

COURAGE, COLLAPSE & THE GOD WHO STAYS

20: Courage, Collapse, & the God Who Stays (1 Sam 26-27)

The Bible doesn't paint a picture of constant blue skies and calm waters—nor does it showcase people who always get it right. Today we'll see David stand strong, as he has so many times before, but we'll also watch him buckle under the persistent pressure of persecution. The good news? God's faithfulness remains steady even when we falter.

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* All Scripture is from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) unless otherwise noted.

1 Samuel 26:1-2

Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah saying, "David is hiding on the hill of Hachilah opposite Jeshimon." So Saul, accompanied by three thousand of the fit young men of Israel, went immediately to the Wilderness of Ziph to search for David there.

The last time we saw David and Saul in the same storyline, Saul was asking God to bless David for sparing his life (1 Sam 24:18-19), but now's Saul's at it again - on a seek & destroy mission to take out David. But this time the tables have turned, because David knows exactly where Saul is and Saul doesn't know where David is.

1 Samuel 26:3-6

Saul camped beside the road at the hill of Hachilah opposite Jeshimon. David was living in the wilderness and discovered Saul had come there after him. So David sent out spies and knew for certain that Saul had come. Immediately, David went to the place where Saul had camped. He saw the place where Saul and Abner son of Ner, the commander of his army, were lying down. Saul was lying inside the inner circle of the camp with the troops camped around him. Then David asked Ahimelech the Hethite and Joab's brother Abishai son of Zeruiah, "Who will go with me into the camp to Saul?" "I'll go with you," answered Abishai.

Although there is no response from **Ahimelech**, **Abishai** is ready to roll!

🕒 When you've got a difficult meeting or decision coming up, it's good to have a friend who has your back and walks with you through a difficult journey or task - a friend who will lift you up in prayer. That's the kind of friend **Abishai** was.

1 Samuel 26:7-12

That night, David and Abishai came to the troops, and Saul was lying there asleep in the inner circle of the camp with his spear stuck in the ground by his head. Abner and the troops were lying around him. Then Abishai said to David, "Today God has delivered your enemy to you. Let me thrust the spear through him into the ground just once. I won't have to strike him twice!" But David said to Abishai, "Don't destroy him, for who can lift a hand against the LORD's anointed and be innocent?" David added, "As the LORD lives, the LORD will certainly strike him down: either his day will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish. However, as the LORD, is my witness, I will never lift my hand against the LORD's anointed. Instead, take the spear and the water jug by his head, and let's go." So David took the spear and the water jug by Saul's head, and they went their way. No one saw them, no one knew, and no one woke up; they all remained asleep because a deep sleep from the LORD came over them.

Notice this isn't just about the quiet skill of David, but a **deep sleep** that Yahweh put on them. God is still at work, protecting David from his enemies.

1 Samuel 26:13-18

David crossed to the other side and stood on top of the mountain at a distance; there was a considerable space between them. Then David shouted to the troops and to Abner son of Ner, "Aren't you going to answer, Abner?" "Who are you who calls to the king?" Abner asked. David called to Abner, "You're a man, aren't you? Who in Israel is your equal? So why didn't you protect your lord the king when one of the people came to destroy him? What you have done is not good. As the LORD lives, all of you deserve to die since you didn't protect your lord, the LORD's anointed. Now look around; where are the king's spear and water jug that were by his head?" Saul recognized David's voice and asked, "Is that your voice, my son David?" "It is my voice, my lord and king," David said. Then he continued, "Why is my lord pursuing his servant? What have I done? What crime have I committed?"

Saul had heard David's voice many times, as they talked and as David sang for him. David continues to ask WHY Saul wants him dead. What crime has David committed against Saul, that he deserves to die? NONE.

👁️ Once again, we see the parallelism between David & Jesus. When the enemies of Jesus put Him on trial, Jesus asks what evidence they have that he has done wrong. There is NONE, but they pursue his death anyway.

1 Samuel 26:19-21

Now, may my lord the king please hear the words of his servant: If it is the LORD who has incited you against me, then may he accept an offering. But if it is people, may they be cursed in the presence of the LORD, for today they have banished me from sharing in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, 'Go and worship other gods.' So don't let my blood fall to the ground far from the LORD's presence, for the king of Israel has come out to search for a single flea, like one who pursues a partridge in the mountains." Saul responded, "I have sinned. Come back, my son David, I will never harm you again because today you considered my life precious. I have been a fool! I've committed a grave error."

