

David The Shepherd and Musician - Part One

by Charles E. Wigg

David is one of the most beautiful characters of the Old Testament. He was a man like ourselves, full of failure, but it seems that these failures were all forgiven, (at his request as he humbled himself in repentance), and God imputed to him the value and merit of the death of Christ. (Rom. 3:25). The Spirit of God makes this gracious comment on his life, (1 Kings 15:5) Because David did *that which was* right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any *thing* that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.

David the Shepherd

Perhaps his brightest days were those of his youth, when as a pure lad, untarnished by the sins of the flesh or of society, he spent much of his time in the open air, in the countryside caring for the sheep of his father. It is there that he probably became skilled in many things, that were to stand him in good stead in his later life.

Amongst these things, was his ability to play the harp. While his sheep quietly grazed on the pastures of the wilderness, no doubt he spent much of his time playing that harp. It's haunting, soothing music, brought comfort and healing to his spirit. It is probable that the valleys must have echoed to those beautiful relaxing notes. Later he was to use this to soothe the troubled mind of the moody king Saul. Later still, he was to introduce it into the service of God's praise, and as well he wrote many songs, (Psalms), that gave expression to the feelings of his heart. It is possible that he sang some of these while watching the sheep.

I recall visiting an isolated village in Punjab, (India), and in the evenings was thrilled and comforted by the music of an old shepherd who played his flute as he relaxed in the cool of the evening. I was thrilled to listen to those sweet haunting sounds that wafted around the valley, on whose side his house was built, while walking with friends to a small meeting house, further up the valley. My thoughts often wandered to Israel, and to the shepherd boy David.

During those days, he also learned to use the sling with great accuracy. This was to stand him in good stead in the battle with Goliath. But what was perhaps the most important, he learned to trust God, and to prove Him when alone, and confronted by danger. He developed courage, stamina, and good health in the healthy atmosphere of the outdoors.

God became very real to him. He sensed His protection and nearness daily. He communed with God continually. It became a habit with him, and was one of the greatest assets of his life. He saw the Greatness and glory of God in everything, from the tiniest insect and flower, to the great heavenly bodies that orbited in the heavens above him. This appreciation of God he was able to weave into his Psalms, ie. Psalm 19. He saw the insignificance of man, yet man's importance in God's great scheme of things. Psalm. 8. He saw the beauty of order in the universe, how that all was held in its place by an immutable law. This was to fit him for the time when he would ascend the throne of Israel. Thus we see how that God was fitting him, (even in the days and circumstances of his youth), for the future place and responsibilities that God would entrust to him.

He was content with the lowest place in his family, in fact in everything. It no doubt was as great a surprise to him, as it was to his father and brothers, when he was called from the field, and for Samuel to pour the horn of oil on his head, anointing him as the king of Israel. In spite of this great event, he returned to the life of a lowly shepherd, without any complaints.

David the Musician

No doubt when he played his harp in the great outdoors, he never thought of entertaining others. He just delighted to express the emotions of his simple soul, in the vibrations and melody of that beautiful instrument. He did not realize that others were secretly listening. That they too gained both refreshment and healing from listening to the

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beautiful tunes that he played. So no doubt it was a great surprise to him when in the ordering of God, he was summoned to play his harp in the presence of the very king that he was to replace, and surpass.

A great misfortune had befallen king Saul. His position and power had gone to his head. He ceased to be little in his own eyes. He thought God would accept partial obedience that He would not mind if he spared the best, of what God hated, and would accept it as a sacrifice, would permit it to be used in His service. As the result of his presumption, he forfeited divine support, God's Spirit was taken from him. God then allowed an evil spirit to trouble him, and that spirit made him sullen, depressed, moody, irrational, and subject to sudden fits of uncontrollable anger.

Saul's servants suffered because of this, and recalling the soothing effect that David's music had on them, they spoke of him to the king. They also had noticed the other qualities of David. His courage valor, and his prudence. All resulting from the fact that the LORD was with him. So they spoke of him to the king, with the result that David was called to the palace He was given the opportunity to use the gifts God had given him, to minister to his irritable master. Thus as he played the harp, and its soothing healing strains of its music brought refreshment and healing to the troubled king.

His songs and psalms have brought comfort and healing to troubled souls through the millenniums that have elapsed since that time. There was more than natural gift in his compositions. The Holy Spirit moved him to write what he did. It is most likely that he never understood the real significance of the things that he wrote. To him it was probably just beautiful poetry or prose, but God had in His mind the millions of those, that in succeeding generations, even in far off ages, who would benefit from his lovely words. His music was not inspired, that was not preserved for the generations to follow. But his words were inspired by the Holy Spirit God would use other musical souls, in other generations to compose the music, and adapt the lyrics to suit, so that today some of our sweetest hymns have flowed from the pen of David.