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# **After the Triumph... the Trials**

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**Series: God's Living Legends II**

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# After the Triumph...the Trials

Return with me, if you will, to where we were in our last lesson. Goliath the giant is dead! There he lies in his brass-covered coffin of armor, if you will. By his side stands this young man who had felled him with one smooth stone and a slingshot. It is at this point that the young man takes the giant's sword for the first time and he cuts off the head of this one who dared to challenge the name of the Living God.

The Hebrew troops who had been paralyzed with fear up until this moment, finally began to be filled with courage. Someone else did their work for them. They shout their battle cry and take off after the Philistines in the valley of Ekron. Before long, the battle is over. You begin to hear in the background, this chorus, "Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands." And so there you have it.

## DAVID, THE HERO

There now is in Israel, a little shepherd boy, the son of Jesse, the youngest of eight brothers, who has been anointed by God to be the next king. Now he has been elevated by God to the position of a hero. He has tasted the cup of triumph. Don't you just wonder how his brothers felt (particularly those three older ones), who chided him for just coming to the front lines to get a good seat for the battle? Don't you imagine how his dad felt? His dad is back home. He turns on CNN. The newscaster comes on and he says, "The battle is over! You'll never believe it! This young lad with one smooth stone has felled the giant." You can almost imagine it as Jesse looks at the screen and there he sees David. You can't help but wonder how he felt.

But you don't need to wonder how Saul felt, the Bible tells us. You would imagine that he would be relieved that the conflict was over at last, "My kingdom is saved. We don't have to be slaves." You would expect him to set aside a time of worship to the Lord out of gratitude that God had provided, right? Right. But it didn't quite work out that way. I Samuel 18 we take up today in verse 7.

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It goes like this,

The women sang as they played, and said, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." [They had a new chorus and it was up on the overhead.]

Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed [but] thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?"

Saul looked at David with suspicion from that day on.

Now it came about on the next day that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul, and he raved in the midst of the house, while David was playing the harp with his hand, as usual, and a spear was in Saul's hand. [He just happened to have his weapon.]

Saul hurled the spear; for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall." But David escaped from his presence twice.

Now Saul was afraid of David, for the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul. (1 Samuel 18:7-12 NASB)

Now isn't there something about that story that seems strange to you? Anything at all? When I first read it, I thought to myself, "Who wrote this?" Then I thought, "God did." Here is a national hero, who moments before had delivered an entire nation from the brink of disaster. Here he is, utterly humiliated, playing nostalgic melodies on his harp for an emotionally distraught king who was a loser, a king who now having had the spirit of God depart from him, wanted to kill David.

Now you think to yourself, "Are you trying to tell me that God has allowed Satan to bring an evil spirit to live in Saul and is subjecting David to the erratic behavior of a demented monarch? Are you trying to tell me that God has allowed this wild-eyed king, filled with jealousy and self-preservation, to try to assassinate our hero by thrusting a spear in his direction? Are you trying to tell me that's the best God can do to take care of the man who just put his neck on the line for God's reputation? What kind of a story is this, anyway?"

It's a true story. It's not only true of David, it's true of virtually every hero God has ever raised up out of the dust of anonymity and thrust onto the center stage of life, every man or woman. The truth of the matter is that, after the triumph, come the trials. And lest you be left wondering about David for another minute,

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we invite you to travel with us in his post-Goliath experiences. If you're like me, you'll follow in utter amazement at what took place.

We will follow our hero as he descends from the platform of great, human acclaim and gets down to where the real world is. I would remind you who this man is before we begin. This young man is a man after God's own heart. Don't forget that. He is the heir to the throne of Israel, chosen by God. Don't forget that. He is of the lineage of which one day the Messiah would come. Don't forget that. He is so confident of the sovereignty of his God that he was willing to stand before an entire nation and risk his life. He was a man in a million, the kind of man that God loves. Now from the pedestal of the role of a hero, he descends to the role of a servant; then, to the role of the betrayed; and finally, to the role of the fugitive. Does that sound familiar? He was rejected by the very one he had been sent to deliver. How strange.