David is not far from Yahweh's Presence. We have seen lots of evidence of Yahweh's Presence providing for and protecting David. But David doesn't want to die outside of Israel, the land of Yahweh, in a place where false gods are worshiped instead of the One True God.

1 Samuel 26:22-24

David answered, "Here is the king's spear; have one of the young men come over and get it. The LORD will repay every man for his righteousness and his loyalty. I wasn't willing to lift my hand against the LORD's anointed, even though the LORD handed you over to me today. Just as I considered your life valuable today, so may the LORD consider my life valuable and rescue me from all trouble."

David has done unto others what he wanted done to him. David trusts that God will reward him for his **righteousness and loyalty** and the God will **repay** Saul for his unrighteousness and disloyalty.

1 Samuel 26:25

Saul said to him, "You are blessed, my son David. You will certainly do great things and will also prevail." Then David went on his way, and Saul returned home.

This is the last recorded confrontation & conversation between King Saul & David. Saul seems sorry for how he has treated David, BUT...again, notice that David did NOT go back with Saul, because Saul wasn't trustworthy.

Forgiveness is free, but TRUST is earned. Ideally, both happen and genuine restoration takes place.

1 Samuel 27:1

David said to himself, "One of these days I'll be swept away by Saul. There is nothing better for me than to escape immediately to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me everywhere in Israel, and I'll escape from him."

Here we notice a shift - from a natural fear of Saul and supernatural faith in Yahweh - to a fear that David would one day be killed **by Saul**. While it's okay for David to run, it seems that David is DISCOUNTING the promises that God has given him through Samuel & Jonathan.

- God had Samuel anoint David as the next king. Won't God be faithful to that promise?
- God had given Jonathan insight into what was coming and Jonathan prophesied that David would be the next king and something else very encouraging...

1 Samuel 23:16-17 Then Saul's son Jonathan came to David in Horesh and encouraged him in his faith in God, saying, "Don't be afraid, for **my father Saul will never lay a hand on you**. You yourself will be king over Israel, and I'll be your second-in-command. Even my father Saul knows it is true."

Has David forgotten not only God's **PROMISES** but also God's **PROTECTION** - as we have seen many times in the writing we are studying? Why would David struggle to believe after God has shown up SO MANY TIMES? Can you believe that DAVID was afraid of things that God has assured him of time and time again?

We've done that too...haven't we?

- God promises never to leave us or forsake us, yet we wonder if He has.
- God has protected us many, many times, yet somehow we wonder if He really loves us & has our best interests in mind.

The Scriptures don't sugar-coat moments when heroes of the faith fail to trust God...**JUST LIKE US**.

1 Samuel 27:2-4

So David set out with his six hundred men and went over to Achish son of Maach, the king of Gath. David and his men stayed with Achish in Gath. Each man had his family with him, and David had his two wives: Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, Nabal's widow. When it was reported to Saul that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him.

This is the same king **Achish** whom David had faked insanity in front of before, the king who rules over Gath - 1 of the 5 Philistine cities - the home city of Goliath. Achish and others have no doubt heard about Saul's searching for David, so Achish & David see this as an alliance that can benefit them both.

David's plan worked, but there was more to his plan than Achish would be made aware of.

1 Samuel 27:5-7

Now David said to Achish, "If I have found favor with you, let me be given a place in one of the outlying towns, so I can live there. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you?" That day Achish gave Ziklag to him, and it still belongs to the kings of Judah today. The length of time that David stayed in Philistine territory amounted to a year and four months.

Ziklag was a region that was given to the tribe of Judah by Joshua, although the area was never successfully taken. David is from the tribe of Judah, so - unbeknownst to Achish - it already belonged to David's people. Based on the text, David didn't pick out this town, but simply asked for "one of the outlying towns," it seems more than coincidence that this is the town David is given. *Once again, we see the hand of God at work.*

Years after this story, the author of this writing notes that **Ziklag still belongs to the kings of Judah**. While David hasn't been home to Bethlehem for quite some time, he IS living and ruling in the land of his tribe.

1 Samuel 27:8-9

David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites. From ancient times they had been the inhabitants of the region through Shur as far as the land of Egypt. Whenever David attacked the land, he did not leave a single person alive, either man or woman, but he took flocks, herds, donkeys, camels, and clothing.

