

A FAST Biblical Portrait: David

A Life Marked by Success and Failure, Guilt and Freedom

John Kain, 2010

Jesus is not called the Son of Abraham or the Son of Jacob, but the Son of David.... The flag for the nation of Israel is the Star of David.... David composed most of the psalms.... He was a fierce warrior who attracted loyal men.... God chose David to rule his people.... Let's look more closely at this important man in Israel's history and in Jesus' family tree, a man who demonstrated great perseverance in his walk with the Lord.

Like the life of every human being, David's life was a combination of good and evil. It was marked by noble deeds, high aspirations, and great accomplishments—and it was stained by terrible sins. It is hard to believe that the one described as a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14) committed adultery with his general's wife. It is hard to believe that the man who wrote Psalm 23 could have this ace military leader killed in battle. Such are the temptations that come with almost unlimited power, and David's response to those temptations revealed the very human side of a man who was generally loyal to the Lord in his testimony and his worship. During most of David's life, his commitment to God and his ways was obvious, and that accounts for the very high place he occupies in Scripture.

Courage and Character

The youngest of eight sons, David spent his early years on his father's farm near Bethlehem (1 Samuel 16:10–11). During his days as a shepherd, he showed great courage while protecting the flock (17:34–36).

Chosen by God to succeed King Saul, David was quietly anointed by the prophet Samuel (16:12–13). While waiting on the Lord's timing for assuming the throne, David became the king's harpist (16:14–23). After remaining at court for a time, he returned to the farm (17:15).

David next appeared as champion of Israel when—in the name of the Lord and in his power—he killed the giant, Goliath, an act that signified a great victory for God's people (17:25–53). This heroic feat won the admiration of Jonathan, King Saul's son, and the praises of the people, but those praises aroused Saul's hatred (18:1–9). Soon David was forced to flee for his life (chapter 19).

After the death of Saul, the tribe of Judah anointed David as king, and he reigned for seven years in Hebron (2 Samuel 2:1–4). After the death of Saul's son Ish-Bosheth, David became king of all Israel (2 Samuel 5:3).

David's first action as king was to capture Jerusalem, fortify it, and build himself a palace. When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king and was threatening their control over all of Palestine, they attacked and captured Bethlehem. David retaliated and, in three battles, forced the Philistines out of Israel.

Once David had established the safety of his kingdom, he brought the Holy Ark, which had been passed from city to city, to Jerusalem. Then, wanting to build a temple to God, he consulted Nathan the prophet. Nathan told David that God would always be with him, but it would be his son's job to build the Temple.

Character Flaws and Consequences

Despite his successful reign on a public, national level and despite his commitment to the Lord God, David was less than successful in his personal life (2 Samuel 11–12). One day, for instance, while his men were at war—and David should have been with them—he spied the beautiful Bathsheba. He discovered that she was married to Uriah the Hittite, one of his finest soldiers, but this fact did not keep him from sending for her, sleeping with her, and impregnating her.

David called Uriah home from battle so that he could pretend that Uriah was the father of Bathsheba's baby. When that plan didn't work, David sent Uriah to the front lines of battle to be killed. David then married Bathsheba.

When confronted by Nathan the prophet, David admitted his sin. Nathan then told David that, because of his sin, Bathsheba's child would die and that he would deal with rebellion and calamity from within his own house.

The Movement from Guilt to Freedom (Psalm 51)

When we acknowledge our sin or when we are confronted, our guilt (or our responsibility for wrongdoing) is revealed. Repentance is the pathway out of our guilt, a path that David took as he persevered in his relationship with God. David's movement from guilt to freedom began with **confession**, with his admission that what he had done was wrong (Psalm 51:1-3). Next, David **acknowledged** that his wrong actions made it impossible for him to be in the presence of the holy God and that his sin was ultimately an act of rebellion against the Almighty's authority (Psalm 51:4). With these understandings, David then **asked** God to forgive him (Psalm 51:5-8).

Once forgiven, David still had to deal with the aftermath of his sinful acts, including his child's death and his son Absalom's rebellion against him (2 Samuel 15–18). David's repentance was sincere and thorough, but his sinful actions had brought serious consequences—and that offers a lesson for all men. God's gracious forgiveness is always obtainable, but we need to remember, first, that it came at great cost to him and, second, that it does not necessarily alleviate, or enable us to avoid, the natural consequences of our sin. But even as we deal with the consequences of our forgiven sin, we do well to acknowledge that freedom from guilt is a valuable gift and that being right with God frees us for the joy of eternal salvation.