

Role Models

It is man's nature to model his attitudes, behaviors and values after someone or a group, which he admires or respects. Such role models have tremendous influences on the character development of individuals, and, therefore, on the nature and quality of the society in general. Who were the primary role models of our American society a few generations ago? I believe one would find them to have been primarily persons of high moral integrity and great achievement in terms of their contributions to the well-being, strength and advancement of our nation and of all of mankind. They were the likes of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Booker T. Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Florence Nightingale, etc. Emulating such personages and seeking to model one's life after such people was eminently beneficial and uplifting to all of society, both secular and religious.

In the earlier part of my life, these were the popular role models and sources of inspiration for the average person who chose to learn about such people. My favorite literature as a youth was the biographies of these and many other great benefactors of our culture. But who is shaping the values of the present generation? Who are today's heroes, those who stand out as icons of what most people today would like to be like, if they could? Clearly, they are the movie stars, sports figures, so called musicians, and those who have achieved wealth and power by whatever means. Success is no longer measured by any of the previously respected qualities or achievements. In fact, great attempts have been made to empathize or contrive whatever flaws might be laid against these great personages of the past in order to discredit and undermine their worthiness and to thus deprive us of any genuine heroes. This change of role models continues to contribute greatly to the steep moral decline we see in each succeeding generation during this end period of these end times, exactly as Scripture predicts. This decline closely relates to the qualities of the modern day "heroes" being emulated, these moral scum which, like dross, rise to the top in every decaying culture. This characterization is certain to offend many because most have been slowly conditioned to it and cannot see it

for what it is. This process is perfectly represented by the heated frog analogy. This analogy depicts frogs placed in a kettle, which is slowly heated. The frogs don't notice much difference because of the very slow rate of heating, and so are able to adjust to each increment of heat, and are; therefore, blissfully ignorant of what is happening to them. They continue to adjust and adjust to this slowly changing environment until one day they are cooked dead. Being one who can remember well the 1940's on to the present day, this analogy represents the manner of our nation's decline very well. But none of this is directly relevant to the main point of this paper. It merely describes the pathetic environment in which the Christian community is immersed, and which the surrounding world offers as models for "success" in this life.

As Christians, our one and only genuine role model must be Jesus. It is both our desire and duty to emulate Him. Yet as lowly sinful humans, the very best of our efforts fall far below achievement of that goal, even though we are commanded to seek it, for Jesus said "*...be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*" (Matthew 5:48) However, in order to even commence such an endeavor, there must be a genuine faith, a strong faith in Him which can prevail even during the most trying times of adversity, temptation and pain that the world is wont to throw at us. But even so, the awesome nature of the task can devour our resolve even before we commence. The answer to this problem is to recognize that it is impossible to do this by our own strength. It is only through His strength in us, which can accomplish anything. It is a simple fact that Scripture teaches, yet one we all seem to have difficulties apprehending and holding on to. Again, it is only Him working through us that anything of lasting value is achieved, even this. The bottom line in all of this is to firmly resolve to end our sinful ways. Of course, it is not that simple, because Scripture tells us that everything that is not of God is sin. By that definition there is very little in worldly activities beyond those needed to survive and provide for our families that might not be considered sin.

Jesus, of course, is the ultimate role model. However, through the Holy Bible, God has given us biographical sketches of several personages who had characteristics worthy of serving as role models and to thus inspire us, as all good role models should. Of course,

none were perfect but each had attributes worthy of learning from and emulating. In each case, God has also shown us some of their warts as well. I believe that this was to show us that they were neither perfect nor infallible, but were, in some instances, big sinners who overcome, as we are obligated to do as well. The following are a few examples, from which to draw hope and guidance as we seek to live God's Word.

1. ENOCH We know very little about him, and nothing that we can use for role modeling. He is included here as what might have been the ultimate human role model, if only God had given us more details about his life. What we do know from the Old Testament in Genesis 5:24 is that he lived before the flood and "*walked with God*" for three hundred years after he begat Methuselah at age 65. Walked with God for three hundred years! Just try to imagine that! God hates sin, and will not tolerate it in His presence. Can we, therefore, assume that Enoch was absolutely sinless? I believe so, because how else could he have been translated directly to heaven before Jesus paid the price for man's sins? Except for Elijah, who was the only other person Scripture tells us was translated, the souls of all other Old Testament's saints had to wait in shoel until Jesus, on the cross, washed away their sins. What a role model he should have been! He also was a prophet and must have been told by God of Jesus' future coming for he actually predicted His second coming in Jude verses 14, 15 were we are told, "*...and Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.*"

One more thought regarding this walking with God. Of the Triune Godhead, the Father is spirit and, of course, the Holy Spirit is spirit. Jesus is the only one who ever appears in the flesh. We are told that no one can see the Father and live. His presence and the presence of the Holy Spirit are always depicted as a cloud or as fire. We generally conclude that the recorded theophanies such as with Joshua at Jericho and with Abraham on the road to Sodom, were appearances of the Son

before His earthly birth as the Man/God who was then named Jesus. Therefore, it seems to me at least, that the God who walked with Enoch was probably the pre-incarnate son, our Lord and Savior Jesus. Although it is unlikely that any of us can ever walk with Jesus here on earth in the flesh, those who are born-again do walk with Him in the spirit and will do so forever!

2. NOAH Here is a “...*just man perfect in his generation and Noah walked with God*” (Genesis 6:8). He too walked with God. What an incredible privilege and testimony to his righteousness and purity of his ways! But even though his genes were perfect, God saw something less than absolute perfection in his character, as we see later in his biography. We can learn a great lesson in obedience, perseverance and avoidance of ungodly ways from him. These qualities may be seen in his building of the ark and all that followed through to the end of the flood. Just imagine his spending 120 years building this three story barge about 450 feet long and 75 feet wide all out of wood, making it capable of withstanding the flood, and floating it safely for over a year. Of course, he had God’s guidance, but the logistics and effort required to cut and haul timber and construct this monstrous thing with only hand and possibly oxen labor would, I believe, exceed the strength, patience and perseverance of any man or men, not supernaturally endowed. Beyond that, can you imagine the difficulties involved in pursuing this effort in the presence of neighbors? For 120 years he must have been the laughing stock and focus of much abuse from everyone for miles around. They must have come from all over to mock and scorn him, perhaps to even sabotage his efforts. After all, it had never rained. No one even knew what rain was. Therefore, there probably had never been any kind of flood either. And it is unlikely that such a large structure had ever been built out of wood. What can we learn from this that can serve as a model? First, obedience to the Lord as He has decreed to each of us, regardless of what others believe and say, even if you are alone in the entire world in your belief. We belong to God’s autocratic kingdom, not too democratic or consensus rule. It doesn’t appear that the Lord physically walks with anyone today, but we can each

of us walk in the Spirit of the Lord, for He indwells all who have been born again. Obedience does not come easy, for our resolve to do so is tested almost moment by moment as we have to swim daily in this sea of sin and temptation we call the world. We must, all who try to walk in His Spirit, suffer similar scorn and mocking, as did Noah. His uncompromising perseverance under these trying circumstances is also a valuable lesson for each of us. We must thank our Lord that our physical tasks are so small compared to Noah's and that few if any will ever have to endure them nearly as long. To persevere and obey so long and so valiantly is an incredible demonstration of unwavering faith that must have been tested mightily many times.

