



# DAVID

WARRIOR. FUGITIVE. KING.

# THE RISE OF DAVID

---

## *1 Sam 16:1- 2 Sam 5:5*

The David series explores how God takes an obscure muso, slingshot, shepherd boy and fugitive born in 1040BC and makes him the greatest king Israel ever had. This commentary focuses on the rise of David, the sermon series will also include the reign and fall of David. Three sources have been drawn on for this commentary: Michael Eaton, RT Kendal and David Guzik.

If you like underdog-come-topdog stories, you can't improve upon this story. This series is worth its salt in sheer entertainment.

But the David story is more than entertainment. It has a power to change us because it points to something of great significance for us. How so? His life points powerfully to 2 later lives:

It points to a life 1000 years later – not to any life, but the most important Life of all; Jesus who is called 'Son of David' throughout the New Testament. Did you know that Jesus is a descendent of David, by adoption through Joseph, and by blood through Mary? But it's not just David's blood he carries. David's life points toward Jesus' life in so many surprising ways. To understand the life of David is to better understand Jesus, the Ultimate David. The Bible is essentially all about Jesus. Every smaller story – including the story of David – is part of a far larger plot, with Jesus as the main character. He is the ultimate Hero of the Bible.

Secondly, David's life points to your life today – now in the 21st century. Don't let a 3000-year gap fool you. His life, relevant as ever, is a lens through which you can make sense of your own.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>GOD CHOOSES AND PREPARES US</b>	<b>5</b>
The show must go on	5
Have a 'heart after God'	6
Embrace seasons of apparent obscurity	7
Trust God to use your life's experiences as a form of Training	7
Ask God to spiritually empower you	8
Let God open the right doors at the right time	9
Let God equip you for the call on your life	9
<b>HOW GOD MOVES US FORWARD</b>	<b>11</b>
Take your stand on all that God has given you	11
Submit to leaders - God will use it to raise us up	12
Live in faith not fear	13
Shake off accusing voices	13
Seek private victory before public victory	14
With regard to style and strategy, don't conform	15
Realise that without God, you cannot	16
Understand that without you, God will not	16
Christ's victory is our victory!	17
<b>MOVING TOWARD WHAT GOD HAS FOR US</b>	<b>19</b>
To move toward what God has for us, we will need some God-given friends	19
To move toward what God has for us, we will need to handle success	21
To move toward what God has for us, we will need some things to keep us humble and dependent on God	22
<b>WHEN GOD ALLOWS US TO BE STRIPPED</b>	<b>24</b>
God may strip us because he loves us, and he has great plans for us	24
When God strips us, we can see who our true friends are	26
When God strips us, God may provide some amazing deliverances	27
God may strip us of everything valuable to us	29
When God strips us, we might see things in ourselves we're ashamed of	31
<b>SIGNS OF A GOOD LEADER</b>	<b>33</b>
Good leaders take refuge in God	33
Good leaders care about the people they lead	34
Good leaders are desperately needed in the world and church	35
Good leaders are careful to not play it too safe	35
Good leaders are often formed at the hands of a bad leader	37
Good leaders learn to live with some pain, which they mine for wisdom	38
Good leaders keep their people on an outward-focused mission	39
Good leaders seek God's guidance	40
Good leaders don't measure God's favour by how well things are going	41

<b>Good leaders need some personal encouragers</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>LESSONS IN MERCY</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>God's mercy toward us is in line with his promises</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Have mercy on those who make your life difficult</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Showing mercy to the undeserving can soften the hardest heart</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>You might think you're a merciful person, but your levels of mercy will be tested</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>How desperately we need peace-makers!</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Showing mercy to someone who is against you can bring them to repentance</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>THE LOSS OF FAITH</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Beware of the loss of faith!</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>The loss of faith leads to a complicated and compromised life</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Hardened unbelief, and the resulting disobedience, means we may go back to the very sin we once expelled from our lives</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Hardened unbelief, and the resulting disobedience, may mean God speaks to us in some unusual ways</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Hardened unbelief, and the resulting disobedience, ultimately leads to the loss of one's ministry and reward</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>FINDING STRENGTH IN GOD</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Pity the person who tries to find their salvation and strength outside of God</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Blessed is the person who finds their salvation and strength in God</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>BECOMING FIT TO LEAD</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>You're fit to lead when you're broken by your inability to lead</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>You're fit to lead when you seek God for faith and guidance on every major decision</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>You're fit to lead when you can trust God in your weakness</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>You're fit to lead when you're able to recognize the provisions of God</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>You're fit to lead when you can work hard in line with God's instructions</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>You're fit to lead when you can preserve unity</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>You're fit to lead when you can practice magnanimous generosity</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>BECOMING FIT TO LEAD PART 2</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>It's not how well you start that counts, but how well you finish</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>You're fit to lead when you're not jostling to lead</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>You're fit to lead when you don't hold grudges</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>You're fit to lead when you're able to build deep relationships</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>When you're fit to lead, eventually you will lead</b>	<b>82</b>

# GOD CHOOSES AND PREPARES US

---

*1 Samuel 16:1-23*

## CHAPTER 16

*1 The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons."*

## THE SHOW MUST GO ON

Samuel was depressed and defeated. His life's main work had been finding and raising up a king for God's people. At first Saul had seemed so promising, but his heart was not after God. Saul had become enamoured with himself and was not surrendered to God. This led to a disobedience which caused God to reject him as king. This had resulted in Samuel having to say the hardest words he ever had to say: "You have done a foolish thing. You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command" (1 Sam 13:13-14). Samuel felt like his life was wasted. He was grieved to see a man, Saul, and a nation of people, the tribes of Israel, both with so much potential, but now flailing.

But, in the midst of his hopelessness, come words of hope from heaven. "The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons"" (v1). This is God's way of saying, 'I am not a sentimental God. The show must go on, Samuel. Wipe the tears off your face. My kingdom will keep moving forward even if some of the people I once used have been left behind by their hard hearts. And I want to use you in the next phase of forward movement.' These are words of hope to a heart that is depressed. These are words that speak of a brighter tomorrow. These are words that invite us to leave the regrets of yesterday, and embark toward the promises of tomorrow. And still today, God says to those of us grieving over an apparently wasted season of our lives, 'Don't wallow in the past. Partner with me in the unveiling of the future. The show must go on.'

*2 And Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me." And the Lord said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.' 3 And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do. And you shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you." 4 Samuel did what the Lord commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, "Do you come peaceably?" 5 And he said, "Peaceably; I have*

*come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.” And he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. 6 When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord's anointed is before him.” 7 But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” 8 Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” 9 Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” 10 And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen these.”*

## HAVE A ‘HEART AFTER GOD’

When Saul’s heart had turned from God, God’s eyes began to look for a new heart, a heart after himself. In the words of Samuel, ‘The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart’ (1 Sam 13:14). And he found it in David, who in the prophetic words of Samuel was ‘one of (Saul’s) neighbours—one better than (Saul)’ (1 Sam 15:23).

What does it mean to have ‘heart after God’? It means that we love and worship God, both when people are looking and, more importantly, when no one is looking. Spurgeon writes of David the worshipper: *‘David was none of your strutting peacocks who cannot be content unless all eyes are upon them; he sang God’s praises as the nightingale will sing in the dark when no human ear is listening and no eye is admiring. He was content to bloom unseen, knowing that the sweetness of a renewed heart is never wasted on the desert air. He was satisfied with God alone as his auditor, and he coveted not the high opinion of man.’*

Samuel was armed with the knowledge that one of Jesse’s sons was ‘the chosen one’. Though Jesse did not know what was going on, Samuel had specifically asked to meet all of his sons. When his eyes fell on each of them, strong and good-looking as they were, his first thought was ‘this must be the one’ but each time he would then sense God speaking to him saying, ‘Not this one. You’re looking at his features alone, I’m looking at his heart. And what I’m looking for is not there.’ Verse 7 is so powerful: ‘But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”’ (By the way, this does not mean that David’s bodily features were entirely unimportant to God. 1 Samuel 9:2 and 16:12 both disprove that – God would need a warrior-king who had the physical capacity to be a warrior-king, but physical features are not enough in themselves. What is needed more than anything else is the right heart.)

David Guzik encourages us by telling us what ‘a heart after God is not’. He writes, ‘God’s choice of David shows that we don’t have to quit our jobs and enter into full-time ministry to be people after God’s own heart. We don’t need to be famous or prominent to be people after God’s own heart. We don’t need to be respected or even

liked by others to be people after God's own heart. We don't need status, influence, power, the respect or approval of men, or great responsibilities to be people after God's own heart.' Great news indeed. 'The eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to see whose hearts are fully devoted to him' (2 Chron 6:19).

*11 Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here." 12 And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he."*

## EMBRACE SEASONS OF APPARENT OBSCURITY

God has a unique way of preparing us for what he wants us to do. He hides us in obscurity for a season, and sometimes for many seasons. Though only a tiny percentage of Christians will become famous for what they do in obedience to God, we all tend to hope that at least some people will notice and applaud what we do for God. But God is determined to take us through seasons where no one notices us, and where we are unknown and un-applauded by everyone, but by God himself. As soon as we understand that, we can learn to rejoice in obscurity.

And that is what he did with David. Being the youngest he was the most overlooked in his large family. His very own father did not even call him by name (v11), and did not bother inviting him to the special feast even though Samuel had requested that all his sons come. While everyone was enjoying this exciting public feast, David was alone in the very overlooked menial job of shepherding some sheep. In obscurity he was learning to find his security and affirmation in God. In obscurity he was learning humility. Obscurity, as painful as it can sometimes be, has the power to teach us the same.

## TRUST GOD TO USE YOUR LIFE'S EXPERIENCES AS A FORM OF TRAINING

David was a shepherd boy. This seemed to be the result of the choice of his father, Jesse. But in fact, it was the result of the choice of his Heavenly Father. His Father was training him for reigning. Here are four examples:

1) God was giving David knowledge of himself as the Creator. David in his Psalms (eg Psalms 8 and 19) shows that he had a deep appreciation of God as Creator. As shepherd boy, constantly surrounded by the beauty of creation, and the sheer size of the universe, he was given a head-start in this kind of appreciation.

2) God was giving David knowledge of himself as Shepherd. It is unlikely Psalm 23 ('The Lord is my Shepherd') would have ever been written if David had not been a shepherd himself. Again, God was using his experiences to prepare him.

3) God was teaching David to care for others. David reflected on his own life as he wrote: 'He chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens; from tending the

sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel his inheritance. And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them' (Ps 78:70-72).

4) God was teaching David to trust him in the face of dangers. David was a man constantly in danger, yet he knew how to trust God to protect and provide for him. Where did he learn this? As a shepherd boy.

Whatever life experiences you've had, and you're having – don't despise them. They are the training ground God has hand-selected for you to become all he wants you to become, and to do all he wants you to do. Be attentive to what God may be teaching you about himself, yourself, life and working with people. Listen to the words of John Piper: ‘

*13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.*

## ASK GOD TO SPIRITUALLY EMPOWER YOU

The horn of oil was symbolic, but the Spirit's outpouring upon David was not. It was the real thing. God's presence and power began to 'rush' (to use the ESV's translation) upon David in an apparently tangible way. What was this for? It was a supernatural enabling for the kingly tasks that would be set before him in the future.

The New Testament expands upon this theology with greater detail. First the Spirit regenerates us. This means that we're born again. Along with this comes a new capacity for faith in and obedience to God. Then the Spirit also wants to empower us for service. This is what Jesus referred to in Acts 1:8 and what happened in Acts 2:1-4, when the early Jerusalem church was 'filled with the Spirit'. Though no specific mention is made of David being 'born of the Spirit' (John 3:5) in regeneration, mention is made that he was empowered by the Spirit for his future tasks of leadership.

What is fascinating is the time gap between his anointing, and his actual kingship. How old was David here? Probably about 15. How old was he when he became king of all of Israel? Thirty-seven. That's over a twenty year gap! We see something similar in the life of Timothy in the New Testament. Though he received some prophetic words about being used by God, and also was empowered by the Spirit at the laying on of the elder's hands, it was only many years later that he became a leader of many churches (2 Tim 1:6,7 and 1 Tim 4:14).

We should ask God to spiritually empower us for future tasks, something he is more than ready to do, though he will no doubt sovereignly decide when and how he will answer our prayers (see John 7:37-39 and Luke 11:11-13).



### *David in Saul's Service*

*14 Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the Lord tormented him. 15 And Saul's servants said to him, "Behold now, a harmful spirit from God is tormenting you. 16 Let our lord now command your servants who are before you to seek out a man who is skillful in playing the lyre, and when the harmful spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will be well." 17 So Saul said to his servants, "Provide for me a man who can play well and bring him to me." 18 One of the young men answered, "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a man of valour, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and the Lord is with him." 19 Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, "Send me David your son, who is with the sheep." 20 And Jesse took a donkey laden with bread and a skin of wine and a young goat and sent them by David his son to Saul. 21 And David came to Saul and entered his service. And Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armour-bearer. 22 And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Let David remain in my service, for he has found favour in my sight." 23 And whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him.*

## LET GOD OPEN THE RIGHT DOORS AT THE RIGHT TIME

David as a young man knew he would be king one day. But, after being anointed, he simply went back to tending sheep (v19). This is the picture of trust. The God who called him would also open the right doors at the right time. And that is exactly what God does.

Saul, in his spiritual and moral decline started to struggle with depression. Though there likely was a natural component to his depression, we see that there was also a spiritual root (a 'harmful spirit was tormenting him'). (Did God really send a harmful spirit to him? Most likely it refers to God passively, not actively, sending such a spirit. In other words, God allowed Satan to start tormenting him. But ultimately it was Saul who had walked away from God and his spiritual oversight that brought this evil into his own life.) Saul's servants suggested a skilful musician who could soothe Saul in his agony. David was the young man they found. Coincidence? Probably not.

Still today, if there is a call on our lives and we co-operate with God's processes, he will open the right doors at the right time. We don't need to manipulate the future. God will do that for us.

## LET GOD EQUIP YOU FOR THE CALL ON YOUR LIFE

God was intent of equipping and training David for his future call.

'And whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit

departed from him' (v23). He became Saul's personal musician. David later would release many worship songs (Psalms). As a Psalmist he would need to specialize in lifting the hearts of troubled people into God's presence. This time of ministering to Saul was practice for that.

'And David came to Saul and entered his service' (v21). Notice how God opened the door for David to be in the courts of a king. Being armour-bearer, he was given the closest exposure to a king possible. Again this is the hand of God – what better way to prepare David to be a future king than to expose him to the daily functioning of a king?

God doesn't call the equipped. He equips the called. If God calls you, he will equip you, just like he did for David. Notice however that we need to diligently take these opportunities that God provides for our training, just like David did.

# HOW GOD MOVES US FORWARD

---

*1 Samuel 17:1-54*

## CHAPTER 17

### *David and Goliath*

*1 Now the Philistines gathered their forces for war and assembled at Sokoh in Judah. They pitched camp at Ephes Dammim, between Sokoh and Azekah. 2 Saul and the Israelites assembled and camped in the Valley of Elah and drew up their battle line to meet the Philistines. 3 The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another, with the valley between them.*

*4 A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. His height was six cubits and a span. [t] 5 He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing five thousand shekels [u]; 6 on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. 7 His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. [v] His shield bearer went ahead of him.*

*8 Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. 9 If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us." 10 Then the Philistine said, "This day I defy the armies of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other." 11 On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.*

## TAKE YOUR STAND ON ALL THAT GOD HAS GIVEN YOU

God had promised the Israelites the land as their inheritance. In the same way God has good works prepared in advance for us to do (Eph 2:10). God has promises to bless us and to bless others through us. God has a calling on our life. This calling, these works, these blessings – this can be called ‘our inheritance’.

But the Philistines were the one people group that always refused to move off the promised land, and therefore prevented them from receiving their full inheritance. The problem is that they had just let them be there, instead of driving them out. Now they were paying a price: The Philistines had become very powerful! They were seeking to destroy the Israelites. Goliath the giant, representing the Philistines, were seeking to claim even more ground. Verse 16 says, ‘For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand.’

We can be sure: if we do not take our stand on what God has for us – and drive out squatters – then in the end we will cower and watch helplessly as giants do. Still today, Satan is working and scheming to block us from experiencing all that God has for us, in us and through us.

*12 Now David was the son of an Ephrathite named Jesse, who was from Bethlehem in Judah. Jesse had eight sons, and in Saul's time he was very old. 13 Jesse's three oldest sons had followed Saul to the war: The firstborn was Eliab; the second, Abinadab; and the third, Shammah. 14 David was the youngest. The three oldest followed Saul, 15 but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's sheep at Bethlehem.*

*16 For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand.*

*17 Now Jesse said to his son David, "Take this ephah [w] of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread for your brothers and hurry to their camp. 18 Take along these ten cheeses to the commander of their unit. See how your brothers are and bring back some assurance from them. 19 They are with Saul and all the men of Israel in the Valley of Elah, fighting against the Philistines."*

*20 Early in the morning David left the flock in the care of a shepherd, loaded up and set out, as Jesse had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions, shouting the war cry.*

## SUBMIT TO LEADERS – GOD WILL USE IT TO RAISE US UP

Eventually David would become king not trying to become king, but rather by doing what those in authority told him to do. Here we see him doing what his father told him to do: to carry ten cheeses and ten loaves of bread – a mundane task. We see that David was a man under authority. His God-ordained meeting with destiny flowed right out of submitting to human leadership over his life. He is faithful to the instructions of Jesse. Later, in verse 37, we see that he faces Goliath because Saul permits him to do so.

We must not underestimate how much we can disqualify ourselves by avoiding being led by people. We may think that if we submit to earthly leadership in our lives, that God cannot get through to us. We see here with David, how God's miraculous opportunities come to us right in the middle of the mundane life of being faithful to leaders. It seems that God prepares us to lead by teaching his first to follow.

*21 Israel and the Philistines were drawing up their lines facing each other. 22 David left his things with the keeper of supplies, ran to the battle lines and asked his brothers how they were. 23 As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it. 24 Whenever the Israelites saw the man, they all fled from him in great fear.*



*25 Now the Israelites had been saying, "Do you see how this man keeps coming out? He comes out to defy Israel. The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him. He will also give him his daughter in marriage and will exempt his family line from taxes in Israel."*

*26 David asked those standing near him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?"*

*27 They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, "This is what will be done for the man who kills him."*

## LIVE IN FAITH NOT FEAR

‘When the Israelites saw the man, they all ran from him in great fear.’ Verse 24. Fear is contagious! Apparently, even David ran with the crowd of cowards at first. But then David gave the matter some thought. He saw the issue at hand: ‘Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?’ (v26). The real problem was that God was not being glorified.

If the fear caused God to not be glorified, what caused the fear? Unbelief. God’s people were not stepping out on his covenant promises that God would oppose those who oppose Israel, and curse those who curse Israel (Gen 12:3). Goliath was massive; everyone knew that. Goliath was as mighty as he was massive. Before him the Israelites quaked just because he was so huge. "He's too big to hit!", they despaired before David.

But notice David’s faith. "If Goliath is that big", replied the shepherd boy, "then he's too big to miss!" Everything about Goliath that immobilized the ranks of Israel merely motivated David. Goliath was the best thing that ever happened to David! The giants you face are not the real enemy. Rather your failure to see them as opportunities for God’s glory to be displayed in the defeat of those giants is the real enemy!

*28 When Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, "Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle."*

*29 "Now what have I done?" said David. "Can't I even speak?"*

## SHAKE OFF ACCUSING VOICES

When those closest to us don’t see what God sees in us, it can be very difficult. They may speak words over us that are very destructive, but because of our security in God we must learn to shake them off. We must not let destructive words penetrate our hearts and cripple us. We learn this from David.