Ultimately, God will exalt him. One day he *will* rule and reign, but not yet. God has got to train him. He is going to train him through misery and misunderstanding, through discouragement and danger. God is going to meet his needs during all of that time, but He's going to let David suffer embarrassment and frustration and pain. David is going to literally live with the threat of his life in the balance.

You say, "Why? What reason could God have?" Here is a man God has earmarked for greatness. Here is a man after God's own heart. Here is a man fresh from triumph. That's him. But, Beloved, after the triumph, so often come the trials. You see, through the trials comes the training. Through the training comes the transformation. Don't you understand, this man David is God's man? Better still, he is *becoming* God's man, and the events that are going to happen in the unveiling of his life are a part of that process. Some of you may be able to even identify that after the triumph come the trials.

We are going to follow the footsteps of David for a little while this morning. His first course in the University of Preparation is Jealousy 101. His instructor is King Saul. The class takes place in the palace, but there are some unplanned field trips that take him all across the Hebrew hillside, and even into a cave or two.

It begins in I Samuel 18:7, the passage we looked at a few moments ago. King Saul had been bailed out of a national

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disaster by this young man whose only claim to fame before that time has been his ability to make music to calm the erratic spirit of this out-of-fellowship king. Now our “Mantovani for messed-up monarchs” has become a threat to his ruler. This ruler knows his days are numbered. Samuel told him.

Now how do you handle a jealous spirit? There are a lot of ways:

- 1- You can submerge it and turn it into hostility. Maybe you know somebody like that.
- 2- You can release it “harmlessly” with tiny little barbs and insults. Some of you maybe know somebody who does that.
- 3- You can use the more “up-front” approach that Saul used. You get the guy you’re jealous of in the same room with you. You get him to play a restful tune like “Till the End of Time”, and then splat, you try to nail him to the wall like a new picture. That is one way to do it. Now this approach proves to be a little more frustrating to the “nailee.”

We find the reason for Saul’s insecurity in this verse,

Now Saul was afraid of David, for the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul. (I Samuel 18:12 NASB)

Saul wasn’t walking with God, but he still occupied the office he was assigned to by God. So now he was trying to perform the ministry of God without being controlled by the Spirit of God. Bad deal. He was frustrated. He was insecure. He was jealous. So we read that God supernaturally delivered David twice from the pointed barbs that Saul had thrown in his direction. This made Saul all the angrier.

Saul then tries a more subtle approach. You have to give the guy credit. He is creative. He decided to make David a company commander and put a thousand men under his authority, then send him out to where he was just sure to get killed. He would get rid of this man and he wouldn’t be responsible, right? Wrong.

You see, you don’t really get rid of God’s man that way. Here is what happened as we read in I Samuel 18,

David was prospering in all his ways for the LORD was with him.

When Saul saw that he was prospering greatly, he dreaded him.

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But all Israel and Judah loved David, and he went out and came in before them. (I Samuel 18:14-16 NASB)

The more he was persecuted, the more he prospered. Sounds a little like Matthew 5, doesn't it? It means God was so blessing him through his problems that he was developing a ministry. Everyone in the country loved him. God was equipping David for greatness by enrolling him in a graduate class in how to respond to jealousy. Do you remember a guy named Joseph? He took that course and passed with honors. Jesus was enrolled in the same course. Job was enrolled. He didn't do too well the first semester or two, but he had some special time with the Professor, you remember, and he came out okay in the end.

What is the purpose of jealousy? It started with Abel, didn't it? He pleased God and his brother, Cain didn't. So his brother finished Abel off. What is the purpose of jealousy? There are three aspects I will give you. God never honors it in the person who is demonstrating it, but He uses it.

1- God uses it to get us to where we need to be. It develops relationships you need to develop. The Scripture proves that. It was jealousy that got Joseph where he needed to be for God to exalt him. It was jealousy that caused the Jews to do what God needed them to do to Jesus, so that God could accomplish His purpose on the cross. It was a jealousy that caused a problem between Abraham and Lot that ultimately accomplished God's blessing and judgment. In David's case, jealousy fueled the fire that drove Saul to end his reign, drove David to develop his friendship with Jonathan, and forced David to flee to some places he needed to be for God to get his attention and change him.