There are at least two reasons why Noah was not translated along with Enoch. First God chose him and wanted him here for a very specific job, to build the ark, and through his sons to repopulate the earth, as perhaps the only one left who was "perfect in his generation," not having been contaminated by the "Sons of God" debacle. Second, God foresaw a flaw in his character, which would eventually manifest and result in a curse on one of his grandsons. Because Noah got drunk and passed out, an awful thing happened which resulted in a curse on Ham's son Canaan, (Genesis 9:20-27). The lesson here is that due to our sinful nature we are all fallible and subject of backsliding regardless of how strong, obedient and persevering we are. Avoidance of all temptation and opportunities to sin must be part of our every day, moment by moment, conscious effort.

3. ABRAHAM Abraham is known as the father of the entire Hebrew race. He is also called the father of the entire grouping of people who are commonly called Arabs, through his son Ishmael and through his six sons by his second wife Keturah. Additionally, the people from the sons of his great grandson Esau are also considered to be part of the Arab people. God chose Abraham, this idol-worshipping pagan, and molded him for the purpose of carving out for himself a special people, Israel, through which his act of redemption was to be implemented for all mankind. It is in the saga of Abraham's life where much of God's eternal

plan is revealed, mainly through the covenants He made with him. It is clear that God found some good material in him, material that he could mold into the man He wanted for His purpose. Abraham seems to be one of a group of people when God has chosen for a great purpose, but in whom at least initially, there seems to be no visible merit or distinguishable evidence that they, in any way, seek Him. However, any and all of us, who come to Him with humbleness of heart and commit ourselves to faith in Jesus, have some amount of material which God will find and work with, if we let Him. He will use that material regardless of how tiny an amount it may be, to mold each of us for some divine purpose.

As we follow Abraham's life, we see his many weaknesses as well as his growing strength, through God's working in him. First, while his name is yet Abram, he was told to leave his family in Ur and go to the land where God is directing him. But he didn't go immediately as commanded, and when he did, he took his father and others northeastward up the Euphrates over 500 miles to Harran where he stayed for about 5 years until his father died. This is not what God directed him to do. Then he headed southeastward through the Promised Land into Egypt and into other areas south of the Promised Land, again not what God commanded. On two occasions during the fifteen years of his wondering in this area, he lied and convinced his wife to lie regarding their marital status. He did this each time in order to save his own life, at the expense of his wife, knowing that as a result of the lie she would appear available for marriage to whoever was in authority and wanted her. These two events occurred about 15 years apart. First when Sari was 65 years old and the Pharaoh, ruler of all Egypt, wanted her, and later when she was about 85 years old and chosen by a king named Abimelech. What an incredible beauty she must have been to yet so attract such men of power, men who could have anything and anyone within their reach. However, God intervened on both occasions and preserved their union, which, of course, was vital to the fulfillment of His plan. Not only that, but each of the thwarted monarchs befriended Abraham, giving him great amounts of wealth, making him one of the richest men of the region. In between these two events, he does have

his moments of courage and strength along with some evidence of a lack of greed. This is when he takes his own army of 318 “trained servants” to rescue his nephew Lot from a five kingdom army which had conquered Sodom and Gomorrah and three other cities, taking captive all the people along with their goods. After freeing these people and recovering their goods, he refuses any reward or any of the spoils. There is no evidence that he prayed first for Lot’s release, or simply acted on his own strength in this matter, although God is obviously allowing or guiding his every move. Also during this period he and his wife, rather than wait for God to act on His promise that he would be the father of great nations, decided not to wait on God, but to act on their own in a strictly worldly way to fulfill that promise. His wife was of course, barren, and because she was incapable of having children, they decided to not wait for God’s timing, but to take the matter in their own hands. Therefore, he had a son through his wife’s handmaiden. Later, of course, when God was ready, He gave 90-year-old Sarah the miracle baby whom He had promised.

Beyond this point in time, we see what we might call God’s patience with him vindicated, and His work beginning to bare fruit as Abraham began to exhibit strength, integrity and above all faith, the faith which God was seeking in the man who would be the father of many people, especially the father of the one people from which our Lord and Savior, God’s Son, would come. With such disobedience at the beginning of his calling, and his protracted record of cowardice and weakness of faith, what a testimony of God’s own faithfulness, patience, and loving care it is that Abraham should also become the foremost of the faithful, the standard, the premier example which Scripture uses to portray unquestioning totally committed faith in our Creator. This, of course, was epitomized when Abraham actually proceeded without hesitation to fulfill God’s command to sacrifice his beloved and only legitimate son, Isaac.

Abraham is indeed a role model from whom we can all learn and greatly benefit. What makes God’s narratives about most of His key players so helpful to us is

that He not only reveals their beautiful qualities, but also their warts, that is, their weakness, their failings, and their sins, as well as how they are able to rise above them to become His effective servants. Without this revelation of their flaws, we would find it almost hopeless to even try to emulate their finer qualities, given our own depraved natures. Perhaps the biggest lesson to be derived from Abraham's life is God's patience and perseverance with even the most seemingly incorrigible and self centered among us, for once He chooses to begin His work in anyone, He continues it until His will is done. Human patience would have abandoned Abraham very early in his journey, but God had a plan for him which He intended to fulfill and nothing could prevent it. As noted, Abraham is remembered as the model of ultimate faith in God and in His promises. After what greater attribute can we possibly model our lives, because faith in God, Jesus, is after all, the only contribution we are able to make to our eternal salvation? But that is not all there is to it. As James, Jesus' brother, told us, "Faith without works is dead".

Regarding Abraham, here is what else James said in James 2:20-24.

"But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called a friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

How do we know we have that saving faith? We know that something happens to us inside. And if that happening inside is a genuine saving faith, it must eventually burst forth outside as works reflective of that faith. I pray that we all read, reread, muse, study, and pray about this observation by James, because I believe it is fundamental to the process surrounding salvation and eternal life in God's presence.

4. MOSES Having been credited with writing the first five books of the Old Testament, Moses is second only to Abraham in stature from the Hebrew historical and spiritual perspective. Scripture makes it clear that he was indeed

specially chosen by God for a very great and complex work. As with Abraham, there is much to be said regarding his missions, his efforts and his achievements. However, because this paper is focused on role models, I'll try to limit this to what I consider relevant to the subject. We can see God's loving hand and evidence of a purpose for Moses from the day he was born. Satan had long ago directed Pharaoh's heart so as to put the whole of the family of Israel into slavery. Because this was not destroying them and their heritage fast enough, it was decreed that all male babies were to be put to death. We all know the story of how his mother defied the decree, placing Moses in a floating basket which was found by Pharaoh's childless daughter, who took him for her own; how he was raised by his own mother, because the daughter chose her for his nanny; how he became a highly educated, widely respected prince of Pharaoh's court, and heir apparent to Pharaoh; how through his mother he became aware of his original heritage; how through his compassion for his blood line people, he killed an Egyptian oppressor in order to save the life of one of his own blood; and finally how he, therefore, gave up his Egyptian position and fled into the wilderness to become a simple shepherd for the next 40 years. Looking carefully one can see God's loving hand orchestrating every major aspect of his life even before the burning bush event.

