

Session 19 The Beauty of the Lord Found in Adversity

INTRODUCTION

Session 19 ends the period of David's life that we've summarized under the term, "the Adullam years." This session covers 1 Samuel 27 on to 1 Samuel 31, the final chapter in this season of David's life, the season in which he is tested by adversity. We've looked at the first season in Bethlehem where he was given the word of the Lord. He was tested by the routine and the mundanity of life in Bethlehem. In the second season, he was tested by short-term prosperity in Gibeah. Then Adullam is the third season we discussed, where he was tested with adversity. In the fourth and fifth season, he was tested with the promotion in Hebron and Jerusalem. We won't spend time on it in this session, but we've mentioned it several times.

THE TRAGEDY OF MOMENTARY COMPROMISE IN DAVID'S LIFE

Again, most of us relate to the adversity dimension of testing and the discovery of the beauty of the Lord in seasons of adversity. This is a very unusual, and in some ways a very sad chapter in David's life, but it encourages us because David has just had one of the great moral victories of his entire life before God in 1 Samuel 24 and 26; we looked at it in the last session, where he had Saul at the end of his spear. He didn't yield to the temptation to express revenge. God gave David the power of revenge, but David wouldn't exercise that power or the right of revenge or the right that he had in the position he was in. The Lord was testing his heart.

However, right after this great moral victory, David stumbles into sixteen months of compromise. The tragedy of it as we look at the story in hindsight is that it's just before the great deliverance of Saul being removed by the hand of God. Right after the great victory of not yielding to revenge and just before the great deliverance of God removing Saul, we have this sixteen-month season, this episode in David's life of compromise. He stumbled in the final lap of the race. Right before he was made king, he stumbled and yielded. There were six or seven outstanding supernatural deliverances recorded, and undoubtedly several others that aren't, yet he succumbs to the fear and the weariness of the journey. He falls into severe depression again, like he did early in the cave of Adullam. It comes upon him again in 1 Samuel 27:1. "David said in his heart, 'Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul...'" (1 Sam. 27:1). He concludes that all the promises God gave him, all the stunning releases of victory and supernatural interventions, none of them would lead to God's faithfulness in his life. We can all relate to this, can't we? David has had the prophet Samuel; David has had Saul himself prophesy to him. We found in the very last verse of 1 Samuel 26 that Saul prophesies, "You will do great things and you will prevail" (1 Sam. 26:25). In 1 Samuel 24:20 Saul prophesied, "You will be king one day" (paraphrased). Saul's son Jonathan likewise prophesied, "You will be king one day." The great prophet Samuel prophesied, "You will be king one day." The Lord spoke to David in the night season in dreams and visions, "You will be king one day." Yet David says in his heart, "I will die, and all those words will fall to the ground unfulfilled."

GOD SHOUTS HIS PROMISES FROM ON HIGH, BUT WE DO NOT HEED HIM

Of course, if you're sitting in a nice comfortable context reading that, you just want to take David and shake him, except that we know in our own experience we have those irrational seasons of despair and fear where everything that God shouted from on high doesn't seem real. It doesn't feel real to us. Not only the prophetic words, not only God's integrity in promising through the word of the Lord, but all the times David actually experienced deliverance in living reality and in dynamic ways, five, six, seven times that we can describe, and a number of other times that aren't recorded in 1 Samuel. Yet David falls into despair. He falls into the trap of

unbelief. He's going to rise up and go back to Gath. Remember in 1 Samuel 22:5 the prophet Gad said, "Go and stay in Judah; stay in the place where you need God to save you. Don't leave Judah. Don't go to Moab and don't go to Gath." That's been some two or three years ago, and that word is wearing out. It doesn't have the same zip it had when first it was given. Circumstances seem too difficult; the delay seems too long. David forgets the obvious. His humanity shows. Again, he just finished the great victory of 1 Samuel 27. The great deliverance is just around the corner. Of course, sixteen months in our lives seems like a millennium. When you're reading the text, it's only a few chapters and the victory is there. It's finally secured.

GOD IS NO LONGER THE REFUGE THAT DAVID HAS SO OFTEN KNOWN HIM TO BE

But David reasons in his soul in 1 Samuel 27:1, "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." David's answer is now Achish, king of Gath, the enemy king—the king who's at enmity with God. God is no longer the refuge that David has known Him so often to be. Again, this isn't the rule of David's life. David had several lapses of faith. He had it in the early years of living in Adullam, and now towards the very end of this season it hits him again.

DAVID'S STRENGTH WASN'T HIS PERFECTION, BUT HIS RALLYING BACK IN MERCY

We all so relate to this. We look at it and say, "If that's a man after God's own heart, I know I can be one." Again, the measure of David isn't the fact that he didn't stumble, it's the fact that he had courage to receive the mercy of God and to come back with a vengeance, with a power and love in his heart. I hope I don't spend too much time telling the story here, because Psalms 18 and 56 are fantastic psalms written about this season of David's life. I hope I don't yield to the temptation to give the details of the story. It's a very, very graphic story. It's a very colorful story. It's a story that has a lot of drama to it. You could easily get lost in the story.

