

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Broadcast Date: 17 November 2013

No. T0807

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Lessons from the life of David: David's triumphs

Last week we thought about David and his testings. Today, we're going to think about David's triumphs, when he was established as King over Israel. There are three things that I would like us to consider:

1. David's triumphs over his enemies;
2. The triumphant procession of the holy ark into Jerusalem; and
3. David's triumph of grace in his kindness to Mephibosheth.

We can learn some valuable lessons from these three areas of David's life.

1. David's triumph over his enemies

Let's start then with our first point, David's triumph over his enemies. I will read 2 Samuel 5:1-5, reading from the New King James Version: *"Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and spoke, saying, 'Indeed we are your bone and your flesh. Also, in time past, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and brought them in; and the LORD said to you, "You shall shepherd My people Israel, and be ruler over Israel." Therefore all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD. And they anointed David king over Israel. David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah."*

So we have here the beginning of David's reign, first at Hebron, then at Jerusalem. What happened next in 2 Samuel 5 is that David's men seized the stronghold of Zion in Jerusalem, which became called "the city of David" (2 Samuel 5:7). This is the first mention of Zion in the Bible, and it is a name that we hear many, many times after that. Zion will be the seat of power of the Messiah during the millennium, as we can see from Psalm 2:6-8: *"Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession."* When David came up against it, however, Zion of Jerusalem was inhabited by enemies, the Jebusites. It would seem that a long time ago, Jerusalem had been a city where God was worshipped, since we read about King Melchizedek, King of Salem, who came to bless Abraham in Genesis 14:18-24.

Hebrews 7:1 tells us that Melchizedek was King of Salem, that is, Jerusalem, and priest of the Most High God. Evidently things had changed, and the stronghold of Zion was held by the Jebusites who taunted and ridiculed David, as we shall see when we read 2 Samuel 5:6-12. Let's read to hear what happened: *"And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who spoke to David, saying, 'You shall not come in here; but the blind and the lame will repel you,' thinking, 'David cannot come in here.' Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David). Now David said on that day, 'Whoever climbs up by way of the water shaft and defeats the Jebusites (the lame and the blind, who are hated by David's soul), he shall be chief and captain.' Therefore they say, 'The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.' Then David dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the City of David. And David built all around from the Millo and inward. So David went on and became great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him. Then Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters and masons. And they built David a house. So David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel, and that He had exalted His kingdom for the sake of His people Israel."*

What can we learn from this story? Are there enemies that we need to fight against, and are there strongholds that we need to seize? There are, but it is important to understand who our enemies are, in contrast to the enemies spoken of in the Old Testament. If we read 1 Corinthians 10:1-10, we read about the children of Israel as they went through the wilderness, before entering into the promised land. The Apostle Paul speaks about various things that happened to them, and then in 1 Corinthians 10:11 he says, *"Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."* Clearly, the stories that we read in the Old Testament are there to teach us specific lessons. Paul says a similar thing in Romans 15:4: *"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."* Therefore we can learn something from David's taking of the stronghold of Zion.

As I said, it is important to realise who our enemies are in the light of the New Testament. The Apostle Paul tells us clearly in Ephesians 6:12 that **our** enemies are **not** other people: *"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."* This is clear also from the words of the Lord Jesus Himself. When it comes to people who may not like us, or may not like what we stand for, then we are told to love our enemies and to do good to those who hate us (see, for example, Luke 6:27). Ephesians 6:12 tells us that our enemies are spiritual. They are nonetheless very real, and Paul speaks further about them in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, where you will note that the concept of a stronghold is mentioned, just like the stronghold of Zion in David's day: *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."* There are indeed many arguments and reasonings that seek to oppose God and Christ. These are strongholds that oppose, just like the Jebusites of Zion in David's day. But in contrast to David, **our** weapons are not carnal (2 Corinthians 10:4) - that is, fleshly, physical - but our weapons are nonetheless powerful. What are our weapons? The New Testament speaks of two - the Word of God, the Bible, spoken of as *"the sword of the Spirit"* (Ephesians 6:17), and prayer (Ephesians 6:18). These are the weapons, when used in the fear of God and with faith in Him, that bring the spiritual strongholds down.