There is no evidence that Moses adopted any of the beliefs or practices of his blood line culture, for it appears doubtful that much of any such thing survived the long period of servitude and lack of relevant spiritual leadership among his people. Even circumcision had long ago been prohibited by the Egyptian overlords. All they seemed to really have was that supernatural instinct and tenacity for preservation of their bloodline heritage as children of Jacob / Israel. Although through the miracles of the plagues against Egypt, and God's guidance through Moses regarding the procedures they were to follow in order to be spared the horror of the Passover of the angel of death, they did begin to get some small inkling of God's intervention. It's that next and last 40 years of Mose's life where the "payoff" seems to come. During this period God used him intensely. We

observe here an almost continuous and intimate relationship between God and Moses, much like a loving father might have with his devoted and committed son. We find them working closely together to nurture, educate and grow their flock of particular people. As if attending to the overwhelming needs of over a million people during nearly 40 years of wandering in a desert was not more than a full time job, Moses, through divine authorship, pens nearly every word of the first five books of the Old Testament. These not only detail the history of the world from the moment of creation to just before these people were to cross into the promised land, but they also lay down God's laws, provide minute details on how to construct the Arc of the Covenant, the Tabernacle and all of the furniture and utensils needed therein, along with very explicit instructions on how to live and worship God until the Redeemer was to come. To many of the Hebrews, even to this day, the content of these five books of Moses are all that they believe is needed to know and to properly worship God, the book of the prophets and other Old Testament writings being useful but unessential fill ins.

From a role model perspective, Moses, as with Abraham, is a tough act to follow. Until the age of 40, Scripture gives us nothing about him to laud or criticize. Then, when he kills the Egyptian out of his sense of righteous indignation, he becomes a murderer. In running away, even though he is leaving a life which offered the very most that the world could provide, we can also consider him to be a coward who ran rather than face the consequences of his crime and to then pursue seriously the liberation of his people. Because of his powerful position, along with the great love and respect which both Pharaoh and the Egyptian people had for him, it is likely that his crime would have gone unpunished and viewed merely as a reasonable expression of authoritative power, which would have been considered acceptable. Instead, I believe, that it wasn't cowardice, but Providence, which guided him to leave, and to thus get down to the business of preparing for God's purpose and in God's way. Preparing how? For 40 years he was a prince of Pharaoh's court, educated in all of the best in science, religion, politics and medicine, which that advanced, pagan culture could provide. He was

decorated and much admired as a general in Pharaoh's army, distinguishing himself in battles which enhanced the size and stature of the empire. Thus for 40 years he was steeped, honed and conditioned in ways hostile and contrary to God's ways. It would seem, therefore, that God led him into the wilderness and to a humble shepherd's life, using another 40 years to clean Egypt out of his soul.

* If these details seem to exceed the Scriptural account, it is because Josephus in his writings provides many details about Moses not found in Scripture.

After 40 years in Egypt, and another 40 years as a wilderness shepherd, at 80 years of age, Moses finally gets the assignment which God had chosen for him. At first, we find him very reluctant and full of excuses as to why he is the wrong man for the job. Isn't it that way with most of us when God gives us a task? It always seems beyond our ability to perform, and it always is. That is because what He is really asking is for us to be vehicles through which He will do the job. Of ourselves we are nothing, nor do we have anything, which is adequate for any God-ordained task. He just wants our availability and willing participation. He will then provide us with what we need so that through us His purpose will be accomplished. Our Father is a spiritual being, and it is of spiritual matters that are His priorities and principal realm in which He operates. Things of the flesh, and physical matters are but temporary and trivial in His great scheme of things. After all, what was His involvement in creating the earth, sun, moon, stars, and man? It was merely six thoughts of His over a six-day period. It is the soul and the spirit of man where the Father is most concerned and where His focus is. This earth is merely a temporary workshop and proving ground where souls, willing to love Him and believe in His Son, are cleansed and made ready to be part of His eternal family. This is a difficult time-consuming work for Him in one sense, and He has worked at it now for over 6,000 years. It is difficult because of His self-imposed rule whereby He gave man free will, which God honors and will not override, particularity in the matter of love and faith. Man's choice to worship

Him and His Son must be of his own free will, if he or she is to be His son or daughter. There is no other way for anyone to become part of His eternal family.

As we read through the saga of that last 40 years of Moses' life, we see an extremely intimate relationship between God and Moses. They seem to be in almost daily conversations as Moses seeks divine guidance and God responds. We see Moses' love for his people, and his responsibility for them, grow. As their leader, he is responsible for over a million people wandering a desert wilderness for nearly 40 years, totally dependant on miracles for their food, clothing, shelter and water. These miracles continue to happen; yet faith in God among them is sorely lacking. They too need 40 years to get Egypt out of their souls. Throughout this long sojourn, neither Moses' faith nor his love and loyalty to his people ever wavered. This is expressed most profoundly when Moses interceded for the people and was willing to have his name struck from the Book of Life if only God would spare them (Exodus 32:32). Of what greater love could mortal man offer than his own soul for the salvation of others?

In his role as leader of this huge mob, naturally there were many disputes, as well as questions regarding God, the law, faith, conduct, etc. Moses sat daily for many hours as teacher, judge, and councilor to all who came to him. This, of course, was by itself a daunting, exhausting task, aside from his other responsibilities. In Exodus 18, we learn of Jethro, his father-in-law, coming to their encampment. There he saw how Moses was trying to do all of these tasks by himself. Jethro was a Median priest, most likely a worshiper of many gods. Upon seeing the great miracles the true God provided, and having heard the story of their escape from Egypt, he realized exactly who was the one true God. Jethro was also an able organizer because he immediately recommended that Moses select among the elders a group to share the judiciary burdens with him, thereby leaving only the bigger issues for his personal attention. Moses took this advice, thereby greatly improving the efficiency of his leadership. It is most certain that Moses prayed on this and obtained God's guidance before implementing the idea. I

believe Numbers 11:14-17 provides another perspective on this same event where God tells Moses to select seventy men of the elders of Israel and God then proceeds to educate and ordain them for this mission. This council, which always consisted of 70 elders plus a leader, remained as the judicial authority of the people right up to the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. In Jesus' time, we see them called the Sanhedrin, the ones who tried our Lord and sent Him to the cross.

The point of this, in the context of our topic, is to demonstrate that even though Moses was without exception, the most important leader in Israel's history, he was willing to accept council from others and didn't cling to his prerogatives or to his sense of singular importance. Moses is the finest of role models not only for his outstanding leadership, but also for his obedience and closeness to God, as well as his great love and sense of responsibility to those he had been ordained to both serve and to lead.

Furthermore, Moses is a prime example of what God will do to those He has chosen for a particular purpose. God's hand is visibly on him at every turn of his life, from when he was rescued from the bulrushes all the way to his death, and even beyond (his presence at the transfiguration). I believe that all who have been born again have been called for a particular purpose, and can, therefore, look back at their lives and see with equal clarity how God has molded them for His use. Other than his killing of the Egyptian and his moment of pride and anger as he disobeyed God by striking rather than speaking to the rock, we find little or nothing about Moses that was in any way shameful. What greater role model could we choose for our own lives?