You see, jealousy is not pleasing to God, but He uses it. That is why you need to be so careful when you are blaming God for something that took place in your childhood where jealousy was concerned. Maybe you were the favored child or maybe your brother or sister was the favored child and you've never forgotten that. You've never forgiven your parents. You've never forgiven your peers. Be careful. God allowed those things to put you where He needs you to be. He allowed those things to help you build relationships you need to build.

2- God allows jealousy to develop character. Scripture says that the testing of your faith that produces character and endurance. David was still young. He had some growing up to do.

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He needed to understand relationships better. He needed to be humbled. He was fresh off the heels of this great experience. He could easily be infected by that critical disease called “craniumo expando”, known also as a “swelled head”. Dodging the king’s spears is a good way to get you back down to earth. It gives you an appetite for humble pie.

3- Jealousy was used in David’s life to drive him to dependence on God. Elijah is another good example of how after a great triumph often leads to a mental lapse. Do you remember? You forget that it was God who delivered you, so God has to bring something into your life. David, as he was dodging the spear of this jealous king, must have remembered that every minute he still had to depend on the Lord his God. That one experience in his life he couldn’t live on. It was to be minute-by-minute-by-minute.

So God was training him. The way he was training him was taking this maniac who possessed the throne, and allowing him to be jealous and actually try to exterminate him. David was innocent. All he had ever wanted was the best for Saul. Yet God allowed him to be misunderstood, abused, and hunted like a wild animal. He was trying to let David know he was being prepared for greatness.

Now I don’t know about you, but like David, as I mentioned a minute ago, some of you may have been enrolled in this class yourself. You may have lived in a home that was plagued by favoritism. Maybe that led to jealousy or persecution. Maybe a bitter spirit ensued. Maybe even now you are suffering at home or at work from what you construe to be the curse of a jealous mate or a jealous boss or a jealous fellow employee. God doesn’t honor jealousy. He hates it.

But I want to remind you this morning that there is good news! God designs all things in life to pursue His purpose. If you rightly respond to that jealousy, God is going to use it to put you where He wants you to be, to build relationships He wants you to build, to develop character in you that you sorely need, and to develop a spirit of dependence on Him that you would not have without it. God knows what He’s doing! I know you don’t like it. David didn’t like it. Liking is not the issue. God’s will is the issue.



## THE DILEMMA OF DISAPPOINTMENT

So the angry rage of this jealous king had David on the run. That wasn't the only problem he faced. The "Dilemma of Disappointment" is next. Back to I Samuel 18:17,

Then Saul said to David, "[I've got an idea for you.] Here is my older daughter, Merab; I will give her to you as a wife, only be a valiant man for me and fight the LORD's battles." [Ha, ha, ha! That's in there.] For Saul thought, "My hand shall not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him [lobber him and do the dirty work]."

But David said to Saul, "[Aw, shucks!], Who am I, and what is my life or my father's family in Israel, that I should be the king's son-in-law?"

So it came about at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given to Adriel, the Meholathite for a wife." (I Samuel 18:17-19 NASB)

Let's take a look at Saul's reasoning, Saul's deception, and God's intervention.

### Saul's reasoning

"Why should I kill David and suffer the wrath of the people? He's a hero. I'll just send him off to battle, and let the Philistines finish him off, and I'll pretend to be sad."

### Saul's deception

He promised David his daughter Merab in exchange for his being a brave warrior. Then at the last minute, he pulls the great switcheroo, gives Merab to Adriel instead, and leaves David confused to say the least.

### God's intervention.

Now Michal, Saul's other daughter, loved David. When they told Saul, the thing was agreeable to him.

Saul thought, "[Ah! Loose translation.] I will give her to him that she may become a snare to him [he must have had a really neat opinion of his daughter], and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him." Therefore Saul said to David, "For a second time you may be my son-in-law today [you lucky thing]."

