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## David's Last Words

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*"Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse saith, and the man who was raised on high saith, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel: the Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was upon my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me: One that ruleth over men righteously, that ruleth in the fear of God, he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds, when the tender grass springeth out of the earth, through clear shining after rain. Verily my house is not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for it is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he maketh it not to grow" (2 Sam. 23:1-5).*

*"But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have rejected him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).*

*"Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed" (2 Tim. 2:15).*

In the fragment we have read from the second book of Samuel - the last words of David - we have a clue or an explanation. When we read the unvarnished story of the life of the great servants of God in the Bible, and note how so many of them failed, how they broke down and were guilty of things which are to be very greatly deplored - in the case of David, for instance - the question arises: If God knew the whole course, the end from the beginning, foresaw what would happen, foresaw the sin that David would commit, why did God choose him? Why was he allowed to come into such great responsibility where God's own name and honour were involved? Ought not the Lord either to have chosen people who would never do that sort of thing, or entirely safeguard His interests from the

weaknesses of His servants and prevent them from making those terrible mistakes? Some such question often arises when you see how much the Lord made of these men, what great things He said about them, and what responsibilities He allowed to fall into their hands. Yet nothing about such men is covered up. It is all exposed to full view.

### **David's Reliance on Another**

I think the clue or the answer is found here in 2 Sam. 23. It does not lie just on the surface. You have to look again and find the help which is in the marginal chain for some of the things in the text; and this is what it amounts to - David has seen Someone, he has seen a glorious One. You will see, as you read with the help of the margin, that David is not talking about himself when he speaks of One Who will rule in righteousness, One Who answers to this beautiful description which he gives. He says, "My house is not so; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." He has seen another One, and it is concerning that One that the covenant has been made with David. "I will set up thy seed after thee, that shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom" (2 Sam. 7:12).

The effect of this is to assure David that God has chosen him on two grounds - or a ground with two sides. As to the first, his language is, in effect, this: 'God has provided Himself with the supply of all my defects in Another; He has provided Himself with a covering for all my sins in Another; He is putting to my faulty account all the perfections and glories of that Other; He has made a covenant with me in blood concerning that Other. My house is not like that; I am a very faulty man; but God has the One Who satisfies Him on my behalf.' There is no doubt about it that in his last words David was lifting up his eyes from his own failure, his own coming short, his own weakness, yes, his own grievous sins, and at the end of his life he is saying with Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth" (Job 19:25). 'I see the One Who will complete my life and "perfect that which concerneth me" (Psa. 138:8), and make good on my behalf where I have failed.'

### **A Positive Heart Relationship with the Lord**

But there is the other side to that, which is found in those words which we read - "the Lord looketh on the heart." There also is a clue. Those words were not spoken actually of David, but their setting warrants us in taking them as directly applicable to him, and they mean that David was not just taking this attitude - 'Well, I am a very imperfect, sinful man, but the Lord knows my heart, He knows that I am well-meaning, He knows that I have never really meant to do wrong; I was overtaken, I slipped up, but really I am not an evil-meaning man at heart, I mean well.' No, that was not it, and that is not it with God. That is not good enough. This looking on the heart by God is never negative. There are many people who take that position, thinking to cover up a lot. But it was not like that with David. It was a positive heart relationship with the Lord Himself on the part of David which provided the ground for the Lord to make good all that was in Christ to this faulty man.

### **Concern for the Lord's Interests**

You can see it in several respects. First of all, note that one of the very first things that sprang out of or followed that statement of the Lord was the incident with Goliath. David arrived on the scene not under commission, not having had this matter put to him; he just came up, it would seem casually, on an errand; and while there, he saw this giant come out from the ranks of the Philistines and vaunt himself and challenge Israel. As David saw and heard him his heart boiled. Oh, it was not just a young man wanting a fight, presumptuously wanting to take something on. His language afterwards as he accepted the challenge was, 'You have defied the Lord; it is the Lord and His interests that you

