

Introduction

When a loved one dies, it has become customary at the funeral and the visitation for the family to display photographs of the highlights of their life. It could be on boards or in a video presentation or both. It is one of the aspects of a funeral that I appreciate. Ten years can seem like a long time to have known someone, but when they have lived 80 years, there is a lot about them that we can only imagine. Those photographs bring those other years to life and present to us a snapshot of their life as a whole.

Now let's say you are given the task of selecting photographs to highlight the life of a loved one, but you are only allowed to choose four or five of them. How would you decide which photos to include? The task wouldn't be easy. But I think you would look for those photos which really sum up the most important features of their life. Well this is the kind of thing that has been done for us concerning David in 2 Samuel 5. It is not David's life as a whole but David's life from his being anointed king of Israel onward that we see. Chapter 5 is not about chronology. But it is about high points in David's kingship. The narrator gives us four snapshots that summarize David's reign. There was the anointing of David by the tribes of Israel. Then there was David's conquering of Jerusalem. We looked at those two highlights last week. There remain three more highlights which we will consider as we finish out the chapter this morning.

[Read text and Pray]

Verse 10 is pivotal for this chapter. It looks backward to the advancement of David's throne. He had advanced from king of Judah to king of Israel. He had advanced from Hebron to Jerusalem. The verse also looks forward to the increase of David's greatness and declares that David became greater and greater from this point forward. He is on the increase in terms of his royal stature. As we survey the remainder of the chapter, we observe three marks of David's growing greatness. I have divided our consideration of the text accordingly with three headings. These are highlights of the increase of the greatness of David. Heading number one is a new house. Heading number two is a full house. Heading number three is a safe house.

I. A New House

In the course of David's rule, he definitely came to be noticed as an important force to reckon with. Hiram king of Tyre was one who took notice of David. Tyre is located a little over a hundred miles north northwest of Jerusalem. In a gesture of good relations, Hiram sent messengers to visit David. Along with them he sent the resources and manpower to build for David a house fit for a king.

Along the way and for accuracy, I need to point out that what is recorded here actually took place nearer to the latter years of David's reign. The author here is not concerned with chronology but with facts that demonstrate the increase of David's greatness. And in this case David's intensifying greatness is marked by recognition. Hiram's provision for the construction of a palace for David is indicative of the fact that David was receiving international acclaim as king. He has been anointed by Samuel then the elders of Judah and then the elders of all Israel. And now he is the recipient of favor from a king outside the realm of Israel. David's new house is a symbol that kings of the earth are recognizing his power and greatness.

Now whenever others begin to award you with accolades for your achievements, it is quite easy to begin to glow with pride and self-congratulation. When others compliment you and seek your favor, it is hard not to let it go to your head. But notice what the narrator says of David here (verse 12). "And David knew that the LORD had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel." Here are two extremely important matters that David kept in mind.

First, it was the LORD—not him—who had established him as king. What a difference between David here and Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Remember good ole Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. He is the king who was used by God to bring judgment on Israel for her relentless idolatry and defiance of the Lord. Nebuchadnezzar brought many thousands of captives from Judah to Babylon and destroyed Jerusalem. Many were his accomplishments. And one day he was walking on the roof of his palace beholding the great city surrounding him. He began talking to himself. He said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?"

The narrator of Samuel intimates that David said no such thing as he considered his new palace. The new house and the international recognition that came to him were not signs of his mighty power and glory. They were indicators that the Lord had done this. It was the work of God. To God be the glory. His role as king was not earned or deserved. It was given by the grace and purpose of God. David was not gloated in pride and self-congratulation but rather expressed a spirit of gratitude to the Lord.

Here, brothers and sisters, is an important reminder for you and me. We do not possess the role of disciples of Christ and children of God because of what we have done or because of who we are. Our salvation itself is a gift of God, not of works, that is, it is not of our own personal achievement. No one may boast before God, because if it were really up to us, our lives would amount to nothing more than a pile of dung. We cannot walk out on the roof of our palace and look around and survey our lives and glimpse anything worth seeing that has not been wrought by the Lord himself. As Christians, engaged in the pursuit of holiness, it is stated clearly by the Apostle Paul that it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works.

