



Foundation of Faith

DAVID

DAVID—THE SHEPHERD KING

DAVID—AN EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

FIGHTING NEGATIVITY

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The FOUNDATION OF FAITH is a journal of vital Christianity, published in the interest of the Church of God, that takes a clear and decisive stand for full salvation in Christ, the unity of all true believers, and the truths of the Bible.

The editors reserve the right to abridge and edit all materials and information submitted for publication. Research sources are listed for information only and should not necessarily be construed as an endorsement or recommendation.

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www.christianunitypress.com

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FOUNDATION OF FAITH (USPS 9008) is published monthly by Christian Unity Press, 5195 Exchange Dr., Flint, MI 48507, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Flint, MI, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Christian Unity Press, 5195 Exchange Dr., Flint, MI 48507, USA Volume 24 Issue 9

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Printed in USA.

FOUNDATION OF FAITH is published free of charge. All expenses are covered by freewill donations.

Editorial

Dear Readers,

What Bible reader isn't familiar with David, the man of God? His story almost sounds like a fairy tale or a romantic novel: from a disdained shepherd boy to a heroic king! In between lay the battle with the giant Goliath, mighty victories as a general, his marriage to a princess, and years of persecution, which David endured under God's blessing.

When the prophet Samuel was commissioned to anoint one of Jesse's sons as king, God told him: "For man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). In David, God found a man after His own heart: brave, faithful, and humble!

However, the Bible does not remain silent about David's weaknesses and failures. How deeply he fell into sin! Yet in God's dealings with David, we see His great grace and mercy. Again and again, God glorifies Himself in this man's life. David responds to God's dealings with him through magnificent psalms that remain precious and refreshing to us today. God uses this man as a foreshadowing and precursor of Christ.

None of us expects to be a "King David." Yet God wants to reveal Himself just as much in your life and mine. We, too, are to be men and women after God's own heart. Let us learn from David and serve God with the same attitude.

R. Taron

David—The Shepherd King

Among all the men of the Old Testament, few are as well known or as beloved as King David. His life spans some of the most dramatic pages of Scripture. He was a shepherd boy who became a mighty warrior, a fugitive who became king, a gifted poet who wrote many of the Psalms, and a prophet who spoke of the coming Messiah. Though David was far from perfect, God described him as “a man after My *own* heart” (Acts 13:22). His life points us repeatedly to the Lord Jesus Christ, the greater Son of David.

David the Shepherd

David’s story begins in Bethlehem, where he was the youngest son of Jesse. While his older brothers served in Saul’s army, David cared for his father’s sheep. When the prophet Samuel came to anoint Israel’s future king, Jesse presented his older sons first. Yet God rejected them all and chose the young shepherd.

The Lord reminded Samuel, “For *the LORD* does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

As a shepherd, David learned responsibility, courage, and dependence upon God. He later testified that he had protected his flock from lions and bears (1 Samuel 17:34–36). Those lonely hours in the fields also cultivated his fellowship with God and inspired many of the beautiful songs that would later be recorded in the Psalms.

David’s shepherding role foreshadowed Christ, the Good Shepherd. Just as David cared for his sheep, Jesus would later say, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep” (John 10:11).

David the Warrior

David first gained widespread attention through his confrontation with Goliath. When the giant Philistine challenged Israel’s army, fear filled the hearts of Saul and his soldiers. David, however, trusted in the Lord.

Standing before Goliath with only a sling and five stones, David declared, “The battle *is* the LORD’s, and He will give you into our hands” (1 Samuel 17:47).

With a single stone, David struck down the giant and won a remarkable victory. The event demonstrated that God’s power is not limited by human weakness. David’s confidence rested not in his own abilities but in the Lord.

Following this victory, David became one of Israel’s greatest military leaders. He defeated Israel’s enemies repeatedly and brought security to the nation. Yet his growing popularity provoked King Saul’s jealousy. For many years David lived as a fugitive, hunted by the very king he faithfully served.

During this difficult period, David showed remarkable restraint. On more than one occasion he had the opportunity to kill Saul but refused, declaring that he would not raise his hand against the Lord’s anointed king. David trusted God to establish his kingdom in His own time.

David the King

After Saul’s death, David became king, first over Judah and later over all Israel. His reign marked a golden age in the nation’s history. He united the tribes, established Jerusalem as the capital, and brought the Ark of the Covenant to the city.

David desired to build a temple for the Lord, but God had another plan. Instead, God made a covenant with David, promising that his royal line would endure forever: “Your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:16).

This promise extended far beyond David himself. Though many descendants would sit upon David’s throne, the ultimate fulfillment would come through Jesus Christ, whose kingdom will never end.

Despite his successes, David’s reign was not without failure. His sin involving Bathsheba and the death of Uriah brought severe consequences upon his family and kingdom. Yet David’s response to his sin reveals an important aspect of his character. When confronted by the prophet Nathan, David confessed, “I have sinned against the LORD” (2 Samuel 12:13).

Psalm 51 records his heartfelt repentance. Rather than excusing his wrongdoing, David humbled himself before God and sought mercy. His life reminds us that even godly people can fall, but true repentance restores fellowship with God.

David the Poet

David is often remembered as the “sweet psalmist of Israel” (2 Samuel 23:1). He wrote many of the psalms, which have comforted believers for thousands of years.

His poetry expresses a wide range of emotions: joy, sorrow, fear, thanksgiving, repentance, and praise. Through these inspired songs, David teaches us how to bring every circumstance before God.

Perhaps the best-known Psalm is Psalm 23: “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” These simple words have brought comfort to countless believers facing trials, uncertainty, and even death.

David’s psalms reveal a deep and personal relationship with God. Whether celebrating victory or crying out in distress, he consistently turned to the Lord. His songs remind us that worship is not merely a religious activity but the expression of a heart that knows and trusts God.

David the Prophet

Although David is usually remembered as a king and poet, the New Testament also identifies him as a prophet. Peter declared of David: “Therefore, being a prophet . . .” (Acts 2: 30).

Many of David’s psalms contain remarkable prophecies concerning the Messiah. Psalm 22 vividly describes the sufferings of Christ centuries before crucifixion was even practiced. It includes the words later spoken by Jesus on the cross: “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

Psalm 16 foretells Christ’s resurrection, declaring that God would not allow His Holy One to see corruption. Peter specifically applied this prophecy to Jesus in Acts 2.

Psalm 110 presents the Messiah as both King and Priest, seated at God’s right hand. Through these prophetic writings, David became one of God’s instruments for revealing the coming Redeemer.

David as a Precursor to Christ

In many ways, David serves as a picture of Jesus Christ. Both were born in Bethlehem. Both began their public lives in humble circumstances. Both were rejected by many of their own people before eventually being recognized as king. Both were shepherds who cared for God’s people.

David defeated Israel’s enemies; Christ defeated sin, death, and Satan. David established an earthly kingdom; Christ establishes an eternal kingdom.

Yet the similarities also highlight the difference between the two. David was a sinner who needed forgiveness. Jesus is the sinless Son of God. David’s kingdom eventually declined, but Christ’s kingdom will never end.

The New Testament repeatedly calls Jesus the “Son of David,” emphasizing His rightful claim to David’s throne and His fulfillment of God’s covenant promises.

Defined by God’s Grace

David’s life is a testimony to God’s grace. He was a shepherd, a warrior, a king, a poet, and a prophet. He experienced both remarkable victories and painful failures. In every instance, God’s grace was there to rescue and restore him. Through it all, he learned to trust in the Lord.

More importantly, David points us beyond himself to Jesus Christ. The shepherd boy from Bethlehem foreshadowed the Good Shepherd. The victorious king anticipated the King of kings. The inspired psalmist foretold the coming Messiah.

