

The Epistle to the Hebrews

Lesson # 41 March 13, 2022 David, Samuel, and the Prophets Hebrews 11:32e-f

Introduction

Now the A.H. moves from the book of Judges to Samuel, the prophet, and David the king he anointed and nurtured, and some general yet specific comments about the faith of the OT prophets, of which there were many. Once again, the challenge is to provide us with enough background to be able to identify their faith, but avoid lengthy diatribes to try to capture every detail of their lives. As we'll see, the contrast between Samuel and David is, from a human perspective – stark. But we must draw from one verse, words spoken to Samuel by God in I Samuel 16:7 – [of Eliab, David's brother], *“Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”* Of course, the context was Samuel's visit to Jesse in order to anoint one of his sons as the new King of Israel. David was to be that chosen King as we are well aware by now. God's measure of David is given to us even earlier in I Samuel 13:14 – *“The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you [Saul] have not kept what the Lord commanded you.”* Later on, if we were to follow all of David's exploits and observe his many sinful failures and stumbles as a father and husband, we must refer to these verses as a basis to overcome our natural reaction to what we will observe, and recognize that *“God sees the heart.”* (despite what we might observe outwardly). Good advice for the remainder of our study of Hebrews 11 as well!

David

The story of David runs in the Bible from I Samuel 16 to I Kings 2:12 (with parallel passages in I Chronicles. We read of David's death in I Kings 2:10-12 / his last words are recorded in 2 Samuel 23:1-7. He is chosen by God from eternity past, but historically anointed by Samuel as king in I Samuel 16:1-13. As mentioned above, Samuel predicts the end of Saul's kingship and points to this David, a man after God's own heart (I Sam. 13:14). This verse is cited in Acts 13:22. Let's read Paul's address in Antioch in Pisidia – Acts 13:16-23. Christ Himself also talked about David in a number of gospel passages (MT 12:1-8; 22:41-46; MK 2:23-28; 12:35-37; LK 6:1-5 & 20:41-44, plus other passages. Christ Himself is referred to as “the Son of David” 8 times in the gospels¹ and it is also clear from at least 8 passages that David was a “type of Christ”.² David was also a musician as the Psalms, at least 73 of them, attest. He was also employed by King Saul as a musician to sooth his attacks of anxiety & anger. He was a shepherd (I Sam. 16), and a courageous warrior and King of Israel.

¹ MT 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9; 22:42; MK 10:47-48; LK 18:37,39.

² Pss. 2; 16;18:43; 69:7-9, 20-21,26,29; 89:19-37

Through him, God gained victory over numerous enemies of Israel – most outside the nation, but also many traitors within Israel.

His exploits – military career, his lengthy wait for the throne (that was rightly his), and his flight from Saul’s murderous attempts to catch him and kill him took years, and his many faithful forays in God’s service are legendary (but true), starting with his confrontation of the giant Philistine from Gath – Goliath (I Sam. 17) in order to silence this blaspheming behemoth. Note his speech to Goliath in I Sam. 17:44-47! He was courageous, almost to a fault, but not in his own strength. Notice his words as he prepares to face Goliath – I Sam. 17:37. We see a relatively unknown and softer facet of his fatherhood faithfulness in Proverbs 4:3-4, from the words of his son, Solomon.

So, faced with a human biography that is 42 chapters long and includes 73 psalms, plus numerous OT and NT mentions, how do we whittle this down to support one part of 1 verse in Hebrews 11, without taking 6 weeks to do it? This was my challenge.

So, what I settled on was to condense the life of David into one experience of his expression of faith, but also to mention some of his moments of weakness. Also – to point out some sentences that relate to us David’s faithfulness by God Himself. Like all the people mentioned in Hebrews 11, he was human and the Bible never covers up the sinful acts of even the greatest of its heroes of faith, and David is certainly no exception.

His Faithful Years of Waiting on God to Install Him as King

Although God had rejected Saul as king due to his rebellious disobedience against Him, and then directed Samuel to select and anoint David as Saul’s replacement (I Sam. 15:28; 13:8-13), it would be many years (perhaps 38, at least 20) before David actually took the throne, and even then, he reigned over Hebron for 7 years, and only then all of Israel - his total reign was 40 years (I KGS 2:11).

Saul also reigned for 40 years, although I Samuel 13 & 15 indicate that 2 years into his reign, God rejected him, and by I Samuel 16, had Samuel anoint David as king. So, David, for at least 20 years suffered the delay of receiving his right to his throne and royal commission, and even further suffered Saul’s many attempts to kill him, and even had two opportunities himself to kill Saul easily (I Sam. 24 & I Sam. 26), and yet, see his thinking in I Sam. 24:4-7.