5. DANIEL Here is a man "greatly beloved" by God! (Daniel 10:19). Wow!! Can it get any better than that? Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could hear those words spoken about ourselves with God as the source? Well, you may not hear them, but the fact is, if you are born-again, born into His family, you are greatly beloved! Your life may not be as near perfect as was Daniels, but if you are truly

God's son or daughter in the faith, you qualify for that title "greatly beloved." Could our heavenly Father love in any other way? All He has ever wanted from His creation is to have a family to love, those whom He created in His own image, a family who believes, obeys, and returns that love for Him and His son. If these qualities are representative of what fills your heart, then rest assured that you too are "greatly beloved." Search the Scriptures all you wish, but I believe that nowhere will you find recorded any flaw in Daniel's character or in his faith. Of course, he was a sinner, as are we all, but apparently he committed no sins worthy of mentioning, or which God considered appropriate for our learning. As we can see, as we read God's numerous biographical sketches, He doesn't exclude the negative qualities or actions of those about whom He has written. From a human perspective we might even say that God is embarrassingly honest about the negatives in His portrayal of the lives and deeds of even His most illustrious servants.

Daniel lived prior to, all through, and even beyond the 70 year Babylonian captivity of Judah, the lower kingdom. Taken captive as a young teenager from the royal house of Judah, he spent the rest of his life in Babylon. It was Babylonian policy to take back to the king's court the most brilliant and useful of the captive people to serve the king. Scripture tells of only Daniel and three others who were so selected. Regardless of how spiritually depraved the nation of Judah must have been for God to have rendered such a severe punishment, some small remnant surely was very strong in the faith and how they raised their children, because these four, and especially Daniel, displayed a rock solid absolutely unyielding and uncompromising faith in their God under the most rigorous testing possible. We all know the story of the three, who rather than even fake paying homage to an idol, chose what had to be certain death in a fiery furnace, and how God protected them even as they were in the furnace. A similar attack was made on Daniel for praying to his God rather than to an idol. This got him into the lion's den where we find a similar demonstration of how God preserves His own until they have achieved the tasks He has given them. Daniel's

strength of faith and character were powerfully demonstrated at the very beginning of his captivity when he refused to eat the king's food and insisted on what we might call "kosher food only." This rebelliousness was punishable by death. Shortly after this, when the king was ready to have all the magi killed for not knowing his dream, Daniel claimed that he could interpret the king's dream and did so, even describing the very details of the dream. When making this claim he knew absolutely nothing about it, nor did anyone else, but his faith in God was so powerful that he knew that God would reveal all he needed to know, to save him and the others. This one event launched Daniel on a lifetime career of being what we might call "prime minister," the number two man to king Nebechnezzar, the Babylonian king, and also later under Cyrus the king of the Persia Mede Empire. I believe one might say that Daniels' godly witnessing may have led to the salvation of Nebuchadnezzar, who, in fact, was allowed by God to write chapter 4 of the Book of Daniel. As the chief of the priesthood of magi under the Babylonian king, some scholars believe that Daniel foretold the coming of Jesus as King, and that this is how the subsequent generations of magi knew to follow the star to Bethlehem seeking Him.

Daniel as a youth had been taught so well, and steeped so thoroughly in the God ordained belief system of the Hebrews, that he never forgot and never wavered in his commitment, trust, love and faith in God. Regardless of his responsibilities and other duties, he always kneeled in prayer at least three times daily at the appointed times of temple worship even though he was hundreds of miles from Jerusalem and there was no temples anymore. He gave his life to God and God gave him a long and glorious life, not only in earthly terms, but also as one of the most blessed prophets in all Scripture.

Daniel is a superb role model to all who would be uncompromisingly servants of God, and who seek examples of that stalwartness, along with an absolute, unquestioning faith, a deep heartfelt genuineness of worship, an agape love of the Lord, and a willingness to suffer and die rather than yield even slightly toward

forsaking Him. Daniel's prayer, regarding the liberation of his people as the 70 years of servitude which had been prophesied by Jeremiah was nearing an end, is an exquisite example, and model prayer for all of God's people of all ages (see Daniel 9:1-19). Finally, Daniel's life should serve as an example for all parents in whose heart it is to raise their child to be a true lifetime servant of our Lord. We know nothing of his parents or how he was trained. There was no temple to worship in, and no priest to pray and offer sacrifice for his sins. His only recourse was to remember the law and to live by it to the fullest extent he could remember it, each and every day. But whatever they did, it was indeed impressive, everlasting and right. How many could be torn from their home as a young teenager and taken away to spend the rest of their lives isolated in a cruel, sin-laden, idol-worshipping, pagan culture, and survive a lifetime with their souls unscathed? This is not a hypothetical question, because that is precisely the kind of world into which all parents necessarily send their children today. It is an outstanding Christian parent who can say even four years later, after a college "education" that his or her child's faith survived. Daniels' parents, because of the spiritual training they gave him, along with Daniel himself, should be viewed as valued role models.

6. ESTHER Scripture identifies quite a few women who God has blessed by having used them to advance His purpose, and their participation in His divine plan was often pivotal to each of the purposes for which he chose them. He apparently did not think it useful or relevant to say very much about them. Therefore, there is little regarding their character and behavior that might be used to identify them as role models. This is also true regarding most of the men mentioned in the Holy Bible. For instance, we know very little about the majority of the sons of Jacob who were the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel, or of the twelve apostles. In some instances we know only their names. God's authorship of Scripture is the epitome of succinct efficacy and adequacy for the serving of His purpose. This may not appear evident to our very limited human minds as, for instance, when we read the Book of Leviticus and Numbers. They seem to us long, laborious and

full of irrelevancy. As we read Genesis, especially the early chapters, as well as the last chapters of Revelation, they seem to only hint at profound principles, and we cry out in our hearts in hunger for more information beyond that which God has chosen to share. Nevertheless, the entire precious Book has been finely honed to a perfect balance in accordance with His purpose, as only God could so precisely author. Much of what we may hunger for, and is not evident in a simple reading, can be found through serious study and prayer to the Holy Spirit for His leadership and guidance. Proverbs 25:2 tells us “it is the Glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honor of kings is to search out the matter.” Remember, Scripture identifies those who are born-again into the faith as being kings and priests in His future realm. Therefore, to some degree, that capability has been given to us if we will only use it. Note also that Jesus said, “*Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*” From this we can reasonably assume that much more knowledge will become available to us in these end times, and that some of what we now see as irrelevant or superficial in Scripture will be explained and its importance identified. Some Bible scholars have also offered the observation, that from a doctrinal perspective, the Holy Word can be viewed as being shallow enough for a baby to safely bathe in and yet deep enough for an elephant to swim in. That means that Scripture reveals sufficient truth, such that even the most shallow emersion into it can lead to a saving faith, and also that it has such limitless depth that no matter how much evidence an intransigent soul (like myself) might need to find evidence sufficient to generate a saving faith, it can be found, but only through prayer, guidance of the Holy Spirit, and perseverance.

