

DAVID'S NAME FOR A FUNDAMENTAL SIN

Psalm 54

Intro: I imagine that all of us who read the Bible have often been struck by a single verse, or some unusual express that we have come across in our reading. The words of Scripture are often so different from the words and phrases we use every day, that they are certain to get our attention – and the Lord has undoubtedly designed them for that very purpose.

Many years ago now I remember being greatly impressed by the words of David in Psalm 16, verse 8, which says this, and it is David who is the writer:

I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved (Psa. 16:8).

Obviously we do not have the power nor the authority to control where the Lord, or what the Lord does. That is not what David meant. He meant that he deliberately kept himself focused on the Lord, especially on the presence of the Lord. And, as he went on to say,

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope (Psa. 16:9).

This was a particular reference to the coming Messiah, and His victory over death. But this expression, obviously expressed a way of life for David since he used the word “always.” And the expression, “because he is at my right hand,” adds emphasis to the fact that he was speaking about the presence of the Lord.

Now we know that one of the attributes of the Lord is that He is omnipresent. That is, He is not confined to one place at a time like we are, but He is present everywhere in all the glory of His being. More than that, we who know the Lord, know that He has promised never to leave us, nor to forsake us. See Joshua 1:5; Heb. 13:5. That promise was originally given to Joshua as he took over the leadership of Israel from Moses, but the Holy Spirit led the writer of Hebrews to quote that verse as evidence that the promise belongs to all of us.

But the sad fact remains that not many of us live in a way that shows that we are conscious of the presence of the Lord. He is always with us. He sees everything we do. He hears everything we say. He even knows every thought that we think. But when David said, “I have set the Lord always before me,” he meant that he had trained himself to remember that the Lord was with him, and that this is what had brought such blessing and

peace to his heart.

But I want to point out two other times that this expression is used in an entirely different way in Scripture.

The first of these is in Psalm 54, which is also a Psalm of David. Look at what David said in verse 3:

For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. Selah (Psa. 54:3).

Now what I have said about us as the people of God, applies just as much with people who do not know the Lord. They are in His presence. He sees where they are, knows what they do, hears what they say, and even is keenly aware of what they are thinking. It is absolutely impossible for any person to hide from God. The fact that they do not recognize His presence, and live as though God did not exist, does not change these facts at all. God is God regardless of whether people believe it or not. And He is a sovereign God. All men, all nations, every person on the face of the earth – all are in His presence, and under His control.

Now let me point out another Psalm where this expression is found again. It is in Psalm 86:14. This, too, is a Psalm of David, and this is what verse 14 tells us:

O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul; and have not set thee before them (Psa. 86:14).

All of these expressions come to us from David. And in the last two verses I have given you, they have to do with a great mistake, or it would be better to call it, A FUNDAMENTAL SIN. Perhaps it would be ever better to call it, THE FUNDAMENTAL SIN. One expositor called it, “the root sin,” that is, the sin which leads to all other kinds of sins.

But there are other expressions that are very similar to this one. I read to you from another of David’s Psalms: Psa. 9:15-17:

15 The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken.

16 The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaion.
Selah.

17 The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.

The problem with the nations in every generation since nations began, is

that characteristically they have forgotten God! They live as if there were no true, living God – and only One Who is worthy of the name, God!

In Psalm 10 we have another statement along this line. David's name is not attached to this Psalm, but the Psalms before the 10th belong to David, and it is followed by other Psalms which have David's name attached to them, and so it is reasonable to think that David wrote this Psalm, too. I am referring to Psalm 10:4:

The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.

Two other Psalms, 14 and 53, both Psalms of David, begin with exactly the same words. Our KJV read, "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God." But if your Bible uses italics to show you words which were added by the translators to bring out what they felt was the meaning, you will see that the words "There is," are in italics. What the Hebrew says is simply, "No God." It does not mean that a fool denies the existence of God (although only a fool would do that). It means that a fool says in his heart, *No God for me!* The man who doesn't want to have anything to do with God, who doesn't want to know God, and who is not interested in pleasing God, *is a fool!* Unless he is changed, he is making a mistake from which he will suffer eternally.

And if you read these two Psalms you will find that man's rejection of God, his unwillingness to know God and obey God, leads to all other kinds of tragic results. In fact, this is what is wrong with our world today. This is why we have so many problems, and why morally we continue to go down and down. And the rejection of God always leads to the rejection of His Word. I go back again and again to what the Apostle Paul taught in Romans chapter 1. Man did not want God, and so God delivered him over to sin after sin after sin.

People live together without taking the time to get married, because they have not set God before themselves. Our politicians have not only supported and legalized homosexual activity, but they have protected and encouraged it, because they have not set God before them. And anyone could go on and point to various features of American life today, and people persist in them because they have not set God before themselves. And that goes for robbery, and murder, and adultery – all sin is traceable to the human heart, and life today is the way it is because people are still doing what they have always done: They are not setting God before them. God is not asleep. He has not turned away so that He is not seeing what is

going on. He sees it all, and it is only a matter of time until the judgment of God falls in an unmistakable way. It is already upon us, but most people are so blinded that they do not recognize what is going on.

Now the Bible gives us ample warning. We have illustrations in Scripture of those who have set God before them, and we also have illustrations of those who have not set God before them. Let me point out a few of those illustrations for us as we think about this tremendously important subject.

