2 Samuel - Commentaries by Nicolas Simon

Incidents In David's Life As Seen Through The Psalms, 2 Samuel 5:4-12; 1 Chronicles 22:1-5 – Psalm 30

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4 David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. 5 In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah. ... 9 So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward. 10And David went on, and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him. 11And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house. 12And David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that He had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake.

1 Then David said, This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel. 2And David commanded to gather together the strangers that were in the land of Israel; and he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God. 3And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joinings; and brass in abundance without weight; 4Also cedar trees in abundance: for the Zidonians and they of Tyre brought much cedar wood to David. 5And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death.

A psalm and song at the dedication of the house of David. 1 I will extol Thee, O Lord; for Thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. 2 O Lord my God, I cried unto Thee, and Thou hast healed me. 3 O Lord, Thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. 4 Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness. 5 For His anger endureth but a moment; in His favor is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. 6And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. 7 Lord, by Thy favor Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled. 8 I cried to Thee, O Lord; and unto the Lord I made supplication. 9 What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise Thee? Shall it declare Thy truth? 10 Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me: Lord, be Thou my helper. 11 Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; 12 To the end that my glory may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto Thee forever.

It is not clear which house is referred to in the title. The heading is variously translated "A psalm and song at the dedication of the house of David" (as in the King James version) or "A psalm of David: dedication-song of the house" (as in the JND translation). The original Hebrew does not exactly express the thought, "House of David," but rather, it uses the same expression employed in those psalms in which the title reads "A psalm of David," perhaps more correctly rendered, "A psalm by David." A literal translation could be given as, "A psalm; a song-of-dedication of the house. By David." Given that it is merely "The House," it may refer either to David's own house or to the temple, though not yet built.

It was in David's heart to build the temple, but as a man of blood (1 Chron. 22:8), it remained for his son Solomon, a man of peace, to do so (1 Chron. 22:9-10). Nevertheless, David gathered material together to that end (1 Chron. 22:1-5). What would be more appropriate than for David to dedicate those things, which were no doubt of immense value, lest any should think to use them otherwise? David's preparations for the temple began in earnest after Jehovah answered him at the threshing floor of Ornan. It was there that he called upon the Lord for the pestilence that had fallen upon Israel as a result of his sin in numbering the people (1 Chron. 21). At that time he said of the place, "This is the house of Jehovah God" (1 Chron. 22:1).

The psalm expresses the praises of one having come out of a deep trial. Whether it comes after David had built his own house (his kingdom having been finally established over all Israel) or whether it follows the occasion at the threshing floor of Ornan, the psalm speaks of one brought back, as it were, from the grave (vs. 3). The hand of the Lord is clearly recognized by the psalmist in the trial; he tells of God's anger but also of the joy that comes in the morning, the dawning of a new day (vs. 5).

If we suppose this psalm to be consequent upon David's pride in numbering the people, we may well marvel at the expression: "Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness" (vs. 4). David voluntarily fell into the hand of the Lord because of His mercies, and yet, by all accounts, the consequences were severe: 70,000 men died from the plague (2 Sam. 24:15; 1 Chron. 21:14). We might excuse David for being angry, or at least despondent, but he's singing! Furthermore, David gives thanks at the remembrance of the holiness of Jehovah! Do we place such value upon the holiness of God, especially when we are the objects of His chastening hand? As we look around in Christendom, we marvel at the indifference and complete lack of reverence toward God. It is good to remember, however, that indifference to the holiness of God begins with us individually.

David in his prosperity could not be moved (vs. 6), but when God hid His face — "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13) — he was troubled. In our prosperity God may be acknowledged, but so often our lives are all about me: my prosperity, I shall never be moved, my mountain (vss. 6-7). In his troubled state David cried to the Lord (vs. 8). Job, when pressed by his friends justified himself at the expense of God; the man of the world shakes his fist at God, but blessing only comes into our lives when we turn to God and submit to His instruction. Surely this is the purpose of trials.

