

DAVID:

SHEPHERD, PSALMIST, KING

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CHAPTER TWO

“FROM THAT DAY FORWARD”

(I Samuel 16:13)

Once for the least of children of Manasses
God had a message and a deed to do,
Wherefore the welcome that all speech surpasses
Called him and hailed him greater than he knew.”

- F. W. H. Myers

FROM whatever side we view the life of David, it is remarkable. It may be that Abraham excelled him in faith; and Moses in the power of concentrated fellowship with God; and Elijah in the fiery force of his enthusiasm. But none of these was so many-sided as the richly-gifted son of Jesse.

Few have had so varied a career as he: shepherd and monarch; poet and soldier; champion of his people, and outlaw in the caves of Judaea; beloved of Jonathan, and persecuted by Saul; vanquishing the Philistines one day, and accompanying them into battle on another.

But in all he seemed possessed of a special power with God and man, which could not be accounted for by the fascination of his manner, the beauty of his features, the rare gifts with which his nature was dowered, or the spiritual power which was so remarkable an attribute of his heart. We touch these many chords, but the secret still eludes us, until we read the momentous words that sum up the result of a memorable day that lay as a jewel in the obscure years of opening youth. **“The Spirit of the Lord came mightily on David from that day forward.”**

I. IT BEGAN LIKE ANY ORDINARY DAY

No angel-trumpet heralded it; no faces looked out of heaven; the sun arose that morning according to his wont over the purple walls of the hills of Moab, making the cloud-curtains saffron and gold. With the first glimmer of light the boy was on his way to lead his flock to pasture-lands heavy with dew. As the morning hours sped onwards, many duties would engross his watchful soul strengthening the weak, healing that which was sick, binding up that which was broken, and seeking that which was lost; or the music of his song may have thrilled the listening air. **“A cunning player on the harp was he.”**

A breathless messenger suddenly broke upon this pastoral scene, with the tidings of Samuel's arrival at the little town, and that the prophet had refused to eat of the hastily-prepared banquet until the shepherd-boy had joined the bidden guests. His father had therefore sent to summon him with all speed. How the young eyes must have flashed with pleasure! Never before had he been wanted and sent for thus. Till now he had been only "**the lad that kept the sheep.**"

The family life had been complete without him. His father and brothers had followed their pursuits and pleasures in almost total disregard of the young son and brother who was destined to make their names immortal. He had borne it all in patience. His heart was not haughty, neither his eyes lofty; neither did he exercise himself in great matters, or in things too high for him; but quieted himself as a child that is weaned from its mother.

Still, it was a genuine pleasure to feel that the family circle in great Samuel's eyes was not complete till he had come. He therefore left his sheep with the messenger, and started at full speed for home.

Samuel on his coming had sanctified Jesse and his sons, passing them through a series of ceremonial ablutions to fit them for the festival in which the social and sacred elements combined. But David needed none of these.

His pure and guiltless soul was right with God, and clad in the spotless robe of purity. No soil needed punctilious removal. Let us so live as to be prepared for whatever the next hour may bring forth. The spirit in fellowship with God, the robe stainlessly pure, the loins girt, the lamp trimmed. The faithful fulfillment of the commonplaces of daily life is the best preparation for any great demand that may suddenly break in upon our lives.

II. IT WAS THE CONSUMMATION OF PREVIOUS TRAINING

We must not suppose that now, for the first time, the Spirit of God wrought in David's heart. To think this would indicate complete misconception of the special teaching of this incident; for Scripture always distinguishes between the regenerating and the anointing grace of the Holy Spirit.

From his earliest days, David had probably been the subject of his quickening and renewing work; but he had probably never experienced, before the day of which we treat, that special unction of the Holy One symbolized in the anointing oil, and indispensable for all successful spiritual work. Our Lord was born of the Spirit; but his anointing for service did not take place till at the age of thirty, when on the threshold of his public work, He emerged from the waters of baptism. It was to this He referred in the opening words of his earliest sermon, "**The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, and He hath anointed Me.**"

The Apostles were certainly regenerate before the day of Pentecost; but they had to wait within closed doors until they were endued with power for the conversion of men. Full often have we met with those who were unmistakably the children of God, but who had no special power in witness-bearing, nor freedom in speech, nor ability to grapple with the hearts and consciences of men.

They needed what would be to them as electricity to the wire, or the spark to gun powder. In other words, the Spirit of God has been in but not on them. We have seen such awake and claim the Divine anointing; and suddenly they have begun to speak with new tongues, and men have not been able to resist their reasonings of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come.

