

DENNIS BURKE MINISTRIES

# Insights

The Way to a New Life

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2012

THE

DISCOVERY


*that* UNLOCKED *the* RICHES *of* HEAVEN

BY DR. DENNIS BURKE



THE  
*D*ISCOVERY  
*that* UNLOCKED *the* RICHES *of* HEAVEN





**T**here are people in history whose names rise above others and become almost bigger than life. Some fought wars; others invented something that proved revolutionary or discovered what no one else knew was possible. Their lives have been studied and discussed for generations because of their immense impact on the lives of the seemingly more average.

In biblical history, there are also people whose names rise above the common person. People like Abraham, Sarah, Moses, and Joshua come to mind, to name only a few. They are all people dramatically used by God, and the impact of their faith and what they accomplished in their generation is still with us today.

The name of one man stands out above most others in the Bible—David. He was the shepherd boy who became the greatest king to ever lead Israel, changing the course of the nation's history. David's rise to power was not because he was smarter than others. It was not that he had more wisdom or skill than others. His successes as a leader came from a divine source. His most important achievement as king clearly originated in his walk with God.

This series of studies won't exhaust everything to be learned from David's life. It will, however, unwrap a few pertinent insights through which every believer can be strengthened.

What first drew me to study David's life is found in a statement Jesus made long after His resurrection. When Jesus spoke to the seven emerging churches of Asia (modern-day Turkey) in the first three chapters of Revelation, He gave each church detailed observations and direction. Some of what Jesus said to these churches and leaders was very pointed, even at times a rebuke for failing to maintain their focus on the Gospel. But it was a particular phrase in Jesus' words to the church of Philadelphia that captured my attention.

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, 'He who has *the key of David*, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens: I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one

can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name" (Rev. 3:7–8).

It is the phrase Jesus uses to describe Himself that stood out to me: "He who is holy, He who is true, *He who has the key of David*...." Those last four words piqued my attention. What does "the key of David" refer to?

Of course, any key gives a person access to and authority over whatever the key locks or unlocks. We know from Matthew 16:19 that Jesus possesses the keys to the Kingdom, but in Revelation 3:7, Jesus specifies an aspect of His authority as the key, or the authority, of David.

What is it about David that Jesus is telling us? To add to the mystery, in Revelation 22:16, Jesus declares, "...I am the Root and Offspring of David...." In fact, throughout the four gospels, Jesus is referred to as the Son of David 17 times. Although Abraham was called the father of faith and was the first to walk in a covenant through which Israel would come into being, Jesus was *not* called the Son of Abraham. There is something significant about David we must discover to step through the doors Jesus has opened to us.

What is it about David that made him such a pivotal person in the plan God has for man? David grasped aspects of walking with God that weren't known by any of the leaders or prophets of Israel in his day.

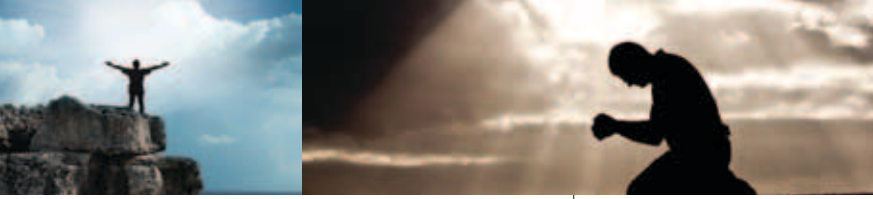
In order to understand the unique position David holds, we need to understand some important facts about the Old Covenant relationship between God and His people. The entire Old Testament system of offerings and sacrifices that God designed provided a covering for sins, but did not eliminate all the effects of sin. The spiritual separation that results from sin remained, which meant there was no intimate fellowship between God and His people. Although they were His people, they were not His family.

Sonship wasn't even available until Jesus came as the "only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18) and became the "firstborn from the dead" (Col. 1:18). Now in Christ we have become "the church of the firstborn," according to Hebrews 12:23.

Yet in what would be one of David's darkest moments of sin and disobedience, he saw into the heart of God and prayed a prayer that established a pivotal point in time for God's plan for mankind. Psalm 51 is a record of the prayer David prayed in that dark time in his life. His prayer came after Nathan the prophet confronted him about his sin with Bathsheba. Although David had gone to great lengths to hide his sin and cover the shame, nothing he had done was hidden from God.

Think about what David had done for a moment. The men of the nation had gone to battle while David remained in the city. As he looked out from his balcony, his eyes fell upon the beautiful

*"David unlocked the very heart of God and saw into the finished work of Jesus."*



young Bathsheba as she bathed. He called his own men to bring her to him. The resulting adultery brought about the conception of a child.