2. The triumphant procession of the holy ark into Jerusalem

So, we have thought about our first point, David's triumph over his enemies. Let's look at the second point, which is the triumphal entry of the Holy ark into Jerusalem. You can read about this in 2 Samuel 6. David wanted to bring the ark of God into Zion, the city of David. At first, there was a sad and serious set-back. The Word of God had clearly specified that the ark was to be carried by the Levites (see Numbers 1:51). However, David initially transported the ark by placing it on a cart (2 Samuel 6:1-5), and Uzzah, who was one of the men driving the cart, was struck by God when he touched the ark because the oxen pulling the cart had stumbled (2 Samuel 6:6). Let's read 2 Samuel 6:7-11: *"Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God. And David became angry because of the LORD's outbreak against Uzzah; and he called the name of the place Perez Uzzah to this day. David was afraid of the LORD that day; and he said, 'How can the ark of the LORD come to me?' So David would not move the ark of the LORD with him into the City of David; but David took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months. And the LORD blessed Obed-Edom and all his household."*

It's worth delving a little into the history of the ark to better understand this story. In 1 Samuel 4:1-11, we see that the Philistines defeated the Israelites, and that the ark of God, which had been rashly carried into the battle by men who were wicked, was captured by the Philistines. The Philistines placed the ark in the temple of their idol Dagon (1 Samuel 5:1-3), but God judged it and them (1 Samuel 5:4-6), and the Philistines returned the ark to Israel (1 Samuel 5:7-6:19). The ark was at first at a place called Beth Shemesh (1 Samuel 6:9), but we read in 1 Samuel 6:19 that God struck the men of Beth Shemesh because they had looked in the ark. Then, in 1 Samuel 7:1, we read that the ark was taken to the house of Abinadab. Now, when David wanted to bring the ark to Zion, it was taken from Abinadab's house, as we read in 2 Samuel 6:3: *"So they set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart."*

Uzzah was thus one of the sons of Abinadab, and so he had had the ark in his house for a long time. He should have known the proper reverence required, especially in view of what had happened to the men of Beth Shemesh. Perhaps familiarity had bred contempt, as we say. The sad incident left David angry and fearful. However, David subsequently realised his fault. If we look at a parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 15:11-15, we will see that David then arranged for things to be done in the proper way: *"And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites: for Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab. He said to them, 'You are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites; sanctify yourselves, you and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel to the place I have prepared for it. For because you did not do it the first time, the LORD our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order.' So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. And the children of the Levites bore the ark of God on their shoulders, by its poles, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the LORD."*

This time, the ark was joyfully carried into Zion. 1 Chronicles 15:28: *"Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the horn, with trumpets and with cymbals, making music with stringed instruments and harps."* It is thought by many that the lovely Psalm 24 was composed with reference to this occasion: *"Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah"* (Psalm 24:7-10). If so, we have a triumphant and glorious theme described, as the King of Glory, typified by the Holy ark, is carried into Jerusalem and Zion. It looks forward to the time when the

Lord Jesus Christ shall take His rightful place in Zion in the millennium. We have a description of this in the words of the prophet Zechariah in Zechariah 2:10-12: *"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," says the LORD. 'Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. And the LORD will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem.'"*

What can we learn from this triumph of David? We need to remember the holiness of God, and it also brings home to us the value and wonder of the Lord Jesus' work for us. The Apostle Peter reminds us of this in his first epistle, 1 Peter 1:15-17: *"But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.' And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear."* And yet, as Peter goes on to remind us in 1 Peter 1:18-19, we are able to approach our God and our Father because of what the Lord Jesus has done for us by His work on the cross: *"Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."*

What a wonderful work the Lord Jesus has done! Because of Him, we are able to stand before a Holy God as our Father, and we are not condemned, because God sees us in Christ - the value of what Christ has done is upon us. Think of some of the very earliest recorded words of the Lord Jesus on the morning of His resurrection, in John 20:17: *"Go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"* What a wonderful Saviour we have!