His oldest brother, the most important of all the brothers, accused him falsely of many things, such as laziness (‘with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert?’),

wickedness and conceit ('I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle').

But notice how David responds. He doesn't take what is being said to heart. He shakes off the accusation. Interestingly, the name 'David' means 'loved by God'. Surely this was his secret: the more convinced we are that God loves us, the easier it is to shake off accusing, malicious voices. Our hearts become shielded.

*30 He then turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter, and the men answered him as before. 31 What David said was overheard and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him.*

*32 David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him."*

*33 Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are little more than a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth."*

*34 But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, 35 I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. 36 Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. 37 The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine."*

*Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you."*

## SEEK PRIVATE VICTORY BEFORE PUBLIC VICTORY

David was about to fight a public battle against Goliath. And it would lead to a public victory. In the same way God wants to use us in ways that advance his kingdom that is public and observable to many. But notice that before we can have a public victory, we need some private ones: 'Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine' (v34-37).

David's private victory had been against a lion and a bear. Now his public victory would be against Goliath. But the private victory preceded and prepared the way for the public victory. In the same way, before God will trust us with some public kingdom advancing ventures, he wants us to fight and win some private battles. This will likely be against some personal sin or temptations that afflict us. It may be overcoming some crippling emotions and lack of personal discipline. If we will fight valiantly when no one is

looking, God will let us fight valiantly while many are looking. If we will not learn to lead ourselves, then we cannot expect to lead others. No private victory means no public victory.

*Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you."*

*38 Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. 39 David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.*

*"I cannot go in these," he said to Saul, "because I am not used to them." So he took them off. 40 Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.*

## WITH REGARD TO STYLE AND STRATEGY, DON'T CONFORM

David wanted to fight Goliath. Immediately he was pressurized to do it Saul's way – with Saul's armour, tunic, sword and belt. The problem: it wasn't him.

When it comes to serving God we need to learn all we can from those who have served God before us, but we need imitate their methods, and their styles. God is a creative God and he wants us to get the job done in a way that is true to who we are. RT Kendal, a famous pastor and preacher said that the most common mistake he has seen in the ministry is the way that younger leaders imitate the style and methods of the older leaders, instead of daring to do things in a new way. Of course, we must learn from the more experienced, and we must conform to a standard of character and doctrine, but with regard to style and strategy, they can be different. It takes courage to be one's self.

One fascinating detail included here is that David 'chose five smooth stones' (v40). He would only need one. Why four more? Who knows, but one reason put forward is that Goliath had four brothers (see 2 Samuel 21:18-22). David was ready to not just face one Giant, but all Giants that stood against God!

*41 Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. 42 He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him. 43 He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 44 "Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!"*

*45 David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46 This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. 47 All those gathered*

*here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands."*

## REALISE THAT WITHOUT GOD, YOU CANNOT

Augustine once wrote, 'Without God, we cannot; without us, he will not.' In this point let me focus on the first phrase, and in the next point I'll focus on the last phrase.

'With God, with cannot'. David knew that. He faced the giant not in his own authority, but in an authority God gave him. He faced the giant not in his own power, but in the anointing that God had given him. Most importantly, he faced the giant by faith in God. And he faced it for God's glory not his own. 'All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands.' (v47).

David, a mere boy without sword or shield, faced and defeated a giant. Still today, God will use despite (or perhaps because of) our weaknesses – this way we give him the glory and we rely on God-given faith, authority and anointing.

*48 As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. 49 Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.*

*50 So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.*

## UNDERSTAND THAT WITHOUT YOU, GOD WILL NOT

This is another way of saying that God requires our availability and willingness to develop whatever abilities he may require. God is committed to human instrumentality. God doesn't send angels to defeat Goliath, he sends David. And he wants to send us to confront whatever resists his kingdom. There is work that needs to be done.

In the previous point we pondered how God used David's weaknesses. But notice that God also used his strengths. All his time in the fields, he had developed into a master sling-shot. And this skill came in very handy in this moment. A good question to ask ourselves is, 'What skills and abilities should I develop that might come in handy in God's call on my life?' Ecclesiastes 10:10 says, 'If the axe is blunt, then more strength is needed. But skill brings success.' Perhaps we need to develop people skills, leadership skills, organizational skills, public speaking skills, counselling skills, personal management skills, small group facilitation skills, or cross-cultural skills?

A wonderful example of someone who understood this was William Wilberforce. In line with his God-given call to abolish slavery, he developed skills and then tenaciously gave himself to deploying them. He gave fourteen years of his life in tireless efforts to end the slave trade. He suffered dreadful abuse for his efforts, but he never quit. He spent fourteen relentless years before he saw slave-trading abolished. But what about those



slaves whose lot wasn't improved by the abolition of slave-trading just because they were slaves already? Already they were the degraded possession of slave-owners. They weren't going to be traded, but neither were they going to be freed. Whereupon Wilberforce spent the next twenty-five years of his life in order to see slave-owning abolished. Thirty-nine years of his life? His entire adult life! But he never quit. Just because Wilberforce knew the battle to be the Lord's he knew too that he himself couldn't shirk the battle. Wilberforce saw the outcome of the battle.

*51 David ran and stood over him. He took hold of the Philistine's sword and drew it from the sheath. After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword.*

*When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they turned and ran. 52 Then the men of Israel and Judah surged forward with a shout and pursued the Philistines to the entrance of Gath and to the gates of Ekron. Their dead were strewn along the Shaaraim road to Gath and Ekron. 53 When the Israelites returned from chasing the Philistines, they plundered their camp.*

*54 David took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem; he put the Philistine's weapons in his own tent.*

## CHRIST'S VICTORY IS OUR VICTORY!

This may come as a shock. But the story of David is not really a story about us. It is a story about Christ. Christ is the true and better David. David prefigures and foreshadows Christ. In what ways does David prefigure Christ in his slaying of Goliath?

Before David came, the Israelites were unable to face the Giant. In the same way, before Christ came, the human race were paralyzed by the Giants of Sin's guilt, Sin's power, Sin's penalty (i.e. Death), God's wrath against our sin, and Satan's authority. These Giants were unassailable.

But David in his weakness was given victory over the Giant. Before David fought Goliath, when Israel saw him they had 'turned and ran.' Now, 'when the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they turned and ran' (v52.) What a turning of the tale! Though he only killed Goliath, he had four spare stones – as though he could have killed even more Giants if need be (v40). In the same way, Christ in the weakness of the cross was given victory over the Giants – at least 5 of them! - Sin's guilt, Sin's power, Sin's penalty (i.e. Death), God's wrath against our sin and Satan's authority. David risked his life, but Christ went further. He lost his life in this stunning victory.

David carried the cut-off head of Goliath 'and brought it to Jerusalem', or more specifically to a tent camped outside the city of Jerusalem (v54). He publicly flaunted his victory. In the same way, Christ crushed the head of Satan outside the Jerusalem in a dramatic public moment. Colossians 2:15 says of the cross that Christ, 'having disarmed the powers and principalities ... made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them on the cross.' In Genesis 3:15, in what theologians call 'the proto-gospel, God had promised that though Satan would one day would the heal of the Messiah, yet the

Messiah would crush the head of Satan. And that is what happened. Christ's death – though seeming fatal – was proved to be a mere injury to Christ (one he still carries scars for) when he was soon after raised from the dead. But Satan was crushed decisively at that time. Ever since then, millions and perhaps billions of people have been freed from Satan's tyranny – and Satan's future sentence to eternal punishment has already been guaranteed by his being defeated 2000 years ago. One more fascinating detail on this point: Christ was crucified at Golgotha just outside of Jerusalem, which means 'the place of the skull'. It was quite likely that 'Golgotha' was given its name because of how David, a thousand years before, had taken the head of Goliath there.

But most importantly, David's victory was the victory for all God's people. He represented them in battle, and he represented them in victory. In the same way, Christ's victory is our victory. To use a theological term, his victory of Sin, Death and Satan is imputed to all those who trust in him, who look to him to represent them.

One last parallel. Not only were God's people given victory, they were to act as though they were victorious, actually exploiting their victorious position. 'Then the men of Israel and Judah surged forward with a shout and pursued the Philistines to the entrance of Gath and to the gates of Ekron' (v52). 'They plundered their camp' (v53). In the same way, believers must not just rejoice in their positional victory of Sin's guilt, Sin's power, Sin's penalty (death), Satan's authority and God's wrath. They must apply that victory in their daily lives. So for example, once in Christ we must refuse Satan's condemnation, refuse sin's deceptive lure, refuse the fear of death. And most importantly, we must refuse the lie that it is too hard to reach people for Christ. Satan, their captor, has been defeated. Believer, the devil and the forces of darkness are on their backfoot since Christ's death! They will seek to pretend like they are not! The devil is more scared of Christ in you – than you could ever be scared of him! Greater is Christ in you, than he who is in the world! Satan will attempt to intimidate you by making you think that the people in our city – or that city – could never be saved! We might think that the social, religious, cultural and spiritual forces just have too much grip on the people. We might think the Gospel is powerless on those people. It is a lie! A lie. 'I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God to save!' (Rom 1:16). The decisive victory has been won – now go and gather the plunder through proclaiming Christ, our Lord and Saviour, who alone has defeated the Giants of Sin, Satan and Death. Jesus has purchased salvation for the multitude. The Spirit of God is let loose. Go and gather the plunder. There is nothing more powerful than the Gospel. 'If God is for you, what can be against you' (Rom 8:31).

# MOVING TOWARD WHAT GOD HAS FOR US

---

## *1 Samuel 17:55-18:30*

*55 As Saul watched David going out to meet the Philistine, he said to Abner, commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is that young man?"*

*Abner replied, "As surely as you live, Your Majesty, I don't know."*

*56 The king said, "Find out whose son this young man is."*

*57 As soon as David returned from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with David still holding the Philistine's head.*

*58 "Whose son are you, young man?" Saul asked him.*

*David said, "I am the son of your servant Jesse of Bethlehem."*

## CHAPTER 18

### *Saul's Growing Fear of David*

*1 After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. 2 From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return home to his family. 3 And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. 4 Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.*

## TO MOVE TOWARD WHAT GOD HAS FOR US, WE WILL NEED SOME GOD-GIVEN FRIENDS

Verses 55-58 are puzzling. It is a little bit of a mystery why Saul doesn't seem to know much about David, even though David has played the lyre for him, and carried his armour. The solution seems to be that a few years have passed since David had been in the palace as a musician and armour-bearer. We know he had returned home (17:15). Saul may not have recognized him now that he was a little older, or more likely Saul had never before bothered finding out much about this young man who had served him before – only now he is interested in finding out who he is, especially what family he comes from. He needs to know whose son he is because he will request to keep David with him permanently from this point on (18:2).

Notice the amazing friendship that sparks up between David and Jonathan. It is surely a friendship brought about by God. Apart from God's work in their hearts, these two would surely have been rivals. Jonathan is in line to be king, but David is clearly a future contender for the throne. But they are not rivals. Instead, they bond deeply as brothers. Apart from God's work in their hearts they would have had little in common with

regards to background: Jonathan is the firstborn son of a king; David is the lastborn son of a farmer. But they find common ground in God, and in a similar spirit: both are brave and bold in God (remember how Jonathan initiated and won a one-man war against the Philistines (1 Sam 14)). Notice how they become 'one in spirit'. This suggests that they are bonded by a common love for God. It also suggests that they were deeply vulnerable with each other. Notice how Jonathan loves him as himself. This is another way of saying that he'd be willing to lay down his life for David. Notice how they make a covenant with each other (v3). This means they swear loyalty to each other. It is as though they're saying, 'From this point on, you can count on me. I will be there for you. I will do all I can to provide for you, to protect you, to support you, to encourage you, to open doors for you.' And that is exactly what Jonathan begins to do. Now that David is living in the palace he needs to look the part, so Jonathan gives him his very own robe, tunic, belt, bow and sword. In the years following this, we will see that God uses this friendship to carry David through some very difficult times, and even to spare his life from death. Still today, it is God's desire that we would have some God-given friendships, friendships based on the kind of bond, commitment and love we see shared between David and Jonathan, a friendship that will set us up to succeed in God's call on our lives.

Having said that, the Ultimate Friend we will need has already been provided. We can't but help but notice the way Jonathan's treatment of David seems to pre-figure Christ's treatment of us. He is the true King's Son and yet he accepts us as brothers and sisters. He says to us 'I no longer call you servants. I now call you friends' (John 15:15). He desires a close bond with us, where we let him into our deepest hearts, and where we enjoy access to his very own heart. He willingly lays down his life for us. He fulfils his own words of love: 'Greater love has no one than this, that a man would lay down his life for his friends' (John 15:13). And notice the significance of the four items that are given to David: 1) Christ gives us his very own royal robe, a robe of righteousness. We are clothed with Christ's own righteousness and royalty. 2) Christ gives us 'a belt of truth', the gospel which stabilizes and centres our lives (Eph 6:14). 3) Christ gives us the short-distance weapon, a sword, which is the Word of God (Eph 6:17). 4) Christ gives us the long-distance weapon of a bow, with which we shoot the arrows of prayer (Eph 6:18).

*5 Whatever mission Saul sent him on, David was so successful that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This pleased all the troops, and Saul's officers as well.*

*6 When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with timbrels and lyres. 7 As they danced, they sang:*

*"Saul has slain his thousands,  
and David his tens of thousands."*



## TO MOVE TOWARD WHAT GOD HAS FOR US, WE WILL NEED TO HANDLE SUCCESS

If you want to know what success and fame sound like, it sounds like this: 'Whatever mission Saul sent him on, David was so successful that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This pleased all the troops, and Saul's officers as well' and 'all the women came out .... And sang, 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.'

What a sudden change of chapter in David's life. Up until now, David has already handled obscurity. He has learned to live on God, to depend on God, to draw his sustenance and security from God. But what happens when David is no longer obscure, but is now obviously successful and famous? Will he still handle?

We must remember that Saul too had once passed the tests of obscurity, but the moment he became famous, he started to flounder spiritually. Fame, success and power went to his head, and his life and leadership quickly began to erode as he moved away from God. Will the same happen to David?

Still today, when God wants to use our lives we need to be able to handle various life experiences. We need to be able to handle obscurity. And we need to be able to handle success. And if we learn anything from Saul it's this: success is tougher to deal with than obscurity.

But notice that the moment David starts to experience success, God allows a source of pain to come into his life – which in turn proves to be what actually helps him to cope with success...

*8 Saul was very angry; this refrain displeased him greatly. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?" 9 And from that time on Saul kept a close eye on David.*

*10 The next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully on Saul. He was prophesying in his house, while David was playing the lyre, as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his hand 11 and he hurled it, saying to himself, "I'll pin David to the wall." But David eluded him twice.*

*12 Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with David but had departed from Saul. 13 So he sent David away from him and gave him command over a thousand men, and David led the troops in their campaigns. 14 In everything he did he had great success, because the LORD was with him. 15 When Saul saw how successful he was, he was afraid of him. 16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he led them in their campaigns.*

*17 Saul said to David, "Here is my older daughter Merab. I will give her to you in marriage; only serve me bravely and fight the battles of the LORD." For Saul said to himself, "I will not raise a hand against him. Let the Philistines do that!"*

18 But David said to Saul, "Who am I, and what is my family or my clan in Israel, that I should become the king's son-in-law?" 19 So when the time came for Merab, Saul's daughter, to be given to David, she was given in marriage to Adriel of Meholah.

20 Now Saul's daughter Michal was in love with David, and when they told Saul about it, he was pleased. 21 "I will give her to him," he thought, "so that she may be a snare to him and so that the hand of the Philistines may be against him." So Saul said to David, "Now you have a second opportunity to become my son-in-law."

22 Then Saul ordered his attendants: "Speak to David privately and say, 'Look, the king likes you, and his attendants all love you; now become his son-in-law.' "

23 They repeated these words to David. But David said, "Do you think it is a small matter to become the king's son-in-law? I'm only a poor man and little known."

24 When Saul's servants told him what David had said, 25 Saul replied, "Say to David, 'The king wants no other price for the bride than a hundred Philistine foreskins, to take revenge on his enemies.' " Saul's plan was to have David fall by the hands of the Philistines.

26 When the attendants told David these things, he was pleased to become the king's son-in-law. So before the allotted time elapsed, 27 David took his men with him and went out and killed two hundred Philistines and brought back their foreskins. They counted out the full number to the king so that David might become the king's son-in-law. Then Saul gave him his daughter Michal in marriage.

28 When Saul realized that the LORD was with David and that his daughter Michal loved David, 29 Saul became still more afraid of him, and he remained his enemy the rest of his days.

30 The Philistine commanders continued to go out to battle, and as often as they did, David met with more success than the rest of Saul's officers, and his name became well known.

## TO MOVE TOWARD WHAT GOD HAS FOR US, WE WILL NEED SOME THINGS TO KEEP US HUMBLE AND DEPENDENT ON GOD

Jealousy makes you nasty. That is certainly the case with Saul. 'Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with David but had departed from Saul.' His jealousy of David made him nasty towards him in two ways.

First, he was nasty directly. 'While David was playing the lyre, as he usually did ... Saul had a spear in his hand and he hurled it, saying to himself, "I'll pin David to the wall."'

But David eluded him twice' (v10-11). In a fit of sudden rage, he had tried to kill David ... twice. Still today, when people are threatened by others, they can be nasty by attacking others. It might be a physical attack, but more often than not, the spear that is hurled is a verbal one. An attack on our character, a bold-faced lie designed to undermine us.

Second, he was nasty in very subtle ways. Saul knew that the moment David married into royalty that he would have a much bigger target sign put on him for the Philistines to strike at. So he wanted David to marry his daughters not to bless him, or to bless his daughters for that matter, but to put David in the line of fire. Although David refused to marry Saul's first daughter (Merab (v17)), he agreed to marry his second daughter (Michal (v21)). The bride-price was two hundred Philistine foreskins – Saul was again putting David in the place of danger by giving him limited time to do such a thing. Still today, sometimes people can be nasty in very subtle ways. They may appear to be wishing you the best, but actually they are hoping you fall.

The fact that the evil spirit upon Saul was 'from God' (v10) is the Old Testament's way of saying that God, though not being the author of evil, was allowing this evil to happen. The big question then is this: 'Why does God allow Saul to be so mean to David?' The answer is this: God was using King Saul to prepare David to be a king one day that was altogether different to King Saul. Said another way, God was using the outward King Saul to kill the potential inward King Saul in David. King Saul was a proud, insecure man. But eventually David, when he would eventually become King would be a humble, secure man. God would use this terrible season of persecution under the hands of Saul to develop in him the humility and security that he'd one day so desperately need, a humility and security that lacking entirely in King David. Still today, God will allow 'Saul' in our life as a way of preparing us to be humble secure in the future. This is what he did with the Apostle Paul who, though having such a great call upon his life, was afflicted with 'a thorn'. Paul came to understand that God allowed this affliction in his life as a way of keeping him humble and secure: "Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong' (2 Cor 10:7-10).

Look how well David responds to Saul. He knows that his life is not in the hands of Saul, but in the hands of God. He humbles himself under God's mighty hand, and he leaves it to God to deal with Saul. Eventually God exalts the humble (David) and brings down the proud (Saul). Still today, as we discern those undesirable things in our lives that God allows to afflict our lives, and humble ourselves before God in the face of them, we can expect that God will look after us, and deal with everything that stands against us in due time. To move toward what God has for us, we will need some things to keep us dependent on God.