We are responsible to conduct ourselves according to the new nature in the power of the Holy Spirit, and, as the children of God, we come under His government — we feel His approval when we do good, and we are brought to feel His disapproval when we do evil. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb. 12:6). It is equally well to remember that we do not have a capricious God; He does not seek to destroy us. "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit?" (vs. 9). Satan is the liar and murderer; he is the destroyer. How interesting to observe that the gods of men's creation are vengeful, impulsive creatures of unrestrained

passion. In contrast, the true God, though a God of all penetrating light, is also the God of love. No greater love was ever displayed than at the cross, and yet, there was never a more revealing light to expose the true nature of man. “The Lord will not cast off forever: but though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men” (Lam. 3:31-33).

In reflecting on the trial, the palmist does not dwell on the evil; it is all about Jehovah and the blessings of a relationship with Him. It is Jehovah that turns his mourning to dancing and replaces his sackcloth with gladness (vs. 11). The outcome is praise to God: “I will give thanks unto thee forever” (vs. 12).

Incidents In David's Life As Seen Through The Psalms, 2 Samuel 15:13-23 – Psalm 3

13And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom. 14And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword. 15And the king’s servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint. 16And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women, which were concubines, to keep the house. 17And the king went forth, and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off. 18And all his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men which came after him from Gath, passed on before the king. 19 Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us? Return to thy place, and abide with the king: for thou art a stranger, and also an exile. 20 Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? Seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth be with thee. 21And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be. 22And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones that were with him. 23And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness.

A psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son. 1 Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise up against me. 2 Many there be which say of my soul, there is no help for him in God. Selah. 3 But Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. 4 I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and He heard me out of His holy hill. Selah. 5 I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me. 6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. 7Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God: for Thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. 8 Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: Thy blessing is upon Thy people. Selah.

It was a solemn day when Absalom, David’s son, caused him to flee from the land of Israel. Though David had truly repented and God had put away his sin from him, there were yet consequences as a result of his behavior. The Lord told David through the prophet Nathan, “Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house” (2 Sam. 12:11). Once again we see the principle of God’s government at work, “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). While we generally think of this in a negative way, we should also remember for our encouragement that it is as true of sowing good seed as it is of sowing bad. If we sow to our flesh, we will reap of its corruption. However, if we sow to the Spirit, we reap the enjoyment of the relationships and communion characteristic of the new life that we now possess. “He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal. 6:8).

Though David’s testimony had been weakened, and indeed many were saying, “there is no help for him in God” (vs. 2), David’s faith remains firm. We likewise need to enlarge our shield of faith; such barbs from the enemy are apt to make us falter. In this context, however, it is perhaps better described as the shield of the faithful, for Jehovah is David’s shield (vs. 3). With the Lord standing between us and our troubles, though 10,000 set themselves against us, we do not need to be afraid (vs. 6).

It is beautiful to see David’s crossing of the brook Kidron, weeping with the crowds, head covered and barefoot, submitting to the chastening hand of God (2 Sam. 15:30). David rests upon the grace of God: “If I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again” (2 Sam. 15:25). Jehovah is the lifter up of his head (vs. 3). Equally well, David justifies God’s knowing that the discipline is surely deserved. “If He thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him” (2 Sam. 15:25-26). David’s cry is heard out of God’s holy hill; he can rest in peace (vs. 5). His situation had not changed, but through prayer his heart had.

The hearts of the people are revealed in this trial. Those that loved David joined him in his rejection. It was no longer a question of subjects being loyal to their king, but the true affections of the faithful. Among them were many foreigners: the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and the Gittites. Ittai is especially marked out as one that identified with David; there was no thought of him returning to those that had risen up against the King. No, David was everything to Ittai. “In what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be” (2 Sam. 15:21). Keep in mind that Goliath was a Gittite! Ittai had truly been delivered from that prince of this world and was now a follower of the true king. Troubles will likewise reveal the state of our hearts. Is the comfortable position that we enjoy the object of our affections, or is it the Lord Himself? Despite this or that circumstance in our lives, can we with David say, “But Thou, O Lord ... ” (vs. 3)? If we settle down in this world, our hearts must grow cold towards Christ.