Well, after that diversion excursion let us get back to Esther. There is considerable disagreement among scholars as to what period of history the Book of Ester represents, and just who was the Persian / Mede ruler that is referred to in Scripture as Ahasuerus. After reviews of various opinions and chronologies, my preference is that as determined by Dr. Floyd Nolen Jones. This is because of his remarkable scholarship, his truly exhaustive analysis of available literature, and

his uncompromising reliance on the inerrant Word of God as the primary basis for his conclusions. From this it appears that Ahasuerus was Daruis I Hystaspis, and Ester became his wife in 515AD. This was during the period of the rebuilding of the Temple after the 70 years of captivity, which God had imposed on Judah (606 BC to 536 BC). Actually only about 50,000 Jews returned to Judah and Jerusalem. The others chose to stay where they had been resettled by the Babylonians and were now subjects of the Persian / Mede kingdom. At that time, the capital of the Persian / Mede empire was Susa, a city about 100 miles from Ur, where Abraham had come from about 1400 years earlier, and about 750 miles due east of Jerusalem. The Jews had been widely scattered by the Babylonians and were now living in many parts of the empire over which Darius I was king. History seems to record Darius as a cruel, greedy, tyrant and among the first to extract tribute from his subjects. Herodatus, the first historian, said of Darius that he “looked to make gain in everything.” At that time the Jews were no longer slaves. They were simply living relatively pleasant and lucrative lives where they had been planted generations before. Ester became queen after the king had ordained a nation wide round up of the most beautiful virgins. It was from that group that he chose her. Her moment of great biblical significance came when her uncle Mordecai told her of a plot by the government official named Haman that would have caused the death of all the Jews in the kingdom. The fact that Ester was of Jewish origin had been kept secret. In order to thwart the plan, she composed an elaborate plot of her own, which put her life in great risk. God was surely using her, guiding her throughout, so that her plan would succeed. The Jews were saved and Haman was executed.

What makes Ester a worthy role model? She was the queen, and a very favored queen of the king, who ruled the greatest empire of that period. She had the very best that the world could offer and no earthly reason to do anything to damage her position much less risk her own life. The Jews in question, were not a cohesive interdependent group or community where anything resembling a common bond could be credited to them. They had long ago lost their religious loyalties and

customs. If they had had any, they would have been part of that small remnant who did return after the captivity. Those who returned were the ones who restored the Temple and, therefore, their ability to worship as it had been their calling, being sons and daughters of Abraham. That they even retained their identity as Jews was a supernatural circumstance as it has been for the past 2500 years since then. This was surely God's supernatural calling to her, which to her great credit, she chose to hear, and on which to act. How many of us today are willing to do much of anything difficult, much less anything painful, or dangerous in an answer to His call? This one answer to God's call can be viewed as having changed all of Jewish history. In fact, their history might well have ended right there. For Haman's plan, which the king had already signified and was scheduled, to be carried out on a certain date, was to kill all Jews within the empire, which at the time included Jerusalem and all of Judea.

Ester's cool, calculated and well-executed heroic act of bravery and self-sacrifice, is well worthy of the historic notation it has received in Scripture. It could be argued that it has been given to us not only to illustrate both Satan's activity as he repeatedly tries to destroy the Jewish race, but also to illustrate God's divine use of women as well as men to thwart him. Here, Scripture also gives us this role model of how we can all, rich and poor, be transformed for use in His greater plan.

7. Other Valiant and Effective Women from Scripture As already noted above, God has chosen to elaborate on the lives of but a select few, even though He identified many whom He has used to advance His plan. Many of these, although we don't know enough about them to choreograph specific role model images, what Scripture has revealed about them is enough to determine the nature of God's calling and how they responded. The following is a listing of a few others and what they did to warrant their place in the Holy Scripture.
 - Sarah God chose Sarah to be the patriarchal mother of the entire Jewish race, the one from which our blessed Lord and Savior was destined to be

born as God /Man. Sarah's devotion and obedience to her erratic, wandering and sometimes badly compromising husband, Abraham, is a worthy example of God's ordained role of a wife. Being barren until the age of 90, when she finally had the long awaited "son of the promise," she must have suffered many years of ridicule and condemnation. This is because in that culture, bearing children was a major factor in establishing a woman's stature and prestige among her peers. Becoming a mother at that advanced age must have been not only a great blessing, but a very difficult challenge as well.

- Tamar Genesis chapter 38 reveals a sordid, sin-filled story of how God has used even some of the worst of His creation to advance His plan of redemption. He did this even in His choosing the very bloodline from whence Jesus would be born. Of the twelve sons of Jacob, God chose Judah to be the one who would continue the bloodline from Abraham to Jesus. It was also through Judah that the bloodline of the kings of Israel would eventually follow. With the exception of Joseph, none of the twelve sons appear to be of such a fine character that a father could feel blessed. Here God chose the fourth son after Rubin, Simeon and Levi to be the standard bearer. How bad could they have been for God to have had to pass by them and choose such an unsavory character as Judah? Scripture does tell us a little about their iniquities.

In Genesis 30 we learn that Judah took a Canaanite wife. This was wholly contrary to God's long-standing directive to marry only within the ethnic group. Judah had three sons. The oldest one married Tamar, but he died before Tamar could have his son. As per God's ordained Leverite custom, Judah ordered the second son to marry Tamar, so as to provide a son, which would then be considered to be of the line of the first son. He refused, so God killed him. (God is serious about these things) Then Judah told Tamar to live in his house and wait until the youngest son would be old enough to marry her. In the meantime, Judah's wife died

and eventually this son became old enough, but Judah did not honor his pledge to Tamar. As noted many times in Scripture, a woman without children was a failure both in her own mind and also to the rest of the world. Tamar felt helpless and betrayed. Judah had sole authority over her future, and he was not allowing her to do what she believed she was destined to do. Probably now her child bearing years are approaching an end. Knowing her father-in-law's sordid ways, and learning that he was to travel some day's journey, she "conceived" a plan, which would solve her problem. She changed her garb from that of a mourning widow to that of a harlot, and set up a place along the trail where she knew Judah would travel. Sure enough, he bought her services and the result was twins, Pharez and Zerah. The story is far more interesting and involved than the simple highlights here noted. It would be good to reread and study it. But what is the point of all this, and how is Tamar and her story worthy of taking up space in the Holy Scripture? There are at least three reasons: First, it is another confirmation that God can use, to advance His divine plan even through the most inveterate of sinners. But then aren't we all? If God chose not to use sinners, there could be no plan having man's involvement. In the Old Testament dispensation, sin could not be removed from the soul, because the means, by which sin could be removed, did not exist yet. Conformance to the religious system, which was centered on faith in the law, could only cover sin, not remove it. In the present dispensation, since Jesus made it possible to actually cleanse the soul of sin, which He does for all who are born-again, God is now able to also work through people who, though yet sinful, are, nevertheless, through faith in Jesus, cleaned of their sins.

The Second reason the Tamar story may have been included in Scripture, is to show how doggedly determined this woman could be and was, in order to obtain what she believed was right, that is, to continue her husband's line and her own fulfillment as a woman. She put her life and

her reputation at risk in several ways in order to accomplish this. Any one could have come to her tent on the trail before Judah arrived. Rape and death could have caught her anywhere as she traveled alone to and from this place. Had she not had proof that Judah was the father, her pregnancy would have been her death sentence. Being ostracized from the community for her action was quite likely the price she did pay for wanting so badly to be a mother and for the way she chose to have her dead husband's line continue. From what we can read it seems fair to consider her to have been a strong and virtuous woman who chose to do a wrong for what she believed to be a greater right.