Then Saul commanded his servants, "Speak to David secretly saying, 'Behold the King delights in you, and all his servants love you; now therefore, become the king's son-in-law.'" (I Samuel 18:20-22 NASB)

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This guy's middle name was deception. You remember it always has been. He promises David one daughter, gives her to someone else, then instructs his servants to lie to David, telling him that he really loves him and would like him to be son-in-law, so here's daughter number two. His motive was to use her as a ploy to get him out into battle and get him killed. What a neat guy! What a neat guy!

What Saul forgot was that the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord, and he's the king! And the Lord turneth it whithersoever he chooseth as we read in Proverbs 21:1. Saul meant it for evil. God meant it for good. Instead of a snare, Michal becomes David's protector, and instead of being killed, David simply endears himself all the more to the people.

### DAVID, THE FUGITIVE

I'm going to try to take the next few chapters and condense them into about 3 minutes. Now you know I have the gift of condensation, right? Wrong. Okay, so if you think you've never been confused before, you're going to be now, so here goes.

Saul sets the stage for David's death by demanding a dowry that forces David into battle so he'll get clobbered. Instead, David is filled with the Spirit of God, takes on 200 Philistines single-handedly, wins the battle, and wins Saul's daughter. That's part of the dilemma of disappointment. In the flesh when we don't get what we were promised, we tend to pout, but the dilemma is that the very things that disappoint us are most often the things designed by God to be the best things that ever happened to us. At any rate, the more Saul conspired against David, and the more miserable he tried to make his life, the more God blessed David, and the more miserable Saul became.

When Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal, Saul's daughter loved him,

Then Saul was even more afraid of David. Thus Saul was David's enemy continually. (I Samuel 18:28,29 NASB)

Now as the next few chapters of I Samuel unfold, they go from bad to worse from a man's perspective. But if you begin to see the principles at work, by now, you may begin to almost get excited for poor David as he is running all over the countryside trying to keep from being killed. Verse 30,

Then the commanders of the Philistines went out to battle, and it happened as often as they went out, that David

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behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul.  
So his name was highly esteemed. (I Samuel 18:30 NASB)

This is a good memory verse. So while God was allowing David to be tested, through the testing He was creating a ministry. The more he was sent into the battle, the more he behaved himself wisely and the more wisely he behaved himself, the more respect he gained. Are you still with me? Kind of?

Then in I Samuel 19:1, Saul comes out in the open and says “Okay, I’m not going to hide it anymore, I want to kill this guy.” So he sends his son Jonathan to kill David on the spot. God intervenes again and, instead, Jonathan’s heart becomes knit together with David’s in one of the most famous friendships in Scripture.

Chapters 19 and 20 give the details of how God supernaturally protects David again and again and again. By chapter 21, our young king-to-be is now a fugitive. He is running for his life with a desperate, deceptive, jealous king right on his heels.

Before long David finds himself without any food and without anything to fight with. He makes his way to Ahimilech, the priest, who trembles when he sees David, and offers him the holy bread to eat and the sword that David had once used to slay Goliath, to take as a weapon. Are we going fast enough? David thinks he hears the footsteps of Saul behind him, and hurries on to King Achish, the king of Gath, only to realize he didn’t belong there and he was in danger. So he concocts an unusual charade,

So he disguised his sanity before them, and acted insanely in their hands, and scribbled on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva run down into his beard [a messy man],

Then Achish said to his servants, “Behold, you see the man behaving as a madman, Why do you bring him to me? Do I lack madmen. Why do you bring him to me?”

(I Samuel 21:13,14 NASB)

So David departed from there and escaped into the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father’s household heard of it, they went down there to him [a family reunion].

Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt [boy, in this country he would have a crowd], and everyone who was discontented, gathered to him, and he became captain over them. Now there were about four hundred men with him.

(I Samuel 22:1,2 NASB)

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Here is our spiritual superman, who days before had chopped off the head of a giant, is now reduced to acting like a man possessed, just to save himself from being killed. He has to put on this charade and that leads to nothing more than a humiliating family reunion. I don't know what his brothers must have been thinking by now, but can't you imagine the line they gave him?

