

INTRODUCTION – HOW IMPORTANT ARE YOU?

I often pick up the phone and hear people say, 'it's only me'. But why the 'only' aren't you important? From Gideon, and the other 'judges' through to the prophet Samuel, and so to Saul and then David, just over 1000 BC, we come to someone who knew he was important. Is that arrogance? And then, how important are you to God - and to his work?

THE DIVINE CHOICE

At every point in scripture, we encounter the phenomenon of God's election. It was there when we were studying Ephesians; we saw that Joseph was called of God for a vital role in God's purposes; Gideon was also singled out and challenged to serve the purposes of God and here too in the life of David. Of the eight sons of Jesse, the seven most obvious were overlooked – not because they failed to qualify in some way, but simply because God had chosen the youngest and least obvious (see 16:7). The apostle Paul understood what lay behind this and he explained it to the Corinthians. The prophet Zechariah understood it too, 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty (4:6); and there are many other similar examples. The same is true of the election of Israel; history and scripture show that they were not more deserving than other nations. God's grace, for that is what this is, is a golden thread that runs throughout scripture. As far as David was concerned, Samuel discerned God's call upon him and anointed him to become king after Saul. The extension of these things into the New Testament is simple to understand though often difficult to accept. God's call is what lies behind everyone who decides to become a Christian. And the Holy Spirit's filling is the extension of Samuel's anointing of David. So that we don't just gloss over something that's very, very important, and to apply it to how we live, let me ask, do you believe that when you are at work, this time tomorrow, that God's call is on your life? And do you believe also that his Spirit will be filling you and empowering you to be a sign of hope to those around you? Do you *really* believe it?

THE CHALLENGE OF DANGER

It isn't long, at least in the narrative, before the first great test of David's calling becomes apparent. The Philistine army decided to challenge the Israelites for supremacy in the land (their territory lay to the east in what today is the Gaza strip). What's more they possessed a weapon of mass destruction – Goliath. And they employed a more sophisticated strategy than had been used in earlier encounters: why waste many lives when a representative from each side could fight it out on behalf of the rest? The Philistines clearly thought they had a major advantage – and the Israelites knew they had no match. Then along came the young, fresh faced David. His thinking was different. And here's a clue into the meaning of what it means to be God's elected and anointed: he was able to see the situation from the angle of God's purposes. And if no one else would take on the godless giant, well then, he would! And he did. And he brought him down. The spiritual application here for us today is that God's purposes still continue. And whilst they may be challenged by the ungodly or even the devil himself, they will not be thwarted. Neither the world, the flesh nor the devil will destroy your witness for him; nor his purposes for you; nor those you love; nor anything within his care (Romans 8:38ff.).

THE CHALLENGE OF CELEBRITY

David's victory over Goliath made him a national hero; then along with other military successes, it wasn't long before Saul, the king, became jealous of David. There was a refrain which became something of a pop song of the day which went, 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands'. Saul's jealousy soon turned to murderous intent and David had to take to the hills for safety. His life was in real danger; but God's anointing was on him and his hand protected him; his will would be done – and it was done! (Remember, God's blessing doesn't always mean enjoyable!)

THE GLORY OF FRIENDSHIP

One of the most notable features of David's life was his very close friendship with Jonathon, the son of the king. That friendship was especially significant and throughout the early stages of King Saul's growing bitterness towards David. When he must have wondered whatever had he done to have deserved the king's hatred, Jonathan was there to befriend, comfort and reassure him. It is not simply by chance that Jesus sent his disciples out two by two.

THE SHARE IN GOD'S MISSION

David was aware of Samuel's anointing, and he was aware too that his life was in God's hands –the many psalms he wrote to confirm this, but he could never have been aware of how significant his life was in terms of God's purposes for the entire cosmos! He could never have known how, a 1000 years later, one of his descendents would become the Messiah – such a word didn't exist in David's time; he couldn't have known the eternal God would cloth himself in human nature through one of his descendents and be called, among many things, the 'Son of David'. He just couldn't have known that: but God did! It was part of God's great venture, his mission, to bring the world, its people and everything in it to perfection. You see, in a sense, creation isn't finished yet; not until everything has been made perfect (Romans 8:19ff.). And just like David, you and I have also been called out, not to become kings (though one day we may rule with Jesus) but to be God's agents, here and now, working with him and in the power of his Spirit, to bring the world to its goal.

CONCLUSION

I asked earlier whether you really believed these things. I do so again because, the chances are, this seems all too grand for us and we let it sweep over our heads. So I ask another thing, meditate on these things and ask God to convince you.