

*1 & 2 Samuel***PREFACE**

Studying the life of David, one begins to understand what the Lord meant when He referred to him as “a man after His own heart” (1 Samuel 13: 14). To David “faith” was more than just a word, “lordship” was not just a high concept, and “obedience” was not limited by his convenience.

To say that David was a man after God’s own heart simply because he was obedient to His law misses the point entirely, for one can be *reluctantly, grudgingly* obedient. Also, as we all know, an intention to obey God’s law does not guarantee it will be obeyed. I believe the most succinct way to summarize David’s relationship with the Lord God is with the Latin phrase, *coram Deo*. Here is how the theologian R. C. Sproul explains this.

R. C. Sproul: This phrase literally refers to something that takes place in the presence of, or before the face of, God. To live *coram Deo* is to live one’s entire life in the presence of God, under the authority of God, to the glory of God.

To live in the presence of God is to understand that whatever we are doing and wherever we are doing it, we are acting under the gaze of God. God is omnipresent. There is no place so remote that we can escape His penetrating gaze.

To be aware of the presence of God is also to be acutely aware of His sovereignty. The uniform experience of the saints is to recognize that if God is God, then He is indeed sovereign. [...]

Living under divine sovereignty involves more than a reluctant submission to sheer sovereignty that is motivated out of a fear of punishment. It involves recognizing that there is no higher goal than offering honor to God. Our lives are to be living sacrifices, oblations offered in a spirit of adoration and gratitude.

To live all of life *coram Deo* is to live a life of integrity. It is a life of wholeness that finds its unity and coherency in the majesty of God. A fragmented life is a life of disintegration. It is marked by inconsistency, disharmony, confusion, conflict, contradiction, and chaos.

The Christian who compartmentalizes his or her life into two sections of the religious and the nonreligious has failed to grasp the big idea. The big idea is that *all* of life is religious or none of life is religious. To divide life between the religious and the nonreligious is itself a sacrilege.

LIVING FAITH

David lived his life in the face of God, in the presence of God, acknowledging His sovereign lordship over every aspect, every nook and cranny of his life. Sadly, but predictably, as with us this did not always ensure righteous behavior on his part. Just because I have adopted *coram Deo* as my own motto, this does not mean I lead a perfect life. But the difference this kind of a relationship with God makes in a life is illustrated by comparing two scenes from this narrative. [Turn please to 1 Samuel 15.](#)

Here is the scene where Saul disobeys a direct order from the Lord—to utterly annihilate every Amalekite from the face of the earth to “put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.”

We already know that Saul did not do this, but the lesson is not found in the disobedience; the lesson is found in the *attitude and behavior of the one caught in the offense*. But before he was even found out by Samuel, we get a foretaste of the king’s heart. He had just won a great victory over his enemy; and before the battle even began he had been told who would be responsible for the victory. Look at verse 2.

Read v2.

The Lord said, “I will punish Amalek...” The outcome of the battle was preordained. Did Saul then praise Yahweh when there was victory? Did he erect a commemorative stele in honor of his Lord, giving Him the credit? No, he erected a stele in his *own* honor.

Read 1 Samuel 15:12.

Samuel arrives on-scene, and listen to the various stories told by Saul:

- v13: “Blessed are you of the Lord! I have carried out the command of the LORD.”
- v15: “...the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; but the rest we have utterly destroyed.”
- vv20-21: “I did obey the voice of the LORD, and went on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and have brought back Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took some of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal.” (Notice that [breathtaking confession!](#) “to sacrifice to the Lord *your* God”)
- v24: Even when confessing his sin to Samuel, it is apparent it is insincere, because he still blames everyone else for making him do it: “I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice.”

Now let’s compare this to a similar situation later in King David’s life. [Turn please to 2 Samuel 12](#). We are familiar with the great and terrible sin committed by David. He lusted after another man’s wife; then, to cover for her pregnancy by him, he has her husband murdered during a battle. After this, Nathan is sent to David by the Lord, and the prophet convicts the king by means of a parable about one man taking another man’s ewe lamb. When David agrees that the man in the story has sinned, going so far as to declare,

“As the LORD lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die. He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion.” (2 Samuel 12:5b-6)

Nathan then nails him with the charge.

Read 2 Samuel 12:7-10.

Did David protest? Did he sputter out lame excuses? “What could I do? She was out there on the roof for me to see. She tempted me! What could I do? I have needs, you know.” “I gave Uriah every opportunity to lie with his wife—but he wouldn’t do it! What else could I do?” We hear nothing like this from the king. Instead,

Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” (Period. Full stop.)