DAVID FLEES INTO THE PROTECTIVE EMBRACE OF ACHISH, THE ENEMY OF GOD

David arose (1 Sam. 27:1). He now has 600 men. Remember he started with 400 in 1 Samuel 22 and now he has 600. He goes over to Achish the king of Gath. Remember his last visit to Achish in 1 Samuel 21; he had Goliath's sword. We know Goliath was from Gath. He has the sword of the champion of Gath at his side. He's running to Achish in order to find safety from Saul because he knows Saul is a coward. Achish looks at him and says, "Wait, you're the young man that killed my champion."

David says, "No, I don't know him."

"Yes, you're the one all the young maidens of Israel sing about. We've heard the song. It's a nice song."

"No, no, that's not me."

He begins to fall to the ground, spit, act insane, roll, and froth about. Achish says, "What's the deal? Get him out of here. Death is too good for him. Get rid of this man." So he goes back. I don't know what entered his mind. Something took place in David's experience with Achish that gave him the courage to come back. That's a mystery. It's not recorded, but he goes back to Gath. Maybe there have been some reports; maybe there have been some offers extended to David by some of Achish's servants who met with David and said, "Hey, if you'll come and do this and that, then we'll let bygones be bygones." I don't know, but that's an interesting verse, that David arose to go to Gath again after all that had transpired.

I'm spending too much time on this story. Hurry up! "So David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, each man with his household" (1 Sam. 27:3). There were 600 men, which means there may have been 1,500, 2,000, possibly 3,000 people. Achish is responsible, as the king of Gath, for this county or region as we would know it today. "It was told Saul that David had fled to Gath" (v. 4)—and that Achish was providing for him. David said to Achish, "If I have found favor in your eyes, let them give me a city, a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there" (v. 5). Then he essentially says, "For why should I live in the royal city with 3,000 people and you have the responsibility to feed us? Give me a city." That's a pretty bold request. Again, something is going on between David and Achish whereby he has found favor with him.

"So Achish gave him Ziklag that day" (1 Sam. 27:6). In 1 Samuel 27:7 there he is with the Philistines for a year and four months, sixteen months, but it's sixteen months of compromise. It's sixteen months of disobeying the word of Gad the prophet who said to stay in Judah. They were to go to Judah, and the idea was to stay there. It's sixteen months of not trusting the Lord. It was sixteen months of his heart burning and knowing that he wasn't doing the right thing the whole time.

THE LORD'S HAND WAS WITH DAVID EVEN AS HE CHASTENED HIM

In the next verse we see that David and his men went up and raided these various people groups, these little nations (1 Sam. 27:8). They were all traveling around and David would raid them for two reasons. One was in order to get the livestock to provide food for his group of 3,000. David was anointed to defeat the enemies of Israel, and they were the enemies of Israel. These very groups were causing Israel trouble, and Saul wouldn't take care of them. So David had this funny dynamic. He had such zeal for the purpose of God and such commitment that he would rise up and defeat the Lord's enemies, and yet he was still in a place of compromise. It's a very difficult place to be. I've experienced that in my own life in the will of God, doing things that I knew were not pleasing to the Lord. The Lord's hand was with me and yet the Lord was disciplining me. It's a confusing dynamic where there are a number of things all laid on top of each other that seem contradictory.

WHENEVER DAVID ATTACKED THE LAND, HE WOULD LEAVE NO TRACE BEHIND

So whenever David would attack the land, he would kill everyone (1 Sam. 27:9). He destroyed the evidence, is the idea, and then he would return and come back to Achish. He wouldn't leave anyone alive. He would burn everything and kill everyone. Then he would come back to Achish and lie to Achish (v. 10). Achish would say, "Where have you made a raid today?"

David would say, "Against Judah, against God's people, and against the Israelites." It was a total lie. He wasn't fighting against the Israelites. But he said, "I'm mad at those men; I'm with you forever, Achish. I've risen up against the Israelites."

Achish would say, "Wow that's really something. That's really powerful that you've done that."

Look at 1 Samuel 27:11. David would cover up everything. He wouldn't let anyone live, so the story couldn't get back to Gath. This was his behavior all the time when he dwelt in the country of the Philistines, as we see at the end of 1 Samuel 27:11.

"Achish believed David, saying, 'David has made his people Israel utterly hate him'" (1 Sam. 27:12). "He will be loyal to me forever," is the idea. David is absolutely bold-facedly lying to him every time. He's lying about

the people; he's lying about the strategy; he's lying about his loyalty. He has no intention of being Achish's servant. He's only hiding from Saul in unbelief against the Lord.

THE PHILISTINES GATHER THEIR ARMIES FOR WAR AGAINST ISRAEL

“Now it happened that in those days the Philistines gathered their armies together for war, to fight with Israel” (1 Sam. 28:1). Achish said to David, “You assuredly know that you will go out with me to battle, you and your men” (ibid). The inevitable has come. The thing that David has dreaded has finally come. Israel is now in a military conflict, an open war with the Philistines. David knew it was inevitable. It had to happen; it happened every few years: they would break out in a military conflict of significant proportion. Achish says, “David, good news! Good news, come on in, quick!”

“Why?”

“Israel has come against me and we can defeat them forever.”

David says, “Er, good...” But inwardly he's thinking, “Oh no!” David loves Israel; he's under the anointing of God to defeat the Philistines, to kill Achish. David has been lying, and now the lie will come to pass. The lie is about to come into the open.

