

## WHEN LIFE GETS OUT OF CONTROL

### Part 2

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1 Samuel 22. My intentions a week ago had been in one single week to take from chapter 21-24 under the theme, “When Life Gets out of Control”. What are we to do when life gets out of our control? I’m finding that I’m getting so absorbed in the text I can’t take it as fast as I’d planned so we have lesson one last week, lesson two this week, lesson three next week.... We’re going to look at chapter 22:1-5.

David’s nemesis Saul is not eating milk and cookies or taking a peace nap in the afternoon. Rather he is clutching his fist and his heart rather than holding hands with David.

I’m suggesting that there are times in all of our lives when we are not going to find life idyllic, docile, peaceful. It is going to be tumultuous, difficult unforeseen circumstances are going to cloud our vision and our path. There are going to be moments when hot tears lie on our face, when we are confused and distressed and upset with God and circumstances and other people, with family, with friends. We’re going to be upset when things are not in our control in terms of our own personal choice would elect. What do we do in those times?

Last week we looked at lesson one. Just know at the outset you’re going to make some mistakes. You’re not going to go through that time perfectly. David made some really bad mistakes. He lied. He feared and he just made dumb blunders. He wanders into Goliath’s hometown seeking refuge forgetting as he goes that that was Goliath’s hometown and Goliath’s sword is tucked under his clothes. He’s in big trouble.

We’ve all done stupid things. We understand.

Today I want to begin looking at the things David did right. They become for us an example of what we should be doing when life gets out of control. This message today therefore can either be a lifeline to you, a rescue line if you’re going through trouble. Or it can be a preventative to file away when things do get out of control. Three things I want to look at in these five verses that David did in a positive way.

The first is he did not go through his problem alone.

He did not remain alone. Verses 1 and 2, David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and his father’s household heard about it they went down to him there. All those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him and he became their leader and about 400 men were with him. He didn’t stay long alone.

There’s an old gospel spiritual “Nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen...” I’ve sung that with relish at times. That’s so true nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen. Unfortunately while those words maybe wonderful sentiment they do not express reality. Of course others know the trouble you have seen. Others around David know the same kind of situation he’s going through and they gather to him. Scriptures tell us in 1 Corinthians 10:13 “*Not a single temptation has seized you except what is common to man.*” So while the particular fact of every one of our experiences maybe different the kinds of issues that we have to deal within life have

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commonality to them. We need to seek the association and company of others who can identify with us and give us strength. And in turn whom we can strengthen also.

So gathered around David are what I call the three Ds. The Debtors, the Distressed, and the Discontented. These people who know who they are and what they're suffering from in the company of one another become a mighty band of people. They go to that cave and they are licked and they are wounded and they are struggling and they are suffering. But they emerge as the vanguard of a new kingdom. As a powerful healing agency for good in the world.

I think by the way, A cave is one of the reasons why alcoholics anonymous has been so successful. People gather together who have the same problems and who admit it. They talk about it and begin to ask God for healing and begin to encourage one another and above all stay honest with themselves. One of the dangers we have in the church is on the one hand we're trying to press toward sanctification and perfection and we don't want to admit that we've somehow fallen short. But on the other hand we have this desperate need to be honest. If we elevate one side of the dimension – sanctification – ahead of the other what happens is we gradually become a people that none of us will ever admit we're going through any trouble or difficulty. We became embarrassed to share it least somebody think we're not spiritual. We look around the church and say, all these people look like they've got it put together. I'm the only one here nobody knows the trouble I've seen. Surely these good people wouldn't know what it is I've gone through.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The church must always remember that it is to be Adullam's cave. It's gathering the debtor, the discontented and the distressed.

I wanted to give this church the name that's probably held by no other church in the world. No church I know of is called Adullam's Christian Center. But that's what the church always needs to be – a place of refuge for the 3 Ds. Those in debt, distressed, and discontented. God has called us in the company of one another and he's not called us to communicate an attitude that anyone is perfect other than Jesus.

David is with us now in our own Adullam's cave in the twentieth century. He is still taking those in debt, those in distress, those discontented. And making them a wonderful band of healing and strength and health for the world.

David found solace in the company of others. He was strengthened by not going inward, crawling turtle like into his personality shell and withdrawing from others.

The second marvelous thing he did here that works for healing when life gets out of control is that David did not become self absorbed to the exclusion of taking care of his responsibilities. One of the things that happens when life gets out of control and we have difficulty is we go inward. We start focusing on our problems. Anyone who has had an operation knows what that's about. We get self absorbed when we're going through health situations. We get self absorbed when we're going through emotional problems or spiritual problems. More and more of our time is focused upon ourselves and that's understandable, that's natural. But we need to fight that tendency to be so totally self absorbed. We need to come out of that and also be concerned with other people and with legitimate responsibilities we have in life.