That is lordship; that is living under a sovereign God. That is living *coram Deo*. No excuses, no whining, no vain rationalization. He is Lord, and He sees everything—not just what we do, but what was in our heart. All we can do is fess up and plead His mercy.

The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, spoke eloquently about this, listing the reasons Christ Jesus should have this same preeminence in *our* lives.

Read Colossians 1:15-18.

Sidebar: The “He” is explicit and emphatic in the Greek: He alone, He Himself, only Christ.

Just as Yahweh had first place in the life of David—which defined him as “a man after God’s own heart”—Christ alone is to have first place *in everything in our* life.

DYING FAITH

The episode from David’s life that, for me, best illustrates this kind of living faith—living *coram Deo*—takes place a few months after the king’s confession to the prophet Nathan.

Let’s return to that moment in time and read what the Lord’s response was to David’s confession.

Read 2 Samuel 12:13-14.

What follows is an exquisite demonstration of living rightly under a sovereign God. Nathan declared without caveat or condition that the child born to Bathsheba would die. Nevertheless, when the Lord did indeed strike the child with sickness, David immediately went before the Lord, entreating Him to spare the child.

Was this a sign that David didn’t believe the prophecy? No, David knew his history; he knew that Moses had once prayed to the lord to not do what He had said He would do—destroy all of Israel for their worship of the golden calf—and the Lord took pity on the people and changed His mind (Exodus 32:14).

So the king put his heart and soul into changing the Lord’s mind, and it is not hard to imagine the words that came forth from his mouth. *It was I, Lord God, who sinned against you. I was the one, not this innocent child. Please do not punish him for what I did.*

The king would not eat, would not get up off the ground, where he remained prostrate before his God; so long as there was a chance that the Lord *might* change his mind, David continued.

Sidebar: By the way, one does not go into one's house (NIV) to lie on the ground (earth)—especially if one is a king living in a palace. The text just says that David “went,” probably to the precincts of the palace. He spent this time of earnest entreaty outside on the ground. And note that the details of the text regarding his behavior while the child is still alive, hidden in the English, reveal a man *in mourning*. He is not just in his prayer closet; David is dressed in sackcloth, on the ground, refusing even the “food of mourning.” This explains the later confusion of the servants over his behavior after the death: while the child was alive, David behaved as if he were in mourning; after the child dies, he does *not* mourn.

Even so, after seven days the child indeed died. David was by then in such a state that those in the palace were afraid to inform him of the death for fear that he might do himself harm (*raah, injury, evil, disastrous*). But once he understands what has happened, to their surprise David does quite the opposite.

Read 2 Samuel 12:20.

This is one of my favorite moments in Scripture; it is a template for scenes repeated throughout the history of this world, perhaps best exemplified in the behavior of the five missionary widows made so by the Acau Indians in Ecuador.

Did David raise his fist to God? Did he angrily denounce the act as that of an unfeeling and distant God? Did he rebel, turn his back on One who would dare do such a thing? No, he rose from the ground, cleaned himself up and changed his clothes—and went to the tabernacle to worship the Lord. He worshiped. He acknowledged Yahweh for who He is, bowed down before Him in reverent submission and praise. God's answer to this? Bathsheba's next child would be the child of promise, the one who would build the temple for the Name of the Lord.

Read 2 Samuel 12:24.

CONCLUSION

I had originally intended to use this lesson from the life of David as a concluding summation, at the end of the series. But I soon realized that we need to understand this early on, because it is the foundational characteristic that energizes everything else in his life. Why was David humble? Why was he brave? Why was he obedient? Why was he so transparent before his God? Because he lived the entirety of his life “in the presence of God, under the authority of God, to the glory of God.”

David's laudable qualities did not spring from the earth, or his family line. They were not the result of teaching or reading or cultural appropriation. His qualities were the result of a life devoted to, and dependent on, God.

We hear this devotion in his final public prayer, shortly before he dies. [Turn please to 1 Chronicles 29](#). They have just passed the hat for the temple his son Solomon would build and the amount of the donations are staggering; the weight of just the silver and gold totaled 565 *tons* (1,130,000 pounds) So the old king lifts up his eyes to heaven and, as we would expect from him, blesses not the ones who have given all this wealth, but the Lord.

Read 1 Chronicles 29:10-13.