This is when the story shifts. If you don't view it through the lenses of the Hebrew people reading this story - it can look like David is just a wicked, lying, bloodthirsty man. These people had long been enemies of the Hebrew people for many years, people whom Yahweh had the Israelites to drive out or destroy (see Numbers 33:50-56; Deuteronomy 7:1-5; 20:16-18).

1 Samuel 27:9-10

Then he came back to Achish, who inquired, "Where did you raid today?" David replied, "The south country of Judah," "The south country of the Jerahmeelites," or "The south country of the Kenites."

David did not attack his own people in his own homeland of **Judah**, nor did he attack the **Kenites** (1 Sam 15:6), who were considered allies. What David tells Achish is NOT true. It IS, however, a shrewd tactic to make Achish think that David is fighting against his own people and fully committed to the Philistines, all the while David is fighting against the enemies of Israel. In so doing, David receives approval from Achish & the Philistines AND the people of his homeland of Judah, in Israel.

1 Samuel 27:11-12

David did not let a man or woman live to be brought to Gath, for he said, "Or they will inform on us and say, 'This is what David did.' " This was David's custom during the whole time he stayed in the Philistine territory.

So Achish trusted David, thinking, "Since he has made himself repulsive to his people Israel, he will be my servant forever."

Earlier, when Saul was hunting down David, he spoke about how "cunning" David was (1 Sam 23:22), and this turns out to be very true. David is not truly the **servant** of **Achish**; **David** is the servant of Yahweh and His people.

- David has been under pressure to turn away from Yahweh and His people, yet he refuses to do so. Even though David has had moments of where he lacked faith, Yahweh has not forsaken him. Yahweh has been faithful and WILL be faithful to do all that He has promised.

► What was true for King David is certainly true for those who follow King Jesus. The author of Hebrews closes his writing by reminding his audience to walk in Christian love, purity, & contentment and then quotes these ancient words for his Christian audience.

Hebrews 13:5-6 ...He himself has said, I will never leave you or abandon you.

Therefore, we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid...

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

- * Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), **Gary** (850-673-2507), **Betty** (850-973-3266), or another follower of Jesus soon!
- * Or call our **deacons & wives**: **Alan & Christy Androski** (850-464-1428), **Steve & Debbie Bass** (850-673-7952), **Noel & Patricia Barnes** (813-767-2881), **Derek & Emily Beaty** (813-763-4421), or **Tim & Joni Hughey** (850-464-1156).

Discussion questions

These discussion questions are designed to help you LIVE what you LEARN with your Family, Friends, or Small Group.

Faith When You're Tired

1. David showed remarkable trust in 1 Samuel 26 but quickly slipped into fear in chapter 27. Where have you seen this same pattern in your own life—strong faith one day and discouragement the next?
2. What typically triggers that slide for you?

Friends Who Strengthen Your Faith (1 Samuel 26:6)

3. Abishai stood with David in a dangerous moment.
4. Who has been an “Abishai” in your life—someone who walks with you in difficult moments?
5. How has God used that person to strengthen your faith?

Forgiveness vs. Trust (1 Samuel 26:25)

6. David forgave Saul but did not trust him. Why do so many believers confuse forgiveness with immediate trust?
7. Where might God be calling you to forgive someone—but also wisely set boundaries?

God's Promises vs. Our Fears (1 Samuel 27:1)

8. David knew God had promised to make him king, yet fear convinced him that Saul might one day kill him. What promises of God do you struggle to believe when life gets overwhelming?
9. David had seen God rescue, protect, and provide for him countless times, yet he momentarily forgot. Where do you wrestle with “spiritual amnesia”—forgetting how God has been faithful?

God Working Behind the Scenes

10. Even in David's flawed decisions, God was still sovereignly at work—guiding him to Ziklag, protecting his men, and positioning him for future leadership. *Where have you seen God working behind the scenes in your life, even during a season when your faith wasn't strong?*

The Heart of a Shepherd

11. David refused to lead Israel from Philistine territory—and he continued to fight Israel's enemies even while living among the Philistines. What does this teach us about staying faithful to God's mission even when your circumstances are messy?

Trusting the Father When You Can't See Him

12. Reflect on the closing illustration: The child couldn't see his father, but the father could see him. How does this picture help you trust God during times when you can't “see” what He's doing?
13. Reflect on **Hebrews 13:5–6**. How have you seen God protect or guide you even during seasons of weak faith? How does knowing God is faithful—even when we fail—change the way you face discouragement?

Walking in Faith This Week

14. What is one concrete step of obedience, trust, or boundary-setting you need to take this week based on what you learned from David's story?