

The path of humility leads upwards - Sunday 23rd August, 2015

“Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. ²² After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, ‘I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will.’ Acts 13:21-22

Beloved in The Lord,

Does the Bible surprise you? Renowned Bible teacher Derek Prince said: “If the Bible doesn’t surprise you, you haven’t read it.” Our text today is a surprising one, if we know anything about David the king. God says about him: ***“I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will.”*** God is saying that David was a man after His own heart. This is a surprising statement in that you don’t have to be a Bible scholar to know that David was a man who sinned greatly against the Lord. If there is one story that most people associate with David, it is his affair with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. This affair led to David having Uriah killed, in an attempt to cover up his own adultery.

This was not David’s only transgression and sin. This was probably his greatest and most infamous. How then can God say that David was a man after His own heart? God is repulsed and angered by sin. We find the answer in Psalm 51, which is David’s Psalm of repentance:

***“Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness;
According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.***

***² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity
And cleanse me from my sin.***

***³ For I know my transgressions,
And my sin is ever before me.***

***⁴ Against You, You only, I have sinned
And done what is evil in Your sight,
So that You are justified when You speak
And blameless when You judge.***

***⁷ Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.***

***⁸ Make me to hear joy and gladness,
Let the bones which You have broken rejoice.***

***⁹ Hide Your face from my sins
And blot out all my iniquities.***

***¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.***

***¹¹ Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.***

***¹² Restore to me the joy of Your salvation
And sustain me with a willing spirit.***

***¹³ Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners will be converted to You. (Psalm 51:1-4:7-13)***

David, having sinned greatly, finally confessed his sin and he repented. He took responsibility for his sin, and he confessed it and asked God to forgive him, and he turned from his sin.

This is what distinguished him from Saul his predecessor. Last Sunday we saw that Saul suffered from partial obedience to God's commands and we noted that partial obedience is disobedience. Saul never really fully repented from his sin and that is why God rejected him. Saul was regretful, but not repentant. He regretted that he lost God's favour and blessing, but we never read that he fully repented. The night before he was killed in battle, he consulted a medium, a practice totally forbidden by God.

This is why our text tells us that God removed Saul and raised up David in his place.

Even though David sinned against God, God did not reject him, because David's heart was soft. David's heart responded to God, and when he sinned, he humbled himself, repented and turned from his wicked ways. On the other hand Saul was arrogant and proud. God rejects the proud but lifts up the humble.

What does God require of us? The prophet Micah tells us very clearly:

***"With what shall I come to the Lord
And bow myself before the God on high?
Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings,
With yearling calves?
⁷ Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams,
In ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
⁸ He has told you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justice, to love kindness,
And to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:6-8).***

God could not make it much clearer than that. We are to do justice, love kindness and to walk humbly with our God. If you want to be pleasing to God than you must walk the path of the humble. If there is one thing that God cannot stand that is a proud heart. Pride is at the root of all sin. It is at the core of all sin. No matter what sin you may analyse, if you peel away the layers, you will find pride in the center. This is because Satan is the author of sin. Pride was his downfall.

Satan wasn't always the Devil. Before his fall, he was an anointed cherub. He was one of the archangels. One of three that we know about, who were the highest ranking angels in God's kingdom. He was called Lucifer, the shining one. He fell, because his beauty, intelligence and position went to his head. He became proud and was no longer content to serve Almighty God, but decided that he should be on the throne. He led a revolution, and he lost. We read about his fall:

"Thus says the Lord God,

***“You had the seal of perfection,
Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
13 “You were in Eden, the garden of God;
Every precious stone was your covering:
The ruby, the topaz and the diamond;
The beryl, the onyx and the jasper;
The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald;
And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets,
Was in you.
On the day that you were created
They were prepared.
14 “You were the anointed cherub who covers,
And I placed you there.
You were on the holy mountain of God;
You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.
15 “You were blameless in your ways
From the day you were created
Until unrighteousness was found in you.
16 “By the abundance of your trade
You were internally filled with violence,
And you sinned;
Therefore I have cast you as profane
From the mountain of God.
And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub,
From the midst of the stones of fire.
17 “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;
You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.
I cast you to the ground;
I put you before kings,
That they may see you. (Ezekiel 28:12-17)***

Lucifer became proud. His pride corrupted his wisdom and he fell and became Satan, God’s adversary. His end will be the lake of fire.

As God’s adversary, knowing his ultimate end, his only goal is to take with him, as many of God’s people as he can. He hates humans, because man was created in God’s image, and man was given his original domain. Satan is always trying to take revenge on God and that is why he schemes and plots the downfall of every man. His main weapon of choice is pride, because it works.

When Saul fell from grace, God spoke to him through Samuel the prophet:

“17 Samuel said, “Is it not true, though you were little in your own eyes, you were made the head of the tribes of Israel? And the Lord anointed you king over Israel,” (1.Sam.15:17)

This was Saul’s beginning. He was little in his own eyes, and that is why God could use him. But things changed. Saul grew proud and started to rely upon himself and not God. He allowed a “but” to enter his thinking and so he fell and was rejected by God.

David began humbly, and remained humble throughout his life. Yes there were times when he became proud and sinned, but he quickly repented and humbled himself before God, and was restored. This is why God can say that David was a man after His own heart.

We have a very clear and easy to understand lesson given to us in the contrast of the life of Saul and David. We need to learn not to do as Saul, but to be as David. We must choose the path of humility for that leads upwards.

Jesus humbled Himself and was exalted to the right hand of the Father. He is in the Highest position of all. Everyone who humbles himself before Christ, and who entrusts his life to Him, will one day be exalted to a position of honour for the Bible says that we will rule and reign with Him. God's children will rule and reign with Him in glory.

The path of humility leads upwards.

Amen

Pastor Colvin MacPherson Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sydney.

All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.