Saul’s hatred of David began in I Sam. 18 when David was praised by the people for his killing of the giant, Goliath, and it seems like Saul, from that point on, descended further and further into madness and jealous hatred, which was almost completely directed at David.

But why did God delay in giving the throne He had anointed David to receive for almost 20 years? God was preparing him for kingship – showing him through his life

experiences that He could trust God to protect him and prepare him for the daunting task of ruling Israel, God's people.

It was over the span of this lengthy period of distress, fear, flight, battles, discouragement, some triumphs, a rise to the throne – but even then, it happened in stages, and God used the events of David's life to train him to trust God fully. We have the Scriptural texts of the events themselves to consider, but in David's case, we also have his thoughts preserved for us in the psalms he composed – notice just one here – Psalm 13, as he expresses his heartfelt trust in God, though it seemed he was constantly under deadly assault.

Steven Lawson cites Spurgeon here regarding Psalm 13:

“Charles H. Spurgeon, in his classic work, *A Treasury of David*, has written, “Whenever you look into David's Psalms, you will somewhere or other see yourself. You never get into a corner, but you find David in that corner. I think that I was never so low that I could not find that David was lower; and I never climbed so high that I could not find that David was above me”

These insightful words are relevant to Psalm 13 because this psalm contains both the heights of ecstasy and the depths of despair. Both extremes were David's experience. In this individual lament psalm, David's soul is dramatically transformed from perplexity to praise, from sinking to singing. Joseph Parker remarked, “This psalm begins with winter and ends with summer; it begins with low muffled tones of sorrow and ends with a rapture of praise.” What caused this dramatic turnaround? The answer is found in the midst of the psalm – prayer. Casting his burdens upon God, David found his heart elevated out of the prison of worry to the paradise of worship. This psalm was intended for “the director of music,” a praise song to be sung in public worship.”³

Although we are not always told what events spawned David's psalms, they inevitably express incredible trust in God.

I Samuel 23 – Evidence of David's Faith

I have already mentioned the story of Goliath, and David's anointing by Samuel, so we'll move forward to look at at least one other episode in a biography full of options to use to identify David's faith. After reading through the entirety of his biography in I & II Samuel, I Kings and some of I Chronicles, I selected 1 episode of his faithfulness. This perhaps relatively obscure passage, seems to highlight his life of prayerfulness. Before we look at I Samuel 23, here is what Andrew Davis says regarding this chapter;

“One of the significant qualities of David as a leader after God's own heart was his regular habit of inquiring of the Lord concerning what to do next. A prime example of this occurs in I Samuel 23:1-13 concerning the town of Keilah. David was told that the Philistines were attacking and looting Keilah. David inquired of the Lord three times concerning Keilah, gaining different insights each

³ Steven Lawson, *Psalms 1-75*; Editor Max Anders, *Holman OT Commentary*, B & H Books, 2003, P. 71

time. David's habit of seeking specific strategies from the Lord is in direct contrast with Saul, whose tragic epitaph in I Chronicles 10:13-14 underscores how much this pattern of inquiring of the Lord means to God: "Saul died because he was unfaithful to the Lord; he did not keep the word of the Lord and even consulted a medium for guidance, and did not inquire of the Lord. So the Lord put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David, son of Jesse."⁴

Turn to I Samuel 23. We will skim it briefly, and comment on some highlights. To set the context, we need to first look at I Samuel 21:1-9, where David is treated well by the priests at Nob, and the subsequent rage of Saul in I Samuel 22:6-23. Keilah is about 17 miles SW of Jerusalem in a forested area. Now let's read I Samuel 23:1-14. What I want us to focus on are the prayers of David in this time of crisis – note especially vv. 2,4,10 & 12. King Saul is on a murderous, jealous crusade to locate David and kill him. This takes place relatively early in David's flight to escape Saul, which began in I Samuel 19. Here in chapter 23, we see not only David's prayers seeking God's protection and wisdom, but God's gracious replies – vv. 2b,4b,11b, & 12b. David, in v. 9 asks Abiathar, the priest to bring "the ephod" to him in order to get answers from God through the priest. David's intent is to have the priest inquire of the Urim and Thummim (cf. Ex. 28:30), which was on the breastplate of the High Priest. (see the attached Addenda regarding this)

The answers David receives from God results in his flight from Keilah to the wilderness of Zith at Horesh (10 miles E of Keilah) – cf. Isaiah 23:13-14) where he remained safe from Saul's pursuit. During this time of fleeing from Saul, David wrote down some of his psalms – the headings for which describe the occasions – note PSS 54,55,56,57,59,and 63 at least. Read Ps. 63:1-11. Obviously, God extended grace and mercy to David and spared his life. God had huge plans for David as King of Israel, and as the "father" of the human Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus brings this connection up as he gives the Pharisees and Scribes a theological mystery to solve regarding His relationship to David – notice the exchange in Matt. 22: 41-46; and note Matt. 21:15.

