

The View of God Upon Which to Build Statesmanship

I believe everyone is familiar with the encounter that David had with Goliath. David was a teenager. Goliath was a 9'9" tall, seasoned, powerful warrior. Everyone knows that David fearlessly felled this giant with a pebble employing a slingshot, perhaps the crudest of all instruments. However, I am convinced that there is more to the story. When David asked to be the one to fight the giant, he repeatedly referred to "the living God". It is worth considering what David meant by his expression "the living God". And I am convinced that it is this perspective that is the key to his miraculous success – one that we can appropriate for our own life and service.

The phrase "the living God" is a powerful expression. The addition of the word "living" implies active and involved. From this, we recognize that David viewed God as intimately involved in the lives of His children – involved in every aspect of our lives. We may interpret that David viewed God as hearing and responding, and with compassion and power in response to his needs. God demonstrated that David's understanding and trust were not misplaced. There is no way we can explain in human terms what David accomplished during that encounter with Goliath.

We learn more about "the living God" and His interaction with fallen man as we watch David's ensuing life unfold. David is an anomaly to us because when he was King, he allowed his view of God to lapse when he sinned with Bathsheba. And he paid dearly for that lapse. He was disciplined severely by his Lord for his disobedience, reminding him again that our Lord is "the living God".

Even as David responded to God as he was confronted with his sin through God's prophet, we see his view of our Master as the "living God":

Be gracious to me, God, according to Your faithful love; according to Your abundant compassion, blot out my rebellion. Wash away my guilt and cleanse me from my sin. For I am conscious of my rebellion, and my sin is always before me.... So You are right when You pass sentence; You are blameless when You judge.... Surely You desire integrity in the inner self, and You teach me wisdom deep within. Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones You have crushed rejoice. Turn Your face away from my sins and blot out all my guilt. God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not banish me from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore the joy of Your salvation to me (Psalm 51:1-2,5-12).

When David pleaded with God "Do not banish me from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me", he recognized that he could not take God's presence on his behalf for granted. He understood the need for God's forgiveness and the fact that he could not automatically expect this as a part of His being "the living God" – and certainly not as a result of our Lord being an object of worship. When David pleaded "God, create in me a clean heart", the word he chose for "create" means not to improve something blemished or imperfect but rather to "create out of nothing", recognizing that God would have to produce something for which there was not the raw material or a starting point within David's life. There is nothing David could provide out of which God could create a clean heart. This would have to be a work of God alone.

Possibly, Psalm 23 is one of the tenderest songs that David wrote to God, written years after David's sin with Bathsheba. In it, David expressed "He restores my soul" (23:3). Again, we see the view of "the living God".

Listen to David's heart expressed years after sinning with Bathsheba:

The earth and everything in it, the world and its inhabitants, belong to the LORD; for He laid its foundation on the seas and established it on the rivers.... Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, you gates! Rise up, ancient doors! Then the King of glory will come in. Who is He, this King of glory? The LORD of Hosts, He is the King of glory. (Psalm 24:1-2,8-10)

Here, we see David expressing an intimate friendship, one that would reflect that God is "the living God". Listen to the words of David later in his life:

A man's steps are established by the LORD, and He takes pleasure in his way. Though he falls, he will not be overwhelmed, because the LORD holds his hand. I have been young and now I am old, yet I have not seen the righteous abandoned or his children begging for bread. He is always generous, always lending, and his children are a blessing. (Psalms 37:23-26)

These are the words of a man who experienced his Lord as "the living God" throughout a lifetime. We learn a lot from David's life about this One who is "the living God". He is intimately involved in our lives. He responds to our obedience to Him, and He disciplines us when we disobey Him. As "the living God", He does not leave us to guess what He wants us to do. He makes it very clear as we call upon Him. In response, He promises to hold our hand. What more can a Statesman wish for?

David is considered to have been a good King, by God and man. He is representative of human beings with an imperfect nature desiring to do good for those he was called to serve. I propose for your consideration that his view of our Creator as "the living God" played a key part in his life and service. My challenge is for you to get to know God as David did and to have Him as your "living", active partner throughout your life, guiding you and holding your hand.