At any rate, here he is, now joined by all the castoffs and all the rejects in the countryside. One paraphrase, the Living Bible, reads "anybody that was in any kind of trouble joined him." So here's our former hero hiding in a cave, humiliated before his whole family, and joining him are all the fugitives and malcontents in the land. What a neat life! But if you want a neat study, go back through this slowly and try to look for each of the character qualities in David's life that surfaced in the Psalms. You will see a pressure point in these stories. That pressure point developed that character. That's what God was after with David. Guess what? That's what God is after with us.

Next, David becomes the center of a "church" fight. You knew that had to happen. Eighty-five innocent priests were killed just for helping him. We won't go through the whole story. David had been to Ahimilech. Ahimilech gave his defense to Saul. Saul has all the priests executed. None of his soldiers want to do it. Finally, Doeg, the Edomite does it. He kills, not only the priests, but the women, children, and their dogs and cats as well. The news came to David, and David grieved.

Now the plot thickens, as if it could get much thicker. Another war, a lot of prayer; another cave, another betrayal, until finally Saul and David's paths cross. Do you know what happens? How many of you know what happens? How many of you don't know what happens? I'm kidding. Even if you know what happens, come back next week.

This is the point in the lesson where we need a little music in the background, swelling up. The announcer would say, "Will David's army desert him? Will Saul find David in time? Will Jonathan warn David of his father's plans? Will David kill his pursuer? Will David ever become king at all?" Tune in next week for another session of "All God's Children."

Seriously, we will come to the conclusion of this phase of David's life in the next lesson. But let's go back now and find out exactly what God is trying to say to us as He indicates through

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David's life that "after the triumph come the trials."

### DAVID, OUR TEACHER

Not only in David's life, but also in so many of God's people's lives, there was a parenthesis between the initial moment of victory and his ultimate ministry as God's leader. Think of Elijah. Think of Abraham. Think of Moses. Think of their ultimate ministry that developed from their initial moment of triumph that in between there was a parenthesis which seemed to go on and on and on and on. You say, "Why?"

Now this man David was not being subjected to divine discipline. We know that because he was the only man in Israel who had been obedient in the face of danger. It was not because he was not pleasing to God. The Scripture just told us he was "a man after God's own heart". He was number one. It was not because he had been set aside and was reaping a flurry of difficulties because he was out of the will of God. He had just been anointed king. It was not some kind of demonic activity. We read that the Spirit of God came upon David and departed from Saul. It was not because he was not sensitive to God's leading because the Scripture just told us he behaved more wisely than anyone else.

David wasn't being punished. He was in training. He was enrolled in Officers Candidate School, OCS, which today means Onward Christian Soldiers. That's what David wanted to be. He wanted to be a soldier in the army of God. In order to be a soldier, you must be trained. Part of that training is testing. The result of the testing is transformation. That's what God was after. He was preparing him for a ministry. He was equipping him for greatness.

That's what God did for Elijah and Moses and Abraham and Job and Paul and Stephen and Peter. That's what God does for every man and every woman that He takes from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity. He takes them through some kind of fire. None of us ever want to go through the fire. In fact, the theology of today that is so popular is one that if you have enough faith, you are fireproof. It reduces Christianity to some kind of an across-the-counter pill you can take that removes your ills and eliminates your trials.

It's not a new prescription. Satan offered it to Jesus in Matthew 4 remember? Satan said, "You can achieve greatness

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without a cross. You can be comfortable at the expense of the sovereignty of God.” But Jesus didn’t buy it because it by-passed the will of God. Hebrews 5:8 says,

though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the  
things which He suffered. (Hebrews 5:8 NKJV)

God had a job to do if He was going to see David rise to the heights of greatness He had chosen. He had to orchestrate some and allow other circumstances into David’s life that placed him where he needed to be, that would develop his character to make him totally dependent. So God loved him so much that He withdrew His spirit from Saul and allowed Satan to send into Saul an intense spirit of jealousy, vindictiveness, and hostility. Then he put David where Saul could not help but become enraged, and the process began.

