



David: A Man after God's Own Heart

Lesson 3

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.”

“Nobody’s perfect.” While this statement is true, it can lead to wrong thinking. Some might give up trying to do right, since no one will ever be perfect. Some might assume that it is impossible to please God, since if we fall short the best we can hope for is that God won’t get *too* upset with us. If we mean by “Nobody’s perfect” that no one will ever be totally and completely free of all sin in desire, thought, speech, or action then of course that is right. But that doesn’t mean believers can’t live fruitful, God-honoring lives. That doesn’t mean we can’t say that God is pleased with some lives and not with others.

When we come to the Old Testament we find among the kings one king who stands out head and shoulders above the rest. David, the second king of Israel, is set forth as the high point of Israel’s kings. In this lesson, we will first see what God thinks of David, and how he is held up as a standard for a God-pleasing life. In the second half, we will seek to answer why it is that God felt this way about him.

The Golden Standard

I. God speaks very highly of David

Few people in Scripture get the high adulation David does. God tells Saul when he replaces him that he will replace him with “a man after [his] own heart” (1 Sam 13:14, cf Acts 13:22). God’s high esteem of David is seen in at least two ways:

A. God compares future kings to David.

David becomes the benchmark for good and bad kings going forward. Kings that God disapproves of to some extent are compared with David (1 Kings 11:4, 14:8, 15:3, 2 Kings 14:3), and kings that God is pleased with are also compared with David (1 Kings 3:3, 15:11, 2 Kings 16:2, 18:3, 22:2, 2 Chron 17:3, 28:1, 29:2, 34:2).

B. God states that David’s heart was perfect (1 Kings 11:4, 15:3).

God gives David pretty high praise later on in the book of 1 Kings. Twice the author says that another king’s heart was not “perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.”

What do you think it means that David had a perfect heart, when no one is perfect and David certainly messed up!

The Hebrew word used here is *shalem*, which is connected to the Hebrew verb which means “complete.” This word doesn’t mean that David is absolutely perfect,

but rather that his heart belonged completely to God. Modern translations translate it as “wholly devoted” (NASB), “wholly true” (ESV), “loyal” (NKJV), “wholeheartedly devoted” (CSB).

How can this be an encouragement to us? How can this be a challenge? What types of things do you think would cause God to look at someone and declare them to have a heart completely devoted to him?

II. God promised to give David an everlasting lineage.

Fully knowing the warts and flaws that David would have, God made a promise to David that he never broke. God promised David that he would have an heir who would rule forever (2 Samuel 7). While God had ended Saul’s dynasty, God assured David that he would never do the same to him. In fact, on several occasions God refrained from judging Judah because of this very promise (1 Kings 11:12-13, 32-34, 2 Kings 8:19, 19:34, 20:6). Obviously, the ultimate fulfillment of this promise will happen when Jesus Christ comes to establish his kingdom on this earth.

What do we learn about God’s character from him promising and fulfilling his promise to David?

What Made David So Special?

So why David? David was far from a perfect man, in fact a good argument could be made that his sins were worse than Saul’s! But for some reason God looked on David with a favor that set a high bar for all kings after. We are going to look at just four reasons why David’s life was so pleasing to God.

I. David was a man of humility.

As we mentioned in earlier lessons, this theme of humility vs pride will come to be the defining question for Israel's kings. Will a king humble himself before God and his Word, or will he proudly insist on his own way and his own glory? David's humility was seen in at least four ways:

A. David was faithful in watching his father's sheep (1 Sam 16:11-13, 14-23, 17:12-15, 34-36).

David was probably fairly young when he was called to do an important task. Before he ever killed Goliath, David was sent to play the harp in the place for the king to soothe him. Yet when the country went back to war, David went back to sheep.

David was apparently faithful in watching over his father's flock, so much so that he fought off wild animals rather than letting them have a sheep or two. Had David not been so bold and so faithful, he might not have been ready to take on Goliath.

How is humility seen in being faithful in the little things? What are some ways we can be faithful in the little things? Why do little things matter to God so much?

B. David did not seek to kill Saul (1 Sam 24:6, 26:9).

For much of 1 Samuel David is running for his life. On two separate occasions, David providentially finds himself and his army alone in a cave with Saul. Twice he passes on the opportunity to kill Saul, believing that Saul was God's anointed and it wasn't David's place to kill Saul.

Why do you think it was that David was able to have the courage to not kill Saul? What about God was David trusting? How would our lives be different if we had the same view of God?

C. David didn't take vengeance on his personal enemies (2 Sam 16:5-12; 19:16-23).

It wasn't just Saul who was spared the axe, however. We find later that David was cursed by someone named Shimei while he was fleeing from Absalom. Once David was free and reestablished in his throne, he refused to kill him. David's consistent policy was to not kill people who were his personal enemies (cf 2 Samuel 3-4).

Why do you think David was unwilling to take personal vengeance? What can we learn from his example?

D. David acknowledged when he was wrong (1 Sam 25).

David was also a person who was willing to admit when he was wrong. When Nabal refused to help David and instead publicly insulted him, David decided it was time to teach him and his house a lesson. Abigail, Nabal's wise wife, was able to talk David out of his foolish arrogance (1 Samuel 25:32-35).

Why is it hard to admit when we're wrong about something?

How was David able to go from such proud arrogance to humility so quickly? How might we do the same today?