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David does that. Verse 3 *“From there David went to Mizpeh in Moab [which is on the eastern side of the Dead Sea] and said to the king of Moab, “Would you let my father and mother come and stay with you until I learn what God will do for me?” So he left them with the king of Moab and they stayed with him as long as David was in the stronghold.”* David for all the personal concerns he had for his safety said, My parents are also in an exposed position. If his parents remained at Bethlehem they are subject to Saul’s slaughter. If they’d gone with David down to Adullam they’re old people and they can’t trek like David can. They need to get to a safe place. He comes out of his own self absorption of safety needs and is concerned about providing a haven for his parents. He takes care of his responsibilities.

There’s an interesting sidelight here we should not miss. That is where David takes his parents. To Moab. May that ring kind of biblical bell of recognition. It was four generations before David, his great, great grandmother and great great grandfather were two people named Naomi and Elimelech. One day at Bethlehem after a long famine they’d had enough. They didn’t feel they could stay in that land anymore. They couldn’t trust God for rain anymore. Their food had run out. Naomi whose name meant “pleasant” and “beautiful” and Elimelech whose name meant “God is my king” leave their ancestral home and journey down southeast to Moab to heathen territory where there will be food. There the two sons Mahlon and Chilion grow up, marry and die and Elimelech dies and Naomi is left alone. Only one thing good happens to her in Moab. That is her daughter in law Ruth comes back to Bethlehem. When Naomi gets back she thinks God is finished with her life. She says, Don’t go me “pleasant”, don’t call me Naomi any more. Just call me Mara – bitter. But had there not been that experience of going down to Moab there would have been no Ruth. And had there been no Ruth there would have been no marriage to Boaz. And had there been no marriage between Ruth and Boaz there would have been no Obed. And had there been no Obed there would have been no Jesse. And had there been no Jesse there would have been no great, great grandson named David.

As Paul Harvey says, “Now we know the rest of the story.” Now we know what God was doing those days that Elimelech and Naomi were wandering down with their sons into Moab land, away from family and friends. They didn’t see it at the time and they thought God has abandoned us. Naomi all the more so when she lost Elimelech and her two sons and came back a widow, grieved and bitter. God’s abandoned me.

God has made a promise to us that He is going to work all things for the good. But He never said that promise would be necessarily fulfilled in our own lifetime. There are some things that God is working for the good in your life that you may never see. But that doesn’t mean He isn’t going to work it for the good. It’s understandable why David goes down to Moab. Because he’s got Moabite blood flowing in him and there’s distant relatives there and they’ll be safe. So he takes time out in his own personal saga of life to care for his family, to take care of his responsibilities. I encourage you when life is out of control don’t neglect the important responsibilities you have in life.

The third thing David did in this time when life was out of control was that he kept his heart open to God. Verse 5, “The prophet Gad said to David ‘Do not say in the stronghold. Go into the land of Judah.’ So David left and went to the forest of Hareth.”

I suggest to you that there are three ways David kept his heart open to God. First, through prophet, second priest, third psalm. Those are the three ways David keeps in vital contact with

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God. They may not be the particular way you will keep relationship with God but they would be the way David did.

Through prophet. David didn't have the written word of God. He depended upon the living voice. There was a prophet named Gad who comes to him and says, "You've got to get out of here. Get to the wilderness of Judah." So he does. He let people whom God had used and who could be depended upon for advice he gave them entrance into his life and he heard God's word through them. We don't always hear God's word directly. Sometimes we hear it through someone else.

Then another way of receiving guidance and of keeping his heart open to God was through the priest Ahimelech, the descendant of Eli, the high priest. 1 Samuel 23:2, 4, 9-12. Those verses have four separate occasions when David when in doubt about decision went to priest and said, I need to know from God: should I do this or not. Those were the times when David's human wisdom had run out and he could not make the decision on his own. He wanted a yes/no decision. The Old Testament had a way a priest giving a yes/no decision. The way may shock you. It may strike you as not being spiritual. The high priest (Exodus 28:30) had something called the Urim and the Thummim. These were stones which were carried in the vest which he wore. They were stones that were somehow used in discerning God's will. No one is quite sure exactly how they were employed but the best guess is Urim is the word, which means "cursed." And Thummim means "shinning." Evidently these two stones had two faces on them. One a Urim face which was dull. And a Thummim face which was shiny and glistening. Whenever it came time for a king to ask for God's will then one could go to the priest and inquire of the Lord, "Shall I go to battle or not?" The priest would take the stones out and in some way would cast the lot if both sides came up Urim or dull flat side, that was No. If both sides came up shiny, Thummim, the answer was Yes. If he had one Urim and one Thummim it was "What do you want to do? God will be with you either way."

