

The Fugitive Years of Fear, Sin and Exile (1 Samuel 21-31)

In this session we're going to look at a 7 year period of David's life that is recorded in chapters 21-31 of 1 Samuel. This 7 year period began when David was 23 and came to a sudden end when he was 30. If the Bethlehem years could be described as "Mundane" and if the Gibeah years could be described as "Promotion," then the Adullam Years could be described as "Hardship."

In chapters 18-20 we read of the provoking of Saul's envy and his attempts to kill David. As a result of Saul's bitter rage against him David flees into the caves of Adullam. Saul eventually hires 3,000 bounty hunters to hunt David to kill him (1 Samuel 26:2). On so many levels 1 Samuel 21-31 details suffering, loss, perplexity, depression, compromise, uncertainty and deep pain for David. Many of the depression Psalms were written during this season. This deep pain also gave rise to some of the most incredible Psalms of glory of God in the Psalter.

This season for David was also one of sin and compromise. Two of David's most shameful episodes begin and end this 7 year period. It was in this furnace of failure where David's revelation of God was tested, refined and ultimately strengthened. I think of these years for David as the years when David found out who he really was and who God really was. What was **formed in Bethlehem** and **reinforced in Gibeah** was to be **tested in the caves of Adullam** and later **brought forth into maturity in Jerusalem**.

AN OUTLINE AND OVERVIEW OF 1 SAMUEL

Chapters 1-7: Samuel's Early Years

Chapters 8-15: Samuel and Saul

Chapters 16-31: David and Saul

The Bethlehem Years (age 16/17): Chapters 16-17

The Anointing at Bethlehem: Chapter 16

The Slaying of Goliath: Chapter 17

The Gibeah Years (age 18-23): Chapters 18-20

David's Sudden Rise to Fame and the Beginning of the Conflict with Saul: Chapter 18

Saul's Attempts to Kill David: Chapters 19-20

The Adullam Years (age 23-30): Chapters 21-31

David Flees to Nob and Lies to Ahimelech the Priest: Chapter 21

David Flees to the Cave of Adullam and Saul Slaughters the Priests at Nob: Chapter 22

David Saves the City of Keilah: Chapter 23

David Spares Saul's Life: Chapter 24

Abigail and Nabal: Chapter 25

David Spares Saul Again: Chapter 26

David Flees to Ziklag: Chapter 27

Saul Consults a Medium at En-Dor: Chapter 28

The Philistines Reject David: Chapter 29

Ziklag Burns to the Ground, David Repents and is Restored: Chapter 30

The Death of Saul: Chapter 31

I. DAVID’S FIRST SEASON OF SIN - THE TESTING OF THE MAN AFTER GOD’S OWN HEART

- A. In 1 Samuel 13:14 the Lord referred to David as “a man after His own heart.” He was declaring that David was wholehearted in both love and obedience before God. The primary characteristic about David’s life was his ability to trust unreservedly in the mercy and kindness of God. David’s life was marked by profound confidence.
- B. It takes confidence before God to be a wholehearted lover of God. The Lord wants us to have a 2-fold confidence. First, we are to be confident that His love for us is genuine as we’re growing into maturity. Second, we are to be confident that our love for Him is genuine. We are hindered from being confident in this way by our weakness and immaturity. We feel that our weakness jeopardizes our position before God (His love for us) as well as how He evaluates our love for Him.
- C. The story of the Adullam years begins with David’s sin and ends with more sin. This was a season of profound failure for David. These failures would also become benchmarks of David’s greatest success in God. And so it is with us. This season in the life of David shows us that it’s what we do in failure that defines our lives. Everyone has moments of failure and sin; but this is something different for David. We only get one or two of these moments in our lifetime. This was a season when, like Peter after his denial of Jesus, in the thick of apostasy David wrestled with giving up entirely.
- D. It’s important to understand the emotional pressure of these years. Up until this point David had been defined only as “the man after God’s own heart.” As David struggled through this 7 year period of compromise, moral failure and sin his identity, his future and his relationship with the God of his youth was now being put to the test. The young man who slew Goliath, won the hearts of the masses, commanded an army and provoked the jealous rage of king was now hiding in caves of rock and shame as he contemplated giving up.

“...he said to the king of Moab, “Please let my father and my mother stay with you, till I know what God will do for me.” (1 Samuel 22:3)

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...I shall escape out of his hand.” (1 Sam. 27:1)

II. DAVID’S FEAR-DRIVEN FLIGHT BEGINS - 21

David flees to Nob first where he lies to Ahimelech (21:1-9) and then to the Philistine king of Gath named Achish where he faked insanity (21:10-15). From there David flees to Adullam in chapter 22. This chapter describes the first time David was afraid. This fear soon turned into despair and depression. And this depression soon turned into moral failure which left David in a pile of dust and ashes in chapter 30.

Now David took these words to heart, and was very much afraid... (21:12)

III. DAVID’S COMMUNITY - 22:1-2

1 David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. And when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him.

2 And everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul, gathered to him. And he became captain over them. And there were with him about four hundred men.