“David said to Achish, ‘Surely you know what your servant can do’” (1 Sam. 28:2)—a little evasively. He doesn't actually say, “Oh yes, I would love to kill the Israelites!” He says, “I am your servant.”

“David that's a lie, you're not Achish's servant. You're the servant of the Lord. That's not who you are. You're pretending that which isn't even close to what you believe about yourself. A little evasive on the answer, but your identity is a total falsehood. You're not Achish's servant.”

“Therefore I will make you one of my chief guardians forever” (1 Sam. 28:2)—“one of my top officers forever, my chief guardian. Forever you'll be mine. Boy, I tell you what, when you go and defeat the Israelites and the power that's on you, when it's used against Israel like it was used against us when you fought Goliath, and in the conflicts that followed...”

David is in a major, major dilemma right now. The Lord's whisper is growing to a shout: “David, it's time to end this season of your life.”

THE LORD SAVES DAVID FROM THE DILEMMA OF HIS LIE

Of course, for those of you who don't know the story, the story ends amazingly well. The Lord saves David from the dilemma of his lie. He runs into another dilemma, but not the dilemma of his lie. It's an amazing thing. 1 Samuel 28:3-25 is a parenthesis in terms of David's story, but it's a very significant part of the story nonetheless. It happens in the very same hour where the great battle is about to take place. As a matter of fact, it's the battle in which Saul dies. Saul consults a witch, the witch of Endor. Saul goes to a spiritualist, a witch. Saul doesn't have the prophet of the Lord anymore; he goes into witchcraft. It's this very example that the Scripture uses later in 1 Chronicles 11 when it says God killed Saul because he consulted the witch, and for several other things as well. That's a very fascinating story, but we're staying with David's story line here.

THE GREAT DAY OF RECKONING FOR DAVID, SAUL, AND ALL THE LAND

In 1 Samuel 29:1, the great day of reckoning is come. The Philistines gather together all their armies. The Israelites gather all of theirs just across the way. The captains, or the lords of the Philistines, pass in review by hundreds and thousands. It's the great military alignment. They're all lined up and they're passing by. It's part of the regimen of the military to check everyone in place and ensure that all the battalions are right and everything is in order. David and his men come passing and marching with the Philistines among the banners and uniforms.

THE PHILISTINE COMMANDERS ARE SUSPICIOUS OF DAVID'S LOYALTY

Then in verse 3, the princes of the Philistines, the high command, say, "Wait, what's that? Who are those?"

Achish is the king, and he said to the high command, "Well, it's David. He has been with me these days, or even these years." Years is a bit of a stretch, because it's been a year and four months. "These years David has been with me. What's the problem? His loyalty is proven. He has been killing Israelites for years..."

Yet the main leadership is angry with him (1 Sam. 29:4). They say, "No, make him return."

My assumption is that David overhears this. He's thinking, "Oh, thank You, God. Thank You, God."

Achish looks up, and David pokes himself in the eye so that a tear is formed. "Don't let him go to battle with us!" say the commanders. "If he goes to battle with us, then he might become our adversary. He might turn on us right in the thick of the battle in order to win favor with Saul."

Achish says, "Not a chance. You don't know this man. He's charming; he's sincere. He really is guileless."

"Well, he might be lying to you, Achish."

"IS THIS NOT DAVID, OF WHOM THEY SANG TO ONE ANOTHER IN DANCES?"

There's no track record that David ever lied. That's been one of his problems. Remember the last time David lied in a major way, the whole city of Nob was destroyed and slaughtered by the outrage of Saul. David's lies led to the slaughter of an entire city, and his men know that well. I don't doubt that some of his 600 men have been saying, "David, this is risky business. You're dealing with a king. You're dealing with an enemy king. His loyalty doesn't really go very deep with us."

David said, "Don't worry!"

They said, "We don't like this."

At the end of 1 Samuel 29:4, the high command of the Philistine army said, "This could be the very thing that wins David over." "Is this not David, of whom they sang to one another in dances, 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?'" (v. 5). It's the second time they record this song. They did this back in 1 Samuel 21 as well. This song must have been a really well-known, widespread song.

"Achish called David and said to him, 'Surely as the Lord lives, you have been upright'" (1 Sam. 29:6).

Well, not exactly, David...

“Your going out and your coming in with me in the army is good in my sight.” It’s based on lies, but he doesn’t know that. “To this day I have not found evil in you” (1 Sam. 29:6). Then he says in essence, “Nevertheless, my generals won’t let you come. Therefore, return in peace. I don’t want you to displease the generals.” It’s the happiest day of David’s life. If David flinches and says, “No!” they will look at him and say, “You’ve been a traitor the whole time!” This is treason. The very fact that Achish let David enter into his inner court of relationship is such a risky, risky business. David was a daring man. He was twenty-nine years old. He had his whole future ahead of him. He had risked the lives of 3,000 people with this lie. The Lord bails him out of this. It’s an amazing thing.

The commentators are all divided on why they think God bailed David out. It’s interesting. There are all kinds of different commentaries, ideas, and opinions. I don’t know. I just know that David was bailed out. David went back to Ziklag thinking, “Oh my goodness,” giving high fives.

