

SAUL AND DAVID IN REVIEW

- 2 SAMUEL 5:12. - SEPTEMBER 20. -

Golden Text: – "And David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake."

OF the two men in review Saul certainly had the more favorable opportunities at the beginning of his life. Nature seemed to have so specially fitted him for the office of king that when he was brought to the attention of the people, they, recognizing these natural traits, received him without hesitation. For a little while, he walked in humility, carefully seeking to do the Lord's will, but not having fully submitted himself, it was not long until there was a combination of his own will mixing with that of the Lord. The result was disobedience, failure, a troubled mind growingly perverse almost to the point of insanity, and finally an ignominious death. The flaw in Saul's character was his lack of a full consecration to the Lord, his maintaining a certain amount of self-will. This seemed to have been the difficulty. A similar difficulty affects all who fail to make their calling and election sure. Whether they go into the Second Death or the Great Company, the fault of the failure lies in neglect to surrender fully to the Lord every interest of life and to accept in faith his leadings, his providences in all the affairs of life, seeking to do his will and ignoring – mortifying – self.

David's character was in sharp contrast to that of Saul. Less favorably circumstanced at the beginning of his career, not so tall and commanding in appearance, probably of a less wealthy family, and possibly with no better mental endowment by birth, David's life and its results are in sharp contrast to those of Saul. Look wherever we will in his checkered career, we see courage

and determination exercised along right lines, proper lines. He was not a wild animal hunter, but to protect the flock he slew the lion and the bear. He was not a pugilist nor a gladiator; yet at the proper moment he was ready to risk his life for the defence of his people. He appreciated highly the honor that had been conferred upon him in his anointing for the kingship, yet he held this with modesty – never boasted of it and never rashly attempted to hasten the divine programme. He endured patiently the opposition of the king, yet treated the members of the royal family with profoundest respect; and finally, instead of thrusting himself on the nation as king and demanding his acceptance, he still waited patiently the Lord's time. One of the results of studying the lives of great and good men is in seeing the way in which they were able to make the world better.

"Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us,
Footprints on the sands of time."

Many of those who have risen to prominence in the world have left no footprints that we can see; but when the Lord sets great examples before us, he shows us the footprints, and how some lead downward and others upward. Saul was of the former class, David of the latter. The important point to be noticed by us all is how much these footprints diverge, that we may avoid the one and profit by the other. The secret of David's success was not the mere fixity of his purpose, but additionally the fact that his purpose was kept fully in accord with the divine will. Even in telling to King Saul the story of his conflict with the lion and the bear, he gave glory to God as having delivered them into his hands. And so throughout his entire career. We notice this same desire, to give God the glory of his successes, and to realize that whatever failures there were in his life were either his own weaknesses or divine blessings in disguise. Thus we see David's

whole existence exemplifying the words of holy writ – "In all thy ways acknowledge him," "and he shall give thee the desire of thine heart."

VALUE IN HIGH IDEALS

As we look about us in the world, and in the nominal church, we see vast numbers of mankind without any ideals, without any ambition. Alas, poor things! How can they ever have any pleasure or reach any noble **[R4255 : page 299]** goal when they see none? Looking again, we perceive some with only mean and groveling ambitions, worse than none. Poor creatures! Born in sin, shapen in iniquity, and perhaps reared in unfavorable environments, they are seriously handicapped in comparison with some others of the fallen race, less depraved and more favored. Looking again, we see a third class with noble worldly ambitions, seeking for wealth, influence, power, with a desire to use these honorably, nobly, not to the injury of their fellow-creatures, but to some extent the opposite. These are to be congratulated as having better motives in life than the first two classes. They were possibly better born and possibly had better environment.

We look again and find a fourth class, whose eyes have by the grace of God been lifted from earthly things to the heavenly. To these, "Old things have passed away and all things have become new." The vision of heavenly joy, heavenly fellowship, heavenly service, has so transformed their minds that, although their flesh may still be weak, nevertheless they overcome by the new mind. This is the class which the earth could never satisfy. A new standard of values has come to them; and they both feel and know that the things of this life are "not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." They find these things in comparison but loss and dross. This is the class which the Lord has under his special care and instruction. Because they have made their consecration to him, he is showing

them something of the height and depth, the length and breadth of the "deep things" of God. Thus he is giving to them, through his knowledge and grace, a power divine, which is working in them both to will and to do his good pleasure. The secret of their attainment of this favored position is that, having heard of the grace of God, their hearts responded. They gave themselves to the Lord and the work of grace progressing in them is his work. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." – Eph. 2:10; Jas. 1:8.