As we study David’s life, we are reminded that God delights in using imperfect people who trust Him. And through David’s story, we are directed to the One who is greater than David—the Lord Jesus Christ, whose kingdom shall endure forever. He also delights to extend His grace to you! ■

The Bond of Friendship Between David and Jonathan

“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” (Proverbs 17: 17)

With a skillful cast of his sling, the shepherd boy who trusted in God freed his people from the disgrace that the blasphemous Goliath had brought upon Israel. This heroic deed caused Jonathan, the noble prince who had himself shown great heroism, to feel an immediate deep connection with the young harpist. After the battle, when David told Saul whose son he was, we read that “the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul” (1 Samuel 18: 1). The NIV translates this as “Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself.”

Soul mates—that is the secret of this friendship. Every deep friendship is based on this. As Christians, we are to love all people, yet we cannot form a friendship with everyone. Friendship cannot be forced; it is a mystery of the heart. In the case of Jonathan and David, their spirits resonated. They felt drawn to one another as if by an invisible force, and nothing could separate them. What God has joined together, no human can separate. It is difficult to describe exactly how this works, often even those involved do not know. Yet their bond is almost irresistible. External differences are of no consequence. That Jonathan was a prince and David a shepherd, that one was rich and the other poor, that one wore royal robes and the other simple shepherd’s clothing—none of that mattered. Outward appearances are no obstacle to true friendship. Indeed, great differences can even enrich it, because they allow the two to complement one another. This was true between Jonathan and David.

Their Trial

Suffering with one another is also a part of friendship. With suffering, the bond of the soul becomes even stronger. A dark power attempted to drive a wedge between David and Jonathan. King Saul hated their bond. “Saul’s anger was aroused against Jonathan,” and

he called him a “son of a perverse, rebellious woman” saying, “Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame?” (1 Samuel 20: 30). Saul was determined to destroy this friendship, even if it cost David’s life. Thus, we read: “Now Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David; but Jonathan, Saul’s son, delighted greatly in David” (1 Samuel 19: 1).

Saul himself also attempted to murder him, since God’s Spirit had long since departed from that unfortunate man, and envy filled his heart with anger, hatred, and a thirst for blood.

There was an evil spirit within Saul, and he sensed that God had chosen David to be king. Thus, David became the object of Saul’s hatred. That is why Jonathan’s great love for the man he hated was an abomination to him. This bond had to be broken—even if it meant both of them would perish. That was Saul’s decision.

It is hard to say who suffered more during this ordeal, David or Jonathan. Death threatened them both. At first, in his innocence, Jonathan could not imagine that his father would actually go to such extremes, and he sought to allay David’s fears. David, on the other hand, knew that he could expect the worst at any moment. He told Jonathan, “*There is but a step between me and death*” (1 Samuel 20: 3).

When Jonathan finally recognized his father’s murderous intentions, he went out to David, who was being sorely tried. Amid bitter tears, they embraced each other. Yet this hardship only bound their hearts more firmly together. They said, “We have both sworn in the name of the LORD” and “May the LORD be between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants, forever” (1 Samuel 20: 42).

“A friend loves at all times” (Proverbs 17: 17). Saul knew nothing of the indissolubility of such bonds of the heart. True friendship had never found a place in his darkened soul.



The Test of Their Friendship

So-called friendships often break down at the first sign of trouble. Where selfishness reigns, friendship cannot endure. If it is founded on selflessness and a willingness to sacrifice, however, it endures. Solomon says, “But there is a friend *who* sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24). Jonathan proved this in a remarkable way. In this friendship, he had nothing to gain but everything to lose. He knew that God had chosen David to be king, yet he loved him as his own soul. Not the slightest envy stirred within him. For Jonathan, being David’s friend meant exposing himself to his father’s hatred. Nevertheless, he stood up for David and even tried to change his father’s mind.

Jonathan would rather remain loyal to David than become king himself. His friendship stood the test of the most severe trials. When David looked back on this friendship after Jonathan’s death, he exclaimed with deep emotion: “I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; you have been very pleasant to me; your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women” (2 Samuel 1:26).

The Ultimate Friendship

There is, however, an even greater friendship than that between David and Jonathan. Jesus says, “You

are My friends” (John 15:14). To be called a friend of Christ—that is the greatest honor. To live in close fellowship with the Son of God—is that even possible? Yes! Our Savior and Redeemer wants to be our friend. One beloved hymn says of Him, “Our dearest Friend in heaven is reigning” (Benjamin Schmolck; translated by S. Baring-Gould). In this friendship, we come into fellowship with the Most High, the Most Holy, and the Most Beautiful. To have this friendship is the highest honor that can be bestowed upon a human being. And this friendship never ends, for it is sealed by the blood of Jesus. Jesus invites everyone into this lasting friendship with Him.

But there is one condition, He said: “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you” (John 15:14). When we are obedient to Him, He is our friend. He proved how much this friendship means to Him by giving His life for us. And He prayed to His heavenly Father on our behalf: “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am” (John 17:24). As long as we live on this earth, our best Friend wants to be with us and accompany us. And one day, in eternity, we will be at home with Him forever.

The question for us, therefore, is: Are we friends of the Lord Jesus? Can we truly testify and say that we have Him as our friend? ■

David—An Example of Humility

“Then Nathan said to David, ‘You are the man!’ . . .

So David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the LORD.’” (2 Samuel 12: 7, 13)

As readers of the Bible, we are well acquainted with this account. David had sinned with Bathsheba and then tried to conceal his sin. But like everyone who attempts to hide their sin, he was unsuccessful. There was One who knew everything and had seen everything: God.

When God sent Nathan to David, the prophet withheld nothing of God’s judgment. Speaking these words openly to the king before the entire royal court could have cost Nathan his life. With many kings, it certainly would have. Publicly disgracing the ruler of the nation would have provoked fierce anger and likely resulted in an immediate death sentence. *How dare you speak to your lord in this way?*

But instead of defending himself or silencing the prophet, David humbled himself under Nathan’s rebuke and confessed, “I have sinned against the Lord.”

Why Did David Humble Himself Before Nathan?

First, because he had to admit that Nathan was right. David *had* sinned. Although he already had several wives, he had taken Uriah’s wife and then allowed Uriah to be killed. Since that time, his conscience had not given him any rest. He had likely tried repeatedly to minimize or excuse his sin, but he could not. God’s hand lay heavy upon him day and night. When Nathan finally brought the matter into the light, David realized that the time had come to confess his guilt and sin.

Second, David humbled himself primarily before God. Because his relationship with God meant more to him than anything else, the humiliation he experienced before Nathan and the members of his court mattered far less. In fact, the fear that the entire affair might become public and damage his reputation before his people and the surrounding nations had previously kept him from confessing his guilt. But now, his longing for forgiveness and the restoration of his fellowship with God had become so great that everything else faded into the background.

Here, too, we can learn from David: anyone unwilling to surrender everything else—his sin, along with his pride, excuses, and self-justification—cannot receive God’s grace. Only when the awareness of sin and

the longing for salvation surpass all other concerns will repentance be genuine, and only then will one find grace from God.

David humbled himself before Nathan because, despite his grievous sin, he loved God. As terrible as his fall had been, he longed to return to his place as one beloved by God, and as one who loved God above all else. Listen to his words: “I will love You, O LORD, my strength” (Psalm 18:1).

God seeks the human heart so that He might fill it with His love. And, like a father, He rejoices when that love is returned. Because David had experienced God’s love and had learned to love Him, that love drew him back to God despite the fellowship having been broken by sin.

David had also come to know God, and that knowledge shaped his character. We cannot truly know God without walking before Him in humility. If we know God—the One who revealed Himself in the flesh through Jesus Christ—and read that He was “gentle and humble in heart,” is there any room left for pride? Can there be anything other than genuine humility of heart? Humility is a fruit of the Spirit, and it is difficult to imagine a true child of God being proud or arrogant. This humility of heart is evident repeatedly throughout David’s life.

There is yet another reason why David humbled himself: he sought grace from God, and only the one who humbles himself before God can receive it. In the New Testament, both James and Peter quote the same truth: “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6). Peter adds: “Be clothed with humility” (1 Peter 5:5). How did they come to learn this? The entire Scriptures testify to the importance of a humble spirit. David demonstrated this—not only when seeking grace and forgiveness, but throughout his entire life.