Maybe you think God is allowing too much pressure in your life. Maybe you’ve tried to open the valve and nothing has happened. Listen to what He does when He really loves you. Here is just a little of what happened in this brief period in David’s life.

### DAVID’S TRAINING SCHOOL FOR GREATNESS

There were 21 attempts on David’s life that I could find at least. It included an engagement that ended with father-in-law giving the bride to another man. It included a hero becoming a fugitive, hiding in caves. It included having to feign insanity to escape the clutches of an unsympathetic ruler. It included fleeing to a cave for a humiliating reunion with his father and his family. It included becoming the leader of a band of castoffs and rebels. It included the trauma of seeing 85 innocent priests slain along with their families, because of him. And on and on it goes.

What was God doing? He was training David for the ministry. This was God’s seminary of fire. David was “learning obedience by the things which he suffered.” God could have exalted him immediately to be king without this interlude, but David wasn’t ready for the throne. He had experienced his initial moment of triumph. Now he needed to learn, that “after the triumph, come the trials.”

I honestly think if David could speak to us today, he would say something like this, “Beloved, I’m so glad God didn’t take me directly to the throne. Had I not experienced the spear, had I not experienced the fear of an angry, jealous madman, had I not

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experienced the crushing rejection, defeat, the humiliation, the uncertainty, I never would have known the mind of God. I never could have ruled. Then I believe he would turn and say to us, “Beloved, stop chafing so under the things God has divinely put in your life. He knows what He’s doing.”

Maybe some of you have been a Christian for a short time. Maybe the first months or years were like heaven on earth. Nothing went wrong. No problems, no pain, no persecution. Then one day you woke up and BOOM, the sky fell. Personal problems, physical problems, business problems. You may have sat there stunned and said, “God, what happened?”

Here’s what happened: after the triumph come the trials. God often allows new Christians to have an incubation period so that where they are, they are relatively immune to the spiritual diseases and viruses of the heart. If you are in that situation, this may be what happened: you simply grew strong enough for God to let you begin to experience the realities of spiritual warfare. It’s a compliment. It means that God thinks you are ready to leave the nursery with its protected cribs and safeguards, and let you get out into the world of real pain and suffering. He wants you to know Him in a way you can’t know Him in a bassinet.

Maybe you became a Christian and were exalted too early in your life to a position of responsibility and respectability in the church. You had initial success. You were the “instant success story” of your church or your Christian organization. Suddenly now you find yourself besieged by battles and humiliated by circumstances. What happened? After the triumph come the trials. That’s what happened. God allowed you, like David, to taste the sweetness of victory early to prepare you for eternity. Now He is allowing you to experience the bitter taste to prepare you for planet earth. God hasn’t forsaken you; He is training you.

Why do you think so many of the Psalms that minister to us day-after-day, speak of pain and suffering and unanswered prayer? Because God loved David enough to send a mad king after him! Why do you think we have the prison epistles? Because God loved Paul enough to place him behind bars and then put his heart on paper. Why do you think we have salvation? Because God loved His Son enough to *not* let Him bypass the Cross.

The psalms your life will produce, the epistles your life will etch in the fabric of life, the salvation your life will bring to others,

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all require the likes of mad rulers and prisons and crosses and jealousy and misunderstandings and humiliation. There is no other way.

The question is: What are you here for? What do you want out of life? You want to be a man or woman after God's own heart no matter the cost. You want to be one whose life will leave a footprint in the sands of time that is indelible and speaks Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. My friend, stop fighting God's plan. If He sends you sorrow, thank Him. If He sends you trouble, thank Him. If He sends you pain, thank Him. If He sends you heartache, thank Him. If He sends you joy-filled summer days, thank Him. But if He sends you into snow-covered hiding places where life is evaporating and there seems to be no hope, thank Him.

