

Beneath the Surface

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His reputation really said it all. He was a murderer, an adulterer and a man so associated with violence that bloodshed and death were clearly part of his life. Like so many in the “underworld,” death and destruction seemed to follow him everywhere.

Some, particularly those whose paths he had crossed, became obsessed with hunting him down. Because of this, much of his life was spent as a fugitive – in hiding, moving from one cover to another, constantly looking over his shoulder.

While death eluded *him*, its tentacles reached out, insidiously cutting off many of his family, some of them innocents, but also others – those caught up in a bloody grasp like an ongoing plague that seemed part of his very being. As with many trapped in a life filled with violence, he had to endure the agony of losing some of his nearest and dearest including his first and favourite son.

Not only was he besieged externally but within his very family he experienced the shame and hurt of incest, the humiliation of multiple rape and the mind-numbing, horrible murder of one son by another.

This is no invention to shock you, the story is true.¹

We read or hear of so much “news” of this nature that our minds go numb to it. It literally surrounds us and no matter where we live, such evil is just a horrible part of the world in which we live. Inescapably, it weighs us down. Some blame the government, others put it down to “human nature,” while yet others blame God.

Without exception, those who long for peace just wish it would not happen. We look on these occurrences with revulsion and shame, hoping always for better days.

So, very rightly, we might wonder how God Himself looked at this man of blood?

Interestingly, according to the book of Acts, God’s first words about him were,

1. Read the whole story from I Samuel 16:7 to I Kings 2:4.

I have found [this man], a man according to My heart, who will be doing all My will! (Acts 13:22).

Obviously, with a background as described above, God was looking much, much deeper than the obvious if He expected His will to be carried out through this person. Where we are often guilty of “judging the book by its cover,” God always looks to the heart.

For the benefit of those who have not guessed already, our subject was no less than David, son of Jesse, anointed King of Israel. When Samuel was sent to anoint a future king, he was most impressed with David’s older brother; but God said to Samuel,

You must not look at his appearance ... for not as a human sees, does the One Elohim see. A human sees the visible appearance, yet Yahweh sees into the heart (I Samuel 16:7).

After all of Jesse’s sons, bar one, were paraded before Samuel, the youngest – David – was eventually called from the field.

And Yahweh said, “Rise and anoint him, for this is he.” And the spirit of Yahweh prospered on David from that day onward (I Samuel 16:12-13).

We need to read David’s story as Scripture records it in order to equate this very clear statement with the happenings outlined at the start of this article. If “*the spirit of Yahweh prospered on David from that day onward,*” however did such events come about? Let’s not forget that God’s ways are not our ways. Through David, God had some mighty work to achieve.

We pick up the story at II Samuel 7:8 where God instructs Nathan, the prophet, to tell David,

*I myself took you from the homestead, from following the flock, to become governor over My people, over Israel. I shall be with you wherever you go, and I shall cut off all your enemies from before you. I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones who are on the earth. I will provide a place for **My people**, Israel [and] I will give you rest from all your enemies.*

Then, in :16,

*Your **house and your kingship** will be authenticated before Me for the eon; your throne, it shall become established for the eon.*

God’s plans then, through David, were primarily for His chosen nation, Israel and, secondly, for David himself. According to the scriptural record, we see David embroiled in almost countless skirmishes and wars (will we ever forget the first one involving the giant, Goliath?) as God progressively “put the cleaner” throughout the land, in due course “cutting off all his enemies” and “providing a place for the people.” So then, much of David’s bloody lifetime was at God’s direct behest.

Remember, though, God had an outcome for David himself and – in just the same way as we experience life – David’s had to embrace the knowledge of good and bad. David’s regrettable

adultery with Bathsheba resulting in the murder of her husband in a futile effort to cover his tracks doubtless humbled him greatly. Then, to further humble him, God struck down the son produced from that union so that he died at a very young age.

In a later incident, David called a census of the people knowing it to be against the will of God. As a result, “70,000 men of the people died” when struck down by His messenger. Imagine David’s sense of blame and shame as he cried out to Yahweh,

Behold, I myself have sinned, and I myself have been depraved, I, the shepherd, who has caused this evil ...

Without question, David had to learn some pretty severe lessons. Yet in all of this, recall what we read earlier, “*the spirit of Yahweh prospered on David from that day onward.*” It might help us better understand the meaning of that statement if we look at that key word, “*prosper.*” The primary meaning, according to my *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, is “to succeed.”

Aha! Now it makes sense. In all of these upheavals (and in the good times too!), God’s spirit was “succeeding” with David. Of course God knew the troubles that would come, He knew David’s weaknesses – and his strengths as well – because, remember, “*a human sees the visible appearance, yet Yahweh sees into the heart.*”

That God succeeded with David is beyond doubt. As the prophet told him, “*your throne, it shall become established for the eon*” and no other than our Lord will inherit that throne on His glorious return to this earth in the none too distant future.

In like manner, God sees us *beneath* the surface. He knows us better than we know ourselves and, similarly to David, He has anointed us and given us His spirit as a down payment on the promises He has in store for us.

*Now He Who is confirming us together in Christ, and anoints us, is God, Who also seals us and is giving the earnest [pledge or initial deposit] of the spirit **in our hearts** (II Corinthians 1:21-22).*

We can quickly grasp a certain commonality between the spirit prospering or succeeding with David and what Paul tells us of the spirit for those of us “*who are believing on Him Who rouses Jesus our Lord from among the dead*” (Romans 4:24). Not only are we given the spirit *in our hearts* as a pledge of wonderful things to come, but

*The love of God [also] has been poured out **in our hearts** through the holy spirit which is being given to us (Romans 5:5).*

In the Book of Acts, God is referred to as “*the Knower of hearts*” (Acts 15:8) and how appropriate is that title to this discussion. Not only does God see the heart (David’s, mine and yours), but He *knows* it intimately. So when He gives His spirit, God goes right to the center and core of our spiritual existence, to the heart – the very area where the greatest changes to our lives will be made as God’s spirit *prosper*s or *succeeds* within us.

Yet you are not in flesh, but in spirit, if so be that God's spirit is making its home in you. Now if anyone has not Christ's spirit, this one is not His. Now if Christ is in you, the body, indeed, is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is life because of righteousness. Now if the spirit of Him Who rouses Jesus from among the dead is making its home in you, He Who rouses Christ Jesus from among the dead will also be vivifying your mortal bodies because of His spirit making its home in you. For whoever are being led by God's spirit, these are the sons of God (Romans 8:9-11, 14).

There are wonderful parallels in David's turbulent life and the life of ups and downs God gives in preparation for the glorious role He has in store for us. David has been prepared for a millennial kingship in the coming eon, and we are being prepared for our celestial future (Philippians 3:20). In all cases, as Romans 8:27 reminds us, "*He Who is **searching the hearts** is aware what is the disposition of the spirit ...*" Our mighty God always looks beneath the surface to the very heart of the matter.

Each and every one of us, like David, will experience our right measure of good and bad. These experiences don't "just happen" because they are in fact the result of our Father prospering us just as His spirit prospered with David. Rest assured that, when Father begins His work within our hearts, He will prosper us to the full measure of success, to His glory.

Take comfort in the knowledge that God is working all together for the good of those who love Him, for those called to the foreknown purpose of being conformed to the image of His Son.² That glorious goal lies just before us.

2. Paraphrased from Romans 8:28-29.

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