

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Broadcast Date: 24 November 2013

No. T0808

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Lessons from the life of David: David's troubles

Good Morning and welcome to *Truth for Today*. We are in the middle of a series looking at "Lessons from the life of David". The title of our talk this morning is "David's troubles".

Character studies in the Bible are one of my favourite ways of studying Scripture. We read about many men and women in the Bible, some named and some are unnamed. When we look into the lives of each character we sometimes learn a lot about them, but sometimes very little. For example, so much is written about Joseph (Genesis 30:24-50:26) but only a few words are written about Enoch (Genesis 5:18-24). Why is this? God records exactly what He wants us to know about them, primarily for His glory but also for our learning and encouragement.

Troubles in life are something that we all face in different ways and none of us are exempt, whether young or old, rich or poor, Christian or non Christian. Some troubles we bring upon ourselves which could have been avoided because they are usually the result of sin in our lives. Disobedience to God, weakness, selfishness and wrong desires are examples of this. It is good every now and again to examine our lives, our thoughts and our actions to identify things that could cause troubles in the future. Often we are discouraged as we see how feeble Christians we are. How often we sin and how often we let the Lord down. But God knows our feeble frame, He understands our difficulties. This was the reason that He explained to His disciples in John 13:1-17 that, although when we first believed our sins are washed completely, we still have to continue to wash daily all the defilement we pick up in this evil world. So how is this done? The Lord knew we would not be perfect so provision was made for us as we read in 1 John 1:9, "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" We must remember that as Christians, our sins have already been forgiven but we must confess them to enjoy close fellowship with God.

Christians who live their lives close to God probably have less trouble but they are not exempt. Often God brings times of testing into our lives which He uses to prove and strengthen our faith. These times of trouble could be illness, family problems, and problems in the church or maybe financial difficulties. As we try and live righteous upright lives, we can also have troubles from the enemies of God. It is how we cope with the troubles of life that we would like to look at today. We will look at the positive ways of overcoming troubles.

David is an example of one who was truly chosen of God but saw failure and trouble during his life. David was born in 1035 BC in Bethlehem and was from the tribe of Judah. His father was called Jesse (Ruth 4:17, 22; 1 Samuel 16:19, 17:58) and he had seven brothers (see 1 Samuel 16:10, 1 Chronicles 2:13-15) and two sisters. As the youngest in the family, it was David's duty to tend the sheep. He would spend many lonely hours in the wilderness caring and guarding the family's most precious possession: their sheep. David was musical and he would spend many a lonely evening playing his harp at the entrance to a cave in the hills where he had brought the sheep for safety and to rest for the night. David was a handsome lad and in very good physical shape due to the physically demanding outdoor life he led (1 Samuel 16:12). David was an obedient, unassuming lad and he had a kind heart. Our attention is first brought to David when Samuel is instructed to go and anoint the next king of Israel after God's rejection of Saul as king (1 Samuel 16:13). David was in the fields keeping the sheep (1 Samuel 16:11) while Samuel inspected the sons of Jesse. After they were all rejected, David was sent for. The moment Samuel saw David, he knew that he was God's chosen one who would be the next king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:12).

Saul was a troubled man once the Spirit of God had left him and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. He needed soothing at times and he asked for a good harp player to come and play for him. I like the verse in 1 Samuel 16:18 where one of Saul's servants gives David an excellent commendation in answer to Saul's request; we read, "*Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, a mighty valiant man, and a mighty man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him.*" David is brought from the wilderness to the palace to play his harp before the once mighty king Saul. David lived in the palace and played for the king on many occasions; Saul loved David and he became his armour bearer (1 Samuel 16:21). David's troubles were about to begin.

I will briefly attempt to look at some of David's troubles throughout his life, beginning when he was young, then as a king, then in his family. Then we will look at how David reflects over his life in his old age. As we look at David's life, I trust that we may learn from his mistakes and take encouragement from the way he overcomes these troubles.

The young man David was a quiet, obedient and unassuming lad. He took any responsibility he had very seriously, and did everything to the best of his ability. He did not deserve the attitude others had toward him. Trouble began very close to home and it came from his oldest brother Eliab. After David was sent by his father to the battlefield, Eliab accused him of neglecting the sheep and leaving them alone in the wilderness (1 Samuel 17:28); he also accused him of having an evil heart (1 Samuel 17:28). His other brothers and the other men were no better as they told him the same thing. Of course, none of these things were true as David was carrying out his father's instructions.