# WHEN GOD ALLOWS US TO BE STRIPPED

---

*1 Samuel 19:1-21:15*

## GOD MAY STRIP US BECAUSE HE LOVES US, AND HE HAS GREAT PLANS FOR US

The first best thing that ever happened to David was Goliath. It demonstrated his gifting and God's favour. But the second best thing that ever happened to David was Saul. Saul's persecution deepened his character and prepared him to be a great king. In verse 17 of the following section of Scripture we see the decisive-turning point in the David-Saul relationship: Saul calls David 'my enemy'. Imagine having the king of your own nation as your personal enemy? Terrifying. But why would God allow this to happen. For two reasons:

1) God loves us so much that he wants us to know that he is the bedrock of our lives. One way he brings us to this realization is by stripping away the props in our lives, those things that we perhaps put too much security in. Corrie Ten Boom once said, 'We will never know God is all we need, till God is all we have.' As we read these three chapters in the life of David, we will see God stripping David of all his securities – until God is all he has. Though this season will prove to be so agonizing for David, God is in the process of developing the most famous worshipper of all time. David, the writer of most of the Psalms, is learning that God is enough.

2) God loves us so much that he has great plans for our lives. Corrie Ten Boom also once said, 'Whoever God will use greatly, he will first hurt deeply.' If you have any doubts about this one-liner being true, look at what happens to David in chapters 19-21. God would one day clothe David in royal clothing. But before he did that, he chose to strip David of everything that mattered to him. When David had been anointed with oil, and then soon after was boosted into such early fame with the slaying of Goliath, he could never have guessed how much pain would follow. In chapters 19-21 we see a quick succession of events that show how David is so thoroughly stripped of all his securities.

When we go through times of pain, and being stripped of those things that secure us, we can come back to these three chapters in the life of David and say to ourselves, 'Oh, I am not the first person this has happened to.'

### CHAPTER 19

#### *Saul Tries to Kill David*

*1 Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David. But Jonathan had taken a great liking to David 2 and warned him, "My father Saul is looking for a chance to kill you. Be on your guard tomorrow morning; go into hiding and stay there. 3 I will go out and stand with my father in the field where you are. I'll speak to him about you and will tell you what I find out."*



*4 Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Let not the king do wrong to his servant David; he has not wronged you, and what he has done has benefited you greatly. 5 He took his life in his hands when he killed the Philistine. The LORD won a great victory for all Israel, and you saw it and were glad. Why then would you do wrong to an innocent man like David by killing him for no reason?"*

*6 Saul listened to Jonathan and took this oath: "As surely as the LORD lives, David will not be put to death."*

*7 So Jonathan called David and told him the whole conversation. He brought him to Saul, and David was with Saul as before.*

*8 Once more war broke out, and David went out and fought the Philistines. He struck them with such force that they fled before him.*

*9 But an evil spirit from the LORD came on Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand. While David was playing the lyre, 10 Saul tried to pin him to the wall with his spear, but David eluded him as Saul drove the spear into the wall. That night David made good his escape.*

*11 Saul sent men to David's house to watch it and to kill him in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, warned him, "If you don't run for your life tonight, tomorrow you'll be killed." 12 So Michal let David down through a window, and he fled and escaped. 13 Then Michal took an idol and laid it on the bed, covering it with a garment and putting some goats' hair at the head.*

*14 When Saul sent the men to capture David, Michal said, "He is ill."*

*15 Then Saul sent the men back to see David and told them, "Bring him up to me in his bed so that I may kill him." 16 But when the men entered, there was the idol in the bed, and at the head was some goats' hair.*

*17 Saul said to Michal, "Why did you deceive me like this and send my enemy away so that he escaped?"*

*Michal told him, "He said to me, 'Let me get away. Why should I kill you?' "*

*18 When David had fled and made his escape, he went to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him. Then he and Samuel went to Naioth and stayed there.*

## WHEN GOD STRIPS US, WE CAN SEE WHO OUR TRUE FRIENDS ARE

*Jonathan proved to be a real friend in his time of need.* In fact many Bible students have noted that the way Jonathan is a friend to David here has some parallels to the way Jesus is a friend to us: he intercedes between his Father and us (v3-6), restoring us to the Father's presence (v7).

*Michal proved to be a half-friend to David.* She helps him to escape (v11-16). But she proves to be a half-friend in the end: she slanders David to Saul, her father, by saying that David had threatened to kill her (v17). If ever Saul needed arsenal to justify his murderous campaign of David, this was it. She helped him temporarily, but when her life was at stake, she backed out and only made it worse for him. (Interestingly, David wrote Psalm 59 to speak about how, in the final analysis, God (not Michal) helped him to escape that night).

*Samuel proved to be a friend to David.* David had fled and made his escape, he went to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him. Then he and Samuel went to Naioth and stayed there' (v18). Samuel must have made a huge impact on David as a kind of father-figure. We do not know if he had kept up contact with David since he had been anointed as future king as a boy, but we can assume so. When David was in deep trouble he ran to Samuel.

When we are doing well, people tend to gravitate toward us. But when life's circumstances turn, then we can tell who our real friends are. David once had multitudes of friends – now he had just two real friends: Jonathan, a peer and Samuel, a father-figure. Who are your real peer-friends? And who are the fatherly or motherly people who will be there for you if you were to hit bottom?

*19 Word came to Saul: "David is in Naioth at Ramah"; 20 so he sent men to capture him. But when they saw a group of prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing there as their leader, the Spirit of God came on Saul's men, and they also prophesied. 21 Saul was told about it, and he sent more men, and they prophesied too. Saul sent men a third time, and they also prophesied. 22 Finally, he himself left for Ramah and went to the great cistern at Seku. And he asked, "Where are Samuel and David?"*

*"Over in Naioth at Ramah," they said.*

*23 So Saul went to Naioth at Ramah. But the Spirit of God came even on him, and he walked along prophesying until he came to Naioth. 24 He stripped off his garments, and he too prophesied in Samuel's presence. He lay naked all that day and all that night. This is why people say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"*

## WHEN GOD STRIPS US, GOD MAY PROVIDE SOME AMAZING DELIVERANCES

This is such an unusual story! Samuel led a school of prophets. It seems that his school of prophets would spend time in prayer and worship, and would experience ‘incoherent states of ecstasy’ (that’s what the word ‘prophesy’ likely means here) as the Spirit of God powerfully presented himself in their midst. So when three groups of Saul’s men tried to arrest David, they also began to experience the same thing. And then – Saul with his wicked heart – experienced the same. Like the others, he was immobilized in this intense atmosphere of God’s presence – so much so that people would later ask, ‘Is Saul among the prophets?’

Why did God allow this to happen? Simply because God was using a miraculous means to protect David (who was likely right there in the midst of the prophets). It was a vivid warning to Saul and all: God protects David, and he humbles all those who try to destroy him (notice how Saul was humiliated in nakedness (v24).) Still today, God is able to deliver us in all kinds of unexpected ways.

As a side note, let me draw out two insights about experiencing God. 1) God sometimes manifests his presence in a very powerful way, and some people may be temporarily immobilized by it. 2) Just because a person experiences God’s presence like this doesn’t say anything about the character of the person, and it doesn’t necessarily change a person’s character after the experience is over.

### CHAPTER 20

#### *David and Jonathan*

*1 Then David fled from Naioth at Ramah and went to Jonathan and asked, "What have I done? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father, that he is trying to take my life?"*

*2 "Never!" Jonathan replied. "You are not going to die! Look, my father doesn't do anything, great or small, without letting me know. Why would he hide this from me? It isn't so!"*

*3 But David took an oath and said, "Your father knows very well that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said to himself, 'Jonathan must not know this or he will be grieved.' Yet as surely as the LORD lives and as you live, there is only a step between me and death."*

*4 Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you."*

*5 So David said, "Look, tomorrow is the New Moon feast, and I am supposed to dine with the king; but let me go and hide in the field until the evening of the day after tomorrow. 6 If your father misses me at all, tell him, 'David earnestly asked my permission to hurry to Bethlehem, his hometown, because an annual sacrifice is being made there for his whole clan.' 7 If he says, 'Very well,' then your servant*

is safe. But if he loses his temper, you can be sure that he is determined to harm me. 8 As for you, show kindness to your servant, for you have brought him into a covenant with you before the LORD. If I am guilty, then kill me yourself! Why hand me over to your father?"

9 "Never!" Jonathan said. "If I had the least inkling that my father was determined to harm you, wouldn't I tell you?"

10 David asked, "Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?"

11 "Come," Jonathan said, "let's go out into the field." So they went there together.

12 Then Jonathan said to David, "I swear by the LORD, the God of Israel, that I will surely sound out my father by this time the day after tomorrow! If he is favorably disposed toward you, will I not send you word and let you know? 13 But if my father intends to harm you, may the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I do not let you know and send you away in peace. May the LORD be with you as he has been with my father. 14 But show me unfailing kindness like the LORD's kindness as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, 15 and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family—not even when the LORD has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth."

16 So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD call David's enemies to account." 17 And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.

18 Then Jonathan said to David, "Tomorrow is the New Moon feast. You will be missed, because your seat will be empty. 19 The day after tomorrow, toward evening, go to the place where you hid when this trouble began, and wait by the stone Ezel. 20 I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I were shooting at a target. 21 Then I will send a boy and say, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I say to him, 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you; bring them here,' then come, because, as surely as the LORD lives, you are safe; there is no danger. 22 But if I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you,' then you must go, because the LORD has sent you away. 23 And about the matter you and I discussed—remember, the LORD is witness between you and me forever."

24 So David hid in the field, and when the New Moon feast came, the king sat down to eat. 25 He sat in his customary place by the wall, opposite Jonathan, and Abner sat next to Saul, but David's place was empty. 26 Saul said nothing that day, for he thought, "Something must have happened to David to make him ceremonially unclean—surely he is unclean." 27 But the next day, the second day of the month, David's place was empty again. Then Saul said to his son Jonathan, "Why hasn't the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?"

28 Jonathan answered, "David earnestly asked me for permission to go to Bethlehem. 29 He said, 'Let me go, because our family is observing a sacrifice in the town and my brother has ordered me to be there. If I have found favor in your eyes, let me get away to see my brothers.' That is why he has not come to the king's table."

30 Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of a perverse and rebellious woman! Don't I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you? 31 As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Now send someone to bring him to me, for he must die!"

32 "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" Jonathan asked his father. 33 But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David. 34 Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger; on that second day of the feast he did not eat, because he was grieved at his father's shameful treatment of David.

35 In the morning Jonathan went out to the field for his meeting with David. He had a small boy with him, 36 and he said to the boy, "Run and find the arrows I shoot." As the boy ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. 37 When the boy came to the place where Jonathan's arrow had fallen, Jonathan called out after him, "Isn't the arrow beyond you?" 38 Then he shouted, "Hurry! Go quickly! Don't stop!" The boy picked up the arrow and returned to his master. 39 (The boy knew nothing about all this; only Jonathan and David knew.) 40 Then Jonathan gave his weapons to the boy and said, "Go, carry them back to town."

41 After the boy had gone, David got up from the south side of the stone and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together—but David wept the most.

42 Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.' " Then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town.

## GOD MAY STRIP US OF EVERYTHING VALUABLE TO US

'David wept' (v41). In this chapter we see the stripping of David happen – and it breaks David's heart.

First, he is stripped of his wife. Second, despite Jonathan's very best efforts to hold on to David, David is stripped of his best friend, Jonathan. Third, he is stripped of his home ('David left'). God had promised him that he would be a palace-residing king, now he was now an outcast. (Wow, see the parallel between Jesus and David: Jesus came from the palace of heaven, then had no where to rest his head (Matt 8:20), and then was



restored to the throne. David too started in a palace and then was humbled to be an outcast, but eventually would be restored to his palace where he would rule as the greatest of all Israel's kings). Fourth, he is stripped of his royal favour. Not so long before he had been loved by all, now he was hunted by all. FB Meyer writes poetically of this: 'Behind you is the sunny morning, before you a lowering sky; behind you the blessed enjoyment of friendship, wife, home, royal favour, and popular adulation, before you an outcast's life'.

Why was God doing this? Was it to discipline David for prior disobedience? The answer is no. It was preparing him for future usefulness and authority. Hard as it may have been for David to understand, he was in the middle of God's will. Again we see some parallels with Christ's life. Christ – though not because of any disobedience, but because of the Father's commitment to deepen him and ready him for his great task of world-salvation on the cross allowed him to 'learn obedience through the things he suffered' (Heb 5:8). Still today, God will allow us to experience pain and the stripping away of those earthly things that bring us much security - not to punish us but to prepare us.

## *CHAPTER 21*

### *David at Nob*

*1 David went to Nob, to Ahimelek the priest. Ahimelek trembled when he met him, and asked, "Why are you alone? Why is no one with you?"*

*2 David answered Ahimelek the priest, "The king sent me on a mission and said to me, 'No one is to know anything about the mission I am sending you on.' As for my men, I have told them to meet me at a certain place. 3 Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever you can find."*

*4 But the priest answered David, "I don't have any ordinary bread on hand; however, there is some consecrated bread here—provided the men have kept themselves from women."*

*5 David replied, "Indeed women have been kept from us, as usual whenever I set out. The men's bodies are holy even on missions that are not holy. How much more so today!" 6 So the priest gave him the consecrated bread, since there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence that had been removed from before the LORD and replaced by hot bread on the day it was taken away.*

*7 Now one of Saul's servants was there that day, detained before the LORD; he was Doeg the Edomite, Saul's chief shepherd.*

*8 David asked Ahimelek, "Don't you have a spear or a sword here? I haven't brought my sword or any other weapon, because the king's mission was urgent."*

*9 The priest replied, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the Valley of Elah, is here; it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you want it, take it; there is no sword here but that one."*

*David said, "There is none like it; give it to me."*

*David at Gath*

*10 That day David fled from Saul and went to Achish king of Gath. 11 But the servants of Achish said to him, "Isn't this David, the king of the land? Isn't he the one they sing about in their dances:*

*" 'Saul has slain his thousands,  
and David his tens of thousands?'"*

*12 David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish king of Gath. 13 So he pretended to be insane in their presence; and while he was in their hands he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard.*

*14 Achish said to his servants, "Look at the man! He is insane! Why bring him to me? 15 Am I so short of madmen that you have to bring this fellow here to carry on like this in front of me? Must this man come into my house?"*

## WHEN GOD STRIPS US, WE MIGHT SEE THINGS IN OURSELVES WE'RE ASHAMED OF

The toothpaste principle says that 'when the pressure is on, what is on the inside comes out.' We begin to see what is inside of David, and it is less than impressive.

In the previous chapter, we don't see David trusting God – we see him in a state of self-concern and self-righteousness. For example, he says to Jonathan, 'Yet as surely as the LORD lives and as you live, there is only a step between me and death' (20:3). The phrase 'as surely as the LORD lives' is a bit of an overstatement – God had ordained him as future king, why would he change his mind? Then he also says to Jonathan: 'If I am guilty, then kill me yourself' (20:8). Can you hear the self-righteousness in that?

In this chapter we see him deceiving Ahimelek in several ways. Instead of telling Ahimelek the truth, he creates a story of being sent out by the king on a mission, and he even goes into detail about how his men (who don't actually exist) haven't slept with any women. All this for some bread. The tragedy is that his lie ends up costing Ahimelek and his entire company of 80 priests, and the entire town of Nob their lives! What is happening in his head all this time? Surely, he is justifying his lying with the fact of his hunger. Then notice how he takes Goliath's sword (v9). Remember how David has said to Goliath, 'You come to me with sword, but I come to you in the name of the Lord'. David, in his panicked state of self-preservation is not clinging to the name of the Lord to rescue him, he is taking the matter into his own hands. Lastly, see how he, in a state of fear, pretends to be mad before a king (v12-13). It all works – David gets his bread, gets his sword and gets to escape from the king Achish. But underneath it all is self-preservation and terror, not the faith that he had once shown when he had faced down Goliath.

The question is, 'Under the same circumstances – hunger, danger anxiety and confusion – would you and I have done any different?' The answer is, 'probably not'. The point of this chapter is not to cripple ourselves with a sense of just how pathetic we can be sometimes, but to humble ourselves with the fact of our own fallenness and fragileness (especially evident when the pressure is on!) - and God's gracious faithfulness to us despite ourselves! And God is so patient with us – in fact when Jesus retells this story he doesn't condemn David, but only speaks of his hunger and his care for his men (see Mark 2:25-26).

# SIGNS OF A GOOD LEADER

---

*1 Samuel 22:1-23:18*

## *CHAPTER 22*

*David at Adullam and Mizpah*

*1 David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam.*

## GOOD LEADERS TAKE REFUGE IN GOD

God provided a cave in Adullam, in the border region of Judah and the Philistine area. It is called ‘the stronghold’ (v4) so it must have been high up on a cliff face, where he was safe from danger.

David wrote Psalm 57 (which has the heading, ‘When David had fled from Saul into the cave’) as a reflection on this time. The psalm even tells us that he had a few encounters with dangerous animals in that cave. ‘I am in the midst of lions; I am forced to dwell among man-eating beasts, whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords’ (v4). In this Psalm, we learn much about how David was coping in this time. Let me draw attention to a few things from this psalm:

1) David imagined that the cave represented ‘God’s wings’: ‘In you I take refuge; I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed’ (v1b). Still today, there is a safe place – even in the midst of life’s most difficult times – it is the place under God’s wings, close to his heart and in his intimate presence.

2) David cried out to God for help. ‘Have mercy on me’ (v1a), ‘I cry out to God Most High’ (v2). Still today, God waits for us to cry out to him in our distress.

3) David took his lyre with him and sang songs to God while he was in that cave: ‘My heart, O God, is steadfast, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and make music. Awake, my soul! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn. I will praise you, Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples. For great is your love, reaching to the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth’ (v7-11). Still today, we need to worship God – especially in the midst of life’s most difficult times.

5) David anticipated that while he was worshipping in the cave, God was fighting for him in the plains and valleys: ‘He sends from heaven and saves me, rebuking those who hotly pursue me’ (v3), ‘They spread a net for my feet— I was bowed down in distress. They dug a pit in my path— but they have fallen into it themselves’ (v6). Still today, often it is as we worship God that he goes to war against that which is against us.

David is a picture not just of the kind of leaders needed in the world today, but a picture of Jesus, the Ultimate Leader. He spent 40 days in the desert with the wild animals and

was safe. He took refuge in his Father's presence while he was in danger in the final years of ministry, and in the final hours before he was crucified.

And more than that – Christ himself is the cave of refuge to which we can run when life is difficult. There is a safe place for us to go. Like a mother-bird, he longs to stretch his wings of comfort and protection over us.

*1 David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and his father's household heard about it, they went down to him there. 2 All those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him, and he became their commander. About four hundred men were with him.*

*3 From there David went to Mizpah in Moab and said to the king of Moab, "Would you let my father and mother come and stay with you until I learn what God will do for me?" 4 So he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him as long as David was in the stronghold.*

## GOOD LEADERS CARE ABOUT THE PEOPLE THEY LEAD

Today, in a world of power-hungry and egotistical leaders, the desperate need is for leaders who are servant-hearted and compassion. David became such a leader.

Unexpectedly, groups of different kinds of people started to come to David and join him in the cave. With a corrupt leader like Saul there were a lot of hopeless people – and people began to pin their hopes on David. Possibly, David's own ability to keep his head above the water, his ability to stay full of song and praise in the midst of his own trial (see Psalm 57) made him a source of hope.

People in danger came to him. Though his parents and brothers previously overlooked him (16:11) and criticized him (17:28) they come to him now. The reason: probably they too are in danger from Saul because of their association with David.

Men in distress and in debt and discontented came to him – four hundred of them! David became their commander (v2). If we look at 1 Chronicles 12:8-18, we see more detail about who these men were and how they were added to David. They were Gadites, Benjamites and other men from Judah. David was very nervous to receive them because he wasn't sure if they had been sent by Saul to betray him. But when Amasai (apparently in the power of the Spirit!) declared allegiance to David, David knew that these men were coming to help him and not hurt him.

