



Studies in the Life of David

Text

First Samuel 27:1-12

Topic

In a fit of spiritual fatigue, David decides to escape his many trials by moving to the Philistine city of Ziklag

Title

He Ziklagged When He Should Have Zagged

Introduction

I want to talk about chronic fatigue - but not the physical kind. There is a chronic *spiritual* fatigue that can affect your walk with the Lord. It occurs when you lose sight of the Lord in the midst of your circumstances. You are especially susceptible to it if you are in a long-term trial in which no change for the better can be seen on the horizon.

David is the textbook case for chronic spiritual fatigue. Let's review his circumstances.

- For several years he had been pursued by King Saul whose intent was to murder him.
- One of David's early decisions, to deceive the priest about his mission, had led to the slaughter of eighty-five priests, their families and their livestock.
- In his exile Saul had given David's wife, Michal, to another man.
- David's band of six hundred men were described as being distressed, in debt, and discontented. Not an easy group to lead.

- As their leader, however, it was up to him to provide for them and their families even though he was considered a criminal among the Jewish people.
- On top of all that, David's spiritual advisor, the prophet Samuel, had died.

One day David looked square in the face of his circumstances and uttered the words you read in verse one, "Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape to the land of the Philistines; and Saul will despair of me, to seek me anymore in any part of Israel. So I shall escape out of his hand."

He was feeling the pressure of his circumstances. The long term nature of his trouble, with no end in sight, weighed him down. He was fatigued, spiritually fatigued, and wanted to do something about it.

There is a notable absence in David's analysis. He doesn't mention the Lord. David succumbed to spiritual fatigue by getting his eyes on to his circumstances and off of the Lord.

Spiritual fatigue is real and, as we'll see, it can be devastating to your walk. I'll organize my thoughts around two questions: #1 Do Your Circumstances Have You Suffering From Chronic Spiritual Fatigue?, or #2 Do Your Circumstances Have You Seeking Jesus Christ's Spiritual Strength?

#1 Do Your Circumstances Have You Suffering From Chronic Spiritual Fatigue?

(v1-12)

David had been anointed by Samuel to be the next king of Israel. He had slain the Philistine giant and champion, Goliath. As a commander in King Saul's army he had won notable victories. A hit song was written about him. The chorus was, *Saul has slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands*. King Saul's son, Jonathan, was David's close friend and mentor - even though he was next in line to be king. On more than one occasion God had miraculously delivered David out of the hand of Saul.

Most recently, David had his second opportunity to kill Saul but instead stood on the promises of God and refused to raise his hand against God's anointed king.

Despite the unconditional promises from God, the miraculous protection of God, and the continual provision by God, David got his eyes on his circumstances and succumbed to spiritual fatigue.

1 Samuel 27:1 And David said in his heart, "Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape to the land of the Philistines; and Saul will despair of me, to seek me anymore in any part of Israel. So I shall escape out of his hand."

Have you ever felt like this? Like you just couldn't take it anymore? You have... or you will. Instead of taking your stand with the Lord and enduring your circumstances, you determine your own way of escape.

Diagnosing the condition is difficult because outwardly it can seem as though you've made a good decision. Look at the next three verses.

1 Samuel 27:2 Then David arose and went over with the six hundred men who were with him to Achish the son of Moch, king of Gath.

1 Samuel 27:3 So David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, each man with his household, and David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's widow.

1 Samuel 27:4 And it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath; so he sought him no more.

Wow! It was just that easy. After years of struggle, all of a sudden Saul quit pursuing David. He and his men settled down in a real town. The mention of "household" and family gives you the impression that everyone was enjoying a rich, full life in the countryside.

I see this all the time in marriages. One spouse walks away and suddenly everything gets better for them. They conclude that it must be God's will that they trashed their marriage. It's not.

Let's talk about the city of Gath. It was one of the five chief cities of the Philistines, the mortal enemies of Israel. It was at Gath the Philistines had

once held the Ark of the Covenant. It was the hometown of Goliath. A few years earlier David had tried hiding-out in Gath only to escape by pretending he was insane.

I submit to you that it was impossible that living in Gath was God's will. It should never even have been considered.

Spiritual fatigue often begins with a decision that should never even have been considered. Walking away from a marriage with no biblical grounds for doing so. Marrying a nonbeliever. Those are two obvious but strangely 'popular' decisions. Others may be more subtle but, with biblical insight, you can see they are not the Lord's will.

1 Samuel 27:5 Then David said to Achish, "If I have now found favor in your eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there. For why should your servant dwell in the royal city with you?"

1 Samuel 27:6 So Achish gave him Ziklag that day. Therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day.

Wow again! David is given his own Philistine city. His plan to escape his trouble seems to be prospering him more-and-more.

In chapter thirty, however, David is going to experience a crushing defeat at Ziklag. Everything he has, and everything his men have, is taken from them in a raid. If he thought his circumstances were bleak now, just wait til then.

We really don't know where a certain decision will lead us. Which is why we need to seek the Lord at all times. He knows the way we ought to take. Enduring certain circumstances will bring us to an expected, spiritual end. The escape route, after an initial release of pressure, often leads to greater, more severe trouble.