We are correct in realizing that David, once he became king, did some very sinful things, and some things, if not downright sinful, then unwise and unbecoming of a believer. There is the blatant episode of Bathsheba, compounded by David's 'death warrant' style murder of her husband Uriah (2 Samuel 11-12); his refusal to properly avenge his daughter, Tamar's rape at the hands of his son, Amnon (2 Sam. 13); and his staunch semi-support for his murderous son Absalom, especially when he himself was killed by Joab (2 Sam. 18). There are glaring episodes of spiritual weakness in David recorded for us. Yet, as a believer, who called out to God in heartfelt repentance – cf. Pss. 51,32 and 38. God forgave him – see Ps. 103:1-14, and isn't that the very reality and essence of true faith?

⁴ Andrew Davis, in *Shepherding God's Flock*; Benjamin Merkle & Thomas Schreiner (editors), Kregel, 2014, p. 320

“David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord”

Perhaps the strongest evidence of David’s faithfulness is supplied, not in his deeds or even in his prayers, but statements given by God Himself which read in almost every case just like the above sub-title or in very similar wording. We find these statements throughout I Kings. These pronouncements are given by God, through prophets usually, to new kings of Israel as a sort of part of their commissioning. Notice the following; I Kings 3:6 (by Solomon); 9:3-4; 11:4, 33-34; 14:7-8; 15:3,5,11. I Kings 15:5 deserves special mention. It not only praises David’s obedience to God, but also mentions, lest we neglect to recall it, David’s murder of Uriah!

So, as the kingdom dynasty of David begins to be established and passed on to the next generations, God reminds these new kings to recall David and how he responded to his God / Their God! These verses we have examined give us an important estimation of David’s faithfulness.

Samuel the Prophet.

I Samuel 1:1-25:1

I felt we should take a similar tack in highlighting Samuel’s faith. His story runs from I Samuel 1:1 to 1 Samuel 25:1. His story begins in I Samuel 1:1-11 – as his up-to-then barren mother, Hannah pleads with the Lord to give her a son, and then she would give that son to the Lord and His service for the rest of his life. Hannah was a woman of incredibly strong faith! In between chapter 1 and chapter 25 of I Samuel, Samuel (who is never once charged with sin or rebuked by God) is not always the main character, but is representative of God’s influence on Eli, then Saul, and finally, David.

His faith is demonstrated virtually every time he is presented in the scenes of most of the 24 chapters that demonstrate his service to God. He anointed 2 kings of Israel – Saul and David, yet never lived to see David’s coronation. He was, once trained, a fearless herald of God’s Word, and fierce champion of God’s honour. He was often in danger – especially from King Saul – of being murdered for his rebukes and commands of God that he faithfully delivered. Any of us who attended the Wednesday night Bible studies when we went through I Samuel, are surely aware of his dominating presence in Saul’s life. Though Saul hated Samuel for the many warnings and rebukes he received from him, Saul was often in a panic when Samuel was “not there for him” (cf. I Sam. 13:1-24; 15:1-35). This was further illustrated in one of the final abominations of Saul in I Samuel 28:11-20.

I’m sure we can over-emphasize the importance of Samuel, both as a prophet and as the last judge of Israel (cf. I Samuel 7:15-17), but as we did, regarding David, I have selected 2 passages to briefly survey Samuel’s faith; I Samuel 13:1-5; and 1 Samuel 15:1-35.

I Samuel 13:1-15

This episode is early in Saul's reign (v. 1). Samuel is old (cf. I Sam. 12:1-2), and yet, in 10:7-8, he prophesies to Saul about a near-future event. That event takes place in I Sam. 13. All Saul had to do was trust God and wait for Samuel to come before the battle against the Philistines. That brings us to 13:8, where Saul the young king, makes a spiritually fatal error (vv. 8-10). As soon as Saul has completed his illegal sacrifice, which was solely the priest's or prophet's role, Samuel arrives – still on time, on the 7th day! Here, Samuel holds nothing back – note the interchange of vv. 11-14. This is a full on faithful rebuke to a disobedient and sinful Saul. In this rebuke, Samuel tells Saul (v. 14) that God has already chosen Saul's replacement – “*A man after God's own heart!*” IOW – a man who would obey God.

