

How to Worship God

There are just a few verses in the Bible which sum up the essence of our calling – providing us with clear guidelines on how we should live. As such they should be marked up and carefully studied by true Christians, for many who claim to be Christians know them not.

The Book of Micah foretold the approaching judgment of Israel for their persistent sins. God's case against Israel is set forth in chapter 6, after detailing their sin in chapter 3, and foretelling the coming and work of the Messiah in chapters 4&5.

In chapter 6, verses 1-3 God calls to mind His faithfulness to Israel – and their unfaithfulness. *'Hear ye now what the LORD saith; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD'S controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.'*

Verses 4-5 tell how God redeemed Israel from slavery and gave them great leaders. He has kept His side of the covenant. *'For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.'*

In verses 6-7 Israel replies with 3 questions, which reveal that the people have even forgotten that God had substituted the redemption of the firstborn by replacing them with the Tribe of Levi. They no longer know what God requires of them.

So, in verse 8, God answers with what He requires not just of Israel, **but of all men and women of all time, perpetually and unchangeably.** *'He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?'*

Lest some may think this does not apply to Christians, let's confirm that in Matthew 23:23, *'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted **the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith:** these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.'*

Here, Christ repeats that these 3 requirements are the weightier matters of the law – key principles which should guide our lives in all we do.

Fortunately, God knows we learn by examples, and so we will look at the life of just one man, who provides such an example, Acts 13:22, *'And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, **a man after mine own heart,** which shall fulfil all my will.'*

God chose David when he was probably a teenager, but God does not dwell in time as we do and knew quite well that he would become a founder of a dynasty which would continue for all time, 1 Samuel 16:1, *'And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have*

rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

5And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

7But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart. 10Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these.

11-13, And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither. And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.'

At the time David was the least in his family, and held the most menial position, as keeper of the sheep. Future events were to reveal that David had already endeared himself to God by studying His creation and meditating on His Laws while he watched the flock, to the extent that he already knew he could rely upon God to help him in all circumstances. 1 Samuel 17:1, *'Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which belongeth to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephesdammim.'* 4-10, *'And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him. And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us. And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.'*

17-20, 'And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren; And carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge. Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle.'

31-37, 'And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed them before Saul: and he sent for him. And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine. And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth. And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul

said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.’ How could David have that kind of confidence, in his early 20’s?

We will find that it was because David had already learned to live justly, love mercy and walk in faith with His God, as we will see from his life.

David had learned to live by God’s Law, to live justly. He had filled his heart with knowledge of God’s word, Psalm 40:8, *‘I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.’*

David’s psalms often allude to God’s creation, and it was probably his wonder at the world around him, as he led his flock from pasture to pasture, that drew him to find out more about the Creator.

Do we pause to wonder at God’s creation? If we don’t take that time, we deny ourselves the inspiration David received. In fact, being a shepherd, caring for a flock of sheep was a distinct advantage to David, for it can teach a man a great deal. Christ often refers to Himself as a shepherd, or the chief shepherd, 1 Peter 5:4, *‘And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.’* He regards His ministers as shepherds and His people as His flock, and it was as a shepherd that David proved to God that he had the character of a faithful king who would care for His people.

We see David’s deep respect for God’s Law when King Saul pursued him into the wilderness of Engedi, and could easily have been killed by David, 1 Samuel 24:1-6, *‘And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi. Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. And he came to the sheepecotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul’s robe privily. And it came to pass afterward, that David’s heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul’s skirt. And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD’S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.’* He had another chance in 1 Samuel 26:1-12 and even accused Abner of not properly guarding his master! *‘And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon? Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon, by the way. But David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness. David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed. And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched: and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him.*

Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee. So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him. Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time. And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD’S anointed, and be guiltless? David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish. The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD’S anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go. So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul’s bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw

it, nor knew it, neither awaked: for they were all asleep; because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them.’ And verse 16, ‘This thing is not good that thou hast done. As the LORD liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the LORD’S anointed. And now see where the king’s spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster.’

This was because God had anointed Saul as king for life, and despite his later failings David remained loyal and protective of God’s chosen leader.

But, despite this respect for God and his commandments, like us, David was human. He murdered Uriah to cover his adultery with Bathsheeba. Psalm 51 then reveals David’s deep repentance, read the following verses from it –

‘I Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.’

David learned that all men sin. It seems that great men can sin greatly, but he understood that his great sin could be covered by deep repentance. Then, a wonderful thing happens, Psalm 32: 1-5,

‘Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

*Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD **imputeth not iniquity**, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.

Selah.

*I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and **thou forgavest the iniquity** of my sin. Selah.’*

Our sin is no longer counted. We become clean and receive the gift of God’s righteousness.

If we truly repent and struggle to walk in God’s way, we are counted as doing justly, despite our failings. That’s why David’s great sin is listed in God’s word – to show that there is hope for each one of us. David fulfilled the first requirement of Micah 6:8!