II. David repented when sinned.

Sadly, even those most godly king of Israel committed atrocious sin. But the key with David was how he responded to the sin and what happened after the sin. And this especially is where Saul and David take very different paths.

A. David responded when confronted with his sin (2 Samuel 12:1-14).

David was pretty far entrenched in his sin when God confronted him. It's not completely clear, but it would seem that the child has already been born by the time Nathan confronts David (2 Samuel 12:14, 18). That means that David has been rebelling against God for over 9 months! Yet by a miracle of grace, David has the humility to immediately respond with brokenness when confronted by Nathan (2 Samuel 12:13).

B. David accepted the consequences of his sin (2 Samuel 12:17-23; 16:5-12).

Quite unlike Saul, when David believes he is facing the punishment for his sin, he refuses to fight it. When the child dies, David accepts this punishment as from the Lord. When David is cursed by a prominent Benjaminite who feels that David was responsible for death in Saul's house (even though he wasn't), David responded by refusing to take action. Part of the reason for this was his belief that God might be using Shimei, and David didn't want to cut short what God was doing.

Why do people respond differently than David did to God's discipline? How can we respond like David?

III. David was obsessed with God's glory.

David humbled himself and repented of sin the way he did, at least in part because of the view of God that he held. David behaved the way he did because he saw God as one high and lifted up, who was worthy of his love and devotions. All throughout the life of David, we can find David acting right because he has a right view of God, but two episodes draw our attention to David's high view of God like few other passages.

A. David fought Goliath because Goliath defied God (1 Samuel 17:26, 45-47).

Everyone knows that David fought Goliath. But what could possibly convince a shepherd boy to take on one of the mightiest warriors of his day? A rock solid belief that God's glory and power were being called into question, and those were two things that were worth fighting and dying for! It can be easy to go through the motions of following God while forgetting the God we serve. If you had asked anyone of the Israelites if their God could take down Goliath, no doubt they all would have said he could. But only David was willing to face Goliath in combat. Sadly, there is often a gap between what we say about God and what we really believe to be true. Faith in a powerful God takes steps believing that God will do what he has said he will do.

How can we show faith in God's power and glory in our lives today? Why do we often have a shallow view of God?

B. David sought to build a glorious temple for God (2 Samuel 7:1).

David's love for the Lord shines through clearest when, totally on his own, David desires to build a house for God. David didn't do this to get something from God, or to impress God. Rather, what he did was done out of a gratitude for all that God had done for him. God is very pleased by this desire, even if ends up telling David that David can't be the one to build the temple.

Love and gratitude for God should flow out in creative ways. What are some practical ways that believers today can intentionally show how grateful they are for all that God has done for them?

IV. David worshipped extravagantly.

In addition to building the temple for God, David worshipped God with a genuine heart. A right view of God and proper humility before God will result in heartfelt, God-honoring worship. David demonstrated this type of worship at several points in his life.

A. David praised God joyously (2 Sam 6:12-23).

This is a passage that sometimes makes conservative Christians a bit uneasy, and for understandable reasons. The cultural dancing that David did was far less likely to get mixed up with the sensualized dancing of 21st century America. But we need to be careful that we don't run so far from this passage out of fear it might be abused that we miss the point. David loved God! David was thrilled that the Ark, the visible symbol of God's

presence, was coming back to Israel! Even if it doesn't result in physical dancing today, our joy for God should be authentic and vibrant. A heart that is moved by the goodness of God and that is overwhelmed by the thought of God's presence among us will flow out in a joyful life, vibrant singing, a cheerful attitude, and a hundred other different ways.

What are some ways that a heart on fire for God will manifest itself?

B. David worshipped during the lowest points of his life (2 Sam 12:20, Psalm 63).

When David brought the Ark into Jerusalem was arguably one of the best days in David's life. But David, like Job, also worshipped God during some of the worst days of his life (cf Job 1:20). When he found out that the child he had wrongly conceived with Bathsheba was dead, and that God had heard his request the child's life be spared and answered no, David worshipped.

What about God's character was David believing when he worshipped after his prayer wasn't answered? How can this be a help to us in our own spiritual lives?

C. David repented so that he could worship again (Psalm 51:11-15).

We read about what David was thinking after he sinned with Bathsheba in Psalm 51. We see there that one of the things David had missed the most was the ability to worship God. Once his sin was out in the open and being

addressed, David begs God to restore the joy of his salvation, noting that if and when God does, David will praise God yet again.

D. David sacrificed intentionally (2 Samuel 24:18-25).

At the end of his life David takes a sinful census that results in the death of many people as God's punishment. Later, God tells David to purchase an area to offer a sacrifice, the site which later become the temple. When David goes to buy the land, the person who owns it finds out why David wants it and offers it to him. David's response? "Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing" (2 Samuel 24:24). David wanted to make sure that when he served God, he personally was sacrificing for it.

How does this compare with much of the modern church's view of worship? How can we at Colonial learn from David's example?

David was an imperfect man, but he was a man that loved God and lived out a life of faith dependent on God. David had a heart that wanted to see God glorified, and that truly believed that God was big enough and powerful enough to be trusted and worshipped. It has rightfully been said that David had God's heart because God had David's heart. What about you? Do you find yourself going through the motions of worship, or has your heart truly been captured by the same big, all-powerful, all-glorious, and all-good God that captured David's?