I Samuel 15:1-35

Here in this chapter, Saul disobediently modifies what God had commanded him to do regarding the Amalakites, by sparing King Agag, the best of the sheep and the oxen, and “all that was good.” Here, Samuel is in full force as God's herald – note vv. 1-3 & 10-23. Again, fearless and faithful to pronounce what God had told him to say to Saul, angry with how the kingship of Saul had turned out. Read vv. 24-35. Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death – he had lost all respect for the sinful Saul and realized that the cause of trying to reform Saul's character was a lost cause.

Chapter 15 is followed in chapter 16 by Samuel being sent to locate and anoint God's choice for Saul's replacement – David the son of Jesse. I do want to point out vv. 6-7 here.

Probably the most important role filled by Samuel was in his anointing and counselling of Israel's first king, and then his anointing of Israel's greatest king, David. He was faithful to the end of his life, and according to chapter 28, even after his life in some sense. His complete trust in God, even when it placed his own life in peril from a God-hater like Saul, carried him through, and so, he earns a prominent place in Hebrews 11.

The Prophets

It is amazing that the A.H. captures the contents of 23 OT books or more in 1 clause, “*and the prophets.*” Throughout I & II Samuel, I & II Kings and I & II Chronicles, we hear of other named prophets – Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, and some unnamed; and then we encounter the books of the major prophets (so-called only because of the volume of their writings) – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. These are followed by the minor prophets (less volume of writing, not less important content) – Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. We could also include some NT prophets who ministered in the gospels

(which is still within the OT economy, until Jesus' crucifixion as the New Covenant was inaugurated) – John the Baptist, Simeon, and Anna (Luke 2:25f & 36f).

Alva McClain comments briefly about the period of the prophets, and says the following on the heels of the books of Kings and Chronicles:

“It is a striking fact that this period of human failure in the historical kingdom is also a period when divine prophecy reaches its greatest volume and brilliance. But the prophets of Israel were more than predictors of the things to come...These prophets were also men of their own times, in the sense that they spoke a message which was immediately relevant to the things present in the historical kingdom.

It should also be noted here that the period of the writing prophets parallels the period of the decline and end of the historical kingdom. There had been prophets in Israel before this, but formerly the chief function of the prophet had been to speak the word of the ever-present divine King for the immediate guidance of the nation in its conduct and affairs. Form the most part such prophetic utterances were not recorded. But now the historical kingdom is drawing to a close, when the immediate presence of Jehovah will be withdrawn. Thus the need arises for a written body of divine prophecy for the guidance and encouragement of Israel during the ‘many days’ the nation will abide ‘without a king’ and ‘without an ephod.’⁵

The A.H does mention without naming people, the suffering, mocking and demise of some of the prophets in Heb. 11:33-38, and some are recognizable to those who are very familiar with the OT, but no other specific saint is named after v. 32. As we go through the remainder of chapter 11, we will try to put names to some of these prophets whose suffering and deaths the author points out. His point though, is that they were all faithful, even to the death in many cases, as they were mistreated, and even lived rough, difficult lives – counting on God alone to finally fulfill the promises they counted on as their motivation to live obediently and faithfully. What mighty examples of the results of faith we've been graciously given by our wonderful God!

One striking feature of this list in Heb. 11:32 (at least of those named here) is the weakness and sins of those said to be “of faith”. This weakness is never expressed in Hebrews 11, but as we have seen, a simple study of their lives in the OT accounts of their exploits reveals their all too human frailty.

For example, Barak (previous lesson) was a commander but would not go to battle without Deborah (Judg. 4:8). Gideon asked for signs from God before he would believe and act (Judg. 6:36-40). Samson's sexual infidelities and impulsive actions were infamous (Judg. 13-16). Jephthah's foolish vow caused him to sacrifice his beloved daughter (Judg. 11:3-31, 34-40). David's sins were blatant – adultery and murder. Samuel was a much more ethical and moral figure, but his sons turned out somewhat like Eli's, and yet he appointed them as judges anyway (I Sam. 8:1-3).

Yet, as already mentioned, Hebrews 11 mentions none of these flaws of these people. It only focusses on their faith and trust in God. Therefore, we must conclude that

⁵ Alva McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, BMH Books, 1968, reprint 1980, p. 115

perseverance in the faith (and surely, these people are examples of that) is not the same thing as sinlessness, blamelessness or perfection. Apparently, one can sin, even dramatically and still persevere in the faith.⁶

Of course, that doesn't mean we should recommend or practice such sins to see if the theory holds true for us!

Addendum

I have added some additional historical, cultural & geographical information for things that came up during this study. that may be helpful in this lesson. See the attachments.

⁶ Schreiner, Hebrews, p. 369