Oh yes, Beloved, you have a God who can deliver you out of your problems, if you insist. But, Beloved, you have a God who is bigger than that! You have a God who can walk you *through* those problems with you, orchestrating within your heart a divine transformation *because* of the problem. The whole world will one day stand in awe because of the ministry He has given to you. Which would you rather have?

I honestly believe every one of us stands at a crossroads with two highways stretched before us. One is the path of circumstantial ease. It bypasses many of life's tribulations. It concerns itself with easy answers and two-hour miracles. I think if we beg God hard enough, He will let us go that way.

The other road is rocky. There are a lot of detours. At times it looks like you're not moving at all. At times you cry out in agony for any other road sign just to prove you're not lost. But if you don't turn back, one day you will arrive at the most beautiful oasis you have ever seen. It is called the "Heart of God." And looking back behind you, you will realize there were no shortcuts. God didn't need another Saul, with a superficial knowledge of who He was. God needed a David. He still does. And Davids aren't pressed out of a mold in the back room of heaven. Davids are cured in the ovens of earth's trials, until they are ready to reign.

So if God should grant you the honor of taking you into the dark places of life where there seems to be no hope and no deliverance, and you seem to hear the footsteps of an angry Saul closing in on you, or you feel the dagger as it whizzes by, and you're crying out to God, "Why me?" I remind you today in closing



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that your God may have called you for something special. It may be a ministry that can only develop out of a misunderstanding, or a sensitivity that can only come from someone who has tasted the cup of failure, disappointment and heartache. You can flee those pressures and pains at the expense of character. You can even *badger* God to remove you from the oven, and sometimes He will. Or you can quietly say to God, "Thank you, Lord, it sure does hurt, but You know best."

Try responding like that. Then in utter amazement watch as you pass *through* the fire and see your life changing before your eyes, only one day to realize you that your God loved you so much that He lovingly took you into one of life's deeper valleys, until by His grace, you began to become a David!

*(Concluding poem on next page.)*

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THE DEEPER VALLEY

The valley is where man meets with God  
And causes man to discern  
What brings joy to the heart of God  
And what makes man to learn.

The valley is where priorities change  
Where money, houses and fame  
Cease to glitter, and start to melt  
At the mention of His name.

The valley is where life is,  
Precious life that's hard to grow,  
That which only by sheltered palm  
Can handle the summer's glow.

The valley is where the heart aches  
And deepens for others its care,  
And learns to reach out to other hearts  
And show them that God is there.

But the valley is also a mystery  
For learning its message will  
Strangely enough prepare a man  
For a deeper valley still.

A valley that rests beneath it all  
Where few men e're have been,  
A valley below, where few seem to go  
That stretches the heart of men.

Call it the deeper valley,  
Call it whate're you choose,  
But that man in that deeper valley  
Has all but Christ to lose,

Has nothing left to clutch or hold,  
Has nought to call his own,  
For every trace of what was his  
Rests now beneath God's throne.

And all he has to cling to  
And all he has to claim,  
Is that quiet, calm assurance  
That he owns the Master's name.

After the Triumph...the Trials

That through that deeper valley,  
With all its cliffs and stones,  
He has the inner confidence  
He does not walk alone.

Are you wrestling in the valley?  
Is the light so dim and drear  
That through tears of endless weeping  
You sometimes doubt He's near?

'Tis yet the finished work of God  
For you to see in part,  
For few have known His deeper work  
And fewer known His heart.

Cease crying in the valley,  
Cease claiming what is yours,  
Cease clawing for the surface,  
Seeking all life's so-called "cures".

Instead, seek the deeper valley  
And if God should take you there,  
Simply yield yourself into His hands  
And rest within His care.

Few men reach that deeper valley,  
Even fewer learn to rest  
While the careful hand of Jesus  
Shapes and molds them through each test.

Ah, but those who make the journey  
And in God's power return,  
Become searchlights in the darkness  
To which struggling lives can turn.

What's your prayer when pressure comes?  
"From this valley rescue me?"  
Or is it, "Lord, the deeper valley  
Is the place I long to be."

For I know a God who loves me  
Even when the storms increase,  
Yea, now in total darkness  
May I know a God of peace.

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