The men said, “David, this is a tricky business. You’re playing with a king. This isn’t good. These men can kill anyone and not answer to anyone when they do it.” The dialogue goes on from 1 Samuel 29:8-11.

“David and his men rose early to depart in the morning, to return to the land of the Philistines” (1 Sam. 29:11). All is well and they’re excited. “God is with us!” Well, they’re going to run into a very, very significant disappointment, but then as is so typical in David’s life there’s never a boring moment. The story line will keep turning. There’s a new twist and a new turn. You never know with David what’s coming next. There’s never a dull moment.

AT THE VERY HAND OF AN AMALEKITE, SAUL BREATHE HIS LAST

“Now it happened, when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day”—there were three days of walking. They must have walked home very happy—“on the third day... the Amalekites had invaded the South and Ziklag” (1 Sam. 30:1). They invaded Ziklag particularly. They attacked Ziklag and burned it to the ground. That’s bad news. Remember the Amalekites in 1 Samuel 15. The prophet Samuel said, “Saul, exterminate the Amalekites. They will be trouble forever to you.” Yet here are the Amalekites again. As a matter of fact, Saul commits suicide in the next chapter when he dies at Mt. Gilboa. He dies in the battle, this very battle that David was fortunate enough to avoid. Jonathan is killed and Saul is laying on the ground suffering. He gets hit by an enemy weapon and there are several stories that all come together. Anyway, an Amalekite helps kill Saul. It seems like a divine irony that at the very hand of an Amalekite Saul breathes his last.

THE CITY OF ZIKLAG IS BURNED, THEIR WIVES AND CHILDREN CAPTURED

Anyway, here are David’s men after three days. They walk over the hill. They’re tired; they’re exhausted. They’re very excited that they don’t have to fight their friends, brothers, and family. They fully intend to go back to Israel. All of a sudden they see this great fire, this billow of smoke filling the sky. It’s like, “What’s going on?” It was a really big fire. They had taken captive all the women “and those who were there, from small to great; they did not kill anyone, but carried them away and went their way” (1 Sam. 30:2). “So David and his men came to the city, and there it was, burned with fire” (v. 3). The city was completely burned to the ground. Their wives, their sons, and their daughters had been taken captive. David and the people, the 600 men who were with him, lifted their voices and wept until they had no more power to weep. They were exhausted. They had been on a three-day walk; their eyes were swollen; they had no more power. They actually wept to the point of utter exhaustion and total despair. Everything they cared about: all their money, all that they had built, all that

they had treasured in terms of possessions, and then, much more significantly, their families, had been carried away. They could only assume that their families had been killed. The Amalekites were treacherous people. They looked at David and undoubtedly they said, “David, you lied and the city of Nob was slaughtered. You’ve lied again and our own families are slaughtered by your lies, David. We told you this would turn into disaster.” They didn’t know; they had no way of knowing that the wives and children hadn’t been killed, because the Amalekites wanted to enslave them. They wanted to trade them or sell them as slaves.

THE PHILISTINES, THE ISRAELITES, AND DAVID’S MIGHTY MEN TURN AGAINST HIM

They wept until they had no more strength to weep (1 Sam. 30:4). David was greatly distressed (v. 6). In 1 Samuel 27:1, where we started, he was despairing because he knew Saul would kill him. In 1 Samuel 30:6 his own army of 600 men speaks of stoning him. They say, “David, there’s only one answer. You’re reckless; you’re dangerous. You won’t listen to anyone. We’ve had it with you. We’re going to kill you, David.” The 600 men turn on David. The nation of Israel has turned on David. The Philistines don’t want him. He’s living in depression. He’s got lots of lies and now the only ones who have any semblance of loyalty are going to stone him. They say, “You’re finished, David. We can’t bear this. We told you this would happen. It happened in Nob. It has happened now again. When will this thing ever stop? Your lies are causing havoc to all of us. You’re hurting many people.”

“BUT DAVID STRENGTHENED HIMSELF IN THE LORD HIS GOD”

“So the people were very grieved, every man for his sons and daughters” (1 Sam. 30:6, paraphrased). This is one of the most amazing passages in the life of David: “But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God” (ibid. NKJV). It’s an amazing passage. David says, “OK, there’s no place to go. Ziklag is burned.”

God wants us to walk on water. He wants us to literally *enjoy*—the word is *enjoy*—supernatural life with Him. He says, “Get out of the boat, Peter. Get on the water.”

“Well, I like the boat.” Actually, Peter liked that, but God sometimes sinks our boats. God burned Ziklag. Yes, it’s discipline, but it’s not discipline rooted and grounded in anger. It’s discipline rooted in passion for David and who he is to God and who God is to him. God says, “I will burn your Ziklag, because in Ziklag you don’t need Me. David, you’ll soar when you need Me. I’m worthy of your trust, David.” Have you ever had a season in your life when God burned Ziklag? It’s an amazing thing that the Philistines didn’t catch David in the lies and kill him. Number two: The Philistines didn’t say yes and take him to war. Number three: The Philistines didn’t catch him in a little craftiness right there and say, “Wait a second; wait a second... this whole thing has been a sham.” The city is burned and David digs deep. This is the measure of David: he said, “There’s only one place to turn. It’s God; it’s His mercy. The one thing I can count on is God.” He says, “OK God, we’re back in business.”

