

David, the Compleat Sinner

In cataloguing the recorded sins of King David, the Lord's prophet who is lovingly remembered as "the sweet Psalmist of Israel" (2 Sam. 23:1) and whom God Himself designated as being "a man after His Own Heart" (1 Sam. 13:14; cf. Acts 13:22), the careful researcher finds himself getting clunked over the head by all the skeletons tumbling out of David's spiritual closet. Indeed, my personal investigations rewarded me with the discovery of no fewer than 12 missteps, including some of the most blatant, heinous crimes mentioned in Scripture. Here is the list, which David's critics might term "David's Dirty Dozen."

- 1) Distrusts God by visiting the high priest Ahimelech at Nob; while his true purpose is to retrieve Goliath's sword as his own weapon, he gives the priest to believe that he is on King Saul's secret business and has stopped by for provisions for some hungry men he is to meet (see 1 Sam. 21:1-9). *Commandments I, III, IX broken.*
- 2) Flees to King Achish, a Philistine (!), at Gath, again distrusting God regarding his personal safety (see 1 Sam. 21:10). *Commandments I, II broken.*
- 3) Practices deception before King Achish to protect his identity by feigning madness (see 1 Sam. 21:13). *Commandments I, III, IX broken.*
- 4) Manifests distrust of God by entrusting his parents with a Moabite king at Mizpeh, ignoring God's command that Israelites ought not have any business with the Moabites because they were inhospitable to the Israelites during the post-Exodus wanderings, and who also violated traditional Middle-Eastern ethics toward even strangers. Moabite King Balak had hired Balaam to curse Israel (and their daughters had enticed Israel into sin) (see Deut. 23:3-6; Num. 22-25; 1 Sam. 22:3, 4). *Commandment I broken.*
- 5) Harbors vengeance for Nabal and company at Maon and Carmel in the hill country of Judah (see 1 Sam. 25, esp. vv. 13, 34). *Commandments III, VI broken.*
- 6) Practices bigamy by marrying Nabal's widow Abigail, as he was already married to Ahinoam (see 1 Sam. 25:39-43; vs. 44 also reveals that his first wife Michal had since been given by Saul to Phaltiel, but the act of bigamy still obtains.) *Commandments III, VII broken.*
- 7) Distrusts God by fleeing to the Philistine King Achish a second time, staying 18 months (see 1 Sam. 27:1-7; cf. ST Nov. 16, 1888). *Commandments I, III broken.*
- 8) Deceives King Achish into believing he is helping the Philistine cause by raiding his fellow Israelites, when in reality he massacres the Geshurites, Gezrites, and Amalekites, leaving no witness to expose him (see 1 Sam. 27:5-12). *Commandments I, III, VI, IX broken.*
- 9) As king, practices polygamy by adding more wives (Maachah, Haggith, Abital, and Eglah—seven in all, thus far) and at least 10 concubines (see 2 Sam. 3:2-5; 5:13; 15:16; 20:3; 1 Chron. 3:1-9). *Commandments III, VII broken.*
- 10) Commits adultery with Bathsheba in Jerusalem (see 2 Sam. 11:1-5). *Commandments III, VII, IX, X broken.*
- 11) Plots the murder of Bathsheba's husband Uriah the Hittite, a loyal soldier and one of his "mighty men," taking as spoils the victim's widow and making her wife number eight (see 2 Sam. 11:6-27; called Bath-shua in 1 Chron. 3:5). *Commandments III, VI, X broken.*
- 12) Pridefully numbers the Israeli army (see 2 Sam. 24:1-4). *Commandments I, III broken.*

Is there any doubt that good ol' David was guilty of many mistakes, sins, grievous follies, and crimes against both God and man, no matter how you look at it? Did God somehow play the part of a Supreme double-entry bookkeeper, arbitrarily offsetting each of David's liabilities with equally weighted assets? I mean, after all, wasn't David a huge blessing to Israel by felling Goliath of Gath, that haughty Philistine giant who had thoroughly intimidated and shamed the whole Israeli army? Wasn't David's presence a soothing balm to King Saul as his personal armor-bearer and harpist, and didn't he twice forgo eliminating that king-turned-persecutor when he had the upper hand? Isn't this the man who, as king, remembered his promise to Saul's son Jonathan, treating his bosom friend's son Mephibosheth as royalty for life? And though he staggered at God's express command to have no dealings with the Moabites, weren't his motives pure in seeking a safe haven among them for his aging parents? Didn't he show superhuman restraint toward Shimei while being showered with curses, stones, and dirt during his son Absalom's rebellion? As for Absalom, did David not demonstrate Christlike forgiveness and restraint while being personally vilified? Finally, wasn't it big of David to provide for the welfare of his 10 concubines at Jerusalem during Sheba's rebellion? David's name, after all, is among the heroes of faith whom Paul catalogues in Hebrews 11 (see vv. 32-34)!