3. David's triumph of grace in his kindness to Mephibosheth

We now come to our third and final point, David's triumph of grace in his kindness to Mephibosheth. Let's read 2 Samuel 9:1-7: *"Now David said, 'Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?' And there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba. So when they had called him to David, the king said to him, 'Are you Ziba?' He said, 'At your service!' Then the king said, 'Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, to whom I may show the kindness of God?' And Ziba said to the king, 'There is still a son of Jonathan who is lame in his feet.' So the king said to him, 'Where is he?' And Ziba said to the king, 'Indeed he is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, in Lo Debar.' Then King David sent and brought him out of the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo Debar. Now when Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, had come to David, he fell on his face and prostrated himself. Then David said, 'Mephibosheth?' And he answered, 'Here is your servant!' So David said to him, 'Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat bread at my table continually.'"*

If you read 2 Samuel 7, you will see that David had wanted to build a house for God, in other words, a temple (2 Samuel 7:1-2). God had spoken to him to tell him that he should not build a house for God - that task and honour would fall to his son, Solomon. God said instead that **He**, God, would build a lasting house for David, and in that we can see a prophetic indication of the great Son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, whose Kingdom will never end (2 Samuel 7:5-16). David was overwhelmed with this grace of God: *"Then King David went in and sat before the LORD; and he said: 'Who am I, O Lord GOD? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far? And yet this was a small thing in Your sight, O Lord GOD; and You have also spoken of Your servant's house for a great while to come. Is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD? Now what more can David say to You? For You, Lord GOD, know Your servant'"* (2 Samuel 7:18-20). David, having received such grace from God, looks to see where he in turn can show grace. David had greatly appreciated the friendship of Saul's son Jonathan, which we can read about in the first book of Samuel. He now wants to know if there is anyone left of Saul's family, so that he can show kindness for Jonathan's sake, and so we have the beautiful story of David and Mephibosheth, which we have just read.

Mephibosheth may have been concerned when David sent for him (2 Samuel 9:5). What were David's intentions? Was David going to be unkindly disposed towards a member of the deposed former royal family, now that David was firmly established as King? On the contrary, David shows grace and kindness - he restores Mephibosheth's property, and undertakes to provide for Mephibosheth himself (2 Samuel 9:9-13). It is a picture of the grace and kindness of God towards us, in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. Incidentally, it is interesting to note that Mephibosheth was lame (2 Samuel 9:13). When we considered David taking the stronghold of Zion, we read the taunt of the Jebusites, who said *"You shall not come in here; but the blind and the lame will repel you,"* which led to David's hasty response, which grates with us when we think of the spirit of the New Testament: *"Whoever climbs up by way of the water shaft and defeats the Jebusites (the lame and the blind, who are hated by David's soul)"* (2 Samuel 5:8) Here we see a much finer spirit - David shows grace, kindness and favour to the lame Mephibosheth.

So once again we can ask ourselves, what can we learn from this incident? What does this triumph of grace teach us? We have considered God's words to us through the Apostles Paul and Peter, and now we can turn to God's word as spoken by the Apostle John. In 1 John 4:9-11, we read as follows: *"In this the love of God was manifested toward*

us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." This is a very interesting set of verses. We see God's great love to us - He loved us first, even when we did not love Him, and He gave us His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus, so that our sins could be forgiven, and we could be brought into a relationship with Him. "*Beloved, if God so loved us ...*", the Apostle says (1 John 4:11). We might have expected the verse to conclude with something like "we should love God." We should, of course. But what the Apostle says is that "*... if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*" Loving God's people is a way of showing love to God Himself. It is an appropriate response to God's love for us. David was overwhelmed with God's grace to him, and so he seeks to find someone that he can show grace to for Jonathan's sake. We have been marvellously blessed by God, and so we too can seek to show God's love by loving His people.

And so we come to the end of our consideration of some of David's triumphs - his triumphs over his enemies, the triumphant entry of the ark of God into Zion, and then David's triumph of grace to Mephibosheth. May God Himself help us to learn and apply the lessons that we can draw from these incidents.

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