IV. DAVID'S DISOBEDIENCE - 22:3-4; 27:1-7

3 And David went from there to Mizpeh of Moab. And he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and my mother stay with you, till I know what God will do for me."

4 And he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold.

5 Then the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not remain in the stronghold; depart, and go into the land of Judah." So David departed and went into the forest of Hereth.

V. DAVID'S INTEGRITY - 24:5-11

5 Then David rose and came to the place where Saul had encamped. And David saw the place where Saul lay, with Abner the son of Ner, the commander of his army. Saul was lying within the encampment, while the army was encamped around him.

6 Then David said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Joab's brother Abishai the son of Zeruiah, "Who will go down with me into the camp to Saul?" And Abishai said, "I will go down with you."

7 So David and Abishai went to the army by night. And there lay Saul sleeping within the encampment, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head, and Abner and the army lay around him.

8 Then said Abishai to David, "God has given your enemy into your hand this day. Now please let me pin him to the earth with one stroke of the spear, and I will not strike him twice."

9 But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him, for who can put out his hand against the LORD's anointed and be guiltless?"

10 And David said, "As the LORD lives, the LORD will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish.

11 The LORD forbid that I should put out my hand against the LORD's anointed. But take now the spear that is at his head and the jar of water, and let us go."

VI. DAVID'S RESIGNATION AND APOSTASY - 27:1-7

1 Then David said in his heart, "Now I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will despair of seeking me any longer within the borders of Israel, and I shall escape out of his hand."

2 So David arose and went over, he and the six hundred men who were with him, to Achish the son of Maoch, king of Gath.

3 And David lived with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, and David with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and Abigail of Carmel, Nabal's widow.

4 And when it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath, he no longer sought him.

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

6 So that day Achish gave him Ziklag. Therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day.

7 And the number of the days that David lived in the country of the Philistines was a year and four months.

VII. DAVID'S RESTORATION - 1 SAMUEL 30-31

1 Samuel 30 is one of the lowest times in David's life. Everything seems lost. King Saul was seeking to kill him. For sixteen months, he had lived in compromise by disobeying Gad's prophetic word to live in Judah (1 Sam. 22:5) and lying to Achish. He lost his family. His team wants to kill him.

- A. **The Amalekites burn and plunder Ziklag and David’s men turn on him (1 Sam. 30:1-6).**
This was one of the worst days in David’s life, yet it ended up as the beginning of one of the most powerful weeks in his life.

1 Now when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, the Amalekites had made a raid against the Negeb and against Ziklag. They had overcome Ziklag and burned it with fire
2 and taken captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great. They killed no one, but carried them off and went their way.

3 And when David and his men came to the city, they found it burned with fire, and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive.

4 Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept until they had no more strength to weep.

5 David's two wives also had been taken captive, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel.

6 And David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.

- B. Ziklag was the place of David’s compromise. God loved him so much that He allowed the place of his compromise to be burned. Sometimes we live in compromise because we are afraid that God will not deliver us. So we figure out a way to deliver ourselves. We hide in a Ziklag of our own making. Eventually, God will burn our Ziklag to remove all the props we falsely trust in.

- C. **David strengthened himself in God and inquired of the Lord (1 Sam. 30:7-9)**

7 And David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, “Bring me the ephod.” So Abiathar brought the ephod to David.

8 And David inquired of the LORD, “Shall I pursue after this band? Shall I overtake them?” He answered him, “Pursue, for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue.”

9 So David set out, and the six hundred men who were with him, and they came to the brook Besor, where those who were left behind stayed.

10 But David pursued, he and four hundred men. Two hundred stayed behind, who were too exhausted to cross the brook Besor.

- D. **David pursued and defeated the Amalekites (1 Sam. 30:9-31).**

17 David attacked them from twilight until the evening of the next day...

18 David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away...

19 Nothing of theirs was lacking...

- E. **Saul and his three sons died in a battle against the Philistines (1 Sam. 31:1-6).**

3 The battle became fierce against Saul. The archers hit him...

6 Saul, his three sons...and all his men died together that same day.

- F. **David is anointed King in Hebron (2 Sam. 2:1-4)**

1 After [the death of Saul and Jonathan] David inquired of the LORD, “Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?” And the LORD said to him, “Go up.” David said, “To which shall I go up?” And he said, “To Hebron.”....

4 And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.

VIII. DAVID'S REVELATION OF GOD'S GENTLENESS AND MERCY - PSALM 18, 34, 52, 54, 56, 57, 108, 142, 143 AND MORE

I will love You, O LORD, my strength. (Ps. 18:1)

He delivered me because He delighted in me... (Ps. 18:19)

Your right hand has held me up, Your gentleness has made me great. (Ps. 18:35)

You number my wanderings; put my tears into Your bottle; are they not in Your book? When I cry out to You, then my enemies will turn back; this I know, because God is for me. (Ps. 56:8-9)

Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by. I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me. He will send from heaven and save me; he will put to shame him who tramples on me. God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness! (Psalm 57:1-3)