If there is anything good in us, anything worthy of acclaim, and there will be if we are in Christ, then it is evidence that it is Lord who has caused us to be born again. It is the Lord who has established us. And that fact should make us humble. And that fact should make us grateful.

Humble people are not obsessed with the specks in the eyes of others; they are broken over the logs in their own. They do not compare themselves with others. They don't live for themselves. They live for the benefit of others. Grateful people are not obsessed with getting what is coming to them. They are concerned that the glory and the honor and the accolades for their life goes to God. They belong to him. They are not complainers. They rejoice. They rejoice in God. Their hearts resonate with the one who wrote the 92nd psalm. "It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High: to declare your steadfast love in the morning and your faithfulness at night ... for you have mad me glad by your work; at the works of your hand I sing for joy."

This was the spirit of David at the construction of his new house. He knew it was the Lord who established him king. Likewise, when the Lord grants you and me esteem, when we are

acknowledged or honored and receive applause, let's remember where we got our bread buttered in the first place and give all the glory to the Lord.

But there is a second matter David kept in mind. Not only did he acknowledge it was the Lord who established him, he also bore in mind WHY the Lord established him. David knew that the Lord had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel. He knew he was not king for his own benefit. He was king for the benefit of others. David was not placed into the role of king for his own aggrandizement. It wasn't so he could rule in his own self-interest. It was so that he could rule in the interest of the people of God. It was not primarily a position of privilege to be enjoyed but a position of responsibility to be fulfilled. In the scripture, headship and authority are not positions of control for the benefit of oneself but of service for the sake of others. Jesus made this clear when he said of his own self: I did not come TO BE SERVED but TO SERVE and to give my life as a ransom. Here is the king of kings and Lord of Lords and he did not come for himself. He came to give. And that is the way it is meant by God to be in all positions of authority.

When God made Adam and gave to him Eve as his helper, it wasn't so Adam could rule over Eve and dominate her. But he was her head. He was to be her leader. He was responsible for her well-being. It was God who gave Adam the command to refuse to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam was the first responsible. Hence it was that when God came to the Garden he called out for Adam first. God knew what had happened but he called to the man first. He was first responsible.

David's understanding of his role in God's kingdom is instructive for us in our roles. It is instructive for all governmental leaders. God will hold you accountable to govern in a way that blesses and protects and truly does what is good for human beings. David's understanding is instructive for church leaders. Elders are not put in place in the church to dominate and tyrannize. We are in place to serve and warn and encourage and watch over souls. The authority we bear is not to aggrandize ourselves but to care for the body.

Most of you are not elders, but understanding our role in the kingdom of God is crucial for us all. We may not be in the position of elder, but we still have a position of importance in the body of Christ for which we are accountable. Every person who is in the body has a responsibility for living not in the interest of their own selves but in the interest of the whole body. God may not make you king, but he gives gifts for the benefit of the whole. Whatever gifts we have let us use them not so we can be applauded but so that the body may be built up—if service in our serving, if teaching in our instruction, if exhorting in our exhortation, if contributing in our generosity, if leading with zeal, and if extending mercy, with cheerfulness. The work of ministry is to be performed by all the saints of God to build up the body of Christ. When each part is working properly, the body builds itself up in love. We as a church family need to have this recognition of David etched in our minds. He knew the Lord had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.

Let me apply this truth in another critical area of living. It applies in the family. Husbands, our role of headship in our families is NOT to be SERVED. We are not to seek to be the chief recipient of benefit. No. Our role is to be the chief servant in our home. God did not place us in the role of husband so we might rule the roost and make ourselves comfortable on the backs of our family. He placed us in this role to insure their instruction and comfort and encouragement and support to have every opportunity to flourish. We are to lead by watching over the souls of those in our homes. We are to provide for and protect the well-being of those in our home. The more and more we do, the more and more we look like David and far more important, the more we look like Jesus.