It's not very spiritual way of knowing God's will. Yet if we look at Acts 1 that's exactly how the church selected the apostle to replace Judas. They cast lots out of Proverbs 16:33. The lot was cast and the lot was the decision that was holy from the Lord. Am I suggesting that one of the ways you can get guidance is just to flip coin? No. I'm not suggesting that.

But I am saying that there are times when we run out of our ability to humanly rationalize ourselves to decision. And rather than simply casting a lot, what David did was he inquired of God. He went through that process of asking the Lord, "What is Your will?" and then letting a circumstance happen through which he could discern God's will. He didn't cast the lot without asking God first.

The principle for us is that in our times when life is out of control we need to keep coming to the Lord and asking for direction on moment by moment basis.

The third way he kept this heart opened to God was through his psalms. All through this experience of wandering here are psalms which he writes, which expresses his faith in God. When he is acting like a madman at Gath he is composing Psalm 34 and 56. When he is in the cave probably the cave of Adullam he is writing Psalm 57 and Psalm 142. When he receives word that Doeg has murdered all the priests he writes Psalm 52. When he is betrayed something we'll look at next week he writes Psalm 54. And when he's in the wilderness of Judah, 22:5 he

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is writing Psalm 63. In that Psalm he is expressing the vital themes of a person who's in fresh relationship with God. He's expressing hunger for God. He is remembering past times of spiritual victory. It wasn't always difficult like this, he's saying. I have seen you in your sanctuary and beheld Your power and glory. We need to remember in our down times that we have had uptimes too. He recalls that God's love is more important than life. He continues to worship in song and with upraised hands. Through the watches of the night he is concentrating on God and praying to Him in his sleepless times. He has the bedrock confidence that God is going to use him. So he even closes the Psalm by referring to himself as the king. And he hasn't even yet become king. He already is saying, God will uphold me.

There are times in life when all we have really is God. One of the things that happens to us when the circumstances of life is out of control is that we may become embittered. We may say, Why is God letting this happen to me? David could have said that. I didn't ask to be king. I didn't ask for Samuel to show up and anoint me. I didn't ask to kill Goliath. I didn't ask to be Saul's son-in-law and one of the chief men in his court. God, you did all this. You put me there. Why are you now letting this happen to me? Why am I now running for my life? Why am I so unfulfilled? I've known people and I could call names who had difficult experience happen in their life and they took it as sign that God no longer loved them and cared for them and today they're as bitter and as away from God as you possibly can be.

David is at that crossroads you get into when life gets out of control. Am I going to still believe and trust in God when my circumstances are pounding my senses with the idea that God doesn't care about me?

That's what makes it so special that David in this time kept his relationship with God. David could have had a heart bitter to God but chose when he had every reason to be bitter to keep his heart tender.

You may not see it now in your life circumstance. Things haven't worked out the way you thought they were going to work out. They're not pleasant and it's difficult. In the midst of that kind of time you can say God's forgotten me. God's abandoned me. Why should I serve Him? You can make that decision and you can withdraw into a shell with bitterness and regret. Or you can say, I don't understand, God, but I know that because Jesus Christ has risen from the dead everything He says is true. You say, Lord Jesus, You're David's Son. You will never leave me nor forsake me. And you give me the assurance that You are working for the good in my life. Lord, even if I don't see it in the days that I live I will die trusting that every event of my life you're going to work for good. And rather than being bitter and rather than withdrawing and rather than being rebellious, I will serve You and love You and believe You and trust You. That was David's critical key for staying true in trial. He kept a heart that was close to God.

Our Lord we pray for those in our midst among us right now for whom this word today comes as a rescue. We pray that they may reach out a hand and feel Your hand gripping theirs. We pray for everyone whose life circumstances are out of their control. Decisions have been made for them, which they didn't make for themselves and they have been painful and the consequences were not just for 24 hours. The consequences permeate their life. They don't go away by just wishing them away. They're there. We have to deal with them day to day. Lord we need You. If we needed You in our calm times, more than ever now do we need You. We find as did David You are our hiding place. You always fill our

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heart with songs of deliverance. May we trust in` You. May the weak say I am strong in the strength of the Lord. You are no respecter of persons. If you were for the biblical David, You work for us too. We trust You for that. Help us in every life circumstance to keep cleaving with You. To keep coming back from our mistakes and our failures. To keep coming to Your side and saying, No matter what Lord I'm going to stand with You. I'm going to be upheld by You. We seek this, Lord Jesus. In Your name. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.