are vaunting yourself against; and therefore I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, I take up the Lord's interests.' It was positive jealousy for God that was in the heart of David, that made him boil when he found something that was reaching out and laying a hand upon what was precious to the Lord. The Lord knew that heart of David, that it was jealous for His interests. It was positive; and when the Lord finds a heart like that, that is inwardly moved for His glory whenever it finds His interests challenged, then there may be weaknesses in the life - blunders, mistakes, tragedies - but the Lord looks on that heart and says, 'Yes, but that heart is not passive, negative, toward Me; that heart is really positive toward Me, set on My interests, jealous for My Name and My glory; and I can come alongside of that and make good, in view of what I have in My Son, the defects and the weaknesses.'

That, I think, is very true in principle in the Word of God. We cannot fail to see in the apostle Paul another one like this. It is all wrong to think of such men as infallible. Paul made mistakes, but the sovereign grace of God is marvellously displayed in them. Why? Because here is a man whose heart is on fire for the interests of the Lord at any cost. When the Lord gets that kind of heart He accepts the weak, faulty vessels, and supplies their wants in Jesus Christ and His perfections.

### **A Gift Developed for the Glory of God**

You notice another thing about David which sprang out of his secret life - the developing of gifts for the glory of God. Notice that little fragment in his last words - "David... the sweet psalmist of Israel." Away there in the fields, minding his father's sheep, hidden from public view, living his secret life with God, he was learning to play, developing a musical gift for the Lord; and you find that came into very great use and service for the Lord later on. It was said of him that he was skilful in playing (1 Sam. 16:18). He taught himself alone in the field to play, and it came in as a mighty force - at times against evil spirits, but supremely in the psalms. "The sweet psalmist of Israel." What should we do if the psalms were cut out of the Bible and taken from us? How the saints in all the ages have found help from those psalms which David sang! He became not only a great solo musician, he became also a great organizer and leader of choirs and bands. It was he who instituted the twenty-four courses of the singers so that the whole round of the twenty-four hour day should have no hour in it without praises to God.

David's heart led him to develop whatever gifts he had or could have *unto the Lord*. He did not have mixture in his music; it was all unto the Lord. Oh, the variety of strains! You find everything here in his psalms, from the depth to the height, but you find nothing evil; all is unto the Lord. That in itself should be a word to us. The heart upon which the Lord is looking, to which He can bring so much more that is of His Son, is the heart that is so toward Him that spontaneously, without having to be provoked and urged and persuaded, and out there alone in the wilderness, with none of the incentive of publicity or the inspiration of an audience, it will develop its gift unto the Lord, so that later, in the midst of the Lord's people, that gift just breaks out into full volume. A secret devotion to the Lord finds expression along that particular line. Have you some line that you can develop, for the Lord? Have you some gift that can come under your heart's devotion to the Lord and be made to serve Him? Or have you a lot of fallow ground, latent possibilities, that you are not developing for the Lord? Just look round. "The Lord looketh on the heart."

### **A Passion for the Lord's House**

Then, again, David had a secret in his heart. When it came there we do not know, but it was evidently of long duration, and was one dominating, all-consuming passion. It breaks out from time to time in his phraseology, as anything that is deeply in the heart is bound to do. This is always coming out

with David. What was it? The all-absorbing ambition, the vision, the passion, was - the house of the Lord. On one occasion he said, "I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids; until I find out a place for the Lord, a tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob" (Psa. 132:3-5). Then, when he had found it and had got the pattern and had prepared the materials for its construction, he divulged something. He said, "Seeing that I have a treasure of mine own of gold and silver, I give it unto the house of my God..." (1 Chron. 29:3). See his master passion for the house of the Lord! The Lord had looked into that heart and seen this; and when He finds a heart like that, He has ground on which He can work. Are you conscious of faults, weaknesses, failures? Do not be discouraged, do not give up, do not think you are no good. The Lord has a place for you if your heart is like David's. There is all the margin of what the Lord Jesus is to set over against your weaknesses and failures.