LIFE LESSONS FROM FAMOUS FAILURES (Pt. 8)
"David – A Failure After God's Heart" (Acts 13:22-23)

INTRO: The Bible rarely flatters its heroes. It tells the truth about each so God's grace is magnified over human failure. As we look at Biblical characters, we find ourselves looking in a mirror. We are reminded how often we fail. Great have been our failures but greater is God's faithfulness. No where is this truer than in the life of the great OT person of David. He was thoroughly human and tragically fallible. His is the fullest biography in the Bible. More known of him than any OT individual. Devoted to Abraham are 14 chapters; no less than 62 to David. Mentioned 971 times (Jesus – 1281). Look at his life, occasional failures and see what life lessons we can learn.

I. DAVID'S STORIED LIFE (1 Sam. 16:1-13)

A. *His Rise from Shepherd to King* – As the 8th son of Jesse, David was selected by God to be king long before he was elected by the people. With Saul's tragic death, David became king at 30. He reigned 40 yrs. putting Jerusalem and Israel on the map of the world.

B. *His Resume* – Shepherd, ignored as a son and brother, giant killer, musician and poet (73 psalms), fugitive and outlaw, builder, administrator, soldier, Israel's greatest and most colorful king. Yet, his picture is at times marred by failure. He was a failure as a husband, father and leader. He was (like us) far from perfect.

II. DAVID'S OCCASIONAL FAILURES (Picking only 3)

A. (2 Sam. 6) *Carelessness* – After Saul's death, David inquired of the Lord what to do (2 Sam. 2:1). Later, he inquired what to do about the Philistines (2 Sam. 5:18-19). When we come to Ch. 6, new King David wants to express his love for God by bringing the Ark of Covenant to Jerusalem. This time, he forgot God and failed to inquire. Because the Ark symbolized God's presence and holiness, He gave detailed instructions on how to move it with reverence and fear (Ex. 25:12-15). And only Levites were to move it (Deut. 10:8). Instead of being carried with poles on the Levites' shoulders, the ark bumped around on a cart. When oxen stumbled, Uzzah touched it to steady it and God killed him on the spot (6:6-7). All because David forgot God's instructions concerning holy matters. Cost? Uzzah died!

B. (2 Sam. 11-12) *Lustfulness* – Now about 50, he has ruled some 20 years. Following great successes in battle, David stays home. Again, no mention of his inquiring of the Lord. Read 11:1-5! From here, David weaves a story of hypocrisy, deception and murder to cover up. When later confronted, he does confess it (12:7-18). The rest of his days, his family and kingdom were in turmoil. Cost? Uriah, other soldiers and baby die. Unconfessed sin often becomes compounded sin.

C. (2 Sam. 24) *Pridefulness* – Now come to end of David's life and reign. He is 70 and has reigned 40 years. He makes a foolish decision to take a census. Again, no inquiry of God. He is motivated by pride in his own power. This time, 70,000 people die (v. 15)! David anoints his son, Solomon, king and goes to his grave, no doubt with some regrets (1 Kings 2:10-12).

III. LIFE LESSONS FROM DAVID'S FAILURES

1. *To sincerely love and worship God, we must remember to consistently obey Him – even down to the smallest details*. Such obedience leads to celebration (6:14-15). See John 14:15, 21, 23. We can't just rewrite the rules, grab the cart, do it our own way.
2. *Take the time to own and to learn from your failures* (2 Sam. 6:10-11; 1 Chron. 15:11-15).
3. *Sin is the culmination of a process, not a sudden act*. David had a weakness for women. One was never enough (5:13). In taking many wives, David disobeyed God (Deut. 17:17). Lust dug a deep root in his life. As his harem grew, so did his lust. David had seven wives before he married Bathsheba. He struggled with lust long before he saw Bathsheba. One sin usually leads to another unless confessed.
4. *We are never too old to sin* (2 Sam. 11 & 24). At 50 and 70, he committed sins. Stay accountable and take God seriously. We never outgrow our worst habit: sin.
5. *When we don't consistently inquire of the Lord, we are doomed to fail*. In these three recorded failures, David doesn't inquire of the Lord. Dangerous to lose touch with God.
6. *Success tends to make us independent and vulnerable*. Each of David's failures came on the heels of great victories. This caused him not to inquire of and depend upon the Lord.
7. *The wages of sin are ominous*. Though each forgiven, the consequences were steep. Confession heals wounds but may not erase scars. Life was lost (Uzzah, Uriah and other soldiers, baby, 70,000 men). Rom 6:23 . . . His home was divided (1 Sam 12:14-23). Focus on potential impact not momentary pleasure.
8. *Failures need not prevent us from being a person after God's heart*. To be a person after God's own heart doesn't mean you won't fall. It does mean you will be sensitive to sin, confess it and seek restoration (12:13; 24:10). See Psalms 32 and 51.

CONC: David is one of the most loved Bible characters. Why? He is real flesh and blood. Just like us, he was up and down, close to God and far away from Him. Just like us, though he occasionally failed, he loved God very much. To understand how David ended, recall how he began on the hills of Judah as a shepherd – read Psalm 23 . . .