So there we have David with a new home. And he does not let the recognition he is receiving divert him from the reason he has been chosen to be king. It is not for himself.

So, let's turn to a second aspect of the increase of David's greatness ...

II. A Full House.

While David was in Hebron (we are told back in 2 Samuel 3) that he fathered six sons. When he moved the throne and capital to Jerusalem, the procreating continued as did the marrying. David took more concubines and wives. He fathered more children. Eleven sons are mentioned here in chapter 5:14-16. It is a good thing a fellow king wanted to build David a house because, well, his house kept getting bigger and bigger. From a worldly perspective a bigger house, more sons, equals a stronger dynasty. The worldly-minded would look at David's expanding house and conclude that his greatness was expanding through the expansion of his family.

Sadly, though, for all the inquiring of God that we know David for, it seems he did not inquire of the Lord concerning the relationships into which he was entering with the women of the city he conquered. These would be Jebusite women. The surrounding nations would think nothing of David's activities. However, inter-marrying was contrary to the law of God. And furthermore, the Lord had given explicit instruction for the coming king. Back in Deuteronomy 17:17 the Lord ordered that future kings of his people "shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away." David disregarded this instruction.

Word order is interesting here as "concubines" appears before "wives." It is a curious order given that concubines were sort of a lesser wife. Perhaps there is the innuendo of desire getting the upper hand and overruling self-control and good sense. As Davis puts it, "On the one hand the number of David's sons indicates his strength; on the other hand, the number of his concubines and wives reveals his folly." It is possibly a classic case of one thinking "what applies to everyone else surely does not apply to me." We do that sometimes don't we? We employ a stricter standard of judgment for others than we put upon ourselves. We give ourselves more wiggle-room than we allow for others. It could also be that David felt he was allowed a little excess here because of all the other ways in which he did the right thing. That's another common temptation that spews from the flesh from time to time. Whatever the reason David disregarded the clear instruction of God, it certainly contributed to consequences for him. These marriages and competing family interests sow seeds of conflict and chaos. David will reap the sad consequences of these sinful choices.

This aspect of the increase of the "greatness" of David surely exposes a chink in David's armor. With all the good we can say about David, we must also say that he is like us in many ways. We are all capable of doing wrong alongside whatever we do that is right. David's imperfections are not withheld from us. Reckoning with them is not meant to teach us to take the Lord's instructions lightly. Rather, this exposure reinforces our understanding that there is no one who does good, not even one—that is except the One who ALWAYS does what pleases the Father. There are no spiritual heroes but Jesus. He alone is perfect. And of course his sinless perfection is necessary to provide salvation for sinners. For only he who knew NO sin could be made to be sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

We turn next to the third heading which highlights the increase of David's greatness . . .

III. A Safe House

The new house spoke of David's recognition. His full house represents expansion and now the safe house reflects protection and security. In the final segment of chapter 5, we are told of a pair of significant victories the Lord granted to David over the Philistines. The Philistine forces gathered en

masse. They display themselves as a formidable foe. However, in both cases David inquires of the Lord and responds to the threat as the LORD commands. And in both cases the result was a resounding victory.

And the main point is that in these victories, David is proving to be the king whom God is using to fulfill his promise and to defeat the enemies of his people. This promise was cited by Abner back in 2 Samuel 3:18. The Lord had promised that "by the hand of David" he would "save his people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies." The evil intents of the enemies, the harm they desired to bring upon the people of God, would fail. God would protect his people through his king.

David's victories over the enemies of God's people as the fulfillment of God's promise reminds followers of Christ Jesus of the assurance we have from the Lord that none of our enemies will be able to overcome us. God loves his people. Those who take refuge in him will find themselves protected from their enemies. We are never told that enemies will not arise against us. We are never told that there will not be a fight. We are never told that we will not suffer pain and sorrow in the midst of the battles. But what we are told is that "if God is for us, who can be against us?" Because our king, Jesus Christ, was not spared but was given up for us all and is at the right hand of God interceding for us, "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?" ... "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

That is Paul in Romans 8. Hear some more assurance from Psalm 91.