“I WON’T TRY AND BALANCE THE SCALES. IT’S EITHER YOUR MERCY, OR I’M FINISHED”

Remember, Ahimelech was the only priest who escaped from the city of priests. David said to him, “Bring me the ephod with the Urim and the Thummim” (1 Sam. 30:7, paraphrased). “Bring me the priest’s garment where the yes or no is from the Lord.” David inquires, “Shall I pursue this troop?” This feels just like David at Keilah, doesn’t it? David is depressed in 1 Samuel 22 in Adullam, discouraged because of the disaster at the city of Nob, the lies, the disaster. In 1 Samuel 21 we have the lies, in 1 Samuel 22 his depression in the cave of Adullam. In 1 Samuel 23, he says, “Shall I go?” God says, “Go, and I will cause you to defeat the Philistines at Keilah.” It’s the same exact situation. The city is burned and everyone has turned against him. “Shall I rise up?”

Where does David find this inner strength? It's in his past history in the Lord. He says, "OK, God. I won't try and balance the scales. It's either Your mercy or I'm finished."

ONLY IN GOD CAN YOU SIN FOR SIXTEEN MONTHS AND STILL RECOVER EVERYTHING

God says, "I am with you. My favor is with you. My anointing is with you. My discipline is here in order to bring you back into My arms. Pursue it," God said. Look at what 1 Samuel 30:8 says; it's unthinkable. "You shall surely overtake them, and without fail you will recover all" (paraphrased)—if you go after them.

David says, "Only in God could I sin for sixteen months, have everyone turn against me, and still recover everything. That's unthinkable."

The story goes on in 1 Samuel 30:18: "David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away, and David rescued his two wives." Nothing was lacking, either great or small, sons or daughters, spoil or anything, which David had taken from them. David recovered all. That's a great passage. That's a fantastic passage: "And David recovered all."

Number one: he should have been disciplined for the lies. He should have been caught in the early lies when he was killing the Amalekites. As a matter of fact, it was David's enraging of the Amalekites that caused this, because he killed the Amalekites, so they returned and got him back. It's a natural consequence in some ways. The Lord's hand was in it. But David doesn't get caught there. He doesn't get caught in the lie about going to fight against Israel. He has no intention of doing that. The city is burned, but none of the people are injured. No one is hurt. David recovered everything. Is that not amazing? Beloved, this is in the book for us.

A PSALM OF DAVID, WHEN THE PHILISTINES CAPTURED HIM IN GATH

Turn to Psalm 56 very briefly. Psalm 56 is one that you want to look at in greater detail. What a story! What David doesn't know is that at the very hour he recovered everything, Saul had been pierced by an arrow and died. David is about to be king in a very, very short amount of time. In a few short days he will be made king of Hebron. Look at the very top of Psalm 56. This was written when the Philistines captured David in Gath. It doesn't ever look like it. But it's an interesting title because both times, in 1 Samuel 21 and 27, David voluntarily went to Gath and voluntarily departed. But when they titled this, it talks about him being captured. There's obviously some conflict on both occasions. I believe Psalm 56 is the sum of his two experiences in Gath, what happened on both occasions. And if you know David, you know what Psalm 56:1 is going to be, don't you? David plucks the one string that he can always count on: "Your mercy, O God. The one thing I know for sure is Your mercy" (Ps. 56:1, paraphrased).

DAVID'S WANDERINGS ARE NUMBERED, AND HIS TEARS PRESERVED FOREVER

He goes on and cries out to the Lord in Psalm 56:2-7. Look at Psalm 56:8-9. This is one of those really, really precious passages of Scripture where David's heart is opened up. He says, "God, You number my wanderings. You put my tears into Your bottle. Are they not in Your book? When I cry to You, then my enemies turn back. This I know, because God is for me" (Ps. 56:8-9, paraphrased). That's an outrageous thing to write in Gath.

HE KNOWS THAT DAVID HAS WANDERED OUT OF FEAR, DISTRUST, AND COMPROMISE

Number one: he says, "You take notice of my wanderings. God, I know that You know that I know what I'm doing. You know that I'm wandering. You take notice of my wanderings. You number it. You specifically know the details of what I've been doing these last sixteen months. You know that twice out of fear because I

don't trust You I have wandered. I'm compromising." "I'm out of the will of God," is what you can put there for *wanderings*. "I'm out of the will of God in Gath. You number it. You've taken notice."

"MY TEARS OF DESPAIR, OF DISOBEDIENCE, MY TEARS OF BROKEN DREAMS"

Look at the most amazing thing that David says: "My tears, O God, my tears of despair, of disobedience, my tears of broken dreams, the tears I have cried for lying and resisting the prophetic word." There are many, many different types of tears a man or woman could shed in this dynamic. There are all kinds of emotional collisions going on. Imagine the broken-heartedness he has, but I believe that David's tears are the tears of a man who has lied, not trusted the Lord, and has endangered all his friends.