The third reason is clearly the primary one as to why her story is recorded. We know that God, in His sovereign authority and for His own reasons, chose the line of Judah to be the one through which Jesus would come. From what we read, it seems evident that Judah's line had stopped dead, and it was only through Tamar's initiative that it was able to continue. Of course, we know that had this not happened, God would have orchestrated another way. But it did happen and God used this as the way in which the generational line toward Jesus was continued. We see it over and over again, that God often uses man's errant ways to advance His purposes. Tamar couldn't have known that she was being an instrument in advancing God's plans. She only knew that there was a powerful force in her, which was driving her to do what she did. Was it God's doing, or simply His foreknowledge that was at work here? Because God could never be a participant in a wrong in order to make a right, it had to be that because of His foreknowledge whereby He saw the infinitely complex labyrinth-like ways mankind would travel, He could choose whatever sequence of paths that would best serve His purpose. It is interesting to note in passing, that God chose the path through Perez as the one, which would lead to the birth of His Son. God's laws, as they were applicable during the dispensation, forbid an illegitimate offspring from being king,

and this restriction was valid until the tenth generation of his bloodline. Of course, at that time and until much, much later, it made no difference, for the time was not yet right for kings to be ordained among the Hebrew tribes. It was, about 600 years later, after the Exodus and into the period recorded in First Samuel, that this issue become significant. We read that at that time the people were howling for a king so they could be like the pagan tribes. It had always been God's plan that they would have a succession of kings, for Jesus himself was to become the ultimate and final king from the line of David. But the time was not yet for God to implement that plan. Nevertheless, God gave them Saul to be their king. But he was of the tribe of Benjamin not Judah. Therefore, he was but an interim king and one whose line could not continue. Only through Judah could the line to Jesus be completed. So why didn't God simply take from the line of Judah to start that royal lineage? Again, because the time was not yet right. The tenth generation from Peraz had not yet been born. David was that tenth generation man, and he was the one who God had chosen before the beginning of time to be the one to initiate the dynasty, and to establish the throne on which his son, our Lord Jesus, would sit and one day rule the entire world for 1000 years.

Doesn't that give you goose bumps to witness God in action "taking sows' ears to make silk purses," as He wrote each note of the musical score for that greatest of all symphonies which one day will resound throughout the universe so all will know of His glory?

8. DAVID From a spiritual perspective, I believe that David must be the greatest of all human beings ever to have lived. Scripture has told us a great deal about his life as recorded in First and Second Samuel, First Kings, and First Chronicles. Most of the Psalms were composed by David, and they give us broad insights into his thinking and into his soul. Why should I believe that he is the greatest? It is because God called him a man after His own heart

(Acts 13:22). This is also a common expression many of us use as we express admiration for someone's exploits or behavior. It's one of the ways we indicate our concurrence or agreement with them in their conduct. But for God to say this about anyone, any created being, elevates the expression beyond human comprehension, beyond mine at least. If we read all that has been written about David in the context of this statement by God, it may be possible to find that God has revealed even more about Himself than He has about David.

Before we dwell further on that thought, let's examine a sampling of some of David's shortcomings, which God has allowed us to see. First, he was a liar who lied as it served his immediate interest. He lied to Ahimelech, the temple priest at Nob in order to eat the shew bread from the temple and to obtain a sword, actually, the very one Goliath had owned (1Samuel 22). Because of this lie, the priest accommodated David in a way that caused King Saul to have him executed, along with his family and other temple priests, totaling 85 people. David could have very well known that such consequences of his deceit would result. Also he lusted for another man's wife, committed adultery with her, and then schemed to have Uriah, her husband, killed. Uriah was one of David's most dedicated, valiant and trusted of his generals who was away at war, where David should have been, instead of being at home yielding to temptation. David also had multiple wives, seven we know of, all contrary to long established laws that God had given Moses. Surely all of this must have been horribly offensive to God. Given all this, how could God possibly call him a man after His own heart? This seems to be a very strange paradox, but one from which we can learn something quite important about the mind of God and what characteristics He values most in His human creatures. Is God telling us that someone who is a liar and adulterer, a schemer and a murderer, can also be a man after His own heart? Yes, He is! From the perspective of what Scripture tells us about God and what He thinks

about sin, this is something deserving deep study and not a matter to be taken lightly.

David seems to have had all of the human weaknesses of the flesh typical of all humanity. So what was so extremely special about David that it transcends these things? The answer if anywhere, is to be found in his heart, that element within man that expresses the quality of one's soul. This was made evident in 1Samuel 16:7 when our Lord told Samuel, "*...the Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.*" In 1Samuel 16 we find that God had directed Samuel to the house of Jesses to find the one God has chosen to be king. It turns out to be David, the youngest of Jesse's 8 sons. Notice in verse 13 that as David is anointed, *...the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.*"

This is a very significant and unusual event. Only after Jesus ascended to heaven, starting on the day of Pentecost, did the Holy Spirit take permanent residence in all saved souls. Pentecost was the momentous event that launched the church age. Prior to that, Scripture indicates that the Holy Spirit, while present among believers, did not normally take up permanent residence, but came and went in accordance with a believer's position regarding obedience to God's directives. But here, God, in accordance with His sovereign will, is making an exception in the case of this young teenage boy. In His foreknowledge, God has waited for this one special person with whom He would establish a dynasty and a throne on which one day Jesus would sit and rule for a thousand years. We read in 1 Samuel 16:18, that David already had a reputation as "*...cunning in playing (the harp), and a mighty valiant man and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and Lord was with him.*" That was quite a reputation for one so young!

Now we come to the very popular Goliath story in 1 Samuel 17. Here, I believe, is revealed a very important part of David's character and faith which

sets him apart from all others in such a way that from it we can begin to see why David is a man after God's own heart.

It is evident that as a young shepherd, he spent many days and nights in the wilderness alone with his sheep and his God. He lived with God through those many solitary days musing about and worshiping the Most High. He grew to adore God and felt a familiarity and ever-growing closeness to Him. When he entered the military camp and heard this pagan Goliath pouring out blasphemies against his God, a holy rage came upon him and it became evident that he must put a stop to this evil. In convincing Saul that he should be the one to do it, David cited the occasions where he had single handedly killed both a lion and a bear, when they had tried to take his sheep. He claimed that it was having done this that qualified him to take on Goliath. But notice in telling of his exploits, he gave full credit to where all credit belongs. He told those listening, "*The Lord that delivered me out of the paws of the lion and out of the paws of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of the Philistine.*" You see, there were two participants in this action, God and David. David slew the lion, the bear and the Philistine. That is the human part of the effort. But as David so states, God delivered; that is the divine side. All lasting achievements, that are not but hay and stubble, occur that way, man's effort through God's strength. There is a great lesson to be learned here. God never meant that faith in Him should be synonymous with sloth. With David's great faith, why didn't he simply go out into the field, get down on his knees, beg and pray and then simply let God slay Goliath? That sounds crazy, doesn't it? But before you scoff at the idea too much, think of how many times each of us has done exactly that! When a problem is difficult, rather than faith, fear grips our heart and we fall apart. Instead of moving ahead to do that which is necessary and what genuine faith in Jesus as our guide and protector would require us to do, we take on the character reminiscent of the sloth. We simply hope that through prayers alone, God will somehow do supernaturally what He appoints us to do, and what we should do

in His name through His strength, and in faith in the righteousness of our actions. God never does supernaturally what can be done naturally. He works through man, and in particular through those who are His own, those who are a part of the body of Christ. What is the body of Christ, if it is not His present earthly manifestation through whom He chooses to work good things? Scripture tells us that if we are born-again, we are His; He bought us with His blood. We are His bondservants as well as His Body during this present dispensation. If you think that being saved is a free ride just because it is a free gift from God that we cannot pay for, you need to become better acquainted with God's Word. Look to David to see what the faith that really saves is all about.