Solomon once said, “With the humble is wisdom” (Proverbs 11:2). Where did he learn that? Surely from his father—a man after God’s own heart and a man of humility. Our Savior said, “Learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29). May we not only learn this lesson but also truly become such people.

R. Taron

The Prayers of David

In the book of Psalms, we find many prayers and songs that were written by David. What a blessing they have proved to be throughout the centuries! Below is just a small sampling.

*I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart;
I will tell of all Your marvelous works.
I will be glad and rejoice in You;
I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.
(Psalm 9: 1-2)*

*To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
O my God, I trust in You;
let me not be ashamed.
(Psalm 25: 1-2a)*

*Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me;
let them bring me to Your holy hill and to Your tabernacle.
(Psalm 43: 3)*

*Whenever I am afraid,
I will trust in You.
(Psalm 56: 3)*

*Restore us, O God; cause Your face to shine,
and we shall be saved!
(Psalm 80: 3)*

*But I will hope continually,
and will praise You yet more and more.
(Psalm 71: 14)*

*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me,
and from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear;
and in the night season, and am not silent. But You are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel.
(Psalm 22: 1-3)*

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence,
and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
and uphold me by Your generous Spirit.
(Psalm 51: 10-12)*

*I will praise You, O Lord my God,
with all my heart,
and I will glorify Your name forevermore.
For great is Your mercy toward me,
and You have delivered my soul
from the depths of Sheol.
(Psalm 86: 12-13)*

*LORD, make me to know my end,
and what is the measure of my days,
that I may know how frail I am.
(Psalm 39: 4)*

*Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in
Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name.
(Psalm 86: 11)*

*I will love You, O LORD, my strength.
The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;
my God, my strength, in whom I will trust;
(Psalm 18: 1-2a)*

*Preserve my life, for I am holy;
You are my God;
save Your servant who trusts in You!
(Psalm 86: 2)*

*It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
and to sing praises to Your name,
O Most High.
(Psalm 92: 1)*

*Preserve me, O God,
for in You I put my trust.
(Psalm 16: 1)*

Would You Build a House for Me?

“Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2: 4–5)

After the deaths of King Saul and his son Ishbosheth, David was asked to rule over a united Israel. David then built himself a house of cedar in Jerusalem, the city he had conquered from the Jebusites. In 1 Chronicles 15:1 we read, “David built houses for himself in the City of David; and he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it.”

Once David had successfully brought the ark of God to Jerusalem, it bothered him that he lived in a house of cedar while the ark of God dwelt in a tent. David’s thinking was commendable. It can happen in Christian circles that the things of the Lord and the church get neglected, while Christians live in affluence. David knew that God deserved a palace far more than he did, and so he wanted to do something about it. He immediately asked Nathan’s advice. Nathan the prophet responded by saying, “Go, do all that *is* in your heart, for the LORD *is* with you” (2 Samuel 7:3). Nathan initially saw nothing wrong with David’s good intentions. However, God had a different plan in mind, and revealed that plan to David through Nathan.

In 2 Samuel 7:5–7, the Lord comments on David’s desire to build a house of worship. The Lord asks, “Would you build a house for Me to dwell in?” God mentions that He had never dwelt in a house in all the years that He led His people, ever since He brought them out of Egypt. We are aware that God knows everything, yet here He almost seems surprised by David’s desire to go beyond what God had called him to do. God saw the pure motives David had in wanting to build a house of worship. It pleased God to have such a loyal servant who cared about the things of God. David was truly a man after God’s own heart, which was

why God could turn a shepherd boy into a great king (v. 9).

Though David’s intentions were right and godly, God told him that he would not be the one to build Him a house. David had shed too much blood in his life; his son Solomon would be given the responsibility of building the temple. God wanted a man of peace to build His house; the name Solomon means “peaceful” (1 Chronicles 22:6–13). David accepted God’s answer even though it went against his plans. We can certainly learn from his example. At times we may desire to do something for the Lord, but the Lord may want to use someone else to carry it out. Are we willing to support that individual from behind the scenes, even though they are doing what we ourselves would like to do? Though God often directs our lives differently than we may anticipate, the important thing is that we remain obedient to His leading and content with His will.

After denying David’s request of building God a temple, God reminds David of how He helped him throughout his life, and how He helped the Israelites throughout their history. He does this to remind David of His love for His faithful servant, even though David’s plans had been put on hold. In 2 Samuel 7:8–9, God tells Nathan to relay the following message to David: “I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel. And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a great name, like the name of the great men who *are* on the earth.” Then, in verses 10–11, God promises to bless His people in the land that God had brought them to.

God had brought the Israelites out of Egypt to Canaan. Through God’s leadership and provision, the

Israelites were able to conquer vast areas of land and destroy the wicked inhabitants that walked contrary to God. Yet the people of Israel weren't fully obedient; they failed to conquer all of the Promised Land, nor did they completely remove the inhabiting nations. These poor decisions would bring terrible consequences and episodes of enslavement by enemy nations. Over a period of 400 years, God intermittently raised up judges that led the people out of bondage and brought peace to the land. King Saul, and later David, brought further victories for the people of Israel. But it wasn't until Solomon's reign that the land truly had rest from all its enemies. This is the rest and peace that is described in 2 Samuel 7: 11.

David wanted to build a house for the ark of God, but God had other plans. David did not get discouraged when God told him that he would not be the one to build His house. He knew that it was better to obey the Lord than to insist on building the temple. God saw David's pure motives, and reminded him of His love, even though David's plans were delayed. Then God used the rest in the Promised Land enjoyed by David and Solomon as a witness that He would do something great for David and his descendants: He would establish from their family a lasting house of peace.

Our Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, fulfilled this promise when He ushered in His kingdom of peace through His death and resurrection. Through faith in Christ's sacrifice, we are added to Christ' temple of peace as "living stones," that "are being built up a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5). How amazing to think that David's desire to build God a temple is being fulfilled by Christ today!

*David Knelsen
Hamilton, ON*



Between Dark Valleys and Mountaintops

David's Life—A Balancing Act Between Valleys of Death and Sunny Heights

God's creation offers us a wealth of landscapes that could not be more diverse: majestic mountain ranges, but also deep valleys, gorges, and dark caves; green forests, fertile river valleys and lakeshores, but also barren steppes and deserts. While some mountains invite us to take leisurely hikes, other bizarre rock formations make us fear the danger of falling. Sun-drenched valleys boast lush vegetation, while others are shrouded in shadow and fog. While many deserts quickly become death traps, others surprise us with fertile oases that serve as safe havens.

It seems as though this diversity of landscapes reflects the different paths and stages of our human existence. The psalmist David often drew on images from nature to express his current life situation and the state of mind associated with it. In his songs, he spoke of lifting his eyes to the mountains, while recognizing that his help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth (Psalm 121). Elsewhere, he described the dark valley through which he had to walk before he could rejoice in green pastures (Psalm 23).

While some life journeys resemble a gentle series of ups and downs, David's path was marked by extreme highs and lows. He passed through many valleys of death, took refuge in caves, and even fled to the desert. Yet time and again, God also led him to light-filled heights.

Still today, it is worth taking a closer look at these different stages of David's life in order to draw personal lessons from the life of one whose name means "Beloved."

Unexpectedly Chosen in the Valley

Although he had already proven himself to be brave and reliable in his youth, David was underestimated by his own family. He wasn't even called away from tending the sheep when the prophet Samuel came to anoint one of Jesse's sons as king. But God judges people according to His own standards. The Lord said to Samuel: "For *the LORD* does not see as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD

looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). And so, unexpectedly, the choice fell on David.

What an encouraging message for us, too! No matter how we see ourselves or how others see us, God has a task or calling in store for each of His children—whether seemingly big or small. All we need is a sincere, deeply faithful, and service-minded heart.

