

"THOU ART THE MAN!"

– JUNE 6. – 2 SAMUEL 11:1 TO 12:7. –

THE HONESTY OF THE BIBLE – KING DAVID'S STATION DID NOT COVER HIS GUILT – THE TEMPTATIONS OF PROSPERITY – KING DAVID'S TERRIBLE SINS – THE PROPHET NATHAN'S PARABLE – THE KING'S SENSE OF JUSTICE – CONDEMNED BY HIS OWN WORD – HIS PENITENCE – FORGIVEN YET PUNISHED – THE LESSON TO ALL.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God." – Psalm 51:10.

THE BIBLE is unlike any other book in the world. It is the most honest, the most candid, of all books. The one most approved as a man after God's own heart is, when he sins, most severely condemned and heavily punished. There is a lesson, however, in the Scriptural statement, "There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mightest be feared." (Psalm 130:4.) The fact that God is not merciless, that He does not disregard the weak and imperfect condition – the fact that He gives us credit for our heart intentions, even when the weaknesses of the flesh are reprov'd and punished – these indications of consideration prompt to the greater reverence for God than if we merely thought of Him as merciless.

No wonder we are surprised that one who manifested so many noble traits should also have manifested such weaknesses as those condemned in this lesson – adultery and murder! We think of David the youth, his reverence for God, his faith, his loyalty, his trials, his difficulties; and we wonder how he could become so changed in so short a time. The secret is not far to seek. It is easier to live a wholly consecrated life in poverty than when surrounded by wealth and the pleasures, customs and liberties of the court. The king temporarily

forgot that the Ark, representative of God's favor and presence, was now in his city. He realized indeed that the eyes of the Lord were in every place beholding the evil and the good; yet the seeing of the Tabernacle should have brought freshly to his mind the thought, "Thou God seest me."

We may be sure, however, that King David did not get into so sinful a condition of mind and heart suddenly. The narrative shows that the matter must have gone on for months, gradually reaching a culmination. Nor would it be fair to the king to assume that his heart was as wrong as his conduct. Rather we must assume, from subsequent manifestations, that his heart was still loyal to God and to the principles of righteousness, but somehow his heart had gone to sleep and his flesh had become very much alive. He was awake to sin, asleep to righteousness. He had before him the unfavorable examples of other kings and the liberties which they exercised. His relationship with God had made him keen of intellect; and now, in yielding to temptation, this keenness of mind was all the more effective in the evil course.

A COURAGEOUS SERVANT OF GOD

David first coveted his neighbor's wife. He did not rebuke this sinful condition of mind, but allowed it to proceed until he stole his neighbor's wife. Her husband was in the war, a faithful soldier. The emergency seemed to call for his death in order to protect the king from shame. David's conscience was surely asleep when he ordered his general to put the faithful soldier in an exposed place in the attack being made on a certain city, then to command a retreat and thus leave the most exposed ones to be killed.

The plan carried out. It cost the life of not only the defrauded husband, but several others. We can scarcely imagine how one of King David's loyalty to principle could have arranged such a plan or how he could have had any peace under these circumstances. Surely none of his beautiful Psalms were written during those nine

months or more. But Uriah was dead; and his stolen wife had been made the wife of David, and shortly their child was born.

Then appeared the Prophet Nathan before the king. Wisely bringing his reproof in the form of a parable, he told of a poor man who had but one ewe lamb and of how a wealthy neighbor had defrauded him of it. King David's sense of justice was outraged, and he declared that the man who did that deed must restore four-fold and must also be put to death. Then the Lord's Prophet Nathan pointing to the king, declared, "Thou art the man!" and promptly drove home the lesson. It required courage; but whoever has a message from the Lord must needs have the courage to deliver it – as wisely as possible, of course, but faithfully.

Instantly King David's heart was aroused; immediately his conscience was quickened. He saw his own conduct, not from the standpoint of other kings and what they did, but from the standpoint of the Divine Law of righteousness, truth, kindness, mercy. He beheld himself a sinner. Indeed, under the Law, both the adultery and the murder were punishable by death. The king instantly acknowledged his sin, and prayed, fasted and mourned. Meantime the Prophet, by Divine direction, informed the king that for all this the Lord would not cause his death nor take from him all his loving-kindnesses, because he had confessed and repented; but that, nevertheless, the child of his sin should not live and the king himself would in after time suffer severe punishments for his transgressions.