In his efforts to cover up his sin, David brought Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, off the battle field to be with his wife, hoping to give the appearance that the pregnancy was legitimate. But Uriah would not go home to his wife while his comrades were on the battlefield. In desperation, David sent Uriah back into battle with sealed orders in his hand that instructed Uriah's commander to move him to the front lines of battle and then to pull back the troops, leaving Uriah to be killed in battle.

David had ordered Uriah's murder.

The day the prophet Nathan came to confront David was the first moment David realized he had failed to hide his treachery from everyone. God had seen it all. David would pay the price for all he had done.

And the price was weighty. Under the Law of Moses, there was no sacrifice or offerings to be given for these sins. What David had done was so vile that anyone guilty of such acts was to be taken outside the city and stoned to death by the elders of Israel. There were no exceptions.

In the face of this reality, David cried out to God in Psalm 51. In this prayer, he reminded God of His mercy and lovingkindness. He acknowledged his sin completely and humbled himself before God, asking the Lord to cleanse him, using words like *purge*, *wash*, and *restore*.

As he prayed, David pointed out numerous attributes he had come to know about God. For instance, he knew that God wants His truth and wisdom revealed in the hidden man of the heart. David also acknowledged that God wants others to be influenced by the forgiveness and lovingkindness He shows.

David then prayed something startling. In verses 16–17, he said, “You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart — These, O God, You will not despise.”

David understood God's desire more deeply than anyone else in his day had grasped. He saw past the animal sacrifices and grain offerings of the Law to God's ultimate plan—His desire to completely deliver people from the sin nature in their hearts. This was the key David discovered as he prayed this heartfelt prayer—a key that would unlock the heart of God and the very core of His redemptive plan for mankind.

David saw that *God would change people from the inside out and break the power of sin*. David caught a true glimpse into the plan God had from the beginning to bring a Messiah who would provide deliverance from sin.

It is the spirit of man that God wants to change. David was the first to understand that such a change would require an inward transformation that no one had experienced before. And it would all begin with a broken and contrite heart.

God does not break our spirits. It is sin that has gripped us, and it is humble repentance that will release us from our sin.

David unlocked the very heart of God and saw into the finished work of Jesus. Although David didn't know the details of the divine redemptive plan, he did know that God's heart is to forgive everyone so completely that anyone can receive His righteousness and live free.

God's desire has remained the same throughout the ages. He has always wanted a family to whom He could reveal the vastness of His love.

David saw it and received what the Law and its sacrifices could not provide. Now by faith in Christ, we receive all that the amazing grace and love of God can offer. When we respond to Him according to faith, He responds to us according to His grace.

By simple faith, we enter into the abundant, beyond-reason riches of God's grace. We unlock His riches and position ourselves to receive more than we could ever conceive in our wildest imaginations.

Ephesians 2:6–7 says that God “... raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” When we see past our failings and faults into the riches of God's grace and love, by faith we are using “the key of David” to step into His kindness, power, and plans. As we do, we will begin to experience more of this rich life than we've ever thought possible.

*Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptures come from the New King James Version.*

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We don't realize that with each word of criticism or act of rejection we experience, a tattoo is imprinted on our minds. With each tattoo, we become a little less free to be who God created us to be.

## ENEMY'S »TATTOOS«

**N**orman Vincent Peale tells of a time when

he was walking the streets of Hong Kong and came upon a tattoo parlor run by an elderly Chinese man. The window displayed various tattoos that could be imprinted on a person's body. There were flags and patriotic sayings, anchors and daggers, skulls and crossbones, and so on. The one tattoo that caught his eye was the phrase: *Born to Lose*. It interested Norman so much that he went into the shop and asked the owner, "Do people really ask to have that permanently imprinted on themselves?"

The owner answered, "Yes."

"Why on earth," Norman asked, "would anyone want to be branded with a gloomy slogan like that?"

The old Chinese man answered in broken English: "Before tattoo on body," he said, "tattoo on mind!"

We all have "tattoos" of some sort on our minds—mental images of ourselves that contradict what God has created us to be. My tattoo may not say what yours does, but each one has the same destructive effect if we don't replace our tattoos with what God says about us. The truth is, no one was born to lose. God created each of us to *win*, but we were conditioned to lose by the enemy's lies and the influences of a fallen world.

I have a friend whose parents worked for the circus. My

friend explained to me what it takes to train a young elephant.

A stake is secured to a rope and then tied around the elephant's leg; then the stake is driven into the ground.