He says, "When I shed my tears, the men around me tell me to shut up. My hypocrisy isn't worthy of crying out for mercy, but God, You don't do that. You take my tears, You scoop them up in Your hand, and You store them in Your bottle, because my tears of repentance are precious to You. Every single tear You have written in Your book." Remember how we saw in Psalm 139 that every day is written in that book (Ps. 139:16). Every teardrop of repentance, every movement of David's heart, every tear of remorse that he is stuck where he is stuck, is recorded in God's book, stored and captured in God's bottle, because they are precious to God. Did David understand that God understood? He says, "I know when I cry out, they call me a hypocrite, but You store my tears up." Is that not an amazing revelation?

"I KNOW THAT EVEN IN GATH, YOU ARE FOR ME, O GOD"

"When I cry to You, my enemies are defeated" (Ps. 56:9, paraphrased). "Things change for good. When I press into You, You stop the enemy. This I know, because I know that even in Gath, You are for me, O God." What a statement. "I know that my enemies will be defeated. I know that my tears will be stored because You are for me. I know that I have despair. I know I have compromise, but one thing I know, God, You will be merciful, for You are a God of mercy" (v. 1, paraphrased), "and I know that You are for me" (v. 9).

PSALM 56: THE MAN OF TEARS ENCOURAGED IN THE LORD

Beloved, what would you do to have the heart of David, to have this deep inward knowing? I believe Psalm 56 is what David did in his heart when he wept at Ziklag with his tears profusely pouring to the ground. He says, "I know You are for me." He encouraged himself in God. I always turn to Psalm 56 to find the man of tears encouraged in the Lord. "This I know: The enemies won't prevail; the Amalekites will be defeated. I know that You are for me." He encouraged himself in God. I believe you find it in Psalm 56. It's just amazing. I don't want to say unbelievable, but it's amazing. We need to put our heart before that fire, our cold hearts before the same fire before which David put his heart.

THE ASTONISHING TURNS AND REVERSALS OF DAVID'S CHAOTIC LIFE

Turn briefly to Psalm 18. We'll end with a few verses. Psalm 18 is a magnificent psalm. It is a really, really good one. Look at the title. I'm jumping right into the middle, but Psalm 18 was written on the day that God delivered David from the hand of Saul. It says "all his enemies." He's delivered from the Philistines, number one. He's delivered from the Amalekites, number two, along with all his family and the families of his 600 men, and he's delivered from Saul. He's free from the Philistines. He's free from the Amalekites' outrage against him and their revenge against Ziklag for him killing them initially. He's free from Saul. This is the day. The news comes back. Just think how exhausted David is now. He has just spent three days walking. He's fought for a day or two. We skipped this part of the story in 1 Samuel 30, but a number of his men were too exhausted to go on. Two hundred of them said, "We don't have the strength to go on, David. We're just too tired." The news

came that Saul had died. What an incredible few days in David's life. He's going to go to war against Israel. Achish turns him away. The city is burned; the men will stone him. He restores his fellowship with God in an intense way. He gets victory over the Amalekites. Saul is dead. David is made king, all in seven days. Never a dull moment.

DAVID'S TENACIOUS CONFIDENCE IN THE IMMEDIATE, IMMEASURABLE MERCY OF GOD

We're just going to look at a few verses. What do you think David would say after sixteen months of compromise when the favor of God came? "O God, I'll do this and that, and I'll even the record if You'll forgive me?" No. "I love You. I love You. I love You. I love You, God. Oh, I love You. I love You. I love You. I love You. I love You," he says. What a beginning. "You are my strength. He gives seven statements of who God is to him, all in the personal: "My rock, my fortress." Note the word *my*: "My deliverer, my God, my strength, my shield, my salvation; You are mine. You belong to me, God. You are mine" (Ps. 18:1, paraphrased).

"I thought you lost your relationship with God."

"No. It's stronger than ever."

"Well, it's a little premature to talk like that."

"I love Him."

"Wait, you've been in compromise for sixteen months."

"The past is the past. He gave me mercy. I am His and He is mine. I love Him. He is mine and I am His."

"Well, David, don't you think maybe you should let a year go by?"

"No. I'm in this thing to the end with God."

I love it. It's tenacious confidence in mercy. Isn't it fantastic? "I love Him. I love Him. I love Him. I love You. I love You. I love You."

"THE PANGS OF DEATH SURROUNDED ME, AND THE FLOODS OF UNGODLINESS"

"I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised" (Ps. 18:3). Look at this: "The pangs of death surrounded me, and the floods of ungodliness made me afraid" (v. 4). He's surrounded by death. At any time the high command of the Philistine army could turn on David. The floods of death, the pangs and floods of sin and death. The Amalekites have surrounded his town and burned it to the ground and taken his family; Saul's army surrounded him in the wilderness of Maon back in 1 Samuel 23. He's always surrounded and in trouble. "The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the Lord" (v. 6). I believe the distress here in Psalm 18:6 is 1 Samuel 30:6, when the men are planning to stone him. That's another instance where he's surrounded by death, when 600 of his own men say, "We're finished with you, David." Yet he encouraged himself in God. Something about that light shown in David's eyes, and a few of those 600 men said, "Guys, let's not kill him. He's back. He's back. It's happening. I can tell. I've been with

David for years. No, let's not. It's right. It's real. He's connecting with the Lord." Even his 600 men have surrounded him.