Here we perceive a principle of the Divine Government in respect to those who are the people of God and are in covenant relationship with Him. Justice would have been required in respect to the sins; but to the repentant soul the Lord's favor would, nevertheless, still be granted. Many Christians have had experience along this line. God does not continue to treat them as sinners; but, accepting their heart contrition, He forgives them in that sense of

the word; yet true to His arrangement, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." In this Divine arrangement there is nothing to encourage sin, but, on the contrary, everything to encourage righteousness; [R5681 : page 139] and if sin be fallen into, everything to encourage the sinner to accept Divine forgiveness and to reform his life, even though he shall be obliged to bear some severe penalty – perhaps to his tomb.

THE PSALM OF REPENTANCE

Very many Christians have been encouraged to repentance by the Fifty-first Psalm. Surely none have been encouraged by it to sin. It is said that Voltaire, the infidel, once attempted a burlesque of this Psalm, but became so awed by its solemn tone that he threw down the pen and fell back dazed on his couch, full of remorse. Bishop Hall, commenting, says, "How can we presume of not sinning, or despair for sinning, when we find so great a saint thus fallen, thus risen?" We should remember, however, that noble as King David was, he was not a saint in the New Testament sense of that word. He may have been equally saintly in heart intentions, but he had not been accepted of the Lord and begotten of the Holy Spirit; for "the Holy Spirit was not yet given," as we read in John 7:39.

The giving of the Holy Spirit and its begetting to a new nature began at Pentecost, and has continued since. If we are astonished that King David should be overtaken in such faults, how much more would we be astonished if any saint of God, begotten of the Holy Spirit, should fall into such a trap of the Adversary. The spirit-begotten ones have much advantage every way – not only through the greater enlightenment which comes to them through the better knowledge of the Divine character, the Divine Plan and the Divine promises, but also by reason of having the Lord Jesus as their Helper under the assurance that "All things shall work together for good to them" (Romans 8:28); and that the Lord will not suffer them

to be tempted above that they are able; but will with every temptation also provide a way of escape. – 1 Corinthians 10:13.

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness; according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me." These words of honesty assure us that the king was overtaken in some kind of fog which for months obscured his mental vision. Earth-born clouds and fleshly weaknesses arose like a veil between his soul and the Lord, shutting out the light of the Lord's countenance.

The lesson applies to all who have ever been in covenant relationship with God. The poet has expressed what ought to be the sentiment of every Christian, discerning the slightest shadow between the Lord and himself:

"Sun of my soul, my Father dear,
I know no night when Thou art near.
Oh, may no earth-born cloud arise
To hide Thee from Thy servant's eyes!"

The important lesson here is that we shall keep close accounts with God. No child of God should go forth in the morning without an earnest petition to Him for Divine supervision of his affairs and for help to walk in the right path. No child of God should retire at night without a retrospective glance on all the day's pathway, to discern to what extent it has been a profitable one and has brought him a day's march nearer the Heavenly Home. Or, if perchance something has occurred of which he should feel ashamed, it is none too soon to go at once to the Throne of Heavenly Grace to obtain mercy and find fresh help for future times of need.

The child of God thus keeping daily accounts with the Father and with the Redeemer, will abide in Their love and not be in

danger of falling into any such great sins as these noted in this lesson. Even King David, we may be sure, would have fallen into no such sins had he not allowed gradually to arise earth-born clouds of fleshly hues between the Lord and himself. **[R5682 : page 139]**

"Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee."

Although the Holy Spirit was not given to the Ancient Worthies in the same sense that it is given to the Church, it was nevertheless the manifestation of God's favor toward them in their affairs, as the king here intimates. We are to remember that from Moses down to John the Baptist, according to the Scriptures, there was a House of Servants under Moses; but that during this Gospel Age there is a House of Sons, begotten of the Holy Spirit, under the chief Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. – Hebrews 3:5,6.

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