The young, energetic elephant tugs and tugs on the rope, but when he cannot get free, he eventually gives up. The elephant has become conditioned to believe that the restraint around his leg is more powerful than he is. When the elephant is fully grown, weighing 6,000 pounds, he no longer attempts to break the restraint. The mental conditioning he experienced when he was young controls his entire life.

The enemy will use the same type of conditioning to control our lives unless we do something about it. How do I know? Proverbs 23:7 (NKJV) says, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he."

The devil uses everyday events to tattoo and condition us, such as a friend's careless ridicule, a parent's thoughtless disapproval, a spouse's hurtful words, or a teacher's criticism. We don't realize that with each word of criticism or act of rejection we experience, a tattoo is imprinted on our minds. With each tattoo, we become a little less free to be who God created us to be.

The Bible calls these tattoos *strongholds*. *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* defines a stronghold as "an argument." That's exactly what tattoos and mental conditioning do: They argue

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with what God has promised you. The argument may sound something like this: “I know the Bible says I’m forgiven, but I still feel guilty. I feel like a disappointment to God. I must be defective.” And yet, God never told us to consult our feelings about what He has said about us. He instructs us to simply believe.

I took the divine instruction to simply believe literally when I was a young Christian, but then something happened that set me back in my own process of removing the tattoos of my past. My life had been dramatically changed after I heard the message of Jesus Christ and received Him as my Savior. I was on fire for God because I had been delivered from a life of misery and despair, and I believed His Word was true.

From the beginning of my spiritual walk, I’d learned about Second Corinthians 5:17: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; all things have become new.” When I first heard that scripture, I believed it literally: *All* things had become new in my life. But it wasn’t long before my ignorance about what that verse refers to got me in trouble.

At the time I was employed at the University of Southern California,

working for a group of professors who studied marriage. Students could receive free marriage counseling after they filled out a questionnaire. After a while, my curiosity about the questionnaire got the best of me, so I asked the professors if I could fill it out just for fun. They allowed me to answer the questions, but when I returned to work the next day, no one would look me in the eye. I finally worked up the courage to ask them if I had done something wrong, although it took me all day. Their answer shocked me. They said I was the worst liar they had ever met. There were several questions that everyone telling the truth would answer yes. I had answered “no” to all of them.

I stood there stunned. However, I immediately realized what had happened. I had answered every question according to my new life in Christ—as though my past no longer existed. Wasn’t that what the counselor had told me when I gave my life to Christ?

That day a seed of doubt was planted in my life. Not *all* things had become new the moment I was born again the way I had imagined. What hadn’t been explained to me as a young believer was this: My spirit had been made completely new the moment I made Jesus my Lord

and Savior. The nature of death within me, passed from Adam to everyone born after him, had been recreated into God’s nature, made new through the cleansing blood of Jesus. In God’s eyes, my past sins didn’t exist any longer. However, human beings don’t see things the way God does!

Because I was ignorant of these truths at the time, the devil was able to use my experience at USC to imprint another tattoo of his lies on my mind. One thing I knew for sure: God couldn’t lie, so the problem had to be with *me*. That’s when the devil told me that something was wrong with me. I was somehow defective; salvation may have worked for others, but not for me.

The devil repeats that same lie to people all the time, even though he may use different ways to present the lie than he did with me. Consider this: Have you ever seen people in church with big smiles on their faces, laughing and acting as if they don’t have a care in the world? You may conclude that these people don’t struggle with hurts or destructive thoughts the way you do. But that just isn’t true. All believers struggle with tattoos imprinted on their minds through the devil’s lies. The truth is, feeling defective is nothing new! The enemy started using this same strategy way back in the Garden of Eden.

It happened when the serpent lied to Eve about what would happen if she ate the forbidden fruit: “God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil” (Gen. 3:4). Although these words may sound relatively harmless, they were infinitely toxic! By telling Eve she would be like God, knowing good and evil, the serpent implied that God knew something He wasn’t telling her. He was withholding something from her; He didn’t really have her best interests at heart. In fact, the serpent implied there was no danger in disobeying God and an advantage to gain in eating the forbidden fruit: She would become like God.

The serpent’s words made it seem as if God had been oppressing Eve. If she’d only declare independence from Him, she would suddenly *be* like Him. But the

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truth is, the serpent made Eve think *less* of herself when he said, "You will be like God..." Eve was the first person to ever suffer from a distorted self-image.

Genesis 1:26 tells us that mankind was made in God's image. Eve should have pointed at the serpent, laughed in his face, and told him that she was already like God. But in his craftiness, the serpent caused her to crave what she already possessed. Eve was already a living, breathing copy of God. Psalm 8:5 says, "Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor." But the serpent messed with Eve's mind until she thought less of herself. How often has he done that to you and me?