“HOW SAY YOU TO MY SOUL, ‘FLEE AS A BIRD TO YOUR MOUNTAIN’?”

“In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple” (Ps. 18:6). Remember Psalm 11:1, when they told David, “David, you had better flee as a bird to the mountains” (paraphrased). David said, “No, God is in His temple. God is in that majestic throne on high. I've seen it by revelation.” I believe that David literally by the spirit of revelation had glimpses like Isaiah and some of the others of the glory of God.

“HE SENT FROM ABOVE, HE TOOK ME; HE DREW ME OUT OF MANY WATERS”

Look at Psalm 18:16. We're really passing some magnificent descriptions of God's glory delivering David. “He sent from above, He took me; He drew me out of many waters.” Waters so often in the Scriptures speak of adversities. The Song of Solomon tells us there's a seal of fire that many waters can't quench (Song 8:7). It's the waters of pressure; it's the waters of persecution. “He sent from above. He took me. He sent for me. He took me. He drew me out.” God drew him out of waters. Six hundred of his own men were about to kill him. The Philistines were about to kill him. The Israelites were about to kill him. The Amalekites were about to kill him. “God drew me out of many, many troubles.” He says, “In one week, all those things were settled. He delivered me from my strong enemy.” It's likely that Saul is the primary one in his mind. Saul would have been the strong enemy, “those who were too strong for me.” Saul and Saul's court were the ones who prevailed on David and caused despair. It was Saul's court. He was never afraid of the Philistines in any big way, maybe for a moment, but it was Saul who was too strong for him. Saul was the man at the thought of whom he buckled down in despair and depression. “They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my support” (Ps. 18:18).

THE WEEK OF HIS GREATEST DISASTER ENDS IN ULTIMATE DELIVERANCE FOR DAVID

Look at this: Psalm 18:19, I love it. “He also brought me out into a broad place.” Here is the day. At the end of the week he is now king of Hebron. At the end of the week he is king. He's got a kingdom. He was a fugitive liar about to be killed by his own men, by the Philistines, by Saul, and the Amalekites. Now he has a kingdom at the end of the week. What a seven-day period. “He has brought me into a broad place. I am now king.” The promises of God are suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere coming to pass; in the last leg of the race where David stumbled and fell, suddenly it's ended with the glory of God. It's just like God, isn't it, to set the record straight, and say, “David, you failed, but I picked you up”?

“THE CROWN ON MY HEAD IS THE MERCY OF GOD”

In Psalm 103:4 he would go on to say, “I am crowned with the lovingkindness of God” (paraphrased). He could have said, “I'm crowned over Hebron and Judah. I'm crowned over Jerusalem and all Israel.” He was the leader of the many nations he defeated, but he says, “No, the crown on my head is the mercy of God.” David always referenced the crown of God's mercy above his earthly crowns, his earthly accomplishments. He always saw himself primarily as one who was great in mercy, crowned with mercy, versus crowned with power, wealth, and military strength. He said, “He delivered me. He delivered me. He brought me to a broad place.”

“BY THE SPIRIT OF REVELATION, HE LIKES ME; THIS I KNOW”

The reporter interrupts David and says, “David, you know, there are a lot of folks around the nation talking about you. The king has been killed, King Saul. Everyone is wondering where you've been. Everything is

changed. Your men, we heard, were going to kill you. The Philistines were going to kill you. The Amalekites were going to kill you. Saul was going to kill you. Everything is different now. Tell me, why do you think it is that God did this for you, David?"

David gives only one reason: "He likes me" (Ps. 18:19, paraphrased). Look at that: "He delivered me because He delighted in me" (ibid, NKJV).

"Wait, David, no. The reports we have show that you were lying, raiding places, and had your people nearly killed again like in Nob. Remember Nob?"

"Yes, I remember..."

"Out of fellowship, disobeying the prophet of God, no, David, why do you think God delivered you?"

"He likes me."

"David, you've read the Bible?"

"Yes, by the spirit of revelation He likes me; this I know. He is for me. I just wrote a new psalm. It's going to be called Psalm 56. I just wrote a new song about it. He likes me; that's why."

"THE LORD HAS REWARDED ME ACCORDING TO MY RIGHTEOUSNESS"

Psalm 18:20-24 can seem a little confusing. He says, "The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands" (Ps. 18:20). For four verses David proclaims his innocence. He's not talking about his whole character. I believe he's talking specifically about the fact that twice under the testing of God he had Saul at the end of his spear and wouldn't kill him. That's what he's talking about. He's talking specifically about the major issue when God brought Saul to the end of David's spear twice. He's speaking of that. He's taking about how, in the economy of God, when God gave the big test, he says, "I know by the grace of God I didn't stumble in that. I've stumbled in many things." David never, ever tries to hide his sin, but most agree that he is referencing his refusal to kill Saul when everyone was breathing down his neck to kill him. The prophecies, finally, will be fulfilled.

