didn't wait.

Another sin was he didn't kill all the sheep. He killed only the bad sheep. Where is that compared to the sin of this man who molests somebody else's wife, kills her husband and marries her? How did this man remain on the throne? There lies a great truth that if we understand, will encourage us.

David was absolutely honest about his sin. Saul wanted to cover it up. If you read in 1 Samuel 15, when Samuel told him, hey, you've sinned.

You know what Saul did? I don't have time to show it to you. Read it. He whispered in Samuel's ear, I've sinned and don't let anybody know about it.

Just pretend that everything's okay. Come with me. Let's act as if nothing has happened.

God has no time for such a man who tries to cover up. He who covers his transgressions will never prosper. Proverbs 28, 13.

But he who acknowledges them and forsakes them, he will find mercy. And what was David's attitude when Nathan the prophet came to him and said, you're the man, just like Samuel came to Saul. David said, yes.

And I won't hide it. I'm not going to pretend that I didn't do it. He wrote a psalm for people to read for 3,000 years, acknowledging his sin, not pretending to be a holy man.

That was the difference. I have seen in my life people who have committed identical sins and God removes one and he doesn't remove the other, just like Saul and David. And I see the difference is humility, acknowledging one's failure.

It makes all the difference in the world. And among us all sitting here, we're all sinners. And if we were to, you know, if we could see the hidden lives of everybody sitting here, that'd be some horrid things there, horrible things, which we would not want anybody else to know.

But this congregation is going to be divided into two categories. Those who honestly acknowledge their sin before God and turn from it. And those who want to cover it up.

And that's the difference Saul and David. And if you're going to be like David, you'll find mercy. One last thing I want to say is, would anyone want to be identified with the name of David, the house of David, a man who has such a terrible history? It's very interesting to see the very first verse of the New Testament.

It says, Jesus, the son of David. You see how Jesus identifies himself with fallen humanity, identifies himself not with the fallen humanity that covers up their sin, but with fallen humanity, humanity that acknowledges their sin. I want to say to you, Jesus will identify himself with you.

Your sin may be much less than David's, but even if it's worse than David's, he'll identify himself with you. If you acknowledge and confess and say, Lord, I don't want to hide my sin. It's true.

I've failed. The last page of the Bible, he's called the offspring of David again. It looks as if the New Testament begins and ends with Jesus being called the son of David.

He identifies himself with those who are honest about their failure. And that's our encouragement. Even if we have failed, we can pass the test now by doing what David did and saying, like he said in Psalm 51, have mercy upon me, Lord.

You're right. I was wrong. I'm at fault.

I don't blame anybody else. I don't blame Bathsheba. I don't blame anybody else.

It's just me. That's what David said in Psalm 51. And if you can say that to the Lord today, it can turn your life around.

Let's pray. Let's bow our heads before God.

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