David truly cared for these people. It appears that there was just one woman in their midst – his mother – so he made a plan to keep her and his father, Jesse, safe. He asked the king of Moab to protect them (v3). (His great grand-mother, Ruth was from Moab, so this was his likely connection to this foreign king – Ruth 4:21-22). Saul had failed to care for these men, but David would not. He was a good leader.



David is a picture not just of the kind of leaders needed in the world today, but a picture of Jesus, the Ultimate Leader. ‘A great number of people from all over Judea and from the coast came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured, and the people all tried to touch him because power was coming from him and healing them all’ (Luke 6:19). Jesus invites those in danger, in debt, in distress and discontented to come to him: ‘Come to me all of you who are tired and weary and I will give you rest’ (Matt 11:28).

## GOOD LEADERS ARE DESPERATELY NEEDED IN THE WORLD AND CHURCH

When there is good leadership, people’s lives are transformed. 1 Samuel 2:2 describes their state when they join David – ‘in distress or in debt or discontented’ But 1 Chronicles 12:8 describes the kind of men that they became under David’s leadership: ‘They were brave warriors, ready for battle and able to handle the shield and spear. Their faces were the faces of lions, and they were as swift as gazelles in the mountains’. Talk about a metamorphosis! They become more courageous, purposeful, focused and united under David’s leadership, gaining momentum and confidence all the time.

When there is good leadership, more and more people want to follow. At the start of this chapter, we’re told that ‘about 400 men’ (v2) joined him. By the middle of the next chapter, we see that this number grows to ‘600 men’ (23:13). As the months and years pass still more and more join David: ‘Day after day men came to help David, until he had a great and mighty army, like the army of God’ (1 Chron 12:22).

Still today, every nation, city, community, church and family needs good leadership! People thrive where there is good leadership. And they tend to grow in number.

Again, it is difficult not to notice the parallel between Christ and David. Christ is the Ultimate Leader, the Lord of Lords and King of Kings, under whose leadership we thrive and become more numerous. And, in the church, his under-shepherds need to reflect some of his leadership qualities to those they lead.

*5 But the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not stay in the stronghold. Go into the land of Judah." So David left and went to the forest of Hereth. 6 Now Saul heard that David and his men had been discovered.*

## GOOD LEADERS ARE CAREFUL TO NOT PLAY IT TOO SAFE

One of David’s men, Gad, turned out to be a prophet – and brought the prophetic message that David leaves his safe place and goes back to Judah, where the Israelites, ruled by Saul, live.

Previously, when the danger had got too much for David, God had provided the ‘cave of Adullam’, a stronghold high up on a cliff face, outside of Judah (22:1). Here he was safe! But now that he had become too safe, perhaps too comfortable, God nudges him to go

back into the place of action and danger. Isn't that just like God – comforting the uncomfortable, and then making comfortable the uncomfortable.

It was important that David stayed in Judah as much as possible. From here he would be able to be an engaging presence in the events unfolding amongst the very people he would one day rule. Still today, good leaders are not removed from their people. They keep their ear to the ground, their finger on the pulse. They are ready to act if need be.

And still today, good leaders step out in faith, from time to time, into a place of increased risk. David was in danger of being found by Saul, which is exactly what happened (v6). However, no risks, no rewards. The reward is that along with greater risk, comes greater rewards – first of which is a greater dependence on God, which leads to a greater intervention by God.

### *Saul Kills the Priests of Nob*

*6 Now Saul heard that David and his men had been discovered. And Saul was seated, spear in hand, under the tamarisk tree on the hill at Gibeah, with all his officials standing at his side. 7 He said to them, "Listen, men of Benjamin! Will the son of Jesse give all of you fields and vineyards? Will he make all of you commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds? 8 Is that why you have all conspired against me? No one tells me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse. None of you is concerned about me or tells me that my son has incited my servant to lie in wait for me, as he does today."*

*9 But Doeg the Edomite, who was standing with Saul's officials, said, "I saw the son of Jesse come to Ahimelek son of Ahitub at Nob. 10 Ahimelek inquired of the LORD for him; he also gave him provisions and the sword of Goliath the Philistine."*

*11 Then the king sent for the priest Ahimelek son of Ahitub and all the men of his family, who were the priests at Nob, and they all came to the king. 12 Saul said, "Listen now, son of Ahitub."*

*"Yes, my lord," he answered.*

*13 Saul said to him, "Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, giving him bread and a sword and inquiring of God for him, so that he has rebelled against me and lies in wait for me, as he does today?"*

*14 Ahimelek answered the king, "Who of all your servants is as loyal as David, the king's son-in-law, captain of your bodyguard and highly respected in your household? 15 Was that day the first time I inquired of God for him? Of course not! Let not the king accuse your servant or any of his father's family, for your servant knows nothing at all about this whole affair."*

*16 But the king said, "You will surely die, Ahimelek, you and your whole family."*

*17 Then the king ordered the guards at his side: "Turn and kill the priests of the LORD, because they too have sided with David. They knew he was fleeing, yet they did not tell me."*

*But the king's officials were unwilling to raise a hand to strike the priests of the LORD.*

*18 The king then ordered Doeg, "You turn and strike down the priests." So Doeg the Edomite turned and struck them down. That day he killed eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod. 19 He also put to the sword Nob, the town of the priests, with its men and women, its children and infants, and its cattle, donkeys and sheep.*

## **GOOD LEADERS ARE OFTEN FORMED AT THE HANDS OF A BAD LEADER**

David became a great leader. But why? The answer may surprise us: he suffered at the hands of a bad leader. God used corrupt King Saul to so shape David that he would never become like Saul one day. It was as though God was using the outer Saul to destroy the potential inner Saul in David. And still today, God sometimes raises up a good leader by exposing him to a bad leader. It is as though something happens in the forming leader: 'Oh God, let me never become a man like this. I know the pain he is causing me. Let me not inflict this kind of pain on anyone.' Look at what a bad leader Saul is...

First, look at how he turns his men against David (v6-8). 1) He is full of himself – he is sitting on a make-shift 'throne' under an impressive tree, spear in hand (v6). 2) He belittles people (v8) – he calls David 'son of Jesse', refusing to even use his name. 3) He appeals to the greed and ambition of his leaders offering them 'fields and vineyards' (v7) and increased rank (v8). 4) He is self-righteously deluded, claiming that David is trying to kill him, and all because his son, Jonathan encouraged him to (v8) – he has forgotten that he is pursuing David, and has already attempted to kill him on several occasions, not least directly with a spear while David had been playing a lyre for him.

Second, look at the pure injustice Saul commits in partnership with a corrupt man, Doeg the Edomite (v9-17): Based on distorted information (v9), he accused Ahimelek the priest of conspiring against him (v13). He refuses to listen to any explanation (v14-15), and commands the death of 'eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod' (v18) and the entire town of 'Nob, the town of the priests, with its men and women, its children and infants, and its cattle, donkeys and sheep' (v19). What injustice! Just think about what a bad leader Saul is: previously he had failed to put to death his enemies (1 Sam 15), but now he is ready to destroy an entire town within his own kingdom! All because of insecurity, turned to hatred!

*20 But one son of Ahimelek son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled to join David. 21 He told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD. 22 Then David said to Abiathar, "That day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, I*

*knew he would be sure to tell Saul. I am responsible for the death of your whole family. 23 Stay with me; don't be afraid. The man who wants to take your life is trying to kill me too. You will be safe with me."*

## **GOOD LEADERS LEARN TO LIVE WITH SOME PAIN, WHICH THEY MINE FOR WISDOM**

What a burden for David to carry! If he had not gone to Ahimelek previously, and had not lied to him, perhaps all these people would be alive now. But they are dead, and he feels the responsibility of it (v22). We can imagine David having sleepless nights over this. Still today, good leaders at some times will make mistakes, mistakes that affect many people. But, instead of giving up, they will have to carry on, dealing with the burdens and memories of their own failures.

But God is using these kinds of thing to mature David for kingship. He must learn to live with regrets and the burden of one's own failures. He must learn to remain focused and steady, despite emotional pain. God is broadening David's shoulders. Somehow, despite his own pain, he extends comfort to Abiathar – 'Stay with me; don't be afraid ... you will be safe with me' (v23). Still today, good leaders will have to stay calm under pressure, and will have to, at times, extend comfort to others even when they are agonized themselves.

A most interesting event will soon unfold. David will be in the town of Keilah, and will realize that the town is in danger because of him, and will flee from it (v10). There we will see that he is mining the painful experiences of the past for their wisdom. Previously, he gave no thought to the well-being of Nod, only his own survival. But in the future he will factor in the well-being of innocent people too. Still today, good leaders will mine the painful experiences of the past for whatever kernels of wisdom there are, and will apply that wisdom into the future. This is the making of a great leader.

Notice how God works good out of evil. The murder of Ahimelek the priest meant that his son, Abiathar the priest, would defect to David, and give loyalty to him for the rest of his life, until his death (2 Sam 20:25). The priesthood moves from Saul to David. The very messenger of the bad news becomes a means of God's grace to David for the rest of his life. Still today, good leaders know that God will work good out of the pains we face.

### **CHAPTER 23**

#### ***David Saves Keilah***

*1 When David was told, "Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are looting the threshing floors," 2 he inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?"*

*The LORD answered him, "Go, attack the Philistines and save Keilah."*

*3 But David's men said to him, "Here in Judah we are afraid. How much more, then, if we go to Keilah against the Philistine forces!"*

*4 Once again David inquired of the LORD, and the LORD answered him, "Go down to Keilah, for I am going to give the Philistines into your hand." 5 So David and his men went to Keilah, fought the Philistines and carried off their livestock. He inflicted heavy losses on the Philistines and saved the people of Keilah. 6 (Now Abiathar son of Ahimelek had brought the ephod down with him when he fled to David at Keilah.)*

## GOOD LEADERS KEEP THEIR PEOPLE ON AN OUTWARD-FOCUSED MISSION

When people are in danger or facing difficulties they tend to become introspective and bent on survival. To use a boxing term, they assume a back-foot stance. They live defensively, self-protectively. This is the state of David's men as they try to hide from Saul in Judah. 'Here in Judah we are afraid' (v3) is what they have to say.

But notice what a good leader David is. Instead of pandering to their insecurities he leads them in a bold move of outward-focused mission. Hearing that a nearby Israelite town called Keilah are being attacked by Philistines, he seeks God, and leads his men to 'save the people of Keilah' (v5). Instead of allowing his people to get inward-focused, he courageously leads them to be outward-focused. Instead of letting them stay on their back-foot in a defensive mode, he gets them onto their front-foot in an offensive mode.

Still today, the desperate need in the church is to remain front-footed and outward-focused. A church that becomes introspective and survival-orientated is a dying church. If a church is not taking ground, it is losing ground. Good leaders understand this, and take opportunities to lead their people forward in mission.

One more thought: notice how David has started doing the work of a king. It was the king's job to rescue Keilah, but Saul is so corrupted that people don't even approach him for help, they approach David. Saul is more interested in fighting David than attacking Philistines. Still today, very often good leaders will start to do the work of a leader before they have any title or position as 'leader'.

Jesus is the classic example of this kind of brilliant leadership! Though he and his men were often in danger, and often without food or home (Matt 8:20), yet Jesus led his men on outward-focused mission trip after outward-focused mission trip. No wonder these disciples became the kind of leaders they became! They were learning to be on mission, taking ground for God, when every fibre of their being wanted to retreat in fear and self-protection.

## GOOD LEADERS SEEK GOD'S GUIDANCE

David gets double confirmation from God that he should seek to save Keilah (v2,4). He is not presumptuous, but he is faith-filled. Faith comes from hearing God's voice. Once he is convinced that God promises them success, he inspires his men with the same God-given faith and leads them into battle.

How did David receive God's guidance? We know that David walked intimately with God, and on many occasions seemed to hear God speak to him directly. For example, in one of his Psalms he writes down God's own words to him, 'I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you' (Ps 32:8). At other times God spoke to him through prophets as was the case when Gad the prophet instructed him to leave his hide-out and return to Judah (22:5). Verse 6 shows another method: the priest, Abiathar, would use the ephod to seek God. The ephod was some kind of lightweight that had dice-like stones in it, called Urim and Thummim. The priest would ask God a question and then would throw the stones, which would then answer yes or no, though no answer might also be given.

Still today, good leaders seek God's guidance in all they do. When an opportunity arises, we should seek God in prayer. One source of guidance is one's intimate walk with God, in which God may directly communicate to the leader. Another source of guidance is prophetic messages through others. The Urim and Thummim are no longer God's means of leading his people however. One leader playfully quipped that now that we have a Bible, God speaks to us as we are Using and Thummin through it. In this story we see that it is appropriate to ask God for confirmation when we are still not sure we have discerned God's guidance correctly.

Think about Jesus here. He was perfectly guided by his Father and by the Spirit during his earthly ministry. Though he was the sinless Son of God, think of how he devoted much time to prayer. 'The Son can do nothing unless he sees his Father doing it' (John 5:19). If Jesus, though having uninterrupted fellowship with the Father sought guidance, how much should we devote some time to seeking God's guidance upon our lives?

### *Saul Pursues David*

*7 Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah, and he said, "God has delivered him into my hands, for David has imprisoned himself by entering a town with gates and bars." 8 And Saul called up all his forces for battle, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men.*

*9 When David learned that Saul was plotting against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod." 10 David said, "LORD, God of Israel, your servant has heard definitely that Saul plans to come to Keilah and destroy the town on account of me. 11 Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me to him? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? LORD, God of Israel, tell your servant."*



*And the LORD said, "He will."*

*12 Again David asked, "Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me and my men to Saul?"*

*And the LORD said, "They will."*

*13 So David and his men, about six hundred in number, left Keilah and kept moving from place to place. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he did not go there.*

*14 David stayed in the wilderness strongholds and in the hills of the Desert of Ziph. Day after day Saul searched for him, but God did not give David into his hands.*

## GOOD LEADERS DON'T MEASURE GOD'S FAVOUR BY HOW WELL THINGS ARE GOING

David's obedience to God gets him exposed. Word gets back to Saul that David and his men, having just rescued Keilah, are staying in that town. Circumstances have turned against David, but notice how differently these circumstances can be interpreted...

Saul assumes that God is against David. He proudly says, 'God has delivered him into my hands, for David has imprisoned himself by entering a town with gates and bars.' One of the signs of spiritual immaturity is the tendency to measure God's favour on our lives, or on the life of another, by circumstances. If things are going well for us, God is for us. If things are going badly for us, God is against us.

But this is plain wrong. One hymn writer put it like this, 'Behind a frowning providence, there is a smiling face.' Though circumstances frown upon David, yet God smiles over him. David has got into trouble for a single reason: he has obeyed God and acted in compassion for others. Still today, obedience to God and care for others will get us into trouble at times, and we should not assume that God is displeased with us. He is not.

'If God is for us, what can be against us' (Rom 8:31). Notice how God allows David to be warned (v9), and the guides him to escape the town. Though Saul cannot see it, God is for David and against him.

Here we have a glimpse of Christ once more: Christ's obedience to the Father and his care for people got him into much trouble, even resulting in his death upon a cross. Talk about terrible circumstances! Yet all the time God was pleased, not displeased, with him. God smiled, not frowned upon the sacrifice that saved the world!

*15 While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. 16 And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God. 17 "Don't be afraid," he said. "My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second*

*to you. Even my father Saul knows this." 18 The two of them made a covenant before the LORD. Then Jonathan went home, but David remained at Horesh.*

## GOOD LEADERS NEED SOME PERSONAL ENCOURAGERS

David must have been at breaking point. And just when he felt he could not take anymore of it ('Saul had come out to take his life' (v15)), God gives him a boost of encouragement and hope. Instead of Saul, his enemy, arriving, Jonathan his friend arrives! What a relief this must have been. And notice Jonathan's mission: he wanted to help David 'find strength in God' (v16). How's that for a definition of spiritual encouragement: helping people find their strength in God.

But notice how he helps him to find strength in God. He reaffirms the promises of God over David's life. David's faith in God's promise that he would one day be king must have been at a real low. Still today, if we want to encourage people we should remind them of God's promises to them. Just when we're about to lose faith, we need to be reminded of God's faithfulness.

Jonathan here is a picture of Jesus. Still today Jesus comes to his discouraged disciples and speaks at least five promises over us:

1) *'Don't be afraid'* (v17). Think of how often Jesus spoke these words to his disciples: 'So do not be afraid of them' (Matt 10:26). 'Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell' (Matt 10:28). 'Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me' (Matt 28:10). 'Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom' (Luke 12:32). 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid' (John 14:27).

2) *'I have rescued you and I will rescue you'*. Jonathan reminds David, 'My father Saul will not lay a hand on you'. God had already delivered David from Saul, and he was promising to continue to do so. We think here of how Christ had encouraged the apostle Paul so that he could say, 'He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us' (2 Cor 1:10).

3) *'God's plan will unfold'*. Jonathan said, 'You will be king over Israel'. There are many times when our future seems so uncertain, and again Christ comes to us and says, 'I know the plans I have for you, plans to give you a hope and a future' (Jer 29:11).

4) *'The devil knows he has lost already'*. Jonathan said, 'Even my father Saul knows this'. Saul opposed David, yet deep down inside he knew that he would ultimately lose. Yet he raged still. It was just a matter of time before he would be totally defeated. The same can be said of the devil. He opposes God's people, and the advance of the church. He rages, and yet he knows that his days are numbered. 'The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet' (Rom 16:20). In World War 2 there were two decisive days: D-Day and V-Day. D-Day was the day the allies landed on Normandy and overcame that German

stronghold, securing for themselves a beachhead from which to operate. From that day on, it was just a matter of time that the Germans would be defeated totally. They knew it, and yet they raged on. But V-Day finally came, where what began on D-Day was brought to completion. Similarly, Christ's death and resurrection is D-Day, and his return is V-Day. Victory is inevitable. When the battle rages, we as Christians must remind ourselves of this.

5) *'I would rather die than forsake you'*. Jonathan renews his covenant with David (v18). This was a covenant of friendship that effectively said, 'I would rather die than forsake you.' This is the covenant Christ has made with all his disciples. Only he has already demonstrated it in action. The cross was his way of saying, 'I would rather face forsakenness (Father, why have you forsaken me?) than forsake you. I would rather die than let you die.' What a friend David had in Jonathan. And what a friend we have in Jesus.

## LESSONS IN MERCY

---

### *1 Samuel 23:19-26:25*

*19 The Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah and said, "Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hakilah, south of Jeshimon? 20 Now, Your Majesty, come down whenever it pleases you to do so, and we will be responsible for giving him into your hands."*

*21 Saul replied, "The LORD bless you for your concern for me. 22 Go and get more information. Find out where David usually goes and who has seen him there. They tell me he is very crafty. 23 Find out about all the hiding places he uses and come back to me with definite information. Then I will go with you; if he is in the area, I will track him down among all the clans of Judah."*

*24 So they set out and went to Ziph ahead of Saul. Now David and his men were in the Desert of Maon, in the Arabah south of Jeshimon. 25 Saul and his men began the search, and when David was told about it, he went down to the rock and stayed in the Desert of Maon. When Saul heard this, he went into the Desert of Maon in pursuit of David.*

*26 Saul was going along one side of the mountain, and David and his men were on the other side, hurrying to get away from Saul. As Saul and his forces were closing in on David and his men to capture them, 27 a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Come quickly! The Philistines are raiding the land." 28 Then Saul broke off his pursuit of David and went to meet the Philistines. That is why they call this place Sela Hammahlekoth. 29 And David went up from there and lived in the strongholds of En Gedi.*

## GOD'S MERCY TOWARD US IS IN LINE WITH HIS PROMISES

Just before this Jonathan had prophesied over David: "Don't be afraid," he said. "My father Saul will not lay a hand on you" (v17). But immediately it seems like the opposite happens.