Let’s look at the second requirement – to love mercy, Micah 6:8, *‘He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, **and to love mercy**, and to walk humbly with thy God?’*

There came a time when David’s firstborn son Absalom rose up in rebellion against his father. If you read the whole account, you will see that even in the final battle David seemed more concerned for Absalom than himself, such was his mercy towards others. The detail I would like to zero in on

though, took place in 2 Samuel 16:5-11, *'And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came. And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man. Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head. And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him.'* The time setting here is early in the rebellion when David was forced to flee from Jerusalem.

I wonder if we would have been prepared to accept such disrespect. David was the king, surrounded by hardened warriors. Cursing the king was a capital crime, and Shimei could have been executed. BUT, by this time David was all too aware of the blood on his own conscience. His own sin, even though repented of, came to mind, and God's mercy made David love mercy. James 2:13, *'For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.'*

Mercy is a subject in itself. It does not mean forgiveness. Among the 10 different Hebrew and Greek words translated 'mercy' in the Bible, forgiveness is never mentioned, just 'compassion, pity, gentle kindness' and of course 'mercy.'

David did not at this time forgive Shimei – he extended mercy towards him, because he had learned that God does not dispense instant retribution the moment we sin, for otherwise we all, and David too, would have been wiped out long ago.

No, David emulated the way God had dealt with him, for he had learned that God suspends due punishment to give us time to repent so that THEN we may be forgiven, Luke 17:3, *'Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.'*

Christians then, must be compassionate, full of gentle kindness and pity even to those who wrong them. We can rebuke those who sin against us, but we must resist the temptation to pay back and gain revenge, so that the offender has a chance to repent. Then we can truly forgive, but til then we must simply have pity, compassion and MERCY for him, for perhaps he does not understand God's Law.

Finally then, let's look at the third requirement of Micah 6:8 – *walking humbly with our God*, having complete confidence that God is with us to fulfil His promises. The most famous example of David's faith and complete trust in God, is in his victory over the giant Goliath, (2 Samuel 17). It is in his dealings with Shimei however that we see again David's fulfilment of the principles in Micah 6:8.

2 Samuel 16:12-13, *'It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day. And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust.'*

But David simply left it in God's hands. David accepted the humiliation as less than he really deserved. He had learned to walk humbly with his God. God is fair, He is just and if there is revenge to be taken it is best left to Him. Romans 12:19, *'Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.'*

The years went by for David, as they do for us. God works things out for those who trust in Him, and He did intervene to overcome Absalom's rebellion, and was restored to the throne, but on his return to Jerusalem took no steps against Shimei.

The Psalms show that David continued to spend time with God in prayer and meditation on His Laws. Yes, he made serious mistakes, but continually repented, and overall his life reflected his deep sense of justice based on God's law, kindness and mercy towards those around him, **and faith in God to work things out for the best end.**

It was only just before his death that David gave instructions to Solomon, his son, 1 Kings 2:8-9, *'And, behold, thou hast with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I sware to him by the LORD, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword. Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood.'* These instructions indicate that Shimei had over the years revealed by his actions that he had never really repented. If he had, David would have forgiven him. The story continues in 1 Kings 2:36-38, *'And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Build thee an house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and go not forth thence any whither. 37For it shall be, that on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die: thy blood shall be upon thine own head. 38And Shimei said unto the king, The saying is good: as my lord the king hath said, **so will thy servant do.** And Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days.'*

Solomon allowed him even more time to repent, but he never did learn to truly respect his own word, God or the king, verses 39-46, *'And it came to pass at the end of three years, that two of the servants of Shimei ran away unto Achish son of Maachah king of Gath. And they told Shimei, saying, Behold, thy servants be in Gath. And Shimei arose, and saddled his ass, and **went to Gath** to Achish to seek his servants: and Shimei went, and brought his servants from Gath. And it was told Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath, and was come again. And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Did I not make thee to swear by the LORD, and protested unto thee, saying, Know for a certain, on the day thou goest out, and walkest abroad any whither, that thou shalt surely die? and thou saidst unto me, The word that I have heard is good. Why then hast thou not kept the oath of the LORD, and the commandment that I have charged thee with? The king said moreover to Shimei, Thou knowest all the wickedness which thine heart is privy to, that thou didst to David my father: therefore the LORD shall return thy wickedness upon thine own head; And king Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD for ever. So*

the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; which went out, and fell upon him, that he died. And the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon. '

So, after 3 more years, his wrongdoing brought about his own death, a sad example of the fact that punishment is justly not withheld by God forever. Eventually, if we continue to sin we will be punished, just as Shimei was.

So, Micah 6:8 and Matthew 23:23 pretty well sum up our duty towards God. David will rule Israel again in God's Kingdom, and if we will follow his example, we too will serve in God's Kingdom, and teach others the essence of true worship – justice, mercy and faith.

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