We do not await the destruction of our enemies (vs. 7). In a sense, they are already a defeated foe. Rather, we look to the Lord and His coming for His saints, to return in glory with His saints.

Incidents In David's Life As Seen Through The Psalms, 2 Samuel 12:7, 9-14 – Psalm 51

7And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. ... 9 Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. 10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite

to be thy wife. 11 Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. 12 For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. 13And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. 14 Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

To the chief Musician, A psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. 1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. 4Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest. 5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. 6 Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom. 7 Purge 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; that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice. 9 Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right [settled] spirit within me. 11 Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free spirit. 13 Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee. 14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness. 15 O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth Thy praise. 16 For Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. 18 Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem. 19 Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar.

It is upon the grace of God that David casts himself; there is no thought of redeeming oneself. Neither tears of repentance, humiliation, reformation, nor reparation, can accomplish redemption (Psa. 49:7). Repentance is not grief — though godly grief leads to repentance: “for grief according to God works repentance to salvation” (2 Cor. 7:10 JND). Man grieves, and, being occupied with himself, he shuts God out. Very often he is angry with God for having been found out. True repentance, on the other hand, takes God’s side against oneself: “I have sinned against the Lord” (2 Sam. 12:13). David accepts God’s view of his sin and justifies God in His judgment (vs. 4).

Man is unclean from birth (Lev. 12); he is shapen in iniquity (vs. 6). “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12). David is not in the least excusing himself; instead, he not only acknowledges the sin committed but also recognizes that there is a condition far more serious with man. How is it then, that he can add, “thou desirest truth in the inward parts” (vs. 6)? Indeed, how should man be just with God? (Job 9:1). “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me. … If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me” (Job 9:20, 30-31). Only God can cleanse the guilty sinner; He alone can make us to know wisdom in our inmost heart (vs. 6). “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (vs. 7). Hyssop was used to sprinkle the leper with blood (Lev. 14:6-7); the shed blood is the only righteous ground upon which God can cleanse. However, we must remember, whereas David knew something of the law of the leper, he knew nothing of that precious blood that cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). David did not have the assurance of sins forgiven; he could only pray that God would hide His face from his sin and blot out all his iniquities (vs. 9).

Though David’s spirit trembled within him, he desired to be at peace again in the presence of God (vss. 10, 12). It is important to see the contrast between David’s position and the one we now enjoy. Because of the judgment borne on the cross by our Lord, we have no more conscience of sins (Heb. 10:2); there should be an awakened sense of sin, but not dread or anxiety for the believer. We may surely grieve the Holy Spirit, but it is equally clear that we are “sealed unto the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30). While David pleaded with God, “take not thy Holy Spirit from me” (vs. 11), it would be ignorance for a believer to say such words. We can, however, lose the joy of our salvation, with our spirits restrained within us (vs. 12).

The restored sinner teaches others of the ways of God (vs. 13). Sadly, however, Nathan must tell David, “By this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme” (1 Sam. 12:14). Unfortunately, our lives may speak so loudly that our words are not heard, no matter how right they are.

Nothing in the law could clear David. His plea must be to the grace of God alone and the sacrifice of “a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart” (vs. 16-17). Once restored, and only then, could God take pleasure in sacrifices (vs. 19).

The latter portion of the psalm clearly anticipates the restoration of the remnant in Israel (vs. 18). Though David was indeed guilty of the blood of Uriah, the nation has been guilty of the blood of the Messiah. However, it is in the cross, the very place where Christ’s blood was shed, that God can in righteousness justify the sinner; there He becomes the God of my salvation (vs. 14).

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