First the people of Ziph betray David and his men. They tell Saul of his whereabouts and offer to help Saul catch him (v19-20), something Saul commends them for (v21-23), even using religious sounding language to make it sound like God commends their betrayal of David: 'The Lord bless you for your concern for me' (v21).

Next Saul and his men pursue David. Though David tries to hide. They go to the 'rock in the Desert of Moan', which is about 8 kilometres South of the town of Ziph. Saul and his men find out about it. And they almost catch David. We're told, 'Saul was going along one side of the mountain, and David and his men were on the other side, hurrying

to get away from Saul. As Saul and his forces were closing in on David and his men to capture them' (v26).

Talk about a close encounter! Apparently David was on the eastern slope trying to escape toward the Dead Sea, while Saul on the other slope divided his force into two flanks and sent them around the mountain to the north and south to encircle David. Since the land to the east was open country, he could easily have captured him. David was within an inch of his life.

But just then, God intervenes to keep his promise to David. 'A messenger came to Saul, saying, "Come quickly! The Philistines are raiding the land." Then Saul broke off his pursuit of David and went to meet the Philistines' (v27-28). How faithful is God! He does exactly what he said he would do through Jonathan. Saul is not able to lay a hand upon him.

Still today, when God makes a promise to us, it may seem for a time that his promise is not true. The very opposite may seem to be happening. But don't stop trusting God. He will continue to show us mercy in line with his promises, even if his faithfulness only becomes evident in the very last minute.

The incident of David's narrow escape became so well known that the mountain where it happened was renamed 'Sela Hammahlekoth' (v28), which means 'Rock of Escape.' Later, the Scriptures would tell us that Christ is 'the Rock' (1 Cor 10:4). He is the Rock of Escape, who stands between us and those who would seek to destroy us, whether it is human enemies or spiritual enemies such as death, demons or temptations. But not only is Christ the Rock of Escape – he is also the famed Oasis ('En Gedi' (v29) was a well-known Oasis) that refreshes us after we have been in battle.

**The question we must ask ourselves is, 'If we had the chance to deal with our enemies as mercilessly as they would love to deal with us, would we?'**

Had Saul caught David, we know what he would have done. He would have mercilessly slaughtered him! But I wonder what would happen if the situation were to turn around, and David would have the chance to slaughter Saul. Would he? Let's see in the coming chapters...

## **CHAPTER 24**

### *David Spares Saul's Life*

*1 Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, "David is in the Desert of En Gedi." 2 So Saul took three thousand able young men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the Crags of the Wild Goats.*

*3 He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself. David and his men were far back in the cave. 4 The men said, "This is the day the LORD spoke of when he said to you, 'I will give your enemy*

*into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.' " Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul's robe.*

*5 Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe. 6 He said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the LORD." 7 With these words David sharply rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way.*

*8 Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, "My lord the king!" When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. 9 He said to Saul, "Why do you listen when men say, 'David is bent on harming you'? 10 This day you have seen with your own eyes how the LORD delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, 'I will not lay my hand on my lord, because he is the LORD's anointed.' 11 See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you. See that there is nothing in my hand to indicate that I am guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life. 12 May the LORD judge between you and me. And may the LORD avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you. 13 As the old saying goes, 'From evildoers come evil deeds,' so my hand will not touch you.*

*14 "Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea? 15 May the LORD be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand."*

## HAVE MERCY ON THOSE WHO MAKE YOUR LIFE DIFFICULT

Previously something had happened that put David at Saul's mercy. And we know that Saul would have destroyed him if he had the chance. Now something happens that puts Saul at David's mercy...

Saul, while pursuing David, takes a toilet break in a cave. It just happens that David and some of his men are hiding in the back of the cave! David's men encourage him to kill Saul, saying that God is giving the opportunity to.

David, feeling the pressure, was possibly about to kill Saul, but then decided to merely cut off some of his robe instead. Immediately he was conscience-stricken. Even cutting Saul's robe was too much. His reason: 'Saul is the Lord's anointed'. This means that God is the One who put Saul on the throne, and God would need to take him off the throne! David would not try play the role of God. He would patiently wait for God to act.



Soon after, after Saul has left the cave, David presents himself and tells the story to Saul and his men. Then he says, 'May the LORD judge between you and me. And may the LORD avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you' (v12).

That is mercy! David is learning to trust God. He is learning to extend forgiveness to those who have hurt him, and still want to hurt him. He is learning to be non-vindictive. He refuses to enter into the cycle of hostility and revenge. But note that forgiveness does not mean that he is excusing the wicked behaviour of Saul. He is not at all. Rather he is leaving it up to God to deal with Saul.

Still today, we must learn to relate mercifully to people. David had been maltreated by the people of Keilah, who had shown him ingratitude (23:12). He had been betrayed by the people of Ziph (23:19). And Saul had made many attempts on his life. One can imagine the temptation to get even. But he doesn't. He leaves it to God to deal with wrong-doers. By saying, 'From evildoers come evil deeds,' so my hand will not touch you,' he shows that he understands revenge to be a kind of evil. It would be merely responding in the same malicious spirit of his enemies.

But what empowers our mercy toward others? The answer is in the story. God had just demonstrated such mercy to David by sparing his life (23:19-29). Now David was merely to extend that mercy to others. In the same way, Christ has shown us so much mercy by dying for us on the cross, becoming the Rock of Escape and the Oasis of Refreshing for us, though we did not deserve it. The least we can do is extend his mercy to others. As Ephesians 5:31-32 says it, 'Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.'

*16 When David finished saying this, Saul asked, "Is that your voice, David my son?" And he wept aloud. 17 "You are more righteous than I," he said. "You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly. 18 You have just now told me about the good you did to me; the LORD delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me. 19 When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed? May the LORD reward you well for the way you treated me today. 20 I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands. 21 Now swear to me by the LORD that you will not kill off my descendants or wipe out my name from my father's family."*

*22 So David gave his oath to Saul. Then Saul returned home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.*

## SHOWING MERCY TO THE UNDESERVING CAN SOFTEN THE HARDEST HEART

David showed Saul undeserved mercy. Saul said it like this, 'You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly' (v17), and, 'When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed?' (v19). And what a wonderful effect it had upon Saul. Saul was humbled by the undeserved grace, and – at least for the moment – was changed.

We must not underestimate the power of showing someone who is against us, mercy and kindness. It can soften them. As Romans 12:19-21 puts it: 'Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.'

## *CHAPTER 25*

### *David, Nabal and Abigail*

*1 Now Samuel died, and all Israel assembled and mourned for him; and they buried him at his home in Ramah. Then David moved down into the Desert of Paran.*

*2 A certain man in Maon, who had property there at Carmel, was very wealthy. He had a thousand goats and three thousand sheep, which he was shearing in Carmel. 3 His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband was surly and mean in his dealings—he was a Calebite.*

*4 While David was in the wilderness, he heard that Nabal was shearing sheep. 5 So he sent ten young men and said to them, "Go up to Nabal at Carmel and greet him in my name. 6 Say to him: 'Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours!'*

*7 " 'Now I hear that it is sheep-shearing time. When your shepherds were with us, we did not mistreat them, and the whole time they were at Carmel nothing of theirs was missing. 8 Ask your own servants and they will tell you. Therefore be favorable toward my men, since we come at a festive time. Please give your servants and your son David whatever you can find for them.' "*

*9 When David's men arrived, they gave Nabal this message in David's name. Then they waited.*

*10 Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days. 11 Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?"*

*12 David's men turned around and went back. When they arrived, they reported every word. 13 David said to his men, "Each of you strap on your sword!" So they did, and David strapped his on as well. About four hundred men went up with David, while two hundred stayed with the supplies.*

## YOU MIGHT THINK YOU'RE A MERCIFUL PERSON, BUT YOUR LEVELS OF MERCY WILL BE TESTED

At this point in the story, David has acquired the reputation of being a merciful person (because he refused to take Saul's life). He may have thought, 'I am a merciful person'. But he was about to be tested again, and this time he would prove to not be merciful at all.

In this event, David, via some messengers, makes a totally reasonable request of Nabal for food for his men (v6-8). David and his army had treated Nabal really well in the preceding months. They did not steal anything and even protected them from danger (see verse 17). Nabal was a wealthy man, and with the sheering of the sheep was enjoying an annual highpoint of prosperity (v4). Nabal was a descendant of the great man Caleb (v3) (see Joshua 14:13-14). David had every reason to believe that Nabal would reciprocate with kindness and generosity.

But the exact opposite treatment was received. First he keeps the messengers waiting (v9). Second, he insults David. Though David is famous, he treats him like a runaway slave (v10), like an unknown person ('Who is David?' (v10)) of unknown origin (v11). Unfortunately, rather than treated David like he should have been treated, Nabal lives up to his name, which means 'Fool!'

The question is, 'How will David respond?' With mercy, or with vindictiveness and revenge. Will he seek God as he has done in the past, or will he act impulsively and with heated emotion. The answer: David commands 400 men to strap on their swords. He intends on obliterating Nabal and everyone associated with him! David, full of offended self-righteousness, horribly fails this test. Listen to his heart-revealing words in verses 21-22: 'It's been useless—all my watching over this fellow's property in the wilderness so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good. May God deal with David, be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!' Instead of overcoming evil with good as he had done with Saul (v17), he lets evil overcome his good – and he responds to evil with the evil of vindictiveness and revenge.

Still today, you might think you've a merciful person, but your levels of mercy will be tested. Though you may have treated people who made you life difficult with mercy in the past, don't too quickly think that you mercy under your belt. God was maturing David for kingship, but one thing God wanted to teach him was to be consistently and deeply merciful to the undeserving – whether it was a Saul or a Nabal. And still today, God is determined to make us deeply and consistently merciful people.

*14 One of the servants told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "David sent messengers from the wilderness to give our master his greetings, but he hurled insults at them. 15 Yet these men were very good to us. They did not mistreat us, and the whole time we were out in the fields near them nothing was missing. 16 Night and day they were a wall around us the whole time we were herding our sheep near them. 17 Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our*

master and his whole household. He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him."

18 Abigail acted quickly. She took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, five seahs of roasted grain, a hundred cakes of raisins and two hundred cakes of pressed figs, and loaded them on donkeys. 19 Then she told her servants, "Go on ahead; I'll follow you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal.

20 As she came riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, there were David and his men descending toward her, and she met them. 21 David had just said, "It's been useless—all my watching over this fellow's property in the wilderness so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good. 22 May God deal with David, be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!"

23 When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed down before David with her face to the ground. 24 She fell at his feet and said: "Pardon your servant, my lord, and let me speak to you; hear what your servant has to say. 25 Please pay no attention, my lord, to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name—his name means Fool, and folly goes with him. And as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my lord sent. 26 And now, my lord, as surely as the LORD your God lives and as you live, since the LORD has kept you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, may your enemies and all who are intent on harming my lord be like Nabal. 27 And let this gift, which your servant has brought to my lord, be given to the men who follow you.

28 "Please forgive your servant's presumption. The LORD your God will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my lord, because you fight the LORD's battles, and no wrongdoing will be found in you as long as you live. **29 Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my lord will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the LORD your God, but the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling.** 30 When the LORD has fulfilled for my lord every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him ruler over Israel, 31 my lord will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself. And when the LORD your God has brought my lord success, remember your servant."

32 David said to Abigail, "Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. 33 May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands. 34 Otherwise, as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak."

35 Then David accepted from her hand what she had brought him and said, "Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request."

*36 When Abigail went to Nabal, he was in the house holding a banquet like that of a king. He was in high spirits and very drunk. So she told him nothing at all until daybreak. 37 Then in the morning, when Nabal was sober, his wife told him all these things, and his heart failed him and he became like a stone. 38 About ten days later, the LORD struck Nabal and he died.*

*39 When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Praise be to the LORD, who has upheld my cause against Nabal for treating me with contempt. He has kept his servant from doing wrong and has brought Nabal's wrongdoing down on his own head."*

*Then David sent word to Abigail, asking her to become his wife. 40 His servants went to Carmel and said to Abigail, "David has sent us to you to take you to become his wife."*

*41 She bowed down with her face to the ground and said, "I am your servant and am ready to serve you and wash the feet of my lord's servants." 42 Abigail quickly got on a donkey and, attended by her five female servants, went with David's messengers and became his wife. 43 David had also married Ahinoam of Jezreel, and they both were his wives. 44 But Saul had given his daughter Michal, David's wife, to Paltiel son of Laish, who was from Gallim.*

## HOW DESPERATELY WE NEED PEACE-MAKERS!

Samuel had previously been a voice of wisdom in David's life, but now Samuel was dead (v1). David, left to himself, would have become increasingly unrestrained in the use of power for the sake of revenge. But God sends Abigail into his life.

Abigail hears Nabal has treated David and David's intention to respond with violence. She prepares food for the men – responding to David's original request for food. She intercepts the warring party. She winsomely talks with David. She reminds him of his current track-record of not having avenged himself (v26). She expresses her faith in God, and in David, that he will be king (v28,29). She reminds him that God is for him, and that he need not commit violence against his enemies, since God will deal with them (v29). She warns him that if he follows through with his revenge he will 'have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed' (v31). Most winsomely, she displays a real knowledge of David's life. She knows that Saul is pursuing him (v29). She knows that he is a sling-shot – since she uses the analogy that God will 'hurl away' his enemies 'as from the pocket of a sling' (v29). David is undone by her wisdom and tact, and even praises God for sending her to speak sense into him (v32-35). God acts to avenge David by the death of Nabal, and David learns that he should leave judgment to God (v36-39).

The story ends beautifully in a wonderful romance. David, having been stripped of his previous wife, Michal, marries Abigail. Both have had terrible previous marriages, and the two are brought together by God, it seems. Abigail becomes a voice of wisdom in David's life. As the years progress, David learns to treat his enemies with mercy – one

classic story later in his life is how he refuses to strike out against the offensive Shimei who taunts him in a time of great vulnerability (2 Sam 16:5-12, 2 Sam 19:16-23). This is the influence of Abigail!

Still today, we desperately need the voice of peace-makers, people who will tactfully, timeously and courageously speak some sense into our lives. And, like Abigail was to David, we need to become this kind of person in the lives of others. Pity the person who does not have the voice of grace and reason in their ears when they are tempted to respond vindictively and with heated emotion to people who rile them.

The main point has been made, but let me take the gap to say three more things from these verses: 1) Notice how God cares for his own. David has lost Samuel (a very wise and intelligent man), and his previous wife (no doubt a beautiful woman), but God restores him by giving him a wife who is both intelligent and beautiful (v3). 2) Notice how David ruins the ultimate romance with Abigail by becoming a polygamist and marrying yet another wife some time later (v43). We must remember that just because the Bible describes this in David's life, it does not prescribe it. It is reflective of an Old Testament morality that had not yet been enlightened by the teachings of Christ or empowered by the transforming work of the Spirit. 3) Notice how Abigail does more than give us an example of peace-making. She is a picture Christ's peace-making mediation between us, foolish, hard-hearted, ungrateful sinners like Nabal, and a Holy King who is angered by our sin. Verse 20 says Abigail 'came riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, there were David and his men descending toward her, and she met them'. Remember Christ riding into Jerusalem to be crucified? Verse 23 and 24 says that Abigail 'bowed down before David with her face to the ground. She fell at his feet and said: "Pardon your servant, my lord.' Jesus surrendered his life in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus humbled himself on a cross. Jesus intercepted the wrath of God that was soon to destroy our lives. But he went further than Abigail who merely risked her life to accomplish pardon for Nabal. He actually lost his life on a cross – taking the punishment we deserve, all so that we could be pardoned. That's mercy! When Christ died he rescued 'us from the coming wrath' (1 Thes 1:10).

## *CHAPTER 26*

### *David Again Spares Saul's Life*

*1 The Ziphites went to Saul at Gibeah and said, "Is not David hiding on the hill of Hakilah, which faces Jeshimon?"*

*2 So Saul went down to the Desert of Ziph, with his three thousand able young Israelites, to search there for David. 3 Saul made his camp beside the road on the hill of Hakilah facing Jeshimon, but David stayed in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul had followed him there, 4 he sent out scouts and learned that Saul had definitely arrived.*



5 Then David set out and went to the place where Saul had camped. He saw where Saul and Abner son of Ner, the commander of the army, had lain down. Saul was lying inside the camp, with the army encamped around him.

6 David then asked Ahimelek the Hittite and Abishai son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, "Who will go down into the camp with me to Saul?"

"I'll go with you," said Abishai.

7 So David and Abishai went to the army by night, and there was Saul, lying asleep inside the camp with his spear stuck in the ground near his head. Abner and the soldiers were lying around him.

8 Abishai said to David, "Today God has delivered your enemy into your hands. Now let me pin him to the ground with one thrust of the spear; I won't strike him twice."

9 But David said to Abishai, "Don't destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the LORD's anointed and be guiltless? 10 As surely as the LORD lives," he said, "**the LORD himself will strike him, or his time will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish.** 11 But the LORD forbid that I should lay a hand on the LORD's anointed. Now get the spear and water jug that are near his head, and let's go."

12 So David took the spear and water jug near Saul's head, and they left. No one saw or knew about it, nor did anyone wake up. They were all sleeping, because the LORD had put them into a deep sleep.

13 Then David crossed over to the other side and stood on top of the hill some distance away; there was a wide space between them. 14 He called out to the army and to Abner son of Ner, "Aren't you going to answer me, Abner?"

Abner replied, "Who are you who calls to the king?"

15 David said, "You're a man, aren't you? And who is like you in Israel? Why didn't you guard your lord the king? Someone came to destroy your lord the king. 16 What you have done is not good. As surely as the LORD lives, you and your men must die, because you did not guard your master, the LORD's anointed. Look around you. Where are the king's spear and water jug that were near his head?"

17 Saul recognized David's voice and said, "Is that your voice, David my son?"

David replied, "Yes it is, my lord the king." 18 And he added, "Why is my lord pursuing his servant? What have I done, and what wrong am I guilty of? 19 Now let my lord the king listen to his servant's words. If the LORD has incited you against me, then may he accept an offering. If, however, people have done it, may they be cursed before the LORD! **They have driven me today from my share in the LORD's inheritance and have said, 'Go, serve other**

*gods.' 20 Now do not let my blood fall to the ground far from the presence of the LORD. The king of Israel has come out to look for a flea—as one hunts a partridge in the mountains."*

*21 Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Come back, David my son. Because you considered my life precious today, I will not try to harm you again. Surely I have acted like a fool and have been terribly wrong."*

*22 "Here is the king's spear," David answered. "Let one of your servants come over and get it. 23 The LORD rewards every man for his righteousness and faithfulness. The LORD delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the LORD's anointed. 24 **As surely as I valued your life today, so may the LORD value my life and deliver me from all trouble.**"*

*25 Then Saul said to David, "May you be blessed, David my son; you will do great things and surely triumph."*

*So David went on his way, and Saul returned home.*

## SHOWING MERCY TO SOMEONE WHO IS AGAINST YOU CAN BRING THEM TO REPENTANCE

This chapter is similar to chapter 25. The difference is that in chapter 25 David was being pursued by Saul – and David was on his back-foot. Now he is still being pursued (through the betrayal and spying of the Ziphites once again (v1), only this time David is on his front-foot. He knows exactly where Saul is, though Saul does not exactly where he is (v4).