David did not react angrily, or neither did he try and justify himself. I find this very interesting and I believe that there are times when we do not need to explain ourselves to others who are ready to judge the things we do. David could have been discouraged but he went on knowing that he was doing what he was told and he had everything in order. When others discourage you, keep going if you believe you are doing God's will. This can be difficult when you are young because you must show respect to your elders, but be strong, never be bitter toward them.

In 1 Samuel 18:14-15 we read *"And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him. Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself wisely in all his ways, he was afraid of him."* Saul also was aware that God was with him and this made him afraid. Saul took David into his house and his son Jonathan became David's best friend (1 Samuel 18:1-2). David had killed the giant Goliath (1 Samuel 17:51) and his fame had spread throughout Israel. Everyone was speaking about him; in fact they praised him as they sang that *"Saul had slain thousands but David tens of thousands"* (1 Samuel 18:7). Because of this Saul, was jealous toward David (1 Samuel 18:8) and tried to kill him on three occasions by throwing his spear at him after inviting him to play his harp (1 Samuel 18:10-11, 19:9-10, 20:33). Saul had made him captain over a thousand soldiers (1 Samuel 18:13). David served Saul the king well, fighting bravely with his men. Saul had also promised that the man who killed Goliath would have his eldest daughter's hand in marriage (1 Samuel 17:25). Saul broke this promise and gave her to another man (1 Samuel 18:17-19). After this, Saul gave David one of his other daughters, called Michal, for his wife (1 Samuel 18:20.) Michal helped David flee when her father tried to kill David again (1 Samuel 19:11-18). Jonathan too helped David eventually to flee the house of Saul for fear of his life.

David continued to serve Saul faithfully in his role as a captain in the army whilst Saul continued to hunt him down. David had men around him who loved him and were very faithful to him. David could have killed Saul on one occasion but instead he cut a piece of cloth from the hem of his coat while he slept (1 Samuel 24:7). Out of his respect for God's anointed king he spared him. The years leading up to Saul's death were difficult for David. However, David had some good friends and God was with him. David consulted God on every step of his difficult path. David had done nothing wrong yet he was hated by Saul. The troubles he had were from friends and family: they were through no fault of his own. We would say this was totally unfair but God was putting him through these troubles to enhance his character for later life when he was to be king. David was never bitter toward Saul's family after the way Saul treated him. In fact, he was distraught when he was told of the death of Saul and his sons which included his best friend Jonathan.

David was 30 years old when he became king of Israel and joined Judah and Israel together. Israel became a strong nation once more and they were feared by the countries that bordered them. David became greater and greater, for the Lord of hosts was with him as we read in 2 Samuel 5:10. David continued in the first few years of his reign to win many battles conquering lands and adding wealth to Israel. David was a wise king; he had to be as he was faced with many different issues from both friends and enemies. David judged situations fairly and righteously but he was ruthless when he judged that some person or country had crossed the line. Becoming king brought David different challenges. David now had endless wealth and complete power which brought responsibilities. This is probably one of the reasons God allowed him to go through the troubles we have spoken of in his youth.

David could do as he pleased, take what he desired. You might say that David had everything anyone would want to have in this world. But having all these things brings different temptations. It was not long before David faced temptation, a temptation that was too much for him to resist (2 Samuel 11:1-26). David, when he should have been thinking about war, was relaxing in the palace (2 Samuel 11:1). He went on to his terrace and he saw a beautiful woman bathing (2 Samuel 11:2). His desires overcame him and he sent for the woman (2 Samuel 11:3). Her name was Bathsheba: she was the wife of Uriah the Hittite who was a very faithful man in David's army (2 Samuel 11:4). David committed adultery with Bathsheba and soon word was sent to David to say that she was pregnant (2 Samuel 11:4-5). David then tried to cover up this dreadful sin by trying to deceive Uriah (2 Samuel 11:6-8) but Uriah remained faithful to his men and to David as king (2 Samuel 11:9-11). David decided that the only way to keep his sin secret was to have Uriah killed so he arranged that he would be sent to the fiercest part of the battle (2 Samuel 11:14-16). Uriah was killed by the Ammonites (2 Samuel 11:17-25) and David brought Bathsheba to his house and she became his wife and bore him a son (2 Samuel 11:27).

