

43. The Book of 1Samuel—27:1-12

“The Power of Discouragement”

(4/17/16)

As we come to 1Samuel 27 we come to one of the darker chapters in David’s life.

As I have said numerous times David is one of my favorite people in the Bible—but that’s not to say he was a perfect man.

Like all human beings he had moments of great success—as when he slew the nine and a half foot Philistine giant named Goliath.

And then he had moments of great failure—as when he pretended to be crazy out of fear of the Philistines letting spittle run down on his beard and scratching on the gates of one of their cities. (1Samuel 21:12-14)

There were times when he manifested great virtue—as when he could have killed Saul but didn’t. (1Samuel 24 & 26)

But then there were times when he demonstrated great vice—as when he slept with another man’s wife and had him killed to cover it up.

As one author put it—

“The Bible is deeply honest and utterly realistic. If you come to the Bible looking for sentimentality or romantic heroism, you will be disappointed.”

The Bible is about real people and a real God. Real people have weaknesses as well as strengths, failures as well as successes, defeats as well as triumphs. The real God, while perfect in every way, deals with real people who do not always find his ways comfortable."

And so the bottom line is that God's servants aren't perfect—not in their lives and not in their faith.

Sometimes we let discouragement get the best of us and when that happens we are driven to do things that are contrary to our faith and to the God we love and serve—as we see in the life of David.

I. The Cause of Discouragement

1 Samuel 27:1 (NKJV)

¹ And David said in his heart, "Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul. *There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape to the land of the Philistines; and Saul will despair of me, to seek me anymore in any part of Israel. So I shall escape out of his hand.*"

At this point in his life David had been on the run from Saul for about seven years.

Now that's a long time to be on the run for your life, living in caves, sleeping with one eye open—and the constant pressure and relentless pursuit of Saul brought David to a place of doubt and discouragement.

First of all he's doubting God's word—the promise that He gave to David years earlier when He told him that he would someday reign as king in Israel in place of Saul.

If Saul were to kill David it would mean that God's word failed—and David knew that was impossible—so why did he doubt?

I believe it was because of the physical and mental exhaustion that came from running from Saul all those years.

The devil used it to wear David down which brought him to a place of utter discouragement and discouragement can cloud our judgment and lead to doubts about God's love, His faithfulness and the validity of His word.

I came across this little fictional story that helps to illustrate my point—

*"The devil, according to legend, once advertised his tools for sale at public auction. When the prospective buyers assembled, there was one oddly-shaped tool which was labeled "Not for sale." Asked to explain why this was, the devil answered, "I can spare my other tools, but I cannot spare this one. It is the most useful implement that I have. It is called **Discouragement**, and with it I can work my way into hearts otherwise inaccessible. When I get this tool into a man's heart, the way is open to plant anything there I may desire."*

I'd like to come back to this subject since Satan uses it so effectively to neutralize our walk and our witness for God—but for right now let's continue looking at the passage.

1 Samuel 27:1 (NKJV)

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Notice that David has fallen into discouragement because he had given up any hope, in his heart, of his circumstance ever changing for the better—but why did he give up hope?

It was simply because he took his eyes off of God.

Look at how many personal pronouns appear in David's estimation of the situation (7 in one verse!)—God is no longer in view only self.

In fact nothing that David says is directed at God in the form of prayer nor does David even take God into account—in fact the word “God” doesn't appear in this entire chapter.

Whenever we take our eyes off of God and focus on our circumstance—we will begin to sink emotionally like Peter began to sink physically on the Sea of Galilee when he took his eyes off of Jesus and began to focus on his circumstances.

II. The Consequence of Discouragement

A. Living in enemy territory

1 Samuel 27:2-7 (NKJV)

² Then David arose and went over with the six hundred men who *were* with him to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath. ³ So David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, each man with his household, *and* David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's widow. ⁴ And it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath; so he sought him no more. ⁵ Then David said to Achish, "If I have now found favor in your eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there. For why should your servant dwell in the royal city with you?" ⁶ So Achish gave him Ziklag that day. Therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day. ⁷ Now the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was one full year and four months.

David's discouragement drove him out of the Promised Land (and out of fellowship with God and His people) and into the land of the Philistines to live (enemy territory).

One pastor and author made this observation—

“David accomplished his immediate goal—Saul stopped pursuing him. But now David is in a place of compromise that will leave him worse off than before. He is actually submitting to a Philistine master. We have no record of any Psalms that David wrote during this time. This was not a high point in his spiritual life...”

When discouragement takes hold in our hearts it will often drive us away from church and fellowship with God and His people back into the world and back into fellowship with the people of the world—and when that happens our spiritual life dries up.

Satan could never force us to do this directly—he’s only able to peel us away from the Body of Christ slowly through discouragement—and the same was true with David’s enemy Saul.