David takes a nephew, Abishai, with him into the heart of Saul's camp one night and secretly take Saul's spear and water jug. Abishai attempts to provoke David to kill Saul with this spear saying that this was a God-given opportunity. Added to that, this was the very spear that Saul had tried three times previously to kill David with! How justified he would have been. Abishai even offers to do it for him. But David resists the temptation. He knows that God will deal with his enemies somehow (just like he had done with Nabal recently (25:39)). God put Saul on the throne, and when the time is right God will remove Saul from the throne (v5-12,23). A side note must be made here: there was the chance for David to become king prematurely. All he needed to do was to kill Saul. But he didn't. And just as well. When we try to rush God's processes through self-promotion we will ruin what God is doing! What motivates David's patience? He gives the answer in verse 23: 'The LORD rewards every man for his righteousness and faithfulness.' How right David was! And later God did just that – rewarded him with a great kingdom. We also see here a forward flash into the life of Christ. Christ was offered the kingdom prematurely by Satan (Luke 4:5-7), a temptation he, like his ancestor David, resisted.

David then, from a distance, wakes up the camp of 6000 soldiers and scolds Abner their captain for failing to protect Saul. He seems to be genuinely concerned for the well-being of the very man who is trying to destroy him (v13-15).

David then addresses Saul in the most respectful and humble way. He insists he is innocent (v17-18). He asks for forgiveness for any way he may have offended him, mentions that others may have possibly provoked Saul to kill David and expresses his grief that he has been kicked out of Israel, which he sees as being partially his rightful inheritance from God (v19). He then compares himself to a flea and a bird being hunted in the mountain (v20).

Still today, this is a picture of mercy. God wants to enable us to extend mercy again and again to people who have hurt us (how many times Saul tried to kill David!). God wants to enable us to be concerned about the well-being of the very people who wish to harm us, or who are indifferent to our well-being. God wants to teach us to respond in the opposite spirit to people who relate to us aggressively. Though they are aggressive, yet we are to respond in humility – not because we're terrified of them, but because we're so secure in God. This does not mean we think that their maltreatment of us is acceptable. It is not! It is just that we leave it to God to deal with them in his own way, and in his own time.

Look how David's amazing mercy undoes Saul. He, for the very first time, admits his sin without providing an excuse (v21). He invites David to come back to the palace. He wishes David the very best (v25). Though previously his repentance had been short-lived, this time it seems to be true – he never pursues David again! This is the last time David and Saul will meet.

Still today, when we treat our enemies well we – to use a verse from Romans 12 (which itself quotes Proverbs 25:21-22) – we 'pour burning coals on their heads.' This doesn't mean that we simply make them feel bad. It means that we open up the possibility of a heart-softening and a genuine repentance and restoration of relationship. Still today, this is how Christ-followers are to treat people, and still today this is how Christ treats us. His loving kindness – the fact that he died for the very people who crucified him – the fact that he responded to the fists of hostility with the kiss of grace – is what leads to our repentance (Rom 2:4).

# THE LOSS OF FAITH

---

## *1 Samuel 27-28*

### CHAPTER 27

#### *David Among the Philistines*

*1 But David thought to himself, "One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand."*

## BEWARE OF THE LOSS OF FAITH!

How many saints have given up 30 seconds before the breakthrough! Think how often people in the Bible, right at the moment of victory, saints fold over into unbelief. Think of Elijah, who immediately after defeating the prophets of Baal and seeing his prophecy of rain come to fulfilment, he runs for his life! Think of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, who asks for a son. But the moment he finds out his prayer has been heard, he falls into unbelief (Luke 1:13). Think of the Jerusalem church praying for Peter's rescue. But when it happens, they slam the door in his face, thinking him to be a ghost (Acts 12:15). Now add David to this list. He falls into unbelief – right at the point of imminent victory!

And what a terrible sin unbelief is. It is the sin from which all other sins come. Spurgeon writes, "To doubt the lovingkindness of God is thought by some to be a very small sin; in fact, some have even exalted the doubts and fears of God's people into fruits and grace, and evidences of great advancement in experience. It is humiliating to observe that certain ministers have pampered and petted men in unbelief and distrust of God, being in this matter false to their Master, and to the souls of his people. Far be it from me to smite the feeble of the flock; but their sins I must and will smite, since it is my firm conviction, that to doubt the kindness, the faithfulness, and the love of God, is a very heinous offense".

We see how David fell into unbelief...

1) *The way to fall into unbelief is to entertain negative, untrue thoughts.* It says David thought to himself, 'One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul.' What a lie! He is soon to be king. Saul has just spoken these words over him: 'May you be blessed, David my son; you will do great things and surely triumph.' They are words that concur with the prophecies of Samuel and Jonathan to him. God has been so good to David, protecting him on numerous occasions. Why on earth would God not protect him into the future? Still today, we are defeated spiritually through believing lies – lies about God, lies about ourselves, lies about God's plan. It is our responsibility to refuse thoughts that contradict the character and promises of God. David Guzik writes, 'David could have

asked himself for a different opinion. Previously, David declared his great trust in God against all enemies (1 Samuel 17:45-47). The David of 1 Samuel 27 should listen to the David of 1 Samuel 17! Spurgeon tells an interesting story of how we can ask ourselves for another opinion on the matter: 'I remember on one occasion, to my shame, being sad and doubtful of heart, and a kind friend took out a paper and read to me a short extract from a discourse upon faith. I very soon detected the author of the extract; my friend was reading to me from one of my own sermons. Without saying a word he just left it to my own conscience, for he had convicted me of committing the very fault against which I had so earnestly declaimed.'

2) *The way to fall into unbelief is to be emotionally exhausted over an extended period of time.* In the preceding chapters we see David running for his life, being hunted down, and betrayed by spies again and again. At every turn he faces strain and danger – for months, maybe years, on end! It is not surprising then that there would be some kind of emotional exhaustion. It appears that the emotional collapse surfaced right at the moment of victory over Saul – even this adrenalizing experience of confronting Saul successfully contributed to the emotional collapse. It is not just the intensity of difficulty but also the intensity of success that wears us down. We should take note. When our emotional tanks are depleted because of the long-endured strain of difficult situations or because of the soul-eroding intensity of success we are in real danger of losing perspective, and along with the loss of perspective comes the loss of faith.

3) *The way to fall into unbelief is to fail to seek God in prayer.* Listen to Spurgeon on this point: 'It seems to us that David had not prayed. In every other action of David you find some hint that he asked counsel of the Lord. He says to Abiathar, "Bring the ephod here;" and he enters upon no enterprise without first asking of the Urim and Thummim what was God's mind. But this time what did he talk with? Why, with the most deceitful thing that he could have found—with his own heart, for "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." I do not find that he mentioned it to God's priest; he did not make it a matter of prayer; he could not venture to pray when he undertook it himself. No, he acted on his own authority, and a man will soon find that his head is full of addled brains that can judge without appealing to God. Having not prayed he did the foolish act; he forgot his God, he looked only at his enemy, and it was no wonder that when he saw the force and strength of the cruel monarch, and the evil persistence of his persecution—he said, "I shall one day fall before him." Brothers and sisters, would you wish to hatch the egg of unbelief until it turns into a serpent? Stop praying! Would you see evils magnified and mercies diminished? Would you find your tribulations increased sevenfold, and your faith diminished in proportion? Stop praying! I say to you today, if you will neglect your prayer closet, all the troubles you have ever had shall be as nothing compared with what will yet come upon you. You shall know what man can do when he leaves his God, and you shall find out in the bitterness of your soul what an evil thing it is to leave the living fountain and hew out for yourself a broken cistern which can hold no water.' If only the words of Spurgeon were not true. Let's see the broken cistern that David begins to drink from. Let's see the egg of unbelief hatch into a serpent...

2 So David and the six hundred men with him left and went over to Achish son of Maok king of Gath. 3 David and his men settled in Gath with Achish. Each man had his family with him, and David had his two wives: Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, the widow of Nabal. 4 When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him.

5 Then David said to Achish, "If I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be assigned to me in one of the country towns, that I may live there. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you?"

6 So on that day Achish gave him Ziklag, and it has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since. 7 David lived in Philistine territory a year and four months.

8 Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites. (From ancient times these peoples had lived in the land extending to Shur and Egypt.) 9 **Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive, but took sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes. Then he returned to Achish.**

10 When Achish asked, "Where did you go **raiding** today?" David would say, "Against the Negev of Judah" or "Against the Negev of Jerahmeel" or "Against the Negev of the Kenites." 11 He did not leave a man or woman alive to be brought to Gath, for he thought, "They might inform on us and say, 'This is what David did.' " And such was his practice as long as he lived in Philistine territory. 12 Achish trusted David and said to himself, "He has become so obnoxious to his people, the Israelites, that he will be my servant for life."

## CHAPTER 28

1 In those days the Philistines gathered their forces to fight against Israel. Achish said to David, "You must understand that you and your men will accompany me in the army."

2 David said, "Then you will see for yourself what your servant can do."

Achish replied, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life."

-the loss of faith can mean that you end up being Satan's agent into the world.

## THE LOSS OF FAITH LEADS TO A COMPLICATED AND COMPROMISED LIFE

The last thing God had told David was to stay in the land of Judah. But now he heads for the land of the Philistines. He has stopped trusting in God's ability to protect him and bless him. He is taking the well-being of his life into his own hands. What a mistake this is. Instead of trusting in God, he leans on his own understanding – "The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines' (27:1). We must use our minds, but not



rely on them. And the more resourceful we are, the more easily tempted we are to rely on ourselves. But look what a mess it leads to...

In verses 2-3 of chapter 27, David leads all 600 men and their families, and his own wives to flee to Gath, a Philistine city, where they are hosted by King Achish. Still today, when we fail to trust in God, we so easily begin to trust in the systems of the world, and the people of this world, instead of God. That's idolatry. And devastatingly we lead astray all the people whom we have influence over along with us.

In verse 4 of chapter 27 we see that David is doing all of this in vain. He is fleeing Saul who is no longer pursuing him. Michael Eaton suggests the better translation of this verse is, 'Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, but he no longer searched for him.' Still today, when we fail to trust in God, we so easily make decisions, sometimes major ones, based upon misperceptions of what is really happening in our lives.

In verses 5-7 of chapter 27, David receives a town of his own, an inheritance amongst the Philistines! And not amongst God's people. Still today, when we fail to trust in God, and take our life into our own hands, we may accumulate possessions and connections that God has not given us. Just because we have these things does not mean God blessed us with them.

In verses 8-9 of chapter 27, David and his men begin to raid and totally destroy neighbouring Philistine villages – women and children included. Though God had at times commanded the destruction of Canaanite villages in the territory of Israel, God had never instructed this! In fact later when David wanted to build the temple, God would refuse him the privilege precisely because of the blood he had needlessly shed upon the earth (see 1 Chron 22:8). Why was David doing this? Was it greed? (He was raiding these villages after all). Was it boredom? Was it a longing for significance? Was he trying to justify a guilty conscience by doing what he wrongly perceived as God's work? Who knows? What we do know is that, still today, when we stop trusting in God, and start trusting in our devices, we may end up doing a whole bunch of things to deal with our boredom, our longing for significance or our guilty conscience that are entirely outside of God's will for us, and ultimately undermine all that God wants to give us and lead us into.

In verse 10-12 of chapter 27, David lies to king Achish. He lives a double life, pretending to be attacking Israel's villages whereas he is really attacking King Achish's neighbours! In those days (as in these days) it was the survival of the best liar. A good saying was 'Do others in, before they do you in.' That was the culture of the day. But it certainly wasn't the culture of God. And tragically we see David who is now trusting in his own resources surviving by lying through his teeth, by doing others in before they do him in. Still today, when we fail to trust in God we so easily begin to lie in order to survive and thrive. And we get sucked into the culture of our day – only making the dark world grow darker - rather than shining God's light into it.

In verses 1-2 of chapter 28. David ends up being willing to march against his very own people, Israel! Instead of fighting against the Philistines, he is willing to fight alongside

them. Instead of taking off the head of a Philistine leader, as he once had done to Goliath, he ends up willing to be King Achish's bodyguard, ready to guard his very head! What a slow and steady fall. What an entangled life – where one compromise leads to another, where life gets all the more complicated. And so it is when we fail to trust in God.

#### *Saul and the Medium at Endor*

**3 Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in his own town of Ramah. Saul had expelled the mediums and spiritists from the land.**

*4 The Philistines assembled and came and set up camp at Shunem, while Saul gathered all Israel and set up camp at Gilboa. 5 When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his heart. 6 He inquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him by dreams or Urim or prophets. 7 Saul then said to his attendants, "Find me a woman who is a medium, so I may go and inquire of her."*

*"There is one in Endor," they said.*

*8 So Saul disguised himself, putting on other clothes, and at night he and two men went to the woman. "Consult a spirit for me," he said, "and bring up for me the one I name."*

*9 But the woman said to him, "Surely you know what Saul has done. He has cut off the mediums and spiritists from the land. Why have you set a trap for my life to bring about my death?"*

*10 Saul swore to her by the LORD, "As surely as the LORD lives, you will not be punished for this."*

## **HARDENED UNBELIEF, AND THE RESULTING DISOBEDIENCE, MEANS WE MAY GO BACK TO THE VERY SIN WE ONCE EXPELLED FROM OUR LIVES**

This is a sad hour in the history of God's people. Not just David, but Saul had lost his faith – only far more severely than David had. If David was experiencing a lapse in faith (which was soon to be restored (see 30:6)), Saul was deeply hardened in his unbelief, and the resulting disobedience. This does not mean he was beyond the ability to repent however.

The Philistines were gathering forces and setting up camp for an imminent attack on Israel. They were a mere 7 kilometres away from En Dor, the place where Saul is in this part of the story. This terrified Saul. Saul had once been a man of courage - when he had been empowered by the Spirit and trusted in God (1 Sam 11:6-11). But 'he was afraid; terror filled his heart' (v5). Still today, the loss of faith leads to the loss of courage and the onset of fear. Fear and faith cannot exist in the same heart. The vacuum that faithlessness creates is easily filled with fear.

Saul was so desperate for comfort, help and guidance. So he turned to God. He sought guidance from God 'by dreams', 'Urim' and prophets' (v6). But God did not speak to him. A few verses later, he says that God had departed from him (v15). Why would God not be found by Saul? Isn't God the one of whom it is said, 'seek and you will find'? There are two answers: 1) When God speaks again and again, and we harden our hearts to what he says, then he will not speak to us again until such time as we repent. This is what had happened to Saul. He had once heard God speaking to him, but he had hardened his heart to what God had said. 2) When we seek God not to get right with God, but because we want to use him, he is inclined to not respond to our seeking. It had been about ten to fifteen years since Saul had walked away from God. Now he seeks God not to be restored to God, but to use him. It is not as Saul thinks – 'God has departed from me'. The truth is Saul had departed from God. If only Saul would repent, who knows the grace that God would have shown him? Perhaps God would have even spared his life, and he could have assisted David as king? But his lack of repentance meant that he was cut off from God's restorative grace.

One might ask, 'but surely if God would just speak to him, he would repent and be restored to God?' God knew his heart, and when we see what he did next to try receive the comfort, guidance and help he needed, we see that his heart was as hard as ever toward God...

Shockingly, he looks for a medium who can consult the dead for him. Verse 3 tells us that when Samuel was still alive, and when Saul had once walked with God, he had expelled all the mediums and spiritists from the land. This was because God in the law of Moses commanded that mediums and spiritists (those who claim to contact the dead and spirit beings) should have no place among his people (see Leviticus 19:31, 20:6, 27 and in Deuteronomy 18:9-14). Now Saul, like a dog that goes back to his own vomit, turns to the occultists – the very occultists he had once banned - in his time of need. What a picture this is of how we – when our hearts are hard toward God – will sink to such base means in our times of need. It may be substance abuse, the occult, sexual sin, fraud and so much more. They are all profoundly inferior substitutes for God. 2 Peter 2:20-21 speaks of people who once knew God and the truth, but then hardened their hearts and went back to their old ways: 'they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud."'

*11 Then the woman asked, "Whom shall I bring up for you?"*

*"Bring up Samuel," he said.*

*12 When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out at the top of her voice and said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!"*

*13 The king said to her, "Don't be afraid. What do you see?"*

*The woman said, "I see a ghostly figure coming up out of the earth."*

*14 "What does he look like?" he asked.*

*"An old man wearing a robe is coming up," she said.*

*Then Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground.*

*15 Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?"*

*"I am in great distress," Saul said. "The Philistines are fighting against me, and God has departed from me. He no longer answers me, either by prophets or by dreams. So I have called on you to tell me what to do."*

*16 Samuel said, "Why do you consult me, now that the LORD has departed from you and become your enemy?"*

## HARDENED UNBELIEF, AND THE RESULTING DISOBEDIENCE, MAY MEAN GOD SPEAKS TO US IN SOME UNUSUAL WAYS

Saul finds a necromancer, or a medium, who claims to be able to consult the dead. And remarkably she makes contact with the spirit of Samuel – he was visible both to both the medium and Saul. This wasn't a 'crystal ball' appearance that only the medium could pretend to see. Nor was it a "voice in the dark" that one might encounter in a séance. This was a real appearance of Samuel.

David Guzik writes, 'This strange incident is controversial, and several different approaches have been used to understand this passage. Here are four of the most commonly suggested possibilities. Some believe that this was a hallucination of the medium. But this doesn't make sense, because it doesn't explain why the medium was so frightened. It doesn't explain why Saul saw Samuel also, and why Samuel spoke to Saul, not to the medium. Some believe that this was a deception by the medium. But this also isn't an adequate explanation, for the same reasons given to the previous suggestion. Some believe that this was a demonic impersonation of Samuel. It is possible that the medium, with her occultic powers, summoned a demonic spirit that deceived both her and Saul. But this suggestion is also inadequate, because it does not speak to the issue of motive. After all, what advantage does Satan gain by "Samuel's" words to Saul? Some believe that this was a genuine (but strange) appearance of Samuel. This is the best explanation, because it is supported by the reaction of the medium, who got more than she bargained for. Judging by her shocked, fearful reaction in verse 12, she had never experienced anything like this! It is also supported by the truth of what Samuel said (and the text says that Samuel said it). Some may say that it is impossible for Samuel to reappear in some way, coming from the world beyond back to this world. But Moses and Elijah also came from the world beyond back to this world when they appeared with Jesus at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:3).'

We must note that the medium in this case had no power over Samuel. Samuel really came, but not because the medium called for him. Samuel appeared because God had a special purpose for it. Why did God send Samuel? To re-confirm the coming judgment upon King Saul's in a dramatic way, and perhaps to give this king an opportunity to repent – which tragically he never did! When we close our ears to God, God may find unusual ways to speak to us! When our hearts are hardened in their unbelief, God may shock us with his voice of warning about judgment and his offer of mercy if we repent!

*17 The LORD has done what he predicted through me. The LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hands and given it to one of your neighbors—to David. 18 Because you did not obey the LORD or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites, the LORD has done this to you today. 19 The LORD will deliver both Israel and you into the hands of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The LORD will also give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines."*

*20 Immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, filled with fear because of Samuel's words. His strength was gone, for he had eaten nothing all that day and all that night.*

*21 When the woman came to Saul and saw that he was greatly shaken, she said, "Look, your servant has obeyed you. I took my life in my hands and did what you told me to do. 22 Now please listen to your servant and let me give you some food so you may eat and have the strength to go on your way."*

*23 He refused and said, "I will not eat."*

*But his men joined the woman in urging him, and he listened to them. He got up from the ground and sat on the couch.*

*24 The woman had a fattened calf at the house, which she butchered at once. She took some flour, kneaded it and baked bread without yeast. 25 Then she set it before Saul and his men, and they ate. That same night they got up and left.*

## **HARDENED UNBELIEF, AND THE RESULTING DISOBEDIENCE, ULTIMATELY LEADS TO THE LOSS OF ONE'S MINISTRY AND REWARD**

No true Christian can lose their salvation, but a Christian certainly can lose their ministry, their inheritance, their heavenly reward. 1 Corinthians 3:15 gives a picture of a Christian who is saved and goes into heaven, but 'as through the fire'. In other words his wasted, compromised life is judged by God, and he has no reward in heaven. Saul is a picture of this. He does not lose his salvation, but he does lose his God-given kingship.