When Eve fell for the enemy's trick, identity theft was born. Identity theft didn't start with the credit cards and Social Security numbers; it started in the Garden of Eden. Everyone born on earth has had to deal with identity issues.

You might say, "No, I'm sure Jesus didn't deal with identity issues." Actually, the devil attacked Jesus over His identity much like he attacked Eve, but Jesus didn't fall for his trick. After Jesus was baptized, a voice came from Heaven saying: "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." After Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness, where the devil came to Him—not once or twice, but *three* times—and said, "If you are the Son of God..." God had just spoken from Heaven confirming Jesus' identity, yet the devil immediately questioned it.

If the devil can convince you that you're not who God says you are, you will draw back from the things of God. If he can talk you into believing that you will always be a failure, then failure will stalk you wherever you go. If you have a mental picture of yourself as inferior, then you will be inferior,

**"BUT HERE'S THE GOOD NEWS:** We can grow back into our lost liberty the same way we grew out of it: a little each day, each month, each year."

living in a state of mediocrity. This explains why people can sit in a service and hear what God has already promised them and yet never attain it. It's what a person believes

in his heart, not his head, that makes the difference.

The problem comes when we mentally agree with what God says, yet remain stuck in our shameful feelings and negative thoughts produced by the tattoos imprinted in our minds. And until those tattoos and the effects of the enemy's conditioning are removed, we will continue to believe that the restraints are more powerful than God's ability to set us free.

But here's the good news: We can grow back into our lost liberty the same way we grew out of it: a little each day, each month, each year. We can undo the damage of the devil's mental conditioning and restore our true identity that he has stolen from us.

James 1:23-25 (*NKJV*) says, "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But the one who looks intently at the perfect law—the law of liberty and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does." James says the Bible

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is a mirror that reflects a true image of who we are. The more we look in God's mirror, the more the tattoos begin to fade as the devil's conditioning loses its power to restrain us—and the more we reflect the image of God.

James makes it clear this change doesn't take place automatically. There are three things that will remove restraints caused by the enemy's conditioning. First, we must look into God's Word with purpose. Taking a casual look at the Word only on Sunday mornings is not enough to remove mental tattoos. If that's all we do, we'll ultimately forget our true image. It's the *quality* of our time spent in the Word, not just the *quantity*, that removes tattoos.

The second thing James said would change the mental conditioning that restrains us is *abiding* in the Word. Our home is where we abide. We may leave our home to go to work or run errands, but we always return home at some point. That's just what we are supposed to do with God's Word—*abide* in it. We may have to mentally leave the Word to do our work, but when we're driving home from work, we return to the Word.

The third thing that James says will bring about true change in how we view ourselves is for us to become doers of the Word. That means we put it into practice. For instance, if we are training ourselves to speak the Word over our lives and we say something contrary to what God promises, we can immediately repent and start anew. We can practice speaking according to the Word the same way we practice an instrument or a sport—by doing it over and over until we get it right!

Paul tells us that we are transformed in degrees (see 2 Cor. 3:18 *AMP*). It doesn't happen in an instant. We'd like for change to come that way, but it doesn't. Our culture has been trained by fast foods, high-speed Internet, and microwave meals, so when we want change in our lives, we want it *NOW!* But both James and Paul said the tattoos will begin to fade and the restraints will be broken as we "continue in the Word" until we are transformed into the image of Jesus.

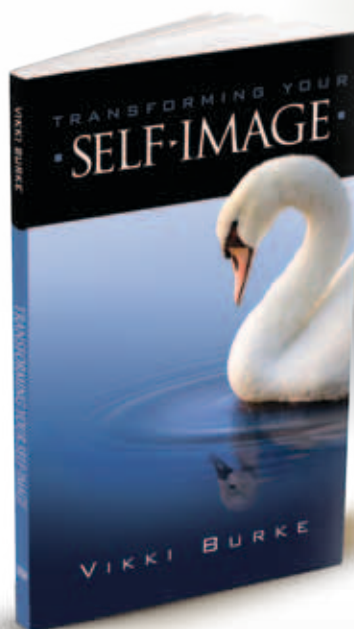
God's Word is like a mirror that reflects our image. We need to begin to believe what God's mirror reflects just as we believe what we see in our bathroom mirror. The more we do, the more of the enemy's tattoos will be removed.

God's Word is the double-edged sword that will surgically remove those tattoos that have shaped our souls. And here's the best part about that double-edged sword: After removing the tattoos, it leaves no scars!

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