Rise Through Growth in Grace

David's calling to become king one day was extraordinary, but his anointing did not lead directly to the throne. He still had an intense period of preparation and significant spiritual growth ahead of him. During this time, his path began to lead upward. Because he was known as a skillful musician, a brave warrior, and an eloquent speaker—and because the Lord was with him—he was summoned to the royal court to drive away Saul's evil spirit with his music.

We, too, can expect God to guide us through a process of personal growth, equip us with everything we need for our ministry, and make His presence and guidance evident.

Even more good things happened in David's life: Through his bravery and military victories, he increasingly won the people's favor. Armed with nothing but a stone, he faced the giant Goliath, saying, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied" (1 Samuel 17:45).

Then, as now, God blesses people who do not rely on themselves, but face challenges with the right attitude, motivation, and intention.

On the Mountain of Encouragement

Meanwhile, God had blessed David with the wonderful friendship of Jonathan, the king's son, and the affection of Michal, Saul's daughter. He was bound to both of them by a deep love. "And Jonathan loved him [David] as he loved his own soul" (1 Samuel 18:1). "Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David" (1 Samuel 18:20). Both stood by David, encouraging and warning him as trouble began to close in on him.



In the same way, God sends kind people our way to encourage us during difficult times or to warn us about spiritual stumbling blocks. We cannot thank God enough for such acts of friendship.

A Downward Spiral Through No Fault of His Own

After receiving abundant blessings, David's circumstances took a turn for the worse, and his descent into the valley began—through no fault of his own. Envy and resentment over his successes and the people's growing affection for him drove Saul to launch one attack after another. What a disappointment for David! The very man whom he had comforted with his harp-playing was now seeking his life. Yet even in the valley of sorrow, we read of David: "And David behaved wisely in all his ways and the LORD *was* with him" (1 Samuel 18: 14).

A years-long manhunt began, and David had no choice but to flee. His path led him through caves and into the desert. Yet whenever David had the opportunity to take revenge on his pursuer, his respect for Saul's anointing prevailed, and he spared him.

God also wants to help us bear our disappointments at the lowest points of our lives, grant us a will-

ingness to forgive, give us wisdom, and show us a way forward.

Effectiveness and Blessings Even in the Valley

Despite his hardships and flight, God had further tasks in store for David. As long as he sought the Lord's counsel and guidance, he remained under God's guidance and protection, and the mission was successful. Whether it was a battle against the Philistines or the simple question of where he should go next, it is recorded that he sought the Lord's counsel (see 1 Samuel 23: 2).

In times of distress, do we still have an open ear for God's further direction, just as David did? Do we not tend to sink into self-pity or despair instead of remembering our true calling? Purposefully seeking out our next direction leads us out of the depths and transforms even difficult times into times of blessing.

A Change of Heart Brought About by God Always Leads Upward

David was always open to wise counsel and to a change of heart brought about by God. When he wanted to take the law into his own hands against Nabal and ►

his men because of a perceived wrong, he allowed himself to be dissuaded from his original plan by the wise counsel of Nabal's wife. With words of gratitude, he ultimately left judgment to God: "Blessed *be* the LORD, who has pleaded the case of my reproach from the hand of Nabal and has kept His servant from evil" (1 Samuel 25:39).

Sometimes God has to rein us in as well. When we begin to act all too humanly, our downfall—both inwardly and outwardly—is inevitable. Looking back, we can always give thanks for God's wise intervention in our thoughts and actions.

Reaching Sunny Heights Through the Fear of God and Humility

Eventually, God gave David ever stronger confirmations of his anointing. He gained influence and power, won victories, and enjoyed divine protection and help. But how did this unstoppable ascent to the heights of blessing affect his character? Did it make him arrogant and vengeful toward his former persecutor, Saul? Was he overwhelmed by feelings of triumph? On the contrary, he mourned for the man who had caused him so much suffering in his life. His reverence for the anointing that Saul had once received from God still commanded his respect.

How can we forgive people who have made our lives difficult? Have we become bitter, and do we take satisfaction in seeing God pass judgment? Or do we mourn for them and pray for them?

On the High Plateau of Divine Blessings

By this time, David was king over Judah and Israel. He had conquered Jerusalem, built himself a royal palace, and brought the Ark of the Covenant to the city. Yet he used this high point in his life not only to expand his earthly power but also to restore the order of worship for the honor and glory of God. In a spirit of joy and spiritual exaltation, he decided to build a house for the Ark of the Covenant. But when he received a divine "No" because of the blood he had shed, he did not rebel. Instead, he reflected on himself: "*Who am I, O LORD GOD? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far?*" (2 Samuel 7:18).

Even on a spiritual "high plateau," we must neither rest on our laurels nor become intoxicated by a false sense of self-confidence. Such sunny heights are particularly suited for glorifying God's name in word and

deed and sharing the good news with others. When we look back on all of God's guidance, our hearts recognize that everything has flowed from the love, goodness, and grace of the Most High.

God's goodness and mercy in David's life led him to show love to his neighbor. Thus, he brought Mephibosheth—a lame descendant of Saul—into his court and cared for him for the rest of his life.

How do we respond to God's blessings and gifts in our lives?

A Fall Brought About by One's Own Sin

Tragically, just as he was at the height of his blessings, David plunged into the depths of sin. This was not a slow descent into the valley, but a rapid plunge into the ravine of willfully committed sin. Against his better knowledge, he committed adultery with Bathsheba and tried to cover up this act with further sinful deeds. As a result, David had to face the prophet Nathan's pointed question: "Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD to do evil in His sight?" (2 Samuel 12:9).

What distinguished David throughout his life, however, was recognition of his wrongdoing and contrition as soon as he was convicted of sin. He did not deny it, nor did he ever put off repentance; rather, he confessed immediately and sought forgiveness. In doing so, he was fully aware of the gravity of his offense. "I have sinned against the LORD" (2 Samuel 12:13).

God was merciful once again and forgave David. Nevertheless, he had to bear the consequences of his sin, for the child born of adultery died.

Are we aware of the gravity of sin committed despite knowing better? Sometimes a "reminder" remains in our lives, constantly bringing home to us just how seriously God takes sin.

A Grateful Look Back After Highs and Lows

In his old age, David still had to walk through many a dark valley. His son Absalom sought to seize power. David did not fight for his rights, but fled. Yet because of God's judgment on Absalom and his tragic death, David suffered greatly.

David again acted on his own initiative when he ordered a census and sought security in numbers rather than trusting in God. Yet he recognized his wrongdoing and sought forgiveness from the Lord: "I have



sinned greatly in what I have done; but now, I pray, O LORD, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly” (2 Samuel 24: 10).

Despite the many depths he had endured, David, looking back on his eventful life, composed a song of thanksgiving in which he praised God as his rock, fortress, deliverer, refuge, shield, the horn of his salvation, and Savior (2 Samuel 22). In spirit, he relived the depths of misery, which he described in vivid language as the chariot of death, rivers of destruction, fiery flames, and arrows. In contrast, he emphasized God’s help, deliverance from great fear, protection, and favor toward him.

In his final words, he imparted the lessons of his own life to his son Solomon: Solomon was to walk in God’s ways and keep His statutes, commandments, ordinances, and laws so that he might act wisely in all he did. In this way, God would fulfill His promises to him (1 Kings 2:2–4). This was David’s legacy to the next generation.

Reflection

Dear reader, how have you coped with the ups and downs of your life so far?

Many difficulties in our lives may have resulted from our own disobedience or poor judgment. We might have been spared had we asked God for counsel and guidance at the time. Sometimes, however, the

Lord intentionally leads us through difficult times to help us mature spiritually and become more useful for the Kingdom of God through the insights and experiences we gain.

When the Lord leads us to “sunny heights,” we can use those times to draw strength for new challenges and to sing His praise. That was David’s sure response, and the Psalms are full of such confident praise.

Psalms 27 beautifully illustrates this. The well-known verse, “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” testifies to David’s deep, personal experience with the Lord.

