

“First Things First”
2 Samuel 2:1
(Preached at Trinity, July 22, 2018)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. David defeated the Amalekites and delivered the captives. He then returns victoriously to Ziklag. On the third day after returning to Ziklag a man arrives with news regarding the war between the Philistines and Israel. David learns of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan and called a national time of mourning.
2. With Saul dead the natural thing for David to do was return to Judah and ascend to the throne of Israel. But this wasn’t the first thing David did. The first thing David did was pray. He knew he dare not proceed until he received direction from God.
2 Samuel 2:1 NAU - "Then it came about afterwards that David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go up to one of the cities of Judah?"
4. We find the great contrast here between David and Saul.
 - a. Saul had always been impatient, impulsive, and self-willed launching forth without seeking God. And when he did hear from God he did not obey. Finally, Saul ceased hearing from God even as he cried out for a word.
1 Samuel 28:6 NAU - "When Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him"
 - b. David, on the other hand, inquires of God and receives an immediate answer.
5. Prayer is one of our greatest gifts but one that we are most negligent in using. It is necessary for us to be continually reminded to pray, to persevere in prayer, to strive in prayer. Part of the problem with our prayerlessness is our low view of God. We presume upon our right to come before Him, failing to comprehend what an amazing thing it is. Who could imagine that the eternal God of glory would allow us to converse with Him? We must never forget this amazing privilege and approach God with holy reverence. We must never forget our absolute dependence upon Him in everything.
Charles Hodge – “Prayer is the converse of the soul with God. Therein we manifest our express to Him our reverence, and love for his divine perfection, our gratitude for all his mercies, our penitence for our sins, our hope in his forgiving love, our submission to his authority, our confidence in his care, our desires for his favor, and for the providential and spiritual blessings needed for ourselves and others.”¹
6. Let us consider for a few moments the necessity of prayer in our lives.

¹ Hodge, Charles. *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.), 1986.

- I. Prayerlessness is sinful and presumptuous – that we can direct our own lives
- A. It would have been reasonable for David to presume to fill the vacancy left by Saul – to ascend to the throne.
1. We know from **1 Samuel** that David was God's anointed. He was the rightful heir to the throne over Israel.
 2. Upon Saul's disregard of God's commands Samuel declares his loss of the throne.
1 Samuel 13:13-14 NAU - "Samuel said to Saul, "You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. ¹⁴ "But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."
 3. David was God's anointed
1 Samuel 15:27-28 NAU - "As Samuel turned to go, *Saul* seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. ²⁸ So Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor, who is better than you."
 4. Everyone knew this – David knew it, Jonathan knew it, Saul knew it – we saw in **Chapter 25** that even Abigail knew it.
The Amalekite who brought David the news in **Chapter 1** knew it. He brought Saul's crown to David.
 5. But David did not take one step towards the throne before seeking God's direction.
- B. We tend to think we have everything figured out
1. We go through life making endless decisions without first seeking the face of God.
 2. This is sinful presumption. We are commanded to pray without ceasing. James reminds us:
James 4:2 NAU - "You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask."
- C. We must carefully guard against those things that hinder our prayer-life
- A. There are spiritual issues that can affect our prayer life
- a. Sin - creates a breach of fellowship. We cease to feel His presence and leave off praying. We can grieve the Holy Spirit resulting in a loss of His leadership in prayer. It is folly to pray for God's leadership when we disregard His Word. This was Saul's problem. He refused to obey and in the end he was left abandoned with no Word from God.

- b. Unbelief - if we believe in the infinite power of our God and of His infinite love for us we will certainly pray and pray without ceasing. When a person fails to see the greatness of God his prayer life will be small.
James 1:5-7 – “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,”
 - c. Apathy - a sense of being satisfied – the satisfied person will feel little need of prayer. People pray the greatest when their need is the greatest. When Peter began sinking beneath the waves he cried out, “Lord, save me.”
 - d. Pride and self-sufficiency. We are sometimes fooled into thinking we have everything under control. During times of such foolishness we leave off praying.
 In times of great need men are driven to prayer
- D. The circumstances of our life can also affect our prayer life
1. In **1 Samuel** David fell into a pit of despondency. He left off praying and instead trusted in his own reason.
1 Samuel 27:1-2 NAU - "Then David said to himself, "Now I will perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than to escape into the land of the Philistines. Saul then will despair of searching for me anymore in all the territory of Israel, and I will escape from his hand." ² So David arose and crossed over"
 2. Sometimes trials, when we should pray most fervently, become so overwhelming that we cease praying.
 3. Preoccupation - We become so distracted by other things that we leave off praying.
 - a. We think of great people of prayer as being people with much free time
 - b. It is easy to brush off our limited prayer to having such a busy life We have work and children and so many responsibilities.
 - c. The truth is some of the busiest people have been the greatest prayer warriors.
 - d. Luther: "I have so much business I cannot get along without spending three hours daily in prayer."