This blessed anointing for service cannot be ours, except there has been a previous gracious work on the heart. There must be the new life - the life of God. There must be docility, humility, fidelity to duty, cleansing from known sin, and a close walk with God. The descending flame must fall upon the whole burnt-offering of a consecrated life. And it was because all these had been wrought in David by the previous work of the Holy Spirit, that he was prepared for this special unction.

It may be, reader, that in the obscurity of your life, shut away from the presence of great interests, you are being prepared for a similar experience. Be careful to obey God's least prompting, whether to do or suffer; that you be prepared for the golden moment when your meek head shall be suddenly bathed in the descending chrism.

III. IT WAS MINISTERED THROUGH SAMUEL

The old prophet had conferred many benefits on his native land; but none could compare in importance with his eager care for its youth. The creation of the schools of the prophets was due to him. Saul, in the earlier years of his manhood, felt the charm and spell of the old man's character. The stalwart sons of Jesse's house were, therefore, probably well known to him when he received the Divine command to anoint one of them as Saul's successor.

Driving a heifer before him, he entered the one long street of Bethlehem, and summoned the elders to a feast, so as not to arouse the suspicions of the jealous, moody king, who would not have scrupled to take his life if he had suspected the real object of his visit.

When David reached the village, a strange scene met his eye. There was his father Jesse, and his seven brothers, probably waiting for him in the ancestral home, preparatory to their all going together to the public banquet to which the leading men of the village had been invited. An unusual restraint lay upon the rough tongues and harsh behavior with which Eliab and the rest were wont to treat him.

At other times they would not have hesitated to express their impatience and contempt; but now the very air seemed heavy with a sacred spell that held them. No sooner had he entered, flushed with exertion, health glowing on his face, genius flashing from his eye, royalty in his mien, than the Lord said to Samuel, "**Arise, anoint him: for this is he!**" Then Samuel took the horn of oil which he had brought with him from Nob, and poured its contents on the head of the astonished lad.

It is likely that the bystanders did not realize the significance of that act; or on the eve of the fight with Goliath Jesse would hardly have treated him so unceremoniously, and Eliab would have addressed him with more courtesy. But David probably understood.

Josephus indeed tells us that the prophet whispered in his ear the meaning of the sacred symbol. Did the aged lips approach the young head, and as the trembling hand pushed back the clustering locks, did they whisper in the lad's ear the thrilling words, "**Thou shalt be king**"?

If so, in after days how they would return to him; and how vast an inspiration they would be! a formative influence, a preparation for the great destiny that awaited him. The descent of the oil was symbolical; in other words, it had no spiritual efficacy, but was the outward and visible sign that the Spirit of God had come mightily on the shepherd-lad. For Jesus there was no oil; but instead, the appearance of a dove flitting gently to its nest.

For the disciples, on the day of Pentecost, there was no oil; but a flame of lambent fire alighting on each bowed head. In the process of the age these outward symbols have become mechanical and have passed from general use. We must believe that we have received when we have fulfilled the conditions of humility and the faith that claims (Galatians 3:14).

From that memorable day David returned to his sheep; and as the months went slowly by, he must sometimes have greatly wondered when the hour of achievement would arrive. When would he have an opportunity of displaying and using his new-found force? He had to learn that we are sometimes strengthened with all might to patience and long-suffering as the prelude to heroic deeds; we have to wrestle with the lion and the bear on the hills of Bethlehem, that we may be prepared to meet Goliath in the valley of Elah.

IV. IT WAS A DAY OF REJECTION

Seven of Jesse's sons were passed over. Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, were called; but God chose then, as ever the weak, the base, the things that were despised. Seven is the perfect number: the seven sons of Jesse stand for the perfection of the flesh. This must be cut down to the ground, lest it should glory in God's presence. The lesson is hard to learn; but its acquisition is imperative. You cannot bear it? Well, be it so; then, like Eliab, you may become one of the princes of Judah, but you shall never be God's beloved (I Chronicles 27:18).

In this secret anointing of David, the first of three, we have a type of the setting apart of our Lord in the Divine counsels. Rejected of men, despised of his brethren, without form or comeliness, He has been set apart as the King of the Ages. As yet many a barrier lies between Him and the acknowledgment which the Father has promised; but to Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord. In the meanwhile He waits - waits till the hour of universal triumph strikes; waits till the many crowns of the destined empire meet on the head which was once encircled by the crown of thorns.

~ end of chapter 2 ~

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