"WITH THE MERCIFUL, YOU WILL SHOW YOURSELF MERCIFUL"

Psalm 18:25-26 is one of the great principles in the Holy Spirit. David understood this. He says, "Let me explain this to you." He's talking about the fact that he had mercy on Saul. He says, "With the merciful God reveals Himself as merciful. With the blameless God shows Himself blameless. With the pure God shows Himself pure, but with the devious man God shows Himself shrewd" (Ps. 18:25-26, paraphrased). God will reveal Himself according to the capacity of the man or woman who is seeking the Lord. It's a very interesting spiritual dynamic. When a man or woman lives in mercy, then God reveals more of His mercy to them. When a man or woman seeks for purity, God by the spirit of revelation shows some of His own purity to them. They see the fire of God in a unique and outstanding way. God will give to us according to our capacities and the way we're living before God. Isaiah saw the Lord holy, holy, holy, high and lifted up. I'm not saying that you're mature, but in your desire for purity God will show you Himself in His Word and in the Spirit in His purity. He will show you according to the desires that you have.

DAVID SEES THE PERSONALITY OF GOD, ETERNALLY PULSATING HIS FIRE OF MERCY

God doesn't just show Himself merciful, in other words; He displays mercy by forgiving David. God shows Himself as merciful as David by the spirit of revelation considers God's orchestration of redemptive history. He watches God's dealings in the lives of others. He looks at God's Word. He can see God's mercy not only in His dealings with David but he sees the personality of God and it's eternally pulsating His fire of mercy. According to the way we posture ourselves and according to our own desires, God shows Himself. To the devious man, the evil man, God shows Himself as shrewd. What I mean is that they're trying to trick God, but God out-tricks them. They try to hide themselves from God and then God hides Himself from them. They want to be devious with God. God is never devious, but He outsmarts them and in righteousness hides things from them according to their deviousness. It's a very, very interesting principle that David is the first to develop. It's spoken in several other places in Scripture.

“YOUR RIGHT HAND HAS HELD ME UP; YOUR GENTLENESS HAS MADE ME GREAT”

I will end with this: “You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your right hand has held me up” (Ps. 18:35). David attributes all this deliverance to God's good hand, and not to his own abilities and not to his own devotion. You know that back in Psalm 18:20-24 he isn't saying that his righteousness is what convinced God. He is honoring the fact that God held him and gave him the grace to have mercy on Saul; but here in Psalm 18:35 he makes it clear that it's God's hand that held him up. He knows who held him up, but here is the statement, I love it, and I'll end with this: “Your gentleness has made me great” (v. 35c). David says, “God, Your gentleness has made me great.” He says, “Why am I a great man of God? Why do I stand here with love in my heart? because You were gentle to me in the seasons where You had every reason to destroy me. You were gentle with me. Yes, You disciplined me. You burned the walls of Ziklag. You burned them, but Lord, when it's all said and done, You were gentle with me. Yes, I've been chased for seven years by 3,000 assassins. Yes, that is true, but when it was all said and done, all my cave dwelling and seven years of the most incredible turmoil, even so, Lord, You were so gentle to me. I lied and sinned, but You have now crowned me king.”

GOD GIVES THE WEAK AND THE BROKEN YET ANOTHER CHANCE TO LOVE HIM

David would say the same thing in Psalm 130, another psalm of David. He said, “Lord, if You should mark iniquities, what man could stand? But You forgive Your people, so that they fear You” (Ps. 130:3-4, paraphrased). And I'm talking about God forgiving the sincere, not trying to give someone a cover-up plan so that they can continue to defy Him. God is giving the weak and the broken yet another chance to love Him. David says, “God, if You should mark iniquities, what person could stand? If You really marked iniquities, because I know that You mark my wanderings in Gath, as I wrote in Psalm 56; if You weighed iniquities in the balance, if Your ledger was completely according to justice only, then what man, what woman could stand? But with You there is forgiveness, that we might fear You.

MERCY GIVES US THE YEARS THAT IT TAKES TO GROW AND FEAR THE LORD

“We fear You for two reasons,” David says. “Your forgiveness is so stunning, the marvel of it causes us to have awe before You. Who could forgive in such measure? Your forgiveness produces a fascination, a stunning of awe in our heart that someone could forgive so freely. It stuns us because it's so great. Secondly, it gives us a chance to mature in You.” If Paul the apostle was killed when he was killing Christians, then he would never have matured as the apostle. Mercy gives us the years it takes to grow in the Lord so that we can grow and go on to fear the Lord. He doesn't cut us off in our infancy; He gives us the next years ahead, so that we can mature in the Lord. David says, “Your gentleness has made me great, O God.” It's one of the great statements of David on the beauty of the Lord.

Amen. Let's stand.

MINISTRY TIME

O Lord, Your gentleness has made us great. Lord, we stand here in 1998 because You have been gentle to us. The reason we haven't been cut off and destroyed, the reason we have hope after we haven't believed You, after we've gone to Ziklag, even after You've burned the walls of Ziklag on several occasions in our lives, the reason we love You, O God, is because You were gentle with us. Your gentleness makes us love You. We say with David in Psalm 18, "I love You. I love You. I love You because You were gentle when You could have cut us off. Why did You deliver me? because You like me. How do I know my tears are in Your bottle, my tears of repentance, my tears of pain? How do I know my enemies will be defeated one day? Because this I know, the Lord is for me. What god is there like You, O God? What god is there like You? You are so great in the heavens, so filled with lovingkindness and mercy."

Amen and amen. God bless you.