II. Prayer is testimony in our hearts of our absolute dependence upon God

A. If David was to be successful in his kingdom he knew he needed God's direction

1. He dare not move without God's direction. David was interested exact obedience. Notice David prayed for both the time and the place.
2. This would also be Solomon's heart. He needed God's hand upon him
1 Kings 3:7-10 NAU - "Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David, yet I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸ "Your servant is in the midst of Your people which You have chosen, a great people who are too many to be numbered or counted. ⁹ "So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" ¹⁰ It was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing."

1 Kings 4:29-31 NAU - "Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore. ³⁰ Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. ³¹ For he was wiser than all men"

3. Trinity's elders feel this weightiness. Before our elder's meetings we pray for God's Divine direction.
 - a. God has given us care for your souls
 - b. God has given us leadership over the direction of this church
 But it is not our church. Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd. We are caring for His church.
1 Peter 5:2-4 NAU - "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; ³ nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."
 - c. We must not presume to make changes without committing it to prayer. We are always in danger of either going on autopilot or going from one new idea to the next.
4. Is the same not also true in your families
 - a. Do you go from one day to the next without seeking God's direction?
 - b. Do you make changes affecting your family without much prayer
 - c. Do you believe the writer of Proverbs:
Proverbs 3:5-6 KJV - "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. ⁶ In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

- d. Those who seek Him are promised His direction
Matthew Henry wrote: “In all our motions and removals it is comfortable to see God going before us; and we may, if by faith and prayer we set him before us.”²
- B. Prayer assumes that God has dominion over all things
 - 1. That He governs the thoughts, feelings, and actions of men
 - 2. That He is everywhere present governing His creation
 - a. All of nature is ruled by Him - It rains because He wills it
 - b. Every blessing comes from Him
 - c. All life is sustained by Him
 - 3. As Christians we must understand this clearly. There is nothing in our lives that is unimportant. Small details can have a huge impact upon our future. Do we then presume we don’t need prayer today, even over the areas we might consider insignificant?
 - 4. William Blaikie: “Is it really a profound conviction of yours that in every step of your life God’s direction is of supreme value? That you dare not even changed your residence without being directed by him? That you dare not enter on new relations in life—new business, new connections, new recreations—without seeking the Divine countenance. That endless difficulties, troubles, complications, are liable to arise, when you simply follow your own notions or inclinations without consulting the Lord?”³

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 439.

³ Blaikie, William Garden. (2005). *Expository Lectures on the Book of 2 Samuel*. (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books), pages 17-18.

Conclusion:

1. Did David desire the throne? Most assuredly. But he didn't gain it by his own inclination or by his own power. He didn't wrench it from the hands of Saul, even when he had opportunity. It wasn't his own ambition that motivated David, but God's direction.
 - A. David had waited for God to remove Saul from the throne.
1 Samuel 26:9-10 NAU - "But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him, for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD'S anointed and be without guilt?" ¹⁰ David also said, "As the LORD lives, surely the LORD will strike him, or his day will come that he dies, or he will go down into battle and perish."
 - B. It had been more than fifteen years since David had been anointed. Saul is now dead but David is still trusting in God's Divine direction.
2. Would this not be true of the one foreshadowed by David?
Philippians 2:8 KJV - "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."
John 4:34 NAU - "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work."
Luke 22:42 NAU - "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."
3. This must be the driving force in our lives; to do the will of our Father. And how can we know His will? David had the Ephod and the priest. But this doesn't change the focus. David "inquired of the LORD."
 We too must inquire of the Lord. We know His will through His word and prayer. We must learn the grace of patience. Seldom are we faced with a decision that demands a sudden answer.