In verse 4, David describes the attitude of heart needed to continue walking in God’s blessing: “One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life.”

We find the key to success and blessing in all our endeavours in verse 8: “*When You said, ‘Seek my face,’ my heart said to You, ‘Your face, LORD, I will seek.’*”

Equipped in this way, we can, like David, offer verse 14 as a legacy to the next generation: “Wait on the LORD; be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!”

Brigitte Ress
Herford, Germany

Strength in Weakness

In Hebrews 11, we find a list of great men and women of faith who accomplished incredible things for the Lord. In verse 34b, we read that they “were made strong” “out of weakness” and “became valiant in battle.”

When we think of David, there is typically one battle he fought that comes to mind more than any other. This battle has epitomized similar conflicts throughout history, where the underdog triumphs over the expected victor: David versus Goliath.

In 1 Samuel 17, we read that the Philistines gathered for battle against Israel (vv. 1–2). Goliath, who stood more than nine and a half feet tall, was the Philistines’ champion. He wore a bronze coat of mail weighing approximately 150 pounds (v. 5) and carried a spear with an eighteen-pound iron spearhead (v. 6). This menacing figure challenged the armies of Israel: “Choose one man to come down here and fight me” (NLT, v. 8). “When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid” (v. 11). Saul himself was too afraid to fight Goliath. The Spirit of God no longer dwelt in him because of his sins, and he knew that without God, there was no way to overcome the giant.

Understanding Our Weakness Increases Our Dependence

God uses those who recognize their weakness and dependence on Him. As mentioned earlier, the writer of Hebrews explains that the heroes of faith “were made strong out of weakness.” God loves using those people who realize that, with their own abilities, knowledge, and strength, they can do nothing of lasting value.

The apostle Paul understood the importance of recognizing and accepting our weakness apart from God. In his second letter to the Corinthians, he writes, “a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness’” (2 Corinthians 12:7–9a). He then continues in verse 10, “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then

I am strong.” In other words, when we understand our weakness and rely on God, then we are made strong through His strength.

Goliath drew near and taunted the Israelites “forty days, morning and evening” (1 Samuel 17:16). Each day the Israelites arose in fear and went to bed afraid, not knowing who would volunteer to fight the giant. Then God brought a young shepherd boy, David, to the battlefield. He heard Goliath’s threats and taunts for himself. While all the other soldiers fled in fear (v. 24), David remained firm and responded, “who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” (v. 26b). What a different perspective he had! Those who heard David’s words reported them to Saul, who called for David to be brought before him. David then told the king that he would volunteer to fight the giant.

Though David was willing to fight, King Saul didn’t think he had a chance against Goliath. Saul only saw his outer appearance and age. When others looked at David, all they saw was a young, inexperienced man. In reality, he was a servant of God, with the Holy Spirit’s favor upon him. David did not volunteer to fight Goliath out of arrogance or pride. He did not think that he could defeat the giant with his own strength or skill. He looked back on his own life, remembered how God had helped him in the past, and was convinced that God could help him again. He knew that if he fought in his own strength, he would surely fail. Humanly speaking, he was weak by comparison; but through God’s power, He would surely overcome. Therefore, he boldly proclaimed to King Saul, “The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine” (1 Samuel 17:37). David was fully dependent on God. He knew that any victory would be the display of God’s power through his weakness.

God Demonstrates His Power Through Our Weakness

I once came across a quote which says, “True power doesn’t come from size and strength, but from reliance on God.” After David shared his confidence in God’s deliverance, Saul said to him, “Go, and the LORD be with you” (1 Samuel 17:37b). Saul then clothed Da-



vid with his own armor and sword, but they were too heavy and cumbersome for him (v. 38). This did not dissuade David from entering the battle without them. He trusted in God's protection and strength.

Likewise, God wants us to remain dependent on Him and His leading so that He can demonstrate His power through us. That's why God often chooses to work mightily through people whom society would deem weak. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:27–29, "But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence."

When David came out to fight Goliath, the giant came out toward him. However, when he saw David's outer appearance, he taunted him saying: "*Am* I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" (1 Samuel 17:43b). Nonetheless, David confidently replied, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. . . . Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle *is* the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands" (vv. 45–46a, 47). We know how the story continues: with one stone

slung from a sling, Goliath came crashing down. After watching David finish off the giant with his own sword, the Philistines fled. The shepherd boy prevailed just as he said he would because he relied on God's power and not his own. By using someone who seemed obviously incapable of the task, God made His work and power all the more evident.

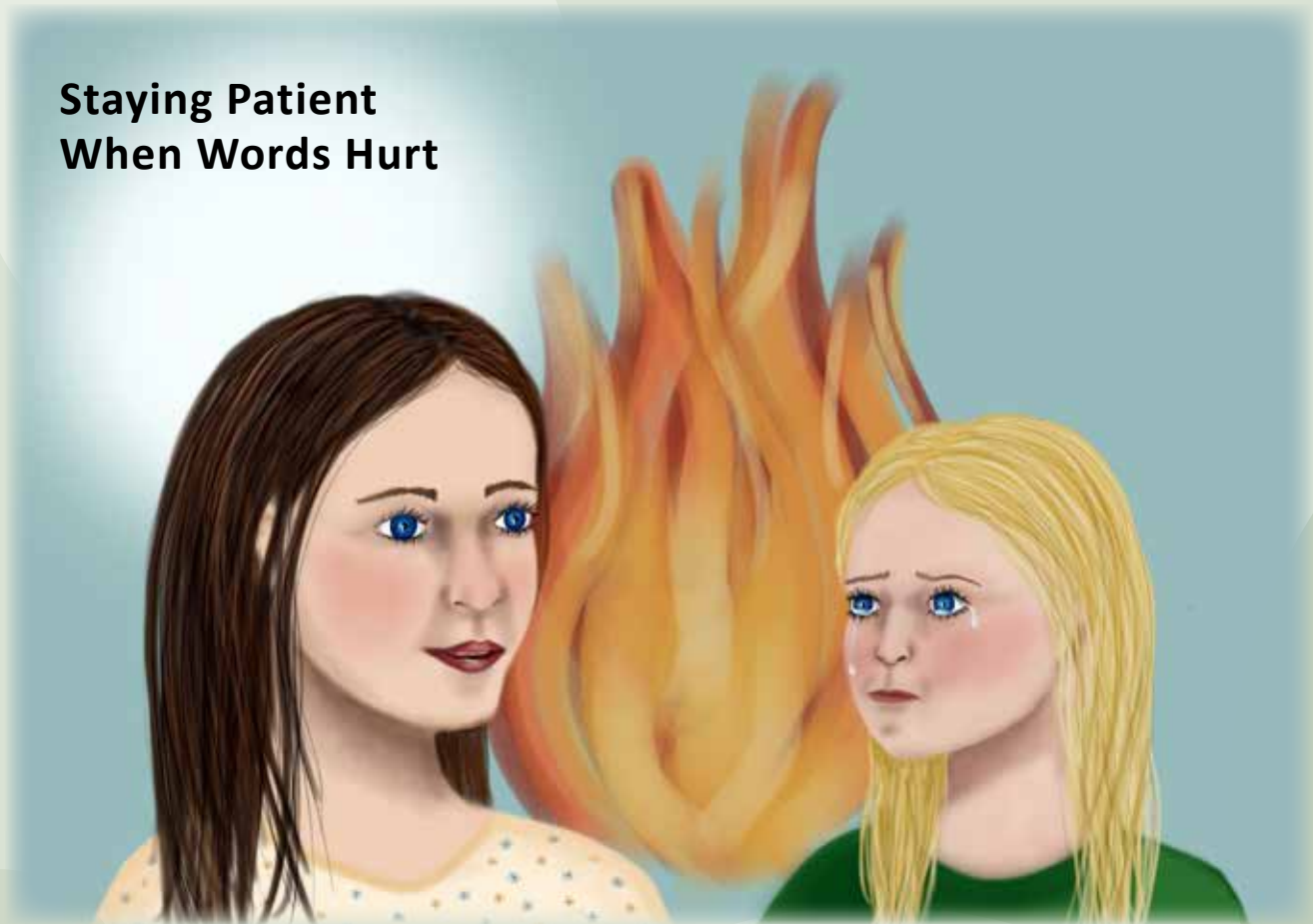
The heroes of faith "were made strong" "out of weakness." God uses those who recognize their weakness apart from Him. When they understand their limitations, they also understand their dependence on God and their need for His strength.