- 1 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.
- 2 I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."
- 3 For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence.
- 4 He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
- 5 You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day,
- 6 nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.
- 7 A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.
- 8 You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked.

The LORD declares:

- 14 "Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name.
- 15 When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him.
- 16 With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."

David's victories over the enemies of God provide an encouraging reminder that our sovereign king, the Lord Jesus Christ, though opposed will, in the end, never lose. The best place for us to be is in lock-step with him. When you have the right king and the king pleases God, you are in a safe house, so to speak; you can rest in his protection.

Now, there are a couple practical lessons in these battles that I do not want us to overlook. First, we see the importance of seeking God's guidance. David demonstrates humility and sensitivity to the Lord in each of these battles by inquiring of the Lord. He is not leaning on his own understanding. He is trusting God. He desires to know the will of God, the direction of God. The Lord provides the guidance David needs to be victorious—two different battles and two different strategies. The Lord secured him and gave him victory through his direction.

The commands of the Lord and the principles of his word, the wisdom provided for us in the scripture are the guidance we need to be faithful to the Lord and to abide in the shelter of the Almighty. It is for our good and for our protection that the Lord guides and directs us. See the instructions of the Lord as part of his protection. Seek him and seek his will through his word.

Second, we also see the assurance of God's commands. Notice that in particular in the first battle, David asks, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? And will you give them into my hands?" The Lord said "yes" to both questions. In the second battle the Lord gave David the same two elements. There was a command, "don't go up, go around and wait until you hear the sound of marching in the balsam trees, THEN rouse yourself." The command was followed by a word of assurance: "The Lord has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines."

I suggest to you that every one of the commands of the Lord carries with it the element of promise. It is like the command to honor one's father and mother that it may be well with you. God's law is the way of protection for our path and triumph for our battles. Obedience is more than just submission to an order; it is also faith in the promise of God that the way of the Lord is best.

And then, third, we see in the first battle, the folly of trusting anything but God. In that first battle, the Lord just burst through the enemy lines like a tidal wave. So profound and so decisive was the punch of the Lord there that they named the place after it. How shocked will the nations be when Christ returns and God bursts right through the walls of falsehood they have thrown up to deceive themselves. How overwhelmed they will be. He is not weak. He is not soft. He is not a pansy. He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. For the nations, it will be a day of reckoning. They have gathered themselves against him as though he is no match for them and their gods, their theories, their philosophies.

But what happened to the Philistines? Verse 21 is telling. "The Philistines left their idols there, and David and his men carried them away." Chronicles tells us they went and burned them. It is folly not to trust in God. Every other so-called god and every philosophy and doctrine that contradicts the One true God is a delusion. All of these are sorry substitutions for the one true God. And when the true King, the Lord Jesus arises in battle, he will smash through all the delusions and those who held to them. He will level the hopes of those who held in their hearts the things of creation in place of the creator. They will leave their idols on the ground to be carried off and burned as garbage because they cannot do them a bit of good.

Our God is in the heavens and he does whatever he pleases. He is the great and mighty God and he is mighty in battle. If you want to win, you should put all your idols on the ground right now and join up with him. Either that or he will come against you in justice and righteously wipe you out because you stand in opposition to him. Your hopes have been invested in folly.

Conclusion

When my life comes to its end and God's purposes for me are complete, I am sure there will be regrets. Mine like David's will never compare to the perfection of my Savior. But I might hope that you would join me in pursuing a life, the summary of which in just a few highlights could be like and unlike that of David in these ways.

One. If we ever get any recognition—like David did when Hiram built him a house—that we in our heart and with our lips would give all the credit to the grace of God.

Two. Unlike David, let us refuse to think ourselves above any of God's instructions.

Three. Like David let us engage in battle remembering, however, that our enemies are the world, the flesh, and the devil and that our weapons are not of the flesh but are mighty through God to destroy enemy strongholds. And let us live in the confident security of Christ's guidance and defense.