First, let us take some examples from Scripture of:

I. THOSE WHO DID NOT SET GOD BEFORE THEM.

Some of them may have recognized *a god*, or *gods* of some kind, but we are talking about the one, true God, the God of heaven and earth, the God of the Bible, the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

My first example is Adam and Eve.

A. Adam and Eve.

Genesis 3 is the chapter. They had been told what they could do, and what they were not to do. They had even enjoyed a pure, unbroken fellowship with the Lord until the Devil came in the form of a serpent to tempt Eve. Why did Eve eat of the forbidden fruit? Because in that instance she failed to remember the Lord; she failed to set the Lord before her. She failed to remember that the Lord was there, and that the Lord could deliver her. She forgot the Lord, ate the fruit, and then gave the fruit to her husband. And he was guilty of the same sin that Eve was guilty of. For that time, until it was too late, they forgot God, and forgot to set Him before them, to recognize His presence, and to remember His Word.

My second example is Sodom and Gomorrah.

B. Sodom and Gomorrah.

When God created the first human beings, he created a man and a woman, and they were to have children, and together they were to make a home. From Sodom and Gomorrah God in heaven heard the cry of what was going on, and the way the marriage relationship had been perverted into the sin that now bears the name of the first city. In their depraved state they falsely believed that they could do anything that they wanted to do,

and get away with it. But they were wrong! Romans 1 tells how wrong they were. And in both 2 Peter 2 and the epistle of Jude what happened in Sodom and Gomorrah, the manner in which God destroyed them, is given as a warning to all succeeding generations. The homosexuals have picked up the idea that to oppose them is prejudice, is bigotry, but what they don't know is that when people forget God, when they fail to set God before them to inquire what is right and wrong in His sight, that there is a great, great price to pay, not only in time, but for all eternity.

My third example is Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

C. Pharaoh of Egypt.

Please turn with me to Exodus 5, and let us read together some of what Pharaoh had to say to Moses and Aaron. (Read Exodus 5.)

This started a long series of judgments upon judgments which finally resulted in the death of the firstborn in Egypt, and afterwards the destruction of the Egyptian army. What was Pharaoh's basic sin? He absolutely refused to set the Lord before himself. He paid an awful price for his rebellion against God and so did the whole nation.

Other examples could be cited. This is one more reason why it is good for all of us to be reading, and re-reading our Bibles. But I must move on to a more pleasant aspect of this truth. Let us think now of those who did set the Lord before them.

II. THOSE WHO DID SET GOD BEFORE THEM.

And my first example here is Joseph.

A. Joseph, the son of Jacob.

Please turn to Genesis 39 where we have the record of how Potiphar's wife tempted Joseph, and what his response to her was. She had no concern for God, but that was Joseph's main concern. Joseph was a man who set God before him.

Now let me give you another illustration of a different kind.

B. Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah.

The chapter I am thinking about is 2 Chron. 20. Here was a situation where the king knew that he was outnumbered, and that the whole nation of Judah was in danger. But what did he do? He set the Lord before himself, and before his people, and what followed was one of the most amazing works of God to be found anywhere in the OT. He knew that he and his army were no match for the nations that had come against him, but he also knew that God was greater than any enemy force. And so he turned to the Lord. He did not forget the Lord, but called upon Him, and the Lord heard and answered in a most amazing way.

My third and final example of those who set the Lord before them is Daniel.

C. Daniel.

Daniel, like Joseph before him, was in a foreign country. But he did not forget the Lord. He had been honored by Darius, the king, and elevated to the first place. He was one of three presidents. But jealousy developed, and his enemies were determined to bring him down. They could find no flaw in his work, and finally they decided that they would never be able to do away with him unless they could find it concerning Daniel and the Word of God. Now Daniel was a man of prayer, and he regularly prayed three times every day for the deliverance of those who were in captivity. So in Daniel 6 we learn how his enemies got the King to sign a decree in which it was stated that anyone found asking a petition of any God or man for thirty days, except to the King, would be cast into the den of lions.

Daniel continued praying. His enemies found him praying. And they told the king what Daniel was doing, and demanded that the King carry out his decree. The King had to go through with the punishment. But note what he said to Daniel in verse 16.

But what is wonderful is the outcome. (Read Dan. 6:18-24.)

Daniel was a man who even in a foreign country never failed to set the Lord before himself. What an example for us to follow!

Concl: Unfortunately as far as David was concerned, there was one time in his life when he failed to set the Lord before himself. And that was in the incidents regarding Bathsheba and her husband, Uriah. For that brief time he forgot the Lord, allowed his passions to take over, and he lived to regret what he did for the rest of his life, even though God forgave

him. So we can see from this that setting the Lord before us is a daily necessity in our lives. We need to remember His presence with us, and we need to trust Him to keep us, to lead us, to bless us, and to use us as He sees fit. The people who forget God are committing a very great sin that always leads to other sins. Although we are not observing the Lord's Supper tonight, this is probably one of the main reasons that we observe it – so we will remember the Lord, set Him before us, and remember also the terrible price He paid in order to deliver us from our sins. May David's words in Psa. 16:8 be our words, and may we never again be numbered with those who fail to set the Lord before them.

I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved (Psa. 16:8).