Though no one among the Israelites was willing to face the Philistines' champion, David, the underdog, was willing—not because of pride or confidence in his own abilities, but because he knew that God was with him. He knew that all things are possible for those who trust in the Lord, no matter how great the adversary may appear. David refused to trust in human armor and weapons because he knew they would hinder God's work through him.

Likewise, God wants us to remove everything that hinders His work in us so that we may rely more fully on Him. Though outwardly vulnerable, David had the almighty God working through him and he faced his adversary with immovable faith. God used his faithful instrument to glorify His own power, and He wants to use us in the same way.

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Staying Patient When Words Hurt



“Mo-om!” Laura called as she came through the front door.

Mrs. Werner was in the kitchen. She turned around just as Laura came running toward her, crying.

“Mariella called me a ‘dumb cow’ at school today!” Laura sobbed. “But I’m not dumb! She’s only two months older than I am. She’s not even that much smarter! I was so upset that I almost said something mean back.”

Her mother knelt down and gave Laura a big hug. “No, you are not a dumb cow,” she said gently. “You’re God’s dearly loved child. And you know what? God loves Mariella just as much as He loves you.”

Laura looked surprised. “Even though she was mean to me?”

“Yes,” her mother replied. “God loves everyone. Jesus died for everyone. But God does not force anyone to accept Him. Everyone gets to decide for themselves whether they want to follow God. What Mariella said was wrong. It hurt you, and that’s not okay. It can be hard to stay calm and not say some-

thing mean back. But that would only make things worse.”

Then her mother went on to explain: “The Bible says that we should be careful with our words. Words can really hurt—sometimes just as much as a shove or a slap.”

Laura wiped her eyes. “At church, they said that the tongue is like fire. At first, I didn’t understand that,” she said. “Dad explained that one mean word often leads to many more. And if you tell a lie about someone, others may believe it. Then that person gets into trouble, even though it’s not true at all.”

Her mother nodded. “Exactly. Words can hurt, which is why it’s important to speak kindly and tell the truth.”

Laura smiled a little. “Thanks, Mom. It feels good to hear that I’m God’s daughter. Thanks for reminding me of that. I don’t want to hurt others with my words—I want to comfort them!”

Katharina Raiser

The Seagull and the Canaanite Woman

One day, I watched a seagull flying low over the water. It had a small fish in its beak, but the fish kept falling out. Each time, the seagull dove down, picked up the fish, and flew away—only to drop it again. This happened many times. Eventually, I lost sight of it. At first, I thought the seagull was clumsy. Then I realized something: this bird didn't give up. It kept trying until it reached its goal.

This reminded me of a story in the Bible. Please read Matthew 15: 22–28. A woman was very worried because her daughter was sick. When she heard that Jesus was nearby, she went to find him. She did not simply ask for help—she cried out loudly. But Jesus did not answer her right away.

Still, the woman did not give up. She came closer, fell to her knees before Jesus, and pleaded again: “Lord, help me!”

Jesus answered her rather sternly. He explained that He had first come to help the people of Israel (the “children”) and not the other nations (the “dogs”). The woman did not become angry or offend.

Instead, she answered humbly that even the dogs get the crumbs that fall from the table.

Jesus saw her great faith. He said to her, “Let it be to you as you desire,” and her daughter was healed immediately.



What can this woman teach us?

- She prayed for someone else. You can pray for other people too.
- She brought her problem to Jesus. You do not have to carry your fears and worries alone. Bring them to Jesus.
- She did not give up or get discouraged. If your prayer is not answered right away, it does not mean that God has not heard you. Maybe it is just not the right time for an answer yet. Keep praying.
- She was patient and humble. When things do not go the way you hoped, or when someone hurts your feelings, ask God to help you respond calmly and with love.
- She had strong faith. When you ask Jesus for help, you can trust that He hears you and will do what is best.

Irene Wuchrer



A soft answer turns
away wrath, but a harsh
word stirs up anger.
Proverbs 15:1

I am Doing A NEW THING



Time has continued its steady march and September is upon us again. This season brings about a shift for not only students but also for those in the working world. It feels almost like a new start after summer; a kind of New Year's season when we reminisce about summer memories and return to a fall routine.

Spring and fall are the two seasons in which change is especially noticeable. Each spring, I marvel as the sun's rays grow warmer, the grass becomes greener, and birds begin singing in the evenings again. That is the beauty of the seasons: although winter brings cold and decay for a time, it also carries the promise of life and warmth to come.

Earlier this year, I read a devotional that focused on change and quoted Isaiah 43: 18–19. Here the words of God are clearly recorded: "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland" (NIV).

The devotional explains that change has a natural way of making us feel uneasy. Understandably, moving away from what we have always

known can be uncomfortable. Familiarity can have a strong pull on us, and I know I have faced changes that gripped my heart with fear.

It is important to note that when God tells His people to “Forget the former things,” He is not saying that the past is of no value. The past can remind us of God’s faithfulness. However, it becomes dangerous when we allow it to shape our view of the present and future. Our ability to embrace what God is doing in our lives can be clouded when we remain focused on what went wrong in the past. Or perhaps we become so attached to the good days gone by that we are not open to something new that God wants to begin in our lives. Change requires trust. It asks us to believe that the same God who was faithful yesterday will also be faithful today and tomorrow.

If I imagine this Scripture spoken aloud by God Himself, I hear urgency in His voice—and excitement! Can you hear it too? “See, I am doing a new thing!” Do we realize that this is a promise from our Heavenly Father? This declaration shows us that He is active in our lives.

Sometimes God’s work begins in quiet or unexpected ways. Throughout human history, people have expected dramatic signs from God, making it easy for us to miss the work He is already setting in motion. “Now it springs up”; perhaps we become so distracted by our doubts and fears that we fail to recognize or listen for the next steps before us. Sometimes we hold tightly to our own plans and are not open to what God has planned. From time to time, we may need the reminder, “Do you not perceive it?” to realign our focus and spiritual attentiveness.

Here is another promise for us: “I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” Sometimes imagery helps us understand Scripture, and this passage is a beautiful example because it describes seemingly impossible

situations. A wilderness is a place with no clear path. A wasteland—or, in some translations, a desert—is dry, desolate, and largely without life. Yet God says that He will make a way there; nothing is beyond His power. He is incomparable in His ability and infinitely greater than His creation. Yet He is also near enough to understand each of our circumstances perfectly.

We see in these verses that God does not merely call us to new things; He also prepares and equips us. We are called to let go of the past and recognize that God is doing something new, though this is often easier said than done. Even when the path seems non-existent, God is already at work before we realize it, and He has our best interests in mind.

The last several years have brought about a great deal of change. From major conflicts in different parts of the world to the rapid rise of artificial intelligence, we are constantly reminded that life can shift quickly and unexpectedly. As the world continues to move at such a fast pace, it benefits us to remain adaptable and to view change as an opportunity for growth—though doing so takes intentional effort. Personally, I am learning to see change not only as a challenge but also as an experience that can shape me for the better. If we are too focused on the past, too discouraged by the present or too afraid of the future, we may miss what God is doing within us.

The phrase “Change is the only constant” is a good reminder that, in this world, we are not guaranteed certainty from one day to the next. Yet, amid all this uncertainty, we can rejoice and find comfort in knowing that God remains our one true and absolute constant. Let us lean into His promises, listen for His direction and take next steps in faith.

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A Look In the Rearview Mirror

We live life looking ahead. That is how it should be, and it is the only right way to live. Paul writes: “Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead . . .” (Philippians 3:13 NLT).