No doubt you have seen the obvious by now: First, it is certain that Scripture doesn't record *all* of David's acts, the good, the bad, and the ugly; second, we mortals, even with 20/20 hindsight, make real lousy judges of others' motives and conduct; and third (and most importantly), God simply doesn't operate that way. Oh, yes, He keeps books, all right, but I have come to see that His system of accounting is as far superior to your favorite CPA's as Heaven is superior to sinful planet Earth.

You see, God knows the inner man. After all, He formed us and knows what makes us tick. There is really no sense in trying to fool ourselves about this. Sooner or later we are forced to arrive at the realization that God knows and sees everything. David, for all of his faults, whether enjoying a mountaintop experience like the thrilling victory God gave him over Goliath, or suffering the exquisitely painful stabs of a smitten conscience and burning rebuke at the hand of God's spokesman Nathan over his sin with respect to Bathsheba and Uriah, I say David showed himself *instantly* ready both to accept the Lord's chastisement without chafing and to be humble and teachable enough genuinely to repent. I say, God knows the *inner* man; that is why He, and not His trusted prophet Samuel, selected David from among the eight sons of Jesse to be Israel's king. Doesn't the Bible put it beautifully when it says: "But the LORD saith unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him [Eliab, in this case]: 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).

Satan, the accuser of the brethren, naturally tries to make capital of David's mistakes and sins, just as he does ours. He says, in effect, pointing to David as he mocks God, "And You say that this specimen of humanity (and here he is careful to quote Scripture) is called 'a man after Your Own heart'?" Surely You jest. Is this the best piece of human spirituality that You could come up with? There is no question that the Devil presents a powerful case for God to expunge David's entry on the ledger marked The Lamb's Book of Life, transferring, as it were, the entry from the asset column over to the liability column in his own journal, a "Book of the Dead," if you please.

But there is one little truth that Satan conveniently overlooks, as he tries this verbal snow-job ploy. He forgets to acknowledge the existence of his most hated and feared archenemy, Jesus Christ/Michael the Archangel/the Lamb of God/mankind's Advocate in the heavenly court. Well should he become suddenly absent-minded, for it is this dreaded Personage Who sealed his own doom at Golgotha nearly 2,000 years ago. Friends, will you remember with me again today to remain at our posts of duty with the Gospel armor on, never pausing to lay it off until Jesus replaces it with the lighter garments of His Own righteousness? Will you please recall that the prosecuting attorney hasn't a prayer, so to speak, in winning a single dispute, so long as our lives are hid with Christ in God (see Col. 3:3)?

Yes, I expect to meet David in Heaven—not because either of us ever did anything noble enough to offset *any* of our sins—but only because of our mutual faith in the atoning sacrifice of King Jesus. My prayer for each one here is that, like David, we shall always be man enough or woman enough to accept God's sovereignty, and whenever we sin, to fall on the Rock Christ Jesus and be broken to pieces that He may then put us back together the right way—His way. May each of us, then, determine in our hearts to put all our trust not in self but in the all-powerful Jehovah of Hosts. Let the Devil lamely term us all “Compleat Sinners”; God's amazing bookkeeping system shows just the opposite: “Saints.” For this we have cause to shout His praises throughout eternity, beginning just now.

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die (Ezek. 18:4 & 20). Let there be no mistake about this—God hates sin. But oh, how He loves the sinner! In our Scripture reading today is recorded one of two Psalms David composed in repentance over the Bathsheba episode. Let us read it again:

Happy is the man whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put away!
Happy is the man when the LORD lays no guilt to his account [mark those words in memory's hall, please!] (repeat: “the LORD lays *no guilt* to his account”), and in his spirit there is no deceit. While I refused to speak, my body wasted away with moaning all day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me, the sap in me dried up as in summer drought. [And then what?] Then I declared my sin, I did not conceal my guilt. I said, “With sorrow I will confess my disobedience to the LORD”; then Thou didst remit the penalty of my sin (Ps. 32:1-5, NEB).

Aren't you glad today that God hounds us until we come clean, like David did? Aren't you glad that it is God Who gives us both the urge to repent and the forgiveness that comes with confession and repentance? Aren't you grateful that the “whosoever” in John 3:16 includes all of us sinners—sinners made, strangely (wonderfully!) into saints by simply believing in the promise of the atoning blood of Jesus? Let us thank Him from the depths of our hearts.—Jerry A. Stevens, February 23, 1991