

Session 7 David and the psalms

We started the course with two over-arching questions.

Why is David revered as a man after God's own heart and as Israel's greatest king?

What are we meant to do with what we read about David in the Bible?

Rather than examining David's character for what we can copy, perhaps the key to learning from his life is to look at the character of the God he believed in and the impact that belief had on his actions.

The best place to do that is probably through the psalms.

Knowing God as our stronghold

Ps 18:2 - God as our rock, fortress, deliverer, shield, stronghold, the one in whom I take refuge.

When David was on the run it was not the deserts, canyons and caves that were his security - God was.

David wasn't indifferent to danger. He remained alert to what his protector-God was saying to him. The safest place, whatever his situation, was to be in close relationship and communication with his God.

(See also Ps 3:3; 12:7-8; 18; 27; 28; 31; 34; 59; 62; 71; 142; 144).

Is that the God we have put our trust in? Who do we look to when we don't feel safe, when life is giving us a battering, when the world seems to be increasingly chaotic and dangerous? Do we truly recognise that God is our rock, our fortress and our deliverer? Do we look and listen to Him?

Knowing God as the faithful provider of all that we need

Ps 16:2 'You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.'

Ps 16:5 'Yahweh, you alone are my portion and my cup.'

Ps 54:4 'Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me.'

God provides the same protection to His Church. He will never let the flame of His Church be extinguished. He is faithful to the promises made to His people.

Ps 31:5 'Into your hands I commit my spirit; deliver me, Yahweh, my faithful God'

Ps 86:11 'Teach me your way, Yahweh, that I may rely on your faithfulness'

Knowledge of that faithfulness was probably what prevented David from killing Saul and Nabal (1 Sam 24-26) and enabled him to rise and worship God when his new-born child died (2 Sam 12)

(See also Ps 21; 23; 37; 61; 63; 65; 68; 108; 138; 143; 145)

We often sing of God's faithfulness in church. Do those words ring true in your head and heart? Do you cling to that awareness of God's faithfulness even when circumstances don't suggest it?

Trust in God's faithfulness gives us hope for the future and motivates our pursuit of a righteous life. Such persevering obedience is worth it for the sake of gaining all God has promised..

Knowing God hears our prayers and answers them

David prayed fervently for his child's life to be spared (2 Sam 12:14-23) because he believed God was worth praying to, even though the outcome was not always what he wanted..

Ps 3:4 'I call out to Yahweh, and he answers me from his holy mountain'

Ps 5:3 'Yahweh, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly.'

David knew he could not make God give him what he wanted by praying. God's ways are not man's ways, nor God's timing what we might think it should be.

Ps 139:6 'You have searched me Yahweh and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Yahweh, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand on me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain' (See also Ps 4; 17:16; 20; 40; 61; 66)

We don't know all that God knows, so don't expect Him always to act how you think He should. Continue to lay your requests before Him, but let Him act as He sees fit. Allow Him to still be God.

Knowing God can be trusted even when evil appears to triumph

David expressed anguish about the way the wicked seem to prosper. And yet he still saw God as a God of holiness and justice who would not allow violence and deceit to have the ultimate victory.

Ps 11:3-4 'When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do? Yahweh is in his holy temple; Yahweh is on his heavenly throne.'

Ps 5:5-7 'The arrogant cannot stand in your presence. You hate all who do wrong; you destroy those who tell lies. The bloodthirsty and deceitful you, Yahweh, detest. But I, by your great love, can come into your house; in reverence I bow down towards your holy temple.'

David's eyes moved from gazing at a world gone wrong to gazing at the throne of God. Doing the same can help us regain a proper perspective on what is true and certain – what we can live for expectantly.

David also knew God could cope with his strongest emotions (Ps 6:1-7) but believed God would act against those who persist in doing evil (v8).

Ps 4:8 'In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Yahweh, make me dwell in safety.'

(See also Ps 6; 7; 9; 12; 13; 22; 31; 33; 36; 37; 54; 55; 56; 57; 64; 73; 109; 140; 141)

Is that true for you too? Is your view of God big enough to trust Him with all the things that worry you about the way the world is?

Knowing God delights in our pursuit of purity

Ps 15:1-3 'Yahweh, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? The one whose way of life is blameless; who does what is righteous; who speaks the truth from their heart'

Ps 19:7-14 David loved God's commands

Is that how you view what God requires of us, His people? Does the thought of God's commands thrill you with the character of the God who introduced them?

David believed his pursuit of holiness delighted God and it spurred him on to holy living (Ps 18:20-28).

(See also Ps 24; 26; 51; 73:1; 101; 141)

Knowing God is gracious and eager to forgive even our worst sins when we return to him

Ps 51:1-17

Take each verse of Ps 51 slowly and ponder the meaning and implications of each part.

David's understanding of the outrageous graciousness of God is what drove his desire to turn away from his own sinful ways and live righteously. He knew for sure that he would be met with love not anger.

Oh, that the same would be true of us.

(See also Ps 32; 38; 41; 51; 103)

Knowing we are nothing compared to God and we depend utterly on Him

Ps 8:3-6

David did not get carried away with his own importance in relation to God, which is why he so often looked out for the people who had helped him when his life was in danger.

David knew he was a servant of God, dependent on Him for everything.

Ps 145:1-21 God's character and works are beyond anything we can lay claim to - we depend on Him.

Ps 131, 'My heart is not proud, Yahweh, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have calmed and quietened myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content. Israel, put your hope in Yahweh both now and for evermore.'

(See also Ps 22; 59)

The remarkable promise God made to David

Perhaps because of David's deep understanding of God's character, God made a promise to him.

2 Sam 7:5-16 - remarkable promises with layers of meaning:

- To make David's name great (v9) - was partially fulfilled already, but would become far greater .
- To provide a home for his people Israel (v10) - they were not yet free from disturbance or oppression, nor are today. So is a bigger horizon in mind?
- To establish a house for David after he'd died (v11-13) - what is that 'house'?

God was saying the building is not the critical thing, nor necessary to guarantee God's favour.

Relevance for us: *We'd do well to remember that the glory of the building is worth little if the heart of the people isn't focused on the glory of God.*

The 'house' God promised David was a 'family' or 'household' - a dynasty. An obvious reference to Solomon but, again, is another horizon in mind, (v13b)?

Who is the 'he' in v13-15? See v12. Could just refer to Solomon. But Hebrew for 'offspring' is 'seed' - used in OT to refer to a line of descendants. So could refer to all the kings of Judah.

An individual king was less important than the office of the king as a whole. Kings would be bad, but the line and the kingdom would last (v16). Nothing could bring it to an end; not David's death, nor his descendants' sin, nor even time itself.

Given the history of Israel since then, how can God's promise to David possibly be true?

Jesus is the 'seed' from the line of David (see Matt 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38) - he is ultimately the king and his is the kingdom spoken of in vv12, 13, & 16.

Did David realise the full extent of what God was promising? He sat before Yahweh (v18), overwhelmed

- by God's humility in not expecting a temple (v19)
- by God's grace in carrying out His purposes through faithless Israel and flawed David (v23)
- by God's faithfulness in ensuring the kingdom of His people would last for ever (v24).

All David wanted was to be forever in His presence and under His blessing (v29).

Is that what you yearn for too?

Last words

1 Kings 2:2-4 God remained faithful to His promise such that today Jesus, son of David, rules over a kingdom that will last forever – all who trust in Him get to share in that kingdom with Him. Alleluia!