Likely it can be compared to driving a car. You drive with your eyes focused on what is before you—where your journey is headed. And yet, every car has a rearview mirror. The moment you are seated behind the wheel, you ensure the mirror is properly adjusted. From time to time you glance into it, not in order to drive backwards, but to assess the situation better.

It is good to take a look in the “rearview mirror.” That is exactly what the story of David invites us to do. This issue of the *Foundation of Faith* draws our attention to the many different stages of his life.

How many highlights there were! We think of his unshakable trust in God as he stood before the giant, Goliath. There was his calling by God, his leadership as king, and his extraordinary gift of poetry, which has given us the Psalms that comfort and encourage people to this day.

Yet David’s life was also acquainted with valleys. The Bible conceals neither his failures nor his dark hours. It paints no flattering picture but shows us

the reality of human life. David’s story encompasses joy and sorrow, victory and defeat, faithfulness and failure.

What stands out most, however, is his humble heart. When David transgressed, he acknowledged his guilt. He did not search for excuses but returned to God. This attitude was one reason he was called “a man after God’s own heart.”

Ultimately, though, David’s life story is primarily a story of God’s mercy and grace. It reminds us that God does not only use people with great strengths; He also carries, forgives, and restores people who have weaknesses.

Every person has a story to reflect on. Nothing about the past can be changed. Many of us would gladly undo certain deeds or take back thoughtless words, but that is not possible.

Who has not wished that life had a “key,” like the one on a computer keyboard—a “delete” function that could simply make certain events, words, or decisions disappear?

But that remains an illusion. Life has no such “function.” What was said and done, what was neglected or overlooked, and even failures that began with the best of intentions—all of it belongs to our story.

This is not always a matter of sin or of obvious wrongdoing. Sometimes we remember misunderstandings, people we misjudged, or decisions we made to the best of our knowledge that later proved to be mistakes. Perhaps those decisions had consequences not only for us but also for other people whom they affected or burdened.

Looking back can be painful. But it can also teach us humility. It reminds us how limited our understanding is and how much we depend on God's wisdom, guidance, and grace.

The realization that we would do some things differently today is actually a sign of personal growth. It shows that we have learned, matured, and see things in a different light now than we did then. If we could redo life, we would reach different decisions, leave some words unspoken, and correct some behaviors. This is not necessarily cause for discouragement. Rather, it shows that we have grown.

But how do we deal with the past? What do we do when past events weigh us down, when memories keep surfacing, and when we cannot find peace?

A man once walked home with a hammer from his workplace. At home, it found a spot in his toolbox. But every time he worked in his garage and saw the hammer, his conscience troubled him. Finally, he took it to the basement and hid it away. Now, he thought, the matter was resolved. But it was not. Whenever he went to the basement, the hammer seemed to call out to him: "Here I am!" The memory would not stay buried, and his conscience would not be silenced.

At last, he made a decision. He took the hammer, put it in his bag, and set out for his former workplace. There, he openly confessed what he had done and returned the hammer.

As he walked home, his step was lighter. The memory of what he had done remained, but something crucial had changed: his conscience no longer accused him. His burden had been lifted.

This story reminds us that true peace does not come from suppressing or hiding our past. Peace comes through honesty, when guilt is cleared away and truth comes to light. What we cannot change, we can entrust to God's grace. And what we can remedy, we should not postpone.

Recognizing that we have learned from our mistakes is good and important. Yet, in some cases, that alone is not enough. There are hurts, misunderstandings, and failures that time does not simply resolve. They require healing and resolution—with a spouse, children, parents, siblings, or others with whom the relationship is strained. When honest dialogue and reconciliation take place, walls come down and relationships

can be healed. How refreshing and freeing it is when strained relationships are restored! We cannot always change the past, but we can take responsibility for our actions and move toward reconciliation.

A look in the rearview mirror of life—what is revealed there depends on the path we have walked and how we have lived. Each of us has his own story, with its joys and successes, but also with its failures, oversights, and painful experiences.

What matters, however, is not that our past be impeccable. What matters is that we are honest—not suppressing or glossing over things, but seeking and finding peace with God and, as far as it depends on us, peace with others.

Where guilt has been confessed, reconciliation sought, and God's grace received, the past loses its power to hold us captive. The memories may remain, but they no longer need to burden or accuse us.

When this is so, we can look ahead with confidence. The past lies in God's hands, the present is in His control, and we can fearlessly entrust the future to Him also.

*Harry Semenjuk
Wetaskiwin, AB*

Each of us has his own story, with its joys and successes, but also with its failures, oversights, and painful experiences.

THE SECRET OF THE SINGING HEART

C. W. Naylor

One of the most basic laws of nature is the instinct for self-preservation. Every living creature has some means of protecting itself. Even certain plants have defensive mechanisms. Animals are equipped with teeth, claws, shells, speed, or wings. Some defend themselves with unpleasant odors; others with poison. The octopus, for example, releases a dark cloud of ink to hide from danger.

Human beings also possess this instinct. Just as we seek to protect ourselves physically, we also try to protect ourselves inwardly. We have mental and emotional ways of defending ourselves when we feel threatened.

This instinct strongly influences how we live. Whenever we sense danger—whether physical, emotional, or spiritual—our defenses are activated. Our first reaction is often to escape. We pull back from what might hurt us and try to avoid discomfort altogether. There is wisdom in this instinct. It helps us avoid unnecessary harm.

However, when this tendency becomes too strong, it leads to weakness. Instead of helping us, it begins to shape us into people who shrink back from challenges. Avoiding every difficulty produces fearfulness. Over time, this weakens our character. Courage, strength, and determination begin to fade. A person who constantly avoids hardship loses self-respect. And in spiritual matters, a fearful attitude prevents growth and maturity.

The desire to escape discomfort often leads to other problems. We may begin to excuse our own faults instead of facing them honestly. We may exaggerate, deny, or justify what is wrong. These are natural results of fear and worry. They quietly undermine character and rob life of its deepest joys.

For this reason, we must carefully watch how we use our inner defenses. They should strengthen us, not weaken us. Instead of feeding fear, they should develop courage, faith, and resolve. We must actively resist the tendency toward cowardice within us.

A Negative Spirit

Another form of self-protection is resistance. Used properly, it can be helpful: it enables us to stand firm

and strengthens our resolve. But when misused, it can turn into complaining, resentment, and blame. We begin to blame our circumstances or the people around us for our discomfort.

This kind of reaction creates a negative spirit. We become critical, dissatisfied, and easily irritated. Such a person may struggle to maintain self-control. Hidden bitterness toward others often develops, leading to harshness, unkindness, and a lack of compassion.

This struggle is not limited to those without faith. Even believers can fall into this pattern. When they give in to worry and fear, discouragement follows. Gradually, impatience, irritability, and inner unrest begin to take hold. They may wonder why they find it so difficult to remain kind, calm, and loving.

This should not surprise us. It is simply the natural result of fear working within us. When we try to escape every difficulty, we become more vulnerable to these negative reactions. If we want to overcome them, we must deal with the root: fear, worry, and discouragement.

If we allow discouragement to remain, we should not expect peace. It will bring with it a host of troubling emotions. These are not always the result of deliberate wrongdoing, but rather of a wrong mindset—a lack of trust and a distorted view of our circumstances.

A Way Out

The way out is clear: we must replace doubt with faith, fear with trust, and focus on what is hopeful rather than what is dark. This is not ignoring reality, but choosing to see it in the light of truth.

Discouragement has a destructive effect. It weakens faith, drains strength, and makes it harder to carry life's burdens. It covers hope with shadows and steals inner peace. Instead of calm confidence, it produces restlessness and sorrow. It throws us off balance and undermines trust.

In this state, we lose many of the blessings that could be ours. Instead of growing stronger through life's struggles, we become smaller and weaker. Eventually, we may feel defeated.