That is how David's heart was exceptional and most pleasing to God. David never shied away from whatever work God gave him to do. Not only that but he did it happily, without fear, and giving full credit to God for its achievement. One of many general lessons from David's life may be summarized as follows. What you do in the name of the Lord, do as if your salvation depended on it, and then give full credit where it is due, to the Lord, for without His grace, your works would be nothing more than dirty rags. David surely backslid and sinned, but his laundry was absent of dirty rags of either sloth or self-esteem.

We see that incredible, totally committed faith throughout his life. We see it joyous and unabashed as he leaps and dances as he brings the Ark of the Covenant back home. His wife, Michal, hated and was ashamed of him for his unkingly behavior in such matters. He demonstrated his absolute faith when his young son died. He prayed and fasted and mourned for a great many days hoping for his son's recovery while the boy lived, but the minute he died, David immediately resumed his duties as if nothing had happened. In his faith, he prayed for God's will to be done. When that will took his son, he accepted it unquestioningly, telling his aides that while God had ruled that his

son could no longer be with him, he accepted that, knowing well that one day he would again be with his son. How often do we see such complete acceptance of the Lord's will, that even a profound grief regarding such a great loss fades completely where genuine faith is present? This son was the result of David's great sin. While it is clear that God forgave him, Scripture shows us here most assuredly through David's example that the consequences of our sins can, and will, in some way and to some degree, plague us for the rest of our lives.

David is, I believe, the best role model for genuine uncompromising life long faith. Jesus, of course, is our ultimate role model for how to live, what our physical and spiritual values need to be, and from exactly where our strength is derived. David, on the other hand, is the model of human applications of these qualities. We see Abraham as an example of an uncompromising faith under a most testing circumstance. But David is an example of a life long, sweet and simple, but absolute and never questionable faith in our Almighty God. Before time began, God saw this shining beacon of what He wanted in His standard bearer, in the one worthy to first establish the throne on which our Lord Himself would one day sit and rule as both the Son of God and the Son of David.

It is important that before we leave our study of David, that we at least examine one or two of his Psalms. David wrote most of the 150 Psalms that are included in the Holy Bible, and we are told that he probably wrote many many more that have been lost to us. The Psalms, even more than his biography, reveal the inner workings of his extraordinary heart and soul.

Looking briefly at Psalms 56, we observe a prayer spoken when the Philistines had taken him to Gath while he was yet running from King Saul. While his enemies sought mercilessly to "*swallow him up,*" he sought mercy from his God. In verses 3 and 4 he says, "*what time I am afraid, I will trust in*

thee. In God I will praise His word, in God I have put my trust, I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.” This is the trust of a soul that can sing praises to God amidst mortal dangers, a soul which has complete trust in God’s decision in all matters, even when death may seem inevitable. It is a faith that can trust when he is afraid, and in so trusting not be afraid. True faith in God drives fear out of man. Skipping down to verse 9, *“When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back; this I know, for God is for me.”* David is completely confident in God, even in this dire and seemingly hopeless and painful situation. If God is for us, what does it matter who or how many can be against us? In verses 10 and 11, he repeats this declaration of praise and trust. How honoring and pleasing to the Lord’s ears it is to hear such commitment, and what an example it is to other seriously tried believers to follow such an example. In truly praising and trusting in our Lord, we are able to put away any fear of what man can do. Then finally in verse 13, David gratefully acknowledges God’s grace and mercy for his delivery from his enemies. This he continues to remember in profound gratitude when he again, in Psalms 116: 8 and 9, repeats this expression of gratitude. Here is another worthy example to guide our walk in the Lord. Recognize and remember God’s great and small workings in our lives, and re-express over and over again our gratitude and love for Him and for His many mercies.

Now, let us look at how David and God dealt with that awful series of sins mentioned earlier. We find that in chapter 12 of Second Samuel. It appears that David’s conscience must have been sleeping for many months, both during and after his most horrendous backsliding into his sins regarding Bathsheba. It was God, through the prophet Nathan, who finally cited to David a parable through which his horrible sins finally pricked his conscience.

In hearing this parable, David was made to condemn himself as he finally saw the true nature of what he had done. In this chapter of Samuel, we hear from David nothing more than the simple confession, a sincere acknowledgment of

his sin against God. However, it is in Psalm 51 that David bares his heart and makes his full heartfelt confession and prayer to God. While his great heart is revealed in many of his Psalms, it is this particular one which can serve as a great role model prayer of a truly repentant soul, one that is humbled, contrite and profoundly sorry for its transgressions. I will not attempt to analyze it. It would be sacrilege for me to do so. For even the great Spurgeon spent many months of prayer and struggle attempting and failing to even commence the work. Here is what he said about the Psalm: *It is a bush burning with fire yet not consumed, and out of it a voice seemed to cry to me. "Draw not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from off thy feet." The psalm is very human, its cries and sobs are of one born of woman; but it is freighted with an inspiration all-divine, as if the Great Father were putting words into his child's mouth. Such a Psalm may be wept over, absorbed into the soul and exhaled again in devotion; but, commented on- ah! Where is he who having attempted it can do other than blush at his defeat?*

For anyone seeking understanding as to how to empower their prayerful petitions to God, this Psalm should be seriously studied. It is a public confession as is evident from the fact that it was published to be sung publicly. It is also important to note that nowhere does David at any time offer excuses for his actions nor cite any extenuating circumstances in order to suggest the slightest justification for what he did. We should, nevertheless, realize that throughout his life he had no one but himself to prevent his backsliding. Only Nathan the prophet after the fact sought to correct him. It is also to be recognized that in those days, as it most certainly is today, the world would think nothing of such actions, nor would it even consider these to be sins. Remember that he was a man of very strong passions, a soldier and oriental monarch with despotic powers. No king of his time would have felt any conviction for having acted as he did. This all the more speaks to the greatness of his heart, that he could in the context of the times and in his exalted position, accept the full blame and seek forgiveness from the even

higher power that he realized he had profaned. You will notice in the Psalm that David says to God “Against you, you only, have I sinned.” Here is a telling example of David’s great depth of understanding of the divine. We may ask, what about Uriah and the others? Didn’t he sin against them also? No! Sin by definition is against God, since it is only by God’s law that sin is defined as sin. A wrong done to others is an offense against humanity. How very close his heart must have been to God’s heart for him to have had that distinction so clear in his mind.

At this point in the story of David, there is another very important lesson to be learned about sin and how God deals with it in the earthly portion of the lives of His own sons and daughters. I wrote a paper on the consequences of sin some time ago but here, in the story of David is a very clear and specific example put here for our learning as it pertains to the compounded ravage of sin and how God’s chastisement is rendered. Please read chapter 12 of Second Samuel in order to get the full measure of what is here only highlighted. Note first that David was made to see his sin in its true light before it was forgiven. Moreover, he was made to strongly condemn himself, prior to forgiveness. It was only then that God, through Nathan, told him that his sins were forgiven. But now we read of the awful realization which descended on David, and which we must, all who are saved, hear and know in our hearts as the consequence of our own sins. David was made to see the greatness of his sin by the effect that is produced in the lives of others as well as in his own. Nathan said “...*by the deeds thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blasphemy.*” David’s Psalms reveal this sad fact several times. There always were, and are today, diverse activities in any court or government body. In his court, there were the very faithful as well as the men of Belial who were ungodly. When the ungodly caught David trespassing this way, it gave them much basis for blasphemy. At the same time, it was a very sad and undermining topic for the faithful to speak of. They must have wept greatly to see their godly hero king so fallen.

