

A Heart Like David's

Grace and peace from God our Father and from the one who forgives us and saves us from sin, death, and the devil, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord, amen.

PJ and I have seen a lot of marching bands performing both their football halftime shows as well as their competition performances over the years... Our grandson Stephen plays for the Greenville Band of Pride in the pit where he plays some of the instruments mentioned in today's scripture reading. Our granddaughter, Lexi performs in the Color Guard. (SLIDE) Even the Best Damn Band In The Land doesn't have the Ark of the Covenant... The scene described in the first part of our scripture reading for today reminds me of all those times watching the marching bands perform with the color guard and all their flags flying in the breeze. The only thing they all lacked was that Ark of the Covenant...

In today's scripture we actually have two stories about David. The first 5 verses of chapter 5 tell us about how David was finally anointed King over all of Israel. He was first anointed by the prophet Samuel back in the first book of Samuel. (SLIDE) This was when David was still a young lad keeping the sheep of his father Jesse. He went on to fame and fortune by taking out that nasty Philistine giant, Goliath. (SLIDE) From there he was placed in charge of King Saul's army and defeated so many in battle he won over the hearts and minds of the people who constantly sang of his great war exploits. All of this made King Saul so jealous he tried many times to kill David, but to no avail. Now David already knew he was

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anointed to be king, but his loyalty to King Saul prevented him from making any move to overthrow him and take the throne. This loyalty didn't dissuade King Saul, who constantly chased David from mountain to mountain trying to kill or expel this threat to his throne. Finally, Saul fell on his own sword to avoid being captured by those pesky Philistines. This allowed David to ascend to the throne unencumbered by the stain of murdering his King. This scene we have before us from Chapter 5 is in the town of Hebron. Hebron is located in the southern part of Israel known as Judah. (SLIDE) The elders of the northern tribes of Israel came to David at his headquarters in Hebron to anoint him as King over the entire area of the promised land. They were tired of fighting against one another, and they recognized David as a leader who was not only skilled in battle, but was one of them... (SLIDE) He was part of their family, their flesh and bones. They saw his great military victories and they recognized the hand of God working in and through him. I noticed they didn't just come in and appoint him by default. No, they first sought God's guidance. The scripture says they made a covenant with David, *before the Lord*. They didn't just pick the only one running for the office of King, they negotiated a covenant agreement, *before the Lord*. As many times as I've read this story, I never appreciated those three little words, "*before the Lord*." It was a religious rite and experience guided and approved by none other than The

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King of King and Lord of Lords! Maybe the House of Representatives should try this when picking their next speaker.

(SLIDE) Now, was David a perfect King? Hardly... There was that whole adultery episode with the girl from the neighboring rooftop. When she became pregnant, David arranged for her husband to be killed in battle. Most of us probably remember that whole ugly mess... A little less known was the trouble David had within his own household and family. He took several wives and had several children by them. When one half-brother raped his half-sister, David was unwilling or unable to condemn the rapist. This directly led to another half-brother killing the perpetrator in order to defend the honor of his sister. Not a perfect family, to say the least...

(SLIDE) Despite all of his shortcomings, the thing that separated David from all the rest was his heart. The Bible says David had a heart after God's own. He had the ability to recognize and confess his sin before God. Sometimes it took the intervention of a trusted prophet and friend such as when Nathan brought the Bathsheba issues to light... In the end, David was like all of us, a sinner. The only thing he really had going for him was the fact that God loved him and picked him. David's love of God and trust in God to provide and protect him was what allowed him to abandon all pretense of decorum and dance almost naked before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord. Can you see any of us parading around in nothing but

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our tidy whities in front of not just our friends and Church brothers and sisters, but in front of our enemies? And, not just in front of our friends and enemies, but also in front of God Almighty??? (SLIDE) I mean the Ark is the Holy of Holies were talking about. There's another story immediately after this singing and dancing, musical marching band parade. The oxen pulling the Ark begin to stumble and a man named Uzzah, reached out to steady the Ark so it wouldn't fall to the ground. Poor Uzzah... He must have forgotten the Law which stated no human could touch the Ark or else they would die. He thought he was doing God a favor by helping steady the Ark. The moment he touched its surface was the moment he breathed his last breath... God doesn't need our help. We're the ones who need God's help!

(SLIDE) The Bible says David was a man after God's own heart. By taking a closer look at David's heart, we can begin to see what our hearts needs to be like, if we want to also have a heart after God. First, David had a humble heart. He started in humble beginnings and knew he was nothing special outside of the fact that God picked him. David had a patient heart and followed God's lead. He didn't try to make it happen in his own time or by his own strength. Although He had been anointed by Samuel back in the First Book of Samuel, David's patient heart allowed him to resist the temptation to rush in, kill his King, forcing God's hand. Our job is to wait for God's leading and for our divine appointment.

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Next, David had a worshipping heart. Here we see David was a great king because he had deep respect for God and was not ashamed to worship Him. The Ark of the Covenant was the symbol for Israel that represented God's presence. When the Bible says David and all of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, I'm picturing some of the crazy dancing I saw during the awful days of the Disco craze of the 70s and 80s. Even his coronation by the elders of Israel was done *before the Lord*. My guess is that everything David did was *before the Lord*, even those things he wanted to keep secret. David was humble in his approach to God, but his worship of God displayed great enthusiasm, overflowing with joy for all that God had done, including forgiving his sins. Great men and women of God are not afraid to let the world know how much they love God, even if that means dancing with all our might!

David certainly had an open heart. He was open to receive God's blessing. He feared the wrath of an angry God, but also rejoiced when God's favor fell upon him. Sometimes we also have a little trouble seeing ourselves through the loving eyes of our Heavenly Father. David received the Covenant from God with deep gratitude and his joy could not be contained. Along with David's open heart, his heart was also vulnerable. Even though David had many victories with God and had just entered into an eternal, unconditional covenant with God, he was still vulnerable to temptation and sin. Many times, just when we think we have it all

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under control – BAM! — we get blind-sided by a temptation that we fall for hook, line, and sinker... It's not that we need to have a vulnerable heart to have a heart for God. We need an awareness that we *ARE* vulnerable to temptation and to sin.

Finally, David had a broken and contrite heart. When David was confronted with his sin he had two options. He could go the way of Saul and deny his sin, shift the blame, and rationalize his sin. Been there—done that... David chose another way. He let the arrow of truth penetrate the hardness of his sin-filled heart and he was broken by the weight of his guilt. A broken heart drives us to our knees and shifts our focus from ourself to God. When we're broken, we admit we're empty and powerless to do anything on our own and need God's strength to live. Jesus famously reminded us, "Blessed are the poor in Spirit, those who mourn, and those who are meek." It's one thing to have your heart broken by your own sinfulness, it's another to actually want to change. To repent is to actually change, not just say "forgive me." David repented and desired to please God. He made mistakes, he suffered deeply for his sin, but he invited God to change him.

May God peel back the layers in our lives. May we discover the joy of Worshipping this God who is Holy and Almighty, but loves us more than we can know or understand. (SLIDE) May we learn from David to have a heart after God's own heart. We might all have to start taking some dancing lessons! Amen.