David had managed to cover up this dreadful sin from his people but not from God! In 2 Samuel 12:1-15 we read of the incident when God sent Nathan to confront David in the form of a parable. David was angry as he heard what the man in the parable had done and he wanted him punished by death (2 Samuel 12:5). David also wanted him to pay it back four times what he had taken (2 Samuel 12:5). Nathan points out that "[David] was *the man*" (2 Samuel 12:7). God had given him deliverance from the hand of Saul. God had given him Saul's house, his wives, the house of Israel and Judah. Was that too little? So as a consequence, the sword would never depart from his house. God would bring evil against David and his own house: God would take his wives and give them to his neighbour. David confessed his sin against God (2 Samuel 12:13) and he was forgiven but there were consequences of his sin (2 Samuel 12:15-23). Bathsheba's child became sick (2 Samuel 12:15), David was utterly distraught during the illness and he fasted and wept for seven days (2 Samuel 12:16). He asked the Lord to be gracious unto him and let the child live but the child died (2 Samuel 12:18-19).

David because of his sin had brought trouble upon himself as king and upon his household. How can we expect God to bless us if we sin? The Bible tells us that "*the wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). David prayed for the child to live but it was the wrong prayer as he was told the child would die. We, too, can try and cover up sin from our nearest and dearest but God is all seeing and all knowing. God is gracious enough to forgive us these sins when confessed but the results of sin may be with us all the days of our lives. We must be guarded that we do not use our position in sinful ways.

In 2 Samuel 3 we read of the beginning of David's family in Hebron. David over the years had met a few women in the different places he fought and he took them with him as his wives. There are six women mentioned and they all had sons to David (2 Samuel 3:2-5). David, when he came to Jerusalem took more concubines and wives, and a further eleven sons and daughters were born to David. God had told him there was going to be trouble in his household and trouble there was! Remember David's words to Nathan? He wanted the man in the parable to pay back fourfold (2 Samuel 12:6). Poor David suffered from his own words. One of David's sons called, Amnon, had fallen in love with his half sister, Tamar, and he attacked and humiliated her (2 Samuel 13:1-22). David was very angry when he heard of all the things that had gone on. Absalom, who was Tamar's sister, hated Amnon because of what he did to his sister and carefully planned revenge (2 Samuel 13:23-33). Two years later, he commanded his servants to kill him. David wept bitterly at the death of his son Amnon (2 Samuel 13:31). Absalom shamefully treated David's wives and he rebelled against his father the King of Israel. He took up arms against him and David had to flee (2 Samuel 13:34-39). Eventually the uprising was put down, but Absalom died when his head was caught in a great oak and he was killed by Joab (2 Samuel 18:9-10). In 2 Samuel 18:33 we read of David's great grief over the death of his son Absalom. Time and time again, David had many family problems due to the wives he had taken from strange countries and the children borne by them.

God's word tells us we should have one wife and if you are a Christian, she should also be a Christian. The Bible clearly states that a Christian should not marry a non Christian as they have different values and beliefs (2 Corinthians 6:14). Unfortunately today there are many broken marriages in Christian circles. Many husbands and wives have broken their marriage vows before God by taking other partners. Children suffer, the testimony suffers and often this results in strife within families. We have only touched on a few instances of the troubles in David's life. But I would like to recommend that you further study his life. We often just look at the well known points in David's life but there are lessons throughout his life for us today.

I would like to finish by looking at a wonderful psalm of David, Psalm 37. David wrote this psalm when he was old as we see in Psalm 37:25. He writes with the benefit of hindsight, of maturity and of a deep, wide and varied experience, of life, of men, and of God. I would just like to look at a few positive things from this psalm that will help us to overcome troubles that are brought upon ourselves or that come along during life. We will probably always ask, "Why does God allow different things in our lives?" Only you can judge why.

- Psalm 37:3 tells us to "*Trust in the LORD.*" That means fully trusting Him during every experience whether we feel it's good or bad;
- Psalm 37:4 tells us to "*Delight in the LORD.*" David delighted in doing God's will: he delighted in being righteous and he delighted in God's word;
- Psalm 37:5 tells us to "*Commit your way to the LORD.*" Our pathway is unknown to us thankfully though it is known to God. We can commit every step to the Lord with faith, and trust Him to direct us along the way;
- Psalm 37:7 tells us to "*Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him.*" Rest is something that is peaceful and pleasant and it comes from a total trust and dependence on God;
- Psalm 37:34 tells us to "*Wait on the LORD and keep His way.*"

We like everything at our finger tips today; we expect answers to be immediate, so we are often impatient. But God requires us to wait for His time as Isaiah 55:9 tells us *"His thoughts are higher than our thoughts: His ways are higher than our ways."*

David in his reflections concluded that a life lived near to the Lord was the antidote to troubles. We are encouraged by what we can learn from David's example to have a closer walk and a total trust and confidence in God. We trust the Lord for salvation but we often don't trust Him enough for our daily lives, our families, our health and our troubles. May you be challenged and encouraged by our talk today and may God bless you, Amen.

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