One author said—

“Saul could never drive David to the Philistines. If Saul told David, “You must leave the people of God and go live among the Philistines,” David would never bow to it. But discouragement and despair are more powerful enemies than Saul. Discouragement and despair will drive David to do something that Saul could never make him do.”

And what was that?—it caused David to make an alliance with the enemy.

B. Making alliances with the enemy

1 Samuel 27:8-11 (NKJV)

⁸ And David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites. For those nations were the inhabitants of the land from of old, as you go to Shur, even as far as the land of Egypt. ⁹ Whenever David attacked the land, he left neither man nor woman alive, but took away the sheep, the oxen, the donkeys, the camels, and the apparel, and returned and came to Achish. ¹⁰ Then Achish would say, "Where have you made a raid today?" And David would say, "Against the southern *area* of Judah, or against the southern *area* of the Jerahmeelites, or against the southern *area* of the Kenites."

¹¹ David would save neither man nor woman alive, to bring *news* to Gath, saying, "Lest they should inform on us, saying, 'Thus David did.' " And thus *was* his behavior all the time he dwelt in the country of the Philistines.

Some people defend David's actions in this saying that he was fighting against people that were not only enemies of the Philistines but also enemies of the Jewish people as well—so they say that David was still "*fighting the battles of the Lord*".

Maybe that's true but I personally find David's actions in this reprehensible in that he's killing men and women in these towns (and what happened to the kids?) so that he didn't leave a witness that could tell Achish the truth.

And then on top of it he lied through his teeth to Achish about what he was doing—in fact David had a problem with lying.

- At Saul's table, we see David telling Jonathan to lie for him (1 Samuel 20:6).
- David lied to Ahimelech that he was on a secret mission for Saul (1 Samuel 21:2).
- He will lie to Uriah to cover his sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11).

How could a man after God's own heart lie like this?

Because God uses imperfect people—which doesn't excuse our faults and flaws it simply means that they don't disqualify us from God loving or using us for His glory.

Look, like David, we are all a work in progress and God doesn't give up on us even as He didn't give up on David.

As someone has said—*“It’s true that God loves us as we are—but it’s also true He loves us too much to leave us as we are.”*

And so He works in our lives to make us more and more godly (God-like)—which starts with conviction (speaking to our hearts about our sin).

That will lead to confession and a desire to change—as it did in David’s life: *“Deliver me, O Lord, from lying lips...”* Psalm 120:2 (AMP)

Now once again many come to David’s defense in this by saying that he is simply pretending to be in alliance with the King of Gath—in essence he was playing the role of a double agent.

Well, a double agent pretends to be loyal another ruler and government while secretly working to bring down that ruler and government.

The cities that David attacked (Geshurites, Girzites and Amalekites) were not Philistine towns—they were actually the enemies of the Philistines.

If David would have leveled with Achish and told him the truth about who he was really fighting against—Achish wouldn’t have been upset because David was fighting the battles of the Philistines.

But David lied and told Achish that he was attacking Israeli towns and wiping out Jewish people—why did he lie?

Because he had nowhere else to go—he had forsaken the land of his fathers (Jewish territory) and needed to make an alliance with the Philistines so that they would accept him into their land and protect him from Saul.

But he realized that Achish and the Philistines would never fully receive him as one of their own if they thought he was still on good terms with his own people—so he concocted this ruse.

He would pretend to attack Jewish towns so Achish and the rest of the Philistines would believe that he was completely loyal to them and could never go back to live among his own people.

That he had permanently burned that bridge by fighting and killing Jews every day so that they would never take him back—thus David sought to cement his alliance with Achish and the Philistines in Gath.

And his plan worked beautifully as King Achish was now thoroughly convinced that David was his servant for life—

1 Samuel 27:12 (NKJV)

¹² So Achish believed David, saying, "He has made his people Israel utterly abhor him; therefore he will be my servant forever."

At this point, as one pastor put it, David was probably thinking—

"'Saul isn't chasing me; the enemy isn't hounding me. I've got it made here in Philistine country.'—This can happen to you and me as well. We can say, 'I'm tired of struggling with the people of God, so I'll just hang out with the world in Philistine country.' And for a while, it seems good because the enemy is no longer chasing you. If you stop going to church, if you pull away from fellowship, if you isolate yourself from Christians, Satan won't bug you. But what will eventually happen to David is highly instructive because, although his situation will be easier initially, it will be disastrous ultimately."

David hadn't turned against God or His people—he had simply moved away from God and His people and was now living with the enemy.

And that's often what discouragement does—it doesn't turn you into an atheist but it often drives you back into the world where you find yourself making alliances with unbelievers and sometimes even fighting their battles with them.