FIGHTING NEGATIVITY

Part 9

In contrast, a life marked by faith and courage looks very different. It holds on to hope and faces the future with confidence. This is the natural and intended position of a believer—to trust, to stand firm, and to move forward with courage.



A Changing Character

Over time, fear and worry can deeply change a person's character. The natural joy and lightness of youth fade, and strength gives way to heaviness. Instead of enthusiasm and confidence, irritability, gloom, and discouragement take hold. Such a person may withdraw from others or be avoided by them. Their influence diminishes, and their life loses much of its value and joy.

If the poisonous tree of fear and worry is allowed to grow in the garden of our lives, we should not be surprised by the fruit it produces. It will inevitably bring negativity, weakness, and a loss of joy.

Honoring God

There is also a deeper issue. Fear and worry dishonor God. We say that God is our Father, that He cares for us, and that we trust Him—yet our actions often contradict those words.

If we truly believe that God is faithful and in control, why should fear dominate us? If we trust that nothing can harm us without His knowledge and permission, then worry loses its foundation. God is able to guide us through every situation and bring us safely through it.

This means that fear, in its essence, is unnecessary. If God is who He says He is, then we have every reason to trust Him. He will provide a way forward and protect us in ways we may not always see at the moment.

Fear and worry also call into question the truth of God's promises. Scripture is filled with assurances of care, guidance, and protection. These promises are either true or they are not. If they are not true, then fear would be justified. But if they are true, then we are called to live in light of them.

This raises an important question: do we truly believe what God has said? When fear arises, we must turn again to these promises, trust them, and act accordingly. As we do, worry loses its hold.

A Faithful God

We should also remember how God has helped us in the past. Many difficulties we once feared have already been overcome. Situations that seemed uncertain often turned out better than expected. These experiences should strengthen our confidence for the future.

We can look back and say, "Thus far the LORD has helped us" (1 Samuel 7: 12). That same faithfulness will continue. Fear and worry have never solved our problems. They have never made us stronger or brought us peace.

Therefore, we must make a clear decision to turn away from the poisonous tree and its harmful fruit, step out from under its shadow, and walk in the light of God's presence.

As we do, something begins to change within us. Peace replaces anxiety. Joy begins to rise again. Confidence grows. In time, the heart finds its song—a song of victory, freedom, and trust.

This is the life that God desires for us: not one overshadowed by fear, but one filled with light, strength, and lasting joy. ■

A HEART THAT SEEKS GOD

The Bible depicts David as a man whose heart was oriented toward God. David's greatness cannot be explained by his gifts, position, victories, or even his kingship; rather, it was rooted in his life with God. That is also what makes him a valuable example of the inner attitude needed by a preacher whom God can use.

A Heart Longing for God

David did not seek the throne. When Samuel came to Jesse's house, David did not step forward or push himself into the center of attention; instead, he remained with the sheep. It was precisely during this hidden time that his relationship with God was formed. As a shepherd boy, David came to know the Lord Sabaoth not merely as the God of Israel's history but personally—as the God who preserved, saved, and strengthened him.

When Goliath later mocked Israel (1 Samuel 17), David could say to Saul, "The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." The lion and the bear were not merely preparations for a greater battle; they were experiences David had with the living God. David was able to stand before Goliath in public because he had first learned to walk with God in secret.

This is an important lesson for us. Preachers do not become spiritually useful merely by delivering good sermons; they become by cultivating a hidden life with God. God does not primarily seek people who can and want to preach, but hearts that abide in Him. A relationship with God is the true foundation for service—and the one that matters most.

Receiving Light in God's Presence

This hidden communion with God is also where God enlightens preachers concerning His Word. Silent prayer is not merely preparation, inward reflection, or a religious duty. Rather, in God's presence, motives are examined, thoughts are ordered, and eyes are opened. Our greatest need is not more material but greater light from God concerning His Word and His will.

The Psalms, in particular, give us a glimpse into David's eventful life. We see him experience need, persecution, guilt, trust, joy, and worship. At the same time, the words he wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit often reach far beyond his own circumstances. In Psalms 16, 22, and 110, for example, God uses David to open our eyes to Christ—His suffering, resurrection, kingship, and glory. Through quiet communion with God, David received deep insight into God's wisdom.

Today, we have the Word of God. We have many Bible translations, commentaries, and essays. However, no amount of human wisdom or theological learning can enable us to grasp the deep truths of God's Word and His will for our time. Spiritual insights must be received through spiritual means, as God reveals them (1 Corinthians 2). Without the Holy Spirit's work, we remain limited, no matter how much truth we might be able to convey. Therefore, as servants of God, we need enlightened eyes. We need the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, to open His Word to us so that we can share God's Word—not merely human thoughts.

This is crucial, especially in times strongly influenced by human wisdom, personality, methods, and technology. Content can be collected, organized, and formulated, but spiritual insight does not arise from rational information. Preachers stand before God so that God Himself may teach them what to



THE PASTOR AND HIS MINISTRY (PART 9)

pass on in accordance with His will and His Word (John 16:13).

Serving in a Way That Keeps God at the Center

For servants of God, speaking to an assembly of God's children is different from other speaking engagements. Such an assembly is not focused on the stage or the speaker's talent and abilities; it is a place where God glorifies Himself (Psalm 89:7). The fundamental element of the assembly is not the preacher, but the presence of God, the leadership of Christ, and the intervention of the Holy Spirit.

Preachers may be present in such gatherings. That is no small thing, as they may serve, speak, explain, comfort, admonish, and direct people to Christ. Nevertheless, they remain only instruments in God's hands. He guides their service and works through them. Therefore, a preacher's love for these assemblies is not rooted in his role within them but to God's presence and glorification there (Matthew 18:20). The preacher's heart is most at home where the congregation gathers before God, His Word is heard, His name is worshiped, and Christ is magnified.

We also see this love for God's presence reflected in David. The retrieval of the Ark of the Covenant (2 Samuel 6) was only an outward sign of a deeper inner longing. David loved his God, loved the place where God's glory dwelt, and he desired God to take His rightful place among His people. This should also characterize preachers. Rather than seeking to be the center of attention, they should work to ensure that God is honored among the people they serve.

A Heart Pursuing God's Honor

David exhibits remarkable spiritual steadfastness. When people despised, wronged,

or insulted him, he felt it deeply. He was not unfeeling, and the Psalms show how profoundly persecution, disdain, and false accusations wounded him. Nevertheless, he was able, again and again, to place God's honor above his own. For example, he did not assert his rights against Saul on his own authority. He was also able to leave Shimei's curse (2 Samuel 16) in God's hands.

It was quite different, however, when God's honor was attacked. When Goliath mocked Israel's battle lines, David saw more than a military threat; above all, he saw a defiance of the living God and His people. David's love for God would not allow him to tolerate the dishonoring of God's name. That is why he confronted Goliath—not out of personal ambition, but in the name of the Lord.

This is an essential characteristic of preachers whom God can use. They do not need to anxiously guard their reputation. They may feel the sting of contempt, but they bring the hurt to God and leave it there. By contrast, when God's Word is distorted, Christ is diminished, God's holiness is trivialized, or His glory is pushed aside, their hearts must not remain indifferent. If we love God, we can relinquish our own honor, but never God's honor.

The messenger after God's own heart seeks God Himself, living in secret communion with Him. This quiet fellowship brings light from God's Word, enabling the messenger to serve with love and humility in the congregation, where God glorifies Himself. Such a heart is not preoccupied with honor or reputation; instead, it seeks the glory of God.

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Psalm 23

A psalm of David.

The Lord is my shepherd.

I lack nothing.

He lets me rest in grassy meadows;

he leads me to restful waters;

he keeps me alive.

He guides me in proper paths

for the sake of his good name.

Even when I walk through the darkest valley,

I fear no danger because you are with me.

Your rod and your staff—

they protect me.

You set a table for me

right in front of my enemies.

You bathe my head in oil;

my cup is so full it spills over!

Yes, goodness and faithful love

will pursue me all the days of my life,

and I will live in the Lord's house

as long as I live.

(Common English Bible)