A DOUBLE-MINDED MAN IS UNSTABLE

But now again we must recognize a division; for "they are not all Israelites who are of Israel." Some of this fourth class are more responsible and some less responsible as to the things which the Lord has shown [R4256 : page 299] them respecting his character and his plan. Some take a less positive stand and seek to gain the things of this world, its honor, as well as the honor of God and the world to come. In doing this, they are not heeding the words of the Master, who assures all his disciples that such a course would mean failure, that they would neither please the world nor would they succeed in pleasing the Lord. Such may eventually be brought to life eternal, but they are not the wise virgins. They will not reign in the Millennial Kingdom. The Lord is seeking those who worship him with all their hearts, with all their souls, with all their strength, and with all their minds. These whole-souled ones are the class the Lord is specially seeking as the Queen of the Millennial Kingdom, the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, and joint-heirs with him. He has already foreordained that only such may be members of the royal family and partakers of the divine nature, saying, "Whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." To these he will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them, because they walk uprightly. Their hearts are upright, and their intentions are loyal to God and to his laws of justice and

love. Let us get fixed in our minds the peculiar quality of this overcoming class, which is to constitute the Kingdom as Christ's joint-heirs, that they must be loyal to God, consecrated, determined, and full of faith and trust.

These qualities cannot be expected to come to us instantaneously. Rather they are the gradual growth and development of the new mind, but the principle must be in the heart before development can be made along these lines – the principle of loyalty and determination. The little word "will" has its very important place, then, in the Christian's character. He must be a willer, and the will must be rightly directed into full harmony with that of God.

CARVING OUT THE IDEAL

We said a moment ago that a high and good ideal is proper, is necessary, in every successful life. But to have the ideal will amount to nothing unless we are patient in its development. It is said of the great sculptor, Michael Angelo, that looking upon a block of soiled marble he began work upon it with hammer and chisel, apparently recklessly knocking off great blocks and pieces here and there. When asked what he was doing, he said, "I see an angel here and must get him out." He had the ideal in his mind, then laboring strenuously for the attainment of it, sculptured the angel out of the block of marble. So it must be with every successful life. We must have the ideal. We must see the angel. Then we must labor for its attainment, carefully, patiently, and prayerfully. The ideal set before the Christian is not only angelic, it is more; it is divine. Nothing less can be made out of the Apostle's words, God hath "given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature."

The same thought is elsewhere presented by St. John. Now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear how great we

shall be made, what glory and honor shall be ours, but the Apostle assures us, "We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." If then we are to be made like him by the "change" of the "First Resurrection," if we are to see him as he is, then we may apply to ourselves the glorious things of the Lord and his excellency, respecting which the Apostle says, "Him hath God highly exalted and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth;" and again, "He has ascended far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named." If we shall be like him and share his glory, then all this glory belongs to the glorious ideal which God himself has presented to our gaze. Who with such in view would not be willing indeed to submit himself to the blows of the Lord! Who would not be willing to endure the necessary chiselings and polishings! Who would not be willing to submit himself to tribulation, knowing that "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience, experience, and experience, hope"! These things shed abroad in our hearts make us neither barren nor unfruitful in respect to the knowledge of God, but obtain for us an abundant entrance into his everlasting Kingdom, in association with him who loved us and bought us with his precious blood.

THE LORD HAD ESTABLISHED HIM

Our Golden Text is quite in line with what we have just received, and shows us afresh the secret of David's **[R4256 : page 300]** successes and the line along which we also should be exercised in developing character which will be pleasing to the Lord. To some in David's place the thought would have been, "The Lord is very partial and has simply elected me to be the recipient of his favors. He cares more for me than for any other person in the nation." With this thought would have come a measure of vanity and pride which would have been very

injurious to David (and to all others). These might also have said, "The Lord has seen that I am the fittest person in all this nation to be its ruler; and any person who does not fully agree with this sentiment is out of accord with the Lord and should have my frown and disapproval." Had David taken a position such as this it would have worked out a wrong character in him; and such a position taken by others would likewise work injuriously. It makes them boastful, arrogant, unloving, and unfits them for proper service to the Lord.

David's thought on the subject was the proper one. He perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel and that he had *exalted him king for his people Israel's sake*. So, too, we should remember that God has a purpose in the selection or election of the Church. As the Apostle says, "We are chosen for a purpose." God's purpose is a Kingdom which shall bless the world. And he has many others, angels and men, whom he could have chosen for this great purpose, and by his providence could have moulded and fashioned them for the accomplishment of his will. But by his mercy he has chosen "not many wise, not many noble, not many mighty," but "the weak things of this world" for the carrying out of his plans. Let this thought keep us very humble, very near to the Lord. Let us strive to learn the lessons necessary to fit and prepare us for the ruling, judging and uplifting "all the families of the earth."

