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IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

(By REV. F. B. FITZWATER, D. D., Teacher of English Bible in the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)
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LESSON FOR JULY 25

DAVID SUCCEEDS SAUL AS KING.

LESSON TEXT—II Sam. 2:1-7; 5:1-5.
GOLDEN TEXT—Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not upon thine understanding.—Prov. 3:5.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL—I Sam. 21:1-3; II Sam. 1:27; 2:3-4:12.

PRIMARY TOPIC—The Shepherd Boy Becomes a King.

JUNIOR TOPIC—How David Became a King.

INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—The Secret of David's Success.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—True Success and How to Win It.

The death of Saul lay open to David the path to the throne. This would have rejoiced the heart of many, but David was sad. Instead of reward being given to the slayer of Saul, quick vengeance was executed upon him.

I. David Made King Over Judah (2:1-4).

He knew full well that the Lord by the hand of Samuel had anointed him to be the successor of Saul. He had learned the essential lesson which the School of Providence was designed to teach, namely, that the position now open to him was no easy one to fill. His exile and sufferings gave him self-control. He had the good sense to know that promotion to the throne did but bring "harder duties and multiplied perplexities." He threw himself upon God and asked for guidance. He rendered instant obedience to the Lord's answer. If we are to enjoy God's fellowship and blessing we must render quick obedience. He made a right beginning, therefore God prospered him. When he reached Hebron the men of Judah came and anointed him king over them. Thus a part of the nation recognized him as king and ratified the work which Samuel did many years before. When David went up he took with him all who had been with him in exile and suffering. They are now sharers with him in the kingdom. When David's great son, Christ, shall enter upon his glorious reign, those who have been faithful to him in his rejection shall reign with him. "If we suffer we shall also reign with him." (II Tim. 2:12); "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my father in his throne." (Rev. 3:21).

II. David's Behavior Toward the Men of Jabesh-Gilead (2:4-7).

The men of Jabesh owed much to Saul (I Sam. 11), and they showed this recognition of debt by making a daring dash to rescue his body from the ignominious exposure at Bethshean. David's act of sending men to Jabesh with a message of good will for their affectionate remembrance of Saul is an exhibition of his noble generosity. His love for the unfortunate king survived all the injuries which he suffered at his hands. He forgave and forgot them all. This was an act of political shrewdness as well as a generous one. In fact the only policy which proves effective is that which proceeds from a generous heart. He deftly follows this generous commendation with a solicitude for the men of Jabesh to transfer their loyalty to himself, since he is now their legal king. Since Saul is now dead, he urges them to be valiant for him. In view of the civil war which was to follow he knew it would require valiant men to stand by God's king. This appeal to be valiant is needed now, for we are all called upon to take sides between God's appointed king, Jesus Christ, and Satan, the pretender to the throne. May Christ's appeal result in making us faithful and valiant for him.

III. The Dual Kingdom—War Between the House of Saul and the House of David (2:8-4:12).

This period of civil war lasted seven and a half years. Most of the tribes of Israel clung to Ishbosheth, Saul's son, whom Abner had proclaimed king at Mahanaim. Feuds continued between the rival generals. David's power increased while that of Ishbosheth's waned.

IV. David Crowned King Over United Israel (5:1-5).

Though the struggle for supremacy lasted long and was a bitter one, Abner's death and Ishbosheth's assassination put an end to David's opposition. David's behavior during this time gradually won for him the confidence of the tribes so that they all came to him at Hebron and anointed him as their king. They accepted his divine right to rule (v. 3). The reasons for anointing him their king were:

1. He is their brother (v. 1). This is true of Christ our King. Through the incarnation he has become one with us.

2. He was their true leader in war, even in Saul's time (v. 2).

3. He was the Lord's choice (v. 2).

Procrastination.

Procrastination is helping the devil in retarding righteousness in the world. Remember that legend of how he summoned his imperial staff and offered a reward to the member who would suggest the best way to destroy a human soul. One said, Convince him there is no God. Another said, Prove there is no immortality and no truth in the Bible. But still another suggested, Convince him that there is no hurry about his carrying out his good resolutions. And the devil gave that one the prize.—Bishop Talbot.

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