In verse 17 and 18, Samuel repeats similar words he had once spoken to Saul many years before (in 1 Samuel 15) about the loss of his kingship. All these years Saul had been running from this very fact, and has been attempting to destroy David. Though 10-15

years have passed, nothing has changed in Saul's heart, and nothing has changed in God's words. When God warns us in Scripture, we may ignore that warning, but it is a matter of time before we will stand before the God who warned us and his treatment of us will be exactly like he warned! Oh, let us all turn to God in humble faith and repentance!

Notice how much dread falls upon Saul. He falls to the ground fear-struck (v20). He is shaken (v21). He struggles to eat (v23-25). 'The Lord will Judge his people; It is fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God' (Heb 10:30-31). Oh, let us all turn to God in humble faith and repentance!

Saul, and his sons, will die within a day. The wages of sin is death. God is kind enough to tell Saul in advance of his death. Why would he do this? Because he wants him to repent. Time for repentance is running out. Still today, when a person is terminally ill, there is an element of grace in it. The person is pressed, with a dead-line added, to get right with God if they are not yet.

But notice that he doesn't lose his salvation. In the midst of the judgment there is some more mercy. 'Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me'. What kind words. Samuel is with God, and Saul will be with him when he dies. That is the Old Testament language for heaven. We must remember that God never rejected Saul himself – he only rejected him as king (see 1 Sam 15:26). And still today, God will not reject his compromised, unbelief-hardened children, but he will deal with them firmly! Let us repent of our persistent faithlessness and disobedience.



# FINDING STRENGTH IN GOD

---

## *1 Samuel 29:1-30:6*

### CHAPTER 29

#### *Achish Sends David Back to Ziklag*

*1 The Philistines gathered all their forces at Aphek, and Israel camped by the spring in Jezreel. 2 As the Philistine rulers marched with their units of hundreds and thousands, David and his men were marching at the rear with Achish. 3 The commanders of the Philistines asked, "What about these Hebrews?"*

*Achish replied, "Is this not David, who was an officer of Saul king of Israel? He has already been with me for over a year, and from the day he left Saul until now, I have found no fault in him."*

*4 But the Philistine commanders were angry with Achish and said, "Send the man back, that he may return to the place you assigned him. He must not go with us into battle, or he will turn against us during the fighting. How better could he regain his master's favor than by taking the heads of our own men? 5 Isn't this the David they sang about in their dances:*

*" 'Saul has slain his thousands,  
and David his tens of thousands'?"*

*6 So Achish called David and said to him, "As surely as the LORD lives, you have been reliable, and I would be pleased to have you serve with me in the army. From the day you came to me until today, I have found no fault in you, but the rulers don't approve of you. 7 Now turn back and go in peace; do nothing to displease the Philistine rulers."*

*8 "But what have I done?" asked David. "What have you found against your servant from the day I came to you until now? Why can't I go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?"*

*9 Achish answered, "I know that you have been as pleasing in my eyes as an angel of God; nevertheless, the Philistine commanders have said, 'He must not go up with us into battle.' 10 Now get up early, along with your master's servants who have come with you, and leave in the morning as soon as it is light."*

*11 So David and his men got up early in the morning to go back to the land of the Philistines, and the Philistines went up to Jezreel.*

### CHAPTER 30

#### *David Destroys the Amalekites*

*1 David and his men reached Ziklag on the third day. Now the Amalekites had raided the Negev and Ziklag. They had attacked Ziklag and burned it, 2 and had taken captive the women who were in it, both young and old. They killed none of them, but carried them off as they went on their way.*

*3 When David and his men reached Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. 4 So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep. 5 David's two wives had been captured—Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. 6 David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the LORD his God.*

## PITY THE PERSON WHO TRIES TO FIND THEIR SALVATION AND STRENGTH OUTSIDE OF GOD

In 27:1-2 we saw David making a major decision without seeking God. He believed the lie that eventually Saul would kill him if he stayed in Israel, and that he would rather live among the Philistines. What a mistake that was. Instead of trusting in God's ability to look after him (God had promised him that he would become king, and that Saul would not succeed at killing him), he trusted in his own ability to save himself. Well, let's see how effective his self-salvation scheme proved to be...

First, once he adopted a posture of self-preservation he turned to lying, and got caught in a maze of problems. He told king Achish that he had been killing Israelites (when he actually had been killing Philistines). This led Achish to invite David to join him in an upcoming battle against the Israelites. And David and his men were marching amongst thousands (29:1-2). Imagine the personal strain he was experiencing, but if he refused to go, it would endanger his future protection by Achish. Spurgeon commented on this saying, 'If you and I ever get away from living by straightforward truth, we shall wander into a maze from which it will be hard to extricate ourselves!'

Second, he was rejected by the Philistines (29:3-11). The very people he was trying so desperately to be accepted by were now rejecting him and his men, for fear that they would turn against the Philistines in battle. On the hand David must have been so relieved. On the other hand he must have been broken that he had sunk so low that he wasn't even allowed to fight in a battle. One can also imagine how the Philistines noticed the inconsistency in David. 'Who are these Hebrews?' (29:3). David was undermining the credibility of Jehovah. He was making a mockery of the Hebrew faith. And still today, when we resort to self-salvation schemes, we make a mockery of our faith. It is a matter of time before people will see our inconsistency and, as a result, blaspheme our God. Though people may not believe our gospel, they expect us to live in line with our beliefs. To not do so is to discredit the gospel.

Third, he lost all that he had acquired in the 16 months (see 27:7) of his stay in Philistine territory. All that we acquire outside of God's will, will ultimately be lost. The first thing

he lost was the little town of Ziklag itself, along with all valuables. It smoked before them in blackened ruins. More tragically, his wives were gone, and the wives and children of his soldiers were gone. 'So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep' (30:4). They were shattered. And we will also be shattered if we try save ourselves. All that we acquire outside of God's will, will ultimately be lost. And we will weep one day.

Fourth, David's men turned against him. Bitter at the loss of their families, they blamed David who had got them into this mess, and threatened to stone him. David came within an inch of his life! The very men God had added to him were not about to destroy him. And when we try save ourselves, we end up endangering ourselves in ways we cannot imagine. We also end up hurting the people around us.

No wonder David was in distress. Spurgeon challenges all those of us who, in an attempt to avoid life's challenges, lean on our own understanding, and fail to trust and obey God: 'If you have faith, it must be tried and should that faith fail, you must be tried still more! There is no discharge from this war—difficulties must be faced. This is the day of battle and you must fight if you would reign. You are like men thrown into the sea—you must swim or drown! It is useless to expect ease where your Lord had none! If you adopt the avoidances of suffering suggested by unbelief, not even, then, shall you avoid affliction! The probabilities are that you will be taken among the thorns and scourged with the briars of the wilderness. However rough the king's highway may be, the by-paths are far worse! Therefore keep the way of the commandment and bravely face its trials.'

Elsewhere Spurgeon said, 'You have carved for yourselves and you have cut your own fingers. You have obtained your heart's desire and while the meat is yet in your mouth, a curse has come with it. You say you, "did it for the best." Yes, but it has turned out to be for the worst! David never made a heavier rod for himself than when he thought to avoid all further discomfort by leaving his true place.'

Isaiah 50:10-11 says it like this: 'Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God. But now, all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches go, walk in the light of your fires and the torches you have set ablaze. This is what you shall receive from my hand: you will lie down in torment!'

We can't but also see a future flash of the gospel here. 'It is by grace you have been saved not by works so that no one can boast' (Eph 2:8-9). Everyone person believes something can save them. It may be career, or religion, or being a moral person, or pouring one's life into family. But these cannot save us from the wrath of God. These cannot save us from the power and penalty of sin. These cannot save us from the grip of Satan. Only Christ can. On the cross Jesus did for us what we could not do for ourselves. He lived the life we should have lived, died the death we should have died to give the gift we could not earn. That's why the way to receive God's gift of salvation is to renounce our idolatrous self-salvation plans and cling to God's mercy at the foot of the cross! To fail

to do this will lead to an eternal distress that makes David's distress and bitter weeping seem like mere crocodile tears.

*6b But David found strength in the LORD his God.*

## BLESSED IS THE PERSON WHO FINDS THEIR SALVATION AND STRENGTH IN GOD

What does 'David found strength in the LORD his God' mean? It means at least three things.

*1) 'David finding strength in God' means he repented of his faithlessness and wandering heart.* There is no mention of David seeking God for the full sixteen months (see 27:7) that preceded this moment. His heart had wandered from God, and he had been trying to find strength in his own resourcefulness, military power, connections and ingenuity – but not in God!

But then, through the disaster at Ziklag, he recognized the chastising hand of God! God preserved David. David had nearly ruined the call of God on his life to be king. Only by God's gracious intervention did David not follow the path of Saul who did ruin his chance at being a good king. Spurgeon writes, "The hardest blow that our God ever strikes, if it puts us right and separates us from self and sin and carnal policy, is a blow of love! If it ends our life of selfishness and brings us back into the life of trust, it is a blessed blow! When God blesses His people most, it is by terrible things in righteousness. He hurt David to heal him. He fetched him out from the snare of the Philistine fowler by a way that brought the tears into his eyes till he had no more power to weep. Now the servant of the Lord begins to see the wonderful hand of God and he shall yet say, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word (Ps 119:67)" I, the preacher of this hour, beg to bear my little witness that the worst days I have ever had have turned out to be my best days! And when God has seemed most cruel to me, He has, then, been most kind! If there is anything in this world for which I would bless Him more than for anything else, it is for pain and affliction."

And rightly, David anticipates God's mercy upon his repentance. Spurgeon chides those of us who feel we're too sinful to return to God: "Alas," you say, "I have done wrong." I know you have, but God has not! If your confidence were in *yourself*, that wrong of yours might crush your hope. But since your confidence is now once again in God and he has not changed, why should you fear? "Oh, but I am so sinful." Yes, I know you are and so you were when he first looked upon you in love!

*2) 'David finding strength in God' means he stirred up fresh faith in God.* It is not enough to repent of the sin of unbelief. Our faith must be restored, renewed and refreshed. David in this moment realizes that it is up to him to do. He cannot wait for another to encourage him. He cannot wait for comfortable circumstances. As he re-ignited his own faith his strength returned. Loss of faith leads to loss of strength. The stirring of faith catalyzes strength. Most likely he encouraged himself by doing three things....

*He may have stirred up fresh faith by meditating upon what God had already done for him.* Imagine the panoramic picture that would move through David's mind as he remembered God's goodness to him the past. Preserved from the lions' jaw and the bear's paw. Protected from Goliath's sword and threats. Spared from Saul's threefold attempt at spearing him mid-song. Evading Saul's men as he was let down from his bedroom by Michal his wife. Provided for by God in caves and on mountains, narrowly escaping the clutches of Saul's army again and again. How easily we forget what God has already done for us, the prayers he has answered, the provisions and protections we have experienced. To forget is to easily lose faith. To remember is to renew faith in the God who has done it so many times that we can be sure he will not fail us in the future.

*He may have stirred up fresh faith by declaring to himself God's prophetic promises to him.* He would have remembered the oil of Samuel at which time he was prophetically anointed as king while he was still a boy (16:13). He would have rehashed the words of Jonathan who prophesied over him (see 23:16-17). Notice that it does not say that he only prayed to God in this time. Much of what David was doing was talking sense to himself. There is such a thing as preaching to one's self the goodness and promises of God (which is what David does in Psalm 42 and 43 for example). This is so important to the restoration of faith. We remember that it was as David spoke lies to himself that his faith collapsed in the first place (27:1-2). Restoration means that he would need to speak truth to himself.

*He may have stirred up fresh faith by reminding himself how God turns suffering for good.* He may have said to himself, 'Though this suffering has been self-induced, yet God will use it for my good. Perhaps he will use it as part of my training for being king one day.' Had he said this he would have been so right. In the years following when he was king he would have to deal with similar situations where he would have to, in times of potential mutiny, regain the respect and submission of the strong men that he had attracted to himself.

**3) 'David finding strength in God' means he realized that God was enough.** In previous moments of suffering David had been able to draw comfort from people. Samuel. Jonathan. His wives. The men who loyally supported him. But now Samuel is dead, Jonathan has lost track of him, his wives are kidnapped and the men who supported him are wanting to kill him. David is totally alone. In previous times had had a back-up plan, but now all back-up plans evade him. In previous times he had physical and emotional strength. Now his strength and heart have failed. David is at the end of his tether. And, right there, in the darkest valley, he learns that God will never leave (though everyone else potentially will) and God is his only true treasure. He learns that God is enough! This is something that can only be learnt when God is all you have. Until that point it is all theory. Every Christ-follower is likely to have at least one moment in their lives like this – and what a glorious truth to discover: 'God is enough!' What a joy to say, along with David, 'Whom I have in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever' (Psalm 73:25-26).

## BECOMING FIT TO LEAD

---

### *1 Samuel 30:7-31*

*7 Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelek, "Bring me the ephod." Abiathar brought it to him, 8 and David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them?"*

*"Pursue them," he answered. "You will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue."*

### YOU'RE FIT TO LEAD WHEN YOU'RE BROKEN BY YOUR INABILITY TO LEAD

David is finally fit to lead. David is soon to become king. God has been training him all this time. Although David is a talented leader, he needs to learn like everyone else that to lead in God's kingdom requires a deep humility. For 16 months David led his men so poorly – by failing to rely on and seek God, and by leading them to dwell in Philistine territory. But God intervened and brought him to his senses. Though he will soon become king, he has learnt that talent is not enough. He has learnt that he doesn't have what it takes to be king. And now that he is freshly broken he is ready to be king!

Still today, when God raises up leaders, he tends to take them through a process of humbling and brokenness, so that they don't put their confidence in themselves and their natural leadership ability, but rather in God.

### YOU'RE FIT TO LEAD WHEN YOU SEEK GOD FOR FAITH AND GUIDANCE ON EVERY MAJOR DECISION

What does David first do once he has found his strength in God? He seeks God for guidance, something he had not done for a while. The way he ended up in Philistine territory for a wasted 16 months was by failing to seek God. He calls on the priest Abiathar to use the ephod. The ephod was some kind of lightweight that had dice-like stones in it, called Urim and Thummim. The priest would ask God a question and then would throw the stones, which would then answer yes or no, though no answer might also be given.

Still today, we're not fit to lead until we seek God's guidance in all we do. When an opportunity arises, we should seek God in prayer. The Urim and Thummim are no longer God's means of leading his people however. One leader playfully quipped that now that we have a Bible, God speaks to us as we are using Urim and Thummim through it. The Holy Spirit is who is ready to lead the praying church and believer is the New Testament version of the Urim and Thummim.



Still today, we desperately need faith and assurance. Faith comes from hearing God (Rom 10:14). The odds were stacked against David and his men even finding this raiding party, never mind overcoming them with a heart-broken, fatigued army. But God spoke to David and that was enough. His faith catalyzed faith in the men he was leading. Oh, how desperately we need Christian leaders who lead with faith and assurance because they have sought God!

David, in these verses, is a good picture of Jesus, the true and greater David. He was perfectly guided by his Father and by the Spirit during his earthly ministry. Though he was the sinless Son of God, think of how he devoted much time to prayer. ‘The Son can do nothing unless he sees his Father doing it’ (John 5:19). And everything Jesus did, he did with faith. He was a man who ministered and led out of continual faith. No wonder so many wanted to follow him. Oh, Christ the King of Kings is fit to lead not only the entire cosmos, but your life and every life!

*9 David and the six hundred men with him came to the Besor Valley, where some stayed behind. 10 Two hundred of them were too exhausted to cross the valley, but David and the other four hundred continued the pursuit.*

## YOU’RE FIT TO LEAD WHEN YOU CAN TRUST GOD IN YOUR WEAKNESS

A full third of David’s men were too weak to continue the chase when they hit a difficult bit of terrain, the Besor valley. David at this point may have lost faith. But he didn’t. He had begun to understand that our weakness doesn’t threaten the possibility of God’s power being at work. In fact they heighten it. Listen to Spurgeon on this point: ‘But mark this, he was not delivered without further trial . . . Many a leader would have given up the chase with one out of three of his troop in hospital, but David pursued with his reduced force. When God means to bless us, he often takes away a part of the little strength we thought we had. We did not think our strength equal to the task, and the Lord takes away a portion even of the little power we had. Our God does not fill till he has emptied. Two hundred men must be rent away from David’s side before God could give him victory . . . Expect then, O troubled one, that you will be delivered, but know that your sorrow may yet deepen, that you may have all the greater joy by-and-by.’ The apostle Paul said God spoke these words to him, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness’, which is why he could say, ‘Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong’ (2 Cor 12:9,10).

David, in these verses, is a good picture of Jesus, the true and greater David. Jesus accomplished salvation in his weakest state – in his own death! And he was raised with power from the grave. ‘For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God’s power’ (2 Cor 13:4). Oh, Christ the King of Kings is fit to lead not only the entire cosmos, but your life and every life!

*11 They found an Egyptian in a field and brought him to David. They gave him water to drink and food to eat— 12 part of a cake of pressed figs and two cakes of raisins. He ate and was revived, for he had not eaten any food or drunk any water for three days and three nights.*

*13 David asked him, "Who do you belong to? Where do you come from?"*

*He said, "I am an Egyptian, the slave of an Amalekite. My master abandoned me when I became ill three days ago. 14 We raided the Negev of the Kerethites, some territory belonging to Judah and the Negev of Caleb. And we burned Ziklag."*

*15 David asked him, "Can you lead me down to this raiding party?"*

*He answered, "Swear to me before God that you will not kill me or hand me over to my master, and I will take you down to them."*

*16 He led David down, and there they were, scattered over the countryside, eating, drinking and reveling because of the great amount of plunder they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from Judah.*

## YOU'RE FIT TO LEAD WHEN YOU'RE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE THE PROVISIONS OF GOD

Picture David and his men. All motivated to rescue their loved ones. But where will they find the men who took them. They are clueless. But God had promised them that they would. It seems David and his men step out in faith and start walking – and God's answer comes! In the discovery of a sick, exhausted, dehydrated and starving Egyptian slave – abandoned by his master who leads them to the drunken raiding army.

Think of the wonderful combination of factors. What are the chances of an army at that time and place abandoning, and not killing, one of their weakened slaves? What are the chances of this man being so upset with the army that abandoned him that he is willing to betray their whereabouts? What are the chances that when David finds the attackers who plundered Ziklag and kidnapped their families that they are in a drunken state (v16)? David and his men must have thanked God for this provision. Still today, when we set out in faith-filled obedience to God, we must be on the look out for God's surprising provisions that will help us succeed. We're fit to lead when we anticipate this to be the normal unfolding of the adventure of leading God's people.

David, in these verses, is a good picture of Jesus, the true and greater David. During his ministry, the Father supplied him with everything that he would need when he needed it, whether it was finding disciples, or a place to stay, or food for the masses, or protection from premature arrest or murder. In fact when we read the gospels with the question, 'In what ways did the Father provide for the Son during the days of his life?' every page rings with examples.

*17 David fought them from dusk until the evening of the next day, and none of them got away, except four hundred young men who rode off on camels and fled. 18 David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives. 19 Nothing was missing: young or old, boy or girl, plunder or anything else they had taken. David brought everything back. 20 He took all the flocks and herds, and his men drove them ahead of the other livestock, saying, "This is David's plunder."*

## YOU'RE FIT TO LEAD WHEN YOU CAN WORK HARD IN LINE WITH GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS

Though God had spoken of their success, David still understood that he would have to work hard to see that success come about. It would not fall out of the sky. So they attacked and rescued 'from dusk until the evening of the next day' (v17) – with an exhausted army! But God kept his promise: 'David brought everything back' (v19).