We are living in spiritually dark days where many of God's people are discouraged and have left church, gone back to the world and are now hanging out with old friends (unbelievers).

And as such they're making alliances with them to fight against *their* enemies—you see this in social media.

How Christians are siding with unsaved friends against homophobia and global warming.

We see them promoting things like social justice, gay marriage and a woman's right to choose an abortion—these are the world's causes not the battles of the Lord.

I have seen many pastors who have left the ministry because of discouragement—but many others who have let discouragement drive them to the world in a sense (like David living among the Philistines) as they tell themselves they are fighting the battles of the Lord by becoming like the world to reach the world.

And so we see churches meeting in bars and having “beers and hymns” services or, once again, making alliances with the world to promote its causes and fight its battles.

But getting back to David—he allowed discouragement to drive him from the people of God to live among the Philistines.

As I've already said discouragement is a powerful force.

Discouragement can make you do things you wouldn't ordinarily do.

It can drive you to give up on yourself, your marriage, your family, your ministry and even on God.

It is the opposite of *courage*—the prefix “dis” comes from the Latin and means “*apart from*” or “*away from*”.

It negates what comes after it, reversing its force as in: dis-ability, dis-belief or dis-content.

So ‘*discourage*’ is the opposite of *courage*—it is the emptying of courage from your heart.

Think of it like the gas tank in your car.

There is a gauge attached to it that sits on your dashboard and indicates how full or empty your gas tank is.

At one point there might even be a red light that comes on telling you that you’re getting dangerously low on gas and you’d better fill up soon.

You have an emotional “gas tank” as well and under normal circumstances one of the things it is filled with is *courage*.

The dictionary defines courage as—“*The quality of mind or spirit that enables a person to face difficulty, danger, pain, etc.*”

The problem is the more difficulties, dangers, and pain we face on a regular basis without any relief in sight (as David experienced)—the more courage is used up and our emotional gas tank gets depleted.

When that happens we begin to see warning signs—much like the red light on the gas gauge in your car.

These warning signs take different forms—everything from depression to loss of appetite to feelings of hopelessness and despair.

And the result is you feel like giving up on everyone and everything and running away.

Discouragement brought David to that very point in Psalm 55:6-7 when he said, “*Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. Indeed, I would wander far off, and remain in the wilderness (isolated and alone).*”

Now if *discouragement* is the result of our emotional gas tank being depleted—then what we need is to fill it up again—that’s what *encouragement* is all about!

The prefix “En” means ‘*to put in*’—and so to ‘encourage’ means to “*put in courage*” as when we or others fill up our emotional gas tank.

When the world tries to do it for someone it usually takes the form of building up their self-esteem (making *self* the focus)—whereas biblical encouragement is all about pointing a person back to God and His promises—making Him the focus.

The Lord knows how important encouraging the downtrodden, the broken hearted, the fearful and the discouraged is—so much so that He actually calls some to the *ministry* of encouragement—men like Barnabas who bore the nickname of “*son of encouragement*” (Acts 4:36).

Acts 11:23 (NKJV)

²³ When he [Barnabas] came [to Antioch in Syria] and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.

Encouraging Christians in the various churches was something Paul did on a continual basis.

Romans 1:11-12 (NKJV)

¹¹ For I long to see you...that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ Therefore [I]...sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith...

But listen, we're all called to encourage one another—in fact I don't think there's a more vital ministry that all of God's people can and should give themselves to than as encouragers to the Body of Christ—

Hebrews 10:25 (AMP)

²⁵ Not forsaking *or* neglecting to assemble together [as believers], as is the habit of some people, but admonishing (warning, urging, and encouraging) one another, and all the more faithfully as you see the day approaching.

III. The Conquest of Discouragement

Conquering discouragement is as simple as getting your focus back on God.

Psalms 42:5-6 (NLT)

⁵ Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again— my Savior and ⁶ my God! Now I am deeply discouraged, but I will remember you...

Jeremiah 29:11 (NLT)

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

Isaiah 26:3 (NLT)

³ You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!

Psalms 3:3 (NKJV)

³ But You, O LORD, *are* a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head.

Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)

⁶ Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Isaiah 40:31 (NKJV)

³¹ But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew *their* strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.

Psalms 46:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ God *is* our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. ² Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

And I'll give you one more principle in conquering over discouragement—

Philippians 4:4 (NKJV)

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

Many Christians fall into discouragement because they fail to offer enough praise to God—they are too wrapped up in self and in selfish pursuits.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to rejoice in the Lord and be discouraged at the same time.

And therefore the psalmist offered good advice when he said, "*I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.*" (Ps. 34:1).

Look, God is still on the throne—He hasn't gone anywhere.

Therefore focus on His greatness, His power, His promises and His faithfulness—and then say no to discouragement by rejoicing in the Lord today!