But that was far from all of it. Never again was David the same happy and joyous example of God's workmanship. He was forgiven, but from that day onward, "the sword never left him," and the consequences of the sin continued to plague him all the rest of his life, a fate we all should expect for ourselves as the consequences of our own sins. A very sad change overcame David's life from then on. Just read of Tamar, Amnon and Absalom to see how degraded his own family had become. Enemies within his own court, even his own son, sought to overthrow him. Most of this latter part of his life was one of mourning and lamentations. Even his dying testimony, though full of faith, was marred by regret, as he expressed it when he said, "...*although my house be not so with God.*" We find that even he, this man after God's own heart, was nevertheless a man of like passions as ourselves and was no exception when it came to having to pay the consequences. Let not any of us believe that because we are saved and our sins are, therefore, forgiven, we are "home free." We should all realize that there is no such thing as being "home free" from sin's earthly consequences. David's story teaches us how bitter and long lasting sin is, and that even though guilt may be removed, the consequences cling to us and continue to be subjects of sorrow until "*God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.*" (Revelation 21:4). We cannot control what is in the past, but with this lesson as foreknowledge, we can, through greater resolve towards obedience to God's ways, greatly reduce the potential for such additional consequences.

Our final excursion here, as we seek to understand David's heart, will be a brief examination of one more Psalm, Psalms 57, where we see some more very worthy expressions of the great heart of David. This Psalm is titled "*To the Chief Musician, Al-taschith, Miichtam of David when he fled from Saul in the Cave.*" This is one of four Psalms that are particularly graphic expressions of David's very special heart in which he sings praises to God and expresses his great love, faith and confidence. The word *Al-Taschith* means,

“thou shall not destroy” and *Michtam* means “engraving.” This would suggest that these prayers were of special meaning to David and he wanted them preserved, as well they were, for God did save them just for us.

As we read the Psalms we see the calmness of David’s heart when he was in great peril. Basically he was a man of peace until inspired by God to right some wrong. Here he is being hunted to death as if he were a vicious dog, by the king to whom he had done no wrong and to whom he had complete loyalty. This compounded the pain of the situation, yet with all the sensitiveness of his nature, his faith in his God never wavered. Here is an example of how the more he was afflicted, the more he was strengthened.

In verse 1, he pleads for mercy twice, the circumstances being so very urgent. Then he expresses his faith as that of a little chick being protected under the mother hen’s wings. He knows that God will so protect him as long as necessary. In verse 2, he cries unto God in perfect faith, not blind or dumb faith, for that is no faith at all, but in a knowing faith that God will protect him. In verse three, his faith is such that if he cannot be saved by earthly means, God will send the means down from heaven if necessary. In verse 4, he makes note that he does now “lie” among the lions and other enemies armed and ready to kill him. He lies among them, as we must live in this world among some who would do us harm just for our beliefs. But in his case, these are killer enemies, yet he can “lie” among them without undue fear, because he knows God is with him and his faith will protect him. In the midst of all the danger and prayer of mercy, David takes a moment to rise above it, for in verse 5, he again praises the Lord with a calm but passionate reverence. Here the message for us is that there are no circumstances, no matter how dire they may be, that one should not take a moment to praise God. It is in times of such stress that test our commitment and love of God and, therefore, no better time to stop and praise him for all He has already

provided, even if it is not in His will to cover us in our immediate circumstances.

They hunted him as wild beast perhaps digging holes covered with netting and leaves for him to fall into as he described the circumstances in verse 6. Then he discerns that they fell into their own traps. This was God's immediate answer to his prayers. Perhaps the message here is to leave them alone who would hurt one of God's own. For sooner or later they will be defeated by their own evil, as God wills it. The remainder of the Psalms is again glorifying God for His great mercy and faithfulness. We should all pray with that same calm praiseful frame of mind and heart that David possessed, even if we are called to endure such trials as befell him. Rest assured, most of us will be called to such trials of faith before our journey here comes to an end. Careful reading of David's Psalms, as he expressed what was in his heart, is where we find the most compelling evidences that it was indeed a Godly heart.

A study of a few others of David's many Psalms would most assuredly confirm what we have already observed about David's exceedingly strong and faithful heart. But was that enough to totally negate the condemning nature of his very serious transgressions? Obviously so, because he does remain for all time a man after God's own heart. Trying to look at the larger picture, perhaps as God saw it, we know that God has a loathing for sin, but also a supernatural love for the sinner. Where genuine faith and love for Him exists, the solution to the sin problem was solved by God before the earth was created. Sin permeated the first man and none have, or ever will, escape its contamination. But, where there is a genuine saving faith, sin is not a primary issue with God. Those who are saved have been given new hearts but they must, nevertheless, continue with the strength of the Holy Spirit to struggle against sin. However, God is more interested in man's new heart and in seeing it perfected in preparation for its greater eternal purpose. David's new

heart was considerably perfected at an early age and continued to increase in attributes, as his Psalms clearly indicate. We might say that his sins were on a totally different plane, the plane of that old heart, the one that is “*deceitful above all things and desperately wicked*” (Jeremiah 17:9). For those who have been redeemed, that plane is no longer of relevance to God from a spiritual perspective, other than for determining one’s position in heaven. In our present “church age,” those who are saved can collect crowns for good works and also lose them through sin. But David, being of the Old Testament dispensation, could not receive such crowns. However, David was given a very special earthly crown and a throne; as the king of God’s chosen people. But, it was not just any kingly throne, it was the one our Lord Christ Jesus has a claim to and will one day occupy.

David had a deep, highly developed understanding of God, His way, and what He wanted for His creation. At the same time, David also expressed a life-long, child-like awe, trust and love for his Creator. One would have to say that David was very much in tune with God and His workings, and it is for our learning of these things that God has revealed to us so much of David’s life and his thoughts as expressed in the Psalms. In this vein, look also at what God gave David in the way of prophecy. Read Psalm 2. Here David was allowed an ear into heaven where he overheard a conversation among the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit discussing things that would be going on at the end times just before Jesus would return to sit on the throne of David. Then read Psalm 22. Here David was given ear to the tortured intimate thoughts and observations which our blessed Lord and Savior would have as He would one day, 10 centuries later, as He hung from a cross dying for us, so that we might have everlasting life with Him. Could David have had any comprehension of the meaning and significance of what he wrote? This certainly is debatable. However, I tend to believe he did. I don’t believe that David was in some sort of trance and simply wrote without knowing what was being dictated to him. I suspect that God gave him these visions along with

some degree of understanding, just as He did to the apostle John when Jesus revealed himself and directed John's writings of the Book of Revelation.

David's heart was certainly a model for all of us. While he was often emotional in demonstration of his faith, it was not that, but the uncompromising faith, absolute commitment, complete devotion, and full time genuine agape love for God, which made his heart so special to God. That's the heart that God chose to compare with His own! Oh, if only each of us could obtain such a heart!

Scripture is replete with other great personages worthy of study and emulation as role models. However, those we have met here give us ample examples for our learning of what God would have of us. I pray that their messages have been as inspirational to you as they have been to me.