Spurgeon writes, "Many who get into trouble seem to expect an angel to come and lift them up by the hair of their heads; but angels have other matters in hand. The Lord generally helps us by enabling us to help ourselves, and it is a way which does us double good. It was more for David's benefit that he should himself smite the Amalekites than that God should hurl hailstones out of heaven upon them, and destroy them. David will have their spoil for the wage of battle, and be rewarded for the forced march and the fight. Brother, you will have to work and labour to extricate yourself from debt and difficulty, and so the Lord will hear your prayer. The rule is to trust in God to smite the Amalekites, and then to march after them, as if it all depended upon yourself."

Now let's move from David to Christ. We're told that David 'took all the flocks and herds, and his men drove them ahead of the other livestock, saying, "This is David's plunder"' (v20). David led his men so well in this time, that his men insisted on giving him much personal bounty, consisting of all the flocks and herds that did not include the livestock that was theirs anyway. Spurgeon once preached an entire message on the single line, 'This is David's plunder'. He applied it to Jesus, the Son of David: 1) Christ set the captives free, and therefore all those who are set free are part of his bounty. "How truly it can be said that the greater Son of David has recovered all. All that was lost by sin, our glorious and victorious Captain has recovered. What then shall be his spoil? It was foretold that 'He shall divide the spoil with the strong.' Let your hearts and mine, and all we are, and all we have, be yielded up to him, and let us say of it all, 'This is Jesus' spoil, and to him be glory evermore!'" Everything we have and are now belongs to him. "We should come to Jesus, and by our free will give Him everything we have, everything we are. We give our lives to Him and say, "This is Jesus' spoil." We give our gifts and abilities to Him and say, "This is Jesus' spoil." We give our possessions to Him and say, "This is Jesus' spoil." We give our praise to Him and say, "This is Jesus' spoil." We give our time to Him and say, "This is Jesus' spoil." 2) Christ restored in salvation more than was lost in Adam in the same way that David did more than just restore what was lost, but took everything from the Amalekites. "Now, in the great battle of Christ on our behalf, He has not only given us back what we lost, but He has given us what Adam in

his perfection never had. And I want you to dwell upon that, because this part of it is peculiarly our Lord's spoil. Those good things which we now possess, over and above what we lost by sin, come to us by the Lord Jesus. Now that the Son of God has come into the field, He is not content with restoration, He turns the loss into a gain, the fall into a greater rising." Oh, Christ the King of Kings is fit to lead not only the entire cosmos, but your life and every life!

*21 Then David came to the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to follow him and who were left behind at the Besor Valley. They came out to meet David and the men with him. As David and his men approached, he asked them how they were. 22 But all the evil men and troublemakers among David's followers said, "Because they did not go out with us, we will not share with them the plunder we recovered. However, each man may take his wife and children and go."*

*23 David replied, "No, my brothers, you must not do that with what the LORD has given us. He has protected us and delivered into our hands the raiding party that came against us. 24 Who will listen to what you say? The share of the man who stayed with the supplies is to be the same as that of him who went down to the battle. All will share alike." 25 David made this a statute and ordinance for Israel from that day to this.*

## YOU'RE FIT TO LEAD WHEN YOU CAN PRESERVE UNITY

David and four hundred men fought the Amalekites, while two hundred of the ones who were too weary did not fight. Some of the four hundred make a proposal that will certainly lead to division: "Because they did not go out with us, we will not share with them the plunder we recovered. However, each man may take his wife and children and go" (v22).

David realizes that this suggestion has the power to split his men into A-grade men and B-grade men, giving rise to jealousy and division. But David, being skilful at leading, knows that an army divided is an army weakened. So he reminds them that God provided all the plunder and therefore all must share alike. So doing, David set a precedent for how similar situations in the future would be resolved.

The passion for and the skill of preserving unity is what made David the great king he would become. Soon he would become king of a loose confederation of weakened tribes but by the end of his reign they would be united into one great nation. And still today, Christian leaders need to be greatly concerned for unity amongst God's people – and must learn to deal with potentially divisive situations with skill.

What a picture David provides us of Christ in these verses! 1) Notice David's genuine concern for the soldiers who stayed behind: 'As David and his men approached, he asked them how they were' (v21). Christ cares for his people, especially those who are battered by life and the battle. Christ was a man full of compassion: 'When he saw the

crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd' (Matt 9:36). 2) Notice David's blessing the weak as much as the strong. Listen to what Spurgeon says about this: 'You Little-Faiths, you Despondencies, you Much-Afraids, you Feeble-Minds, you that sigh more than you sing, you that would but cannot, you that have a great heart for holiness, but feel beaten back in your struggles, the Lord shall give you his love, his grace, his favour, as surely as he gives it to those who can do great things in his name.'" 3) Notice David's concern for unity. Christ once prayed, 'My prayer is ... that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity' (John 17:20-23). Oh, Christ the King of Kings is fit to lead not only the entire cosmos, but your life and every life!

*26 When David reached Ziklag, he sent some of the plunder to the elders of Judah, who were his friends, saying, "Here is a gift for you from the plunder of the LORD's enemies."*

*27 David sent it to those who were in Bethel, Ramoth Negev and Jattir; 28 to those in Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa 29 and Rakal; to those in the towns of the Jerahmeelites and the Kenites; 30 to those in Hormah, Bor Ashan, Athak 31 and Hebron; and to those in all the other places where he and his men had roamed.*

## YOU'RE FIT TO LEAD WHEN YOU CAN PRACTICE MAGNANIMOUS GENEROSITY

David and his men made a massive catch of plunder when they attacked the Amalekites. They were justified in keeping it to themselves, but they did not. David shared it with the elders of Judah, who were his friends, and with the leaders of numerous towns, mainly those towns in Israel where he and his men had once roamed. This was an act of gratitude. This was an act of solidarity, which would have assured them that, though he had lived for 16 months in Philistine territory, he had not become one of them. This was a gesture of kindness which would have added to his favour in the sight of the people he would soon lead. Still today, spiritual leaders need to be people of magnanimous generosity, ready to bless the undeserving, ready to reach out in kindness and love to people beyond our own community.

This too is a picture of Christ's magnanimous generosity toward us. Though we did nothing, yet Christ has done it all. He won the victory for us in a far off place and a far off time (2000 years ago just outside Jerusalem), yet thousands of miles and years away, we get to enjoy the bounty that he won on that day. 'Will not he who gave you his Son, not along with him graciously give you all good things?' (Rom 8:32). It is an act of grace that wins our hearts. Religion says 'Do' but Jesus said 'Done'. Christ has done it all, and has won it all – and he invites us to share in it all. Oh, Christ the King of Kings is fit to lead not only the entire cosmos, but your life and every life!

## BECOMING FIT TO LEAD PART 2

---

*1 Samuel 31:7- 2 Samuel 2:7*

### CHAPTER 31

#### *Saul Takes His Life*

*1 Now the Philistines fought against Israel; the Israelites fled before them, and many fell dead on Mount Gilboa. 2 The Philistines were in hot pursuit of Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua. 3 The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him critically.*

*4 Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me."*

*But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. 5 When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. 6 So Saul and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men died together that same day.*

*7 When the Israelites along the valley and those across the Jordan saw that the Israelite army had fled and that Saul and his sons had died, they abandoned their towns and fled. And the Philistines came and occupied them.*

*8 The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. 9 They cut off his head and stripped off his armor, and they sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to proclaim the news in the temple of their idols and among their people. 10 They put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths and fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan.*

*11 When the people of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, 12 all their valiant men marched through the night to Beth Shan. They took down the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth Shan and went to Jabesh, where they burned them. 13 Then they took their bones and buried them under a tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and they fasted seven days.*

### IT'S NOT HOW WELL YOU START THAT COUNTS, BUT HOW WELL YOU FINISH

The life of following God is a long-distance race. And like in any marathon, it is not how well the runner starts that ultimately counts, but how well they finish. Saul got off to a strong start. There was a time when he was powerfully victorious over the Philistines (11:11, 14:22). How tragic then that a few decades later the Philistines are powerfully victorious over him (31:1-3). There was a time when God's Spirit empowered Saul for victory (11:6) but now he seems to be abandoned by God. There was a time when God's



people rallied around him to support his leadership as a united force (11:7-8) but now Israel is scurrying in flight in every direction (31:1). There was a time when he could command any man in his kingdom to do anything he wanted, but now not even his armour-bearer will obey him (31:4). There was a time when he could protect ‘the people of Jabesh Gilead’ (11:1-11), preserving their lives but now those same people, to honour what he once did for them, can at best bury his beheaded body. There was a time when Israel enjoyed a leader who stood a head taller than the rest of Israel, when his army witnessed the beheading of the corpse of the Philistine’s greatest warrior, but now there is no Israelite, only a cheering Philistine army, to witness the beheading of the corpse of king Saul. He started so well and yet finished so poorly. This is picture of the loss that Christians and Christian leaders can face if they fail to persevere in faith and obedience to God. ‘Watch yourselves so that you do not lose what you have accomplished but receive a full reward’ (2 John 8). Christ waits at the finishing line. He wants to be able to say, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant’ but, if we fail to persevere in faith and obedience, we will not hear these words. ‘Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and the completer of the faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart’ (Heb 12:1-3).

Notice that Saul’s failure did not just cost him, it cost so many people. It cost his three sons their lives (v2). It costs his armour-bearer his life (v5). It cost the lives of ‘his men’, those generals who led his army (v6). And it cost the nation of Israel: many die (v1) and many towns are now occupied by Philistines (v7). Saul was meant to be a blessing, but instead he is a failure. Similarly, when we run well for God, enduring to the end, we have the power to bless others, but when we quit or get off the path God has for us, we end up damaging the lives and destinies of people around us, starting with those closest to us. Certainly if we are leaders, as Saul was, all those we lead pay the price for our compromises! Oh, for the love of those we lead, let us run the race God has marked out for us with our eyes fixed on Jesus! One only has to think of how a Christian dad, or a Christian pastor damages those under his lead when he falls to see the lesson God has for us in this wasted life of Saul.

Contrast Saul with David. David, though stumbling at times, and though being way off track for the last 16 months in Philistine territory nevertheless continues the race. He doesn’t quit. He endures. Saul’s path – though starting with relative ease – ends with great shame. David’s path – though starting with great setbacks and suffering – ends with great honour. Very soon David will be king. ‘The light of the righteous shines brightly, but the lamp of the wicked is snuffed out’ (Prov 31:9).

## *2 SAMUEL 1*

### *David Hears of Saul's Death*

*1 After the death of Saul, David returned from striking down the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag two days. 2 On the third day a man arrived from Saul's*

*camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head. When he came to David, he fell to the ground to pay him honour.*

*3 "Where have you come from?" David asked him.*

*He answered, "I have escaped from the Israelite camp."*

*4 "What happened?" David asked. "Tell me."*

*"The men fled from the battle," he replied. "Many of them fell and died. And Saul and his son Jonathan are dead."*

*5 Then David said to the young man who brought him the report, "How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?"*

*6 "I happened to be on Mount Gilboa," the young man said, "and there was Saul, leaning on his spear, with the chariots and their drivers in hot pursuit. 7 When he turned around and saw me, he called out to me, and I said, 'What can I do?'*

*8 "He asked me, 'Who are you?'*

*" 'An Amalekite,' I answered.*

*9 "Then he said to me, 'Stand here by me and kill me! I'm in the throes of death, but I'm still alive.'*

*10 "So I stood beside him and killed him, because I knew that after he had fallen he could not survive. And I took the crown that was on his head and the band on his arm and have brought them here to my lord."*

*11 Then David and all the men with him took hold of their clothes and tore them. 12 They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the army of the LORD and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.*

*13 David said to the young man who brought him the report, "Where are you from?"*

*"I am the son of a foreigner, an Amalekite," he answered.*

*14 David asked him, "Why weren't you afraid to lift your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?"*

*15 Then David called one of his men and said, "Go, strike him down!" So he struck him down, and he died. 16 For David had said to him, "Your blood be on your own head. Your own mouth testified against you when you said, 'I killed the LORD's anointed.' "*

## YOU'RE FIT TO LEAD WHEN YOU'RE NOT JOSTLING TO LEAD

About fifteen years before David was anointed as king. His life since then had been hell. The reason: Saul had been trying to kill him. 'Day after day Saul searched for him' (1 Sam 23:14). The thing that stood between him and his destiny: Saul. The man who caused him the deepest agony taking from him his security, his wealth, his popularity, his wife, his position: Saul. You'd think that David would just want this man dead so that he can become king. But that's not David. Though David was a man who was fallen in many ways, it appears in one way he truly was 'a man after God's own heart' (Acts 13:22) – he left the unfolding of his future in God's hands. He never manipulated his future. He did not impatiently jostle to lead. He did not scheme how he could remove Saul and rule. He left that all in God's hands and in God's timing. He is the rare example of the innocent man who rises to power without political engineering. These verses illustrate it powerfully...

A man claims to have killed Saul on the battle-field. But we know already from 1 Samuel 31 that Saul's suicidal effort worked. He did not need help. It appears that this Amalekite was trying to ingratiate David to himself. He assumed that David would be delighted with the news of Saul's death and the presentation of symbols of kingship. He says, 'I took the crown that was on his head and the band on his arm and have brought them here to my lord' (v10). But David his not delighted. He is deeply grieved. And that is the sign of David's heart. Amazingly, David has led his men so well that, though they once encouraged him to kill Saul (see 1 Sam 24:4), they now grieve along with David (v11-12). David then commands an act of justice. The Amalekite is executed because he claimed to kill Saul. Even David had known better than to kill Saul.

Still today, even though God may place a calling or desire in us to lead or make a contribution of some kind, we should patiently wait for God to let it unfold. This does not mean we passively do nothing. It means that we find our contentment in God, entrusting the unfolding of our lives to him. And whatever happens, we must never try politically engineer our own promotions. God will promote us when and how he sees fit. Until then we patiently co-operate with the very processes God is using to prepare us.

Again, think of Jesus. He did not take any shortcuts to his promotions. He is now seated on a throne, but the path he went through to get there: being led away like a lamb to the slaughter. Once Satan had offered him a premature throne. He refused. Another time many people wanted to make him king by force. But he escaped. Like David, he patiently entrusted the unfolding of his life's destiny to his Father.

### *David's Lament for Saul and Jonathan*

*17 David took up this lament concerning Saul and his son Jonathan, 18 and he ordered that the people of Judah be taught this lament of the bow (it is written in the Book of Jashar):*

*19 "A gazelle lies slain on your heights, Israel.*

*How the mighty have fallen!*  
 20 *"Tell it not in Gath,  
 proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon,  
 lest the daughters of the Philistines be glad,  
 lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice.*

21 *"Mountains of Gilboa,  
 may you have neither dew nor rain,  
 may no showers fall on your terraced fields. [b]  
 For there the shield of the mighty was despised,  
 the shield of Saul—no longer rubbed with oil.*

22 *"From the blood of the slain,  
 from the flesh of the mighty,  
 the bow of Jonathan did not turn back,  
 the sword of Saul did not return unsatisfied.*

23 *Saul and Jonathan—  
 in life they were loved and admired,  
 and in death they were not parted.  
 They were swifter than eagles,  
 they were stronger than lions.*

24 *"Daughters of Israel,  
 weep for Saul,  
 who clothed you in scarlet and finery,  
 who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold.*

25 *"How the mighty have fallen in battle!  
 Jonathan lies slain on your heights.*

26 *I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother;  
 you were very dear to me.  
 Your love for me was wonderful,  
 more wonderful than that of women.*

27 *"How the mighty have fallen!  
 The weapons of war have perished!"*

## YOU'RE FIT TO LEAD WHEN YOU DON'T HOLD GRUDGES

David kept no grudges. It is one thing speaking well of an enemy (which is hard enough!) but imagine singing well of an enemy. Singing is something that involves the heart. David, as a sign that he had truly forgiven Saul from the heart, wrote this song, and instructed all the people he had influence over ('the people of Judah' (v18) to sing it too. David wanted his future kingdom free from grudges.

It is a song that honours Saul and Jonathan, his son. Notice how honours Saul as a great king and as the nation's 'mighty' hero (v19,25,27). He describes him as a gazelle (v19). He grieves that Philistine towns like Gath and Ashkelon are rejoicing (v20). He curses the mountains and the fields where Saul died (v21). He heralds the generosity of Saul to all the women in Israel, whom he urges to weep (v24). He sings of Saul's victorious sword (v22) and describes Saul, and his son Jonathan, as being swifter than an eagle, and stronger than a lion (v23).

David points to Jesus, the greater David. Jesus is fit to lead as King of Kings because of his ability to forgive from the heart. While he was being crucified he prayed, 'Father forgive them, they know not what they do.' He responded to the very men who were crucifying him with the kiss of grace.

## YOU'RE FIT TO LEAD WHEN YOU'RE ABLE TO BUILD DEEP RELATIONSHIPS

Today so many leaders in the world, and in the church have no deep friendships with men that they open their lives to like a book, with men whom they delight in friendship and vulnerability. But not David. He built a deep relationship with Jonathan. This song makes that clear: By saying that 'in death they were not parted' (v23) he honours Jonathan's loyalty to his corrupt father. He devotes the last part of the song to Jonathan alone (v25-26). He expresses deep agony at the loss of Jonathan who was a precious brother to him. He even speaks about a quality of relationship that was unparalleled In David's marriages. Jonathan was ready to give up the prospect of the throne because of his love for David. That's friendship – truly putting another person before you.

And until we are able to build deep relationships with people. We are not fit to lead. When a leader cannot enjoy deep friendships, friendships that if were lost would cut them to the heart, they are not emotionally healthy enough to lead. Leadership in God's kingdom requires great levels of emotional and relational maturity.

Again, look at Christ. Though he was the sinless Son of God, he enjoyed more than just friendship with the Father and the Spirit. He made himself especially vulnerable to James, Peter and John. The One who created us in his own image, with the capacity for deep friendship and robust emotional health, became one of us and showed us how it is done. Oh he is fit to be Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

### *2 SAMUEL 2*

#### *David Anointed King Over Judah*

*1 In the course of time, David inquired of the LORD. "Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?" he asked.*

*The LORD said, "Go up."*

*David asked, "Where shall I go?"*

*"To Hebron," the LORD answered.*

*2 So David went up there with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. 3 David also took the men who were with him, each with his family, and they settled in Hebron and its towns. 4a Then the men of Judah came to Hebron, 4b and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.*

*4c When David was told that it was the men from Jabesh Gilead who had buried Saul, 5 he sent messengers to them to say to them, "The LORD bless you for showing this kindness to Saul your master by burying him. 6 May the LORD now show you kindness and faithfulness, and I too will show you the same favor because you have done this. 7 Now then, be strong and brave, for Saul your master is dead, and the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."*

## **WHEN YOU'RE FIT TO LEAD, EVENTUALLY YOU WILL LEAD**

'There they anointed David king over the house of Judah' (v4). Eventually David is made king. It will be a full seven years before he will reign over the entire nation of Israel, but already a part of Israel recognizes that he is God's choice of Israel's king. Notice that he does not assert his own reign. Others do it for him. David – only after much time, testing and suffering - is ready to lead.

Oh, all those who feel called to lead in God's kingdom, look to the life of David and learn that one must first become fit to lead before we can lead. This will take time, faith, tears, agony, loss and a roller-coaster ride of diverse life experiences. But eventually it will all make sense and we will see the previously-unseen hand of God leading our lives in a straight direction toward a place of significant spiritual leadership over many other people's lives.

But let us do more than look to the example of David, let us look to Christ, the greater David who is fit to lead. Surely as we submit consistently to his leadership, he accelerates the processes of preparation in our own life. Until we're led we cannot lead!