Outward prosperity is not by itself a sign you've made a good decision. We are to be more concerned with character development than we are with cash flow.

1 Samuel 27:7 Now the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was one full year and four months.

This was undoubtedly the longest time David had spent in a single location in many years. He was able to settle in, to have a regular routine, to get comfortable.

Is the Christian life about settling down in a comfortable setting? Is that it's ultimate goal? You know it's not. It's about serving the Lord wherever you've been sent.

1 Samuel 27:8 And David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites. For those nations were the inhabitants of the land from of old, as you go to Shur, even as far as the land of Egypt.

Wow for the third time! David and his army went out and made mincemeat out of certain enemies of Israel. In other words, he continued to have a ministry of serving the Lord.

You'd think a person in spiritual fatigue would quit serving the Lord entirely. Quite the opposite. You pour yourself into something in order to prove to yourself that your decision to escape your circumstances was a good one, a godly one, because after all you're doing more than before.

But you are most likely doing it in the energy of the flesh. Listen to what David had to do in order to convince Achish he was serving him.

1 Samuel 27:9 Whenever David attacked the land, he left neither man nor woman alive, but took away the sheep, the oxen, the donkeys, the camels, and the apparel, and returned and came to Achish.

1 Samuel 27:10 Then Achish would say, "Where have you made a raid today?" And David would say, "Against the southern area of Judah, or against the southern area of the Jerahmeelites, or against the southern area of the Kenites."

1 Samuel 27:11 David would save neither man nor woman alive, to bring news to Gath, saying, "Lest they should inform on us, saying, 'Thus David did.'" And thus was his behavior all the time he dwelt in the country of the Philistines.

David had to lie about where he had raided. His ministry was misguided, misdirected, by his succumbing to his fatigue. For all his activity, he wasn't doing what the Lord wanted him to be doing.

Worse than that, he killed *everyone* - even “women” and (it’s implied) children - in the process.

The ministry that is performed by a person who is suffering from spiritual fatigue, who has chosen to escape rather than endure his or her circumstances, may appear busy on the surface, but it ultimately kills people. Not literally, but in a spiritual sense. It’s the kind of ministry that wields the sword of God’s Word in a fleshly manner, wounding rather than healing.

1 Samuel 27:12 So Achish believed David, saying, "He has made his people Israel utterly abhor him; therefore he will be my servant forever."

You almost think there should be a verse thirteen saying, “And they all lived happily ever.” Spiritual fatigue is an interesting ailment in that you can be suffering from it and actually think your life is golden. You know, however, in your heart that David was blowing it. *He ought to have endured!* God was going to keep His word to him and do great and mighty things.

Endurance is to be highly valued. Listen to these verses that encourage you to endure.

2 Timothy 2:3 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 2:12 If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.

James 5:11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord - that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

I don’t know about you, but I don’t relish being compared to Job. But in him I see the blessing of endurance.

God knows you and He knows your circumstances. He’s made you promises, afforded you protection, given you provision. Endure unless you are absolutely spiritually sure that God has released you to move on. Endure unless you are absolutely spiritually sure that the way of escape is from the Lord.

We all feel from time to time that we can't go on another day in our particular circumstances. Is there a way to avoid falling into spiritual fatigue in the first place? Look ahead to chapter thirty as we ask,

#2 Do Your Circumstances Have You Seeking
Jesus Christ's Spiritual Strength?
(30:6)

The next several chapters go back-and-forth telling the story of David's stay at Ziklag. We'll look at them (Lord willing) in subsequent weeks. For now let me summarize what is going to happen to David.

- In chapter twenty-eight the Philistines decide to go to war against Saul and Israel. Achish tells David that he is going to come with him and fight against Israel.
- In chapter twenty-nine David goes with Achish but when the Philistine armies muster, the other Philistine lords refuse to allow David to fight with them. They suspect he will turn on them. Seeing he was a traitor to his people they assume he will betray their trust as well.
- In chapter thirty David and his fighting men return to Ziklag. They find that in their absence the Amalakites have raided their city, burned it with fire, and carried-off captive their wives and children.

Which brings us to a pivotal verse, one that expresses how we counter the tendency towards spiritual fatigue.

1 Samuel 30:6 Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. **But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.**

Remember the list of circumstances that had led David to ponder a way of escape rather than to endure? Well this latest episode was worse than all of them. He had lost everything and had caused his men to lose everything. The people closest to him wanted to kill David by stoning.

How would he escape this time? He wouldn't. *He would endure!*

“But David,” meaning despite all outward circumstances to the contrary, David looked to the Lord to strengthen him in the midst of them. The result will be that the people follow him, they retrieve everything that was taken, and David gets back on track in his walk just prior to Saul’s death and his ascent to the throne.

I like it when things are simple. Everything I’ve been saying can be simply understood by putting two verses next to one another - verse one of chapter twenty-seven and verse six of *chapter* thirty. Both of them reflect David’s thinking at a time when circumstances were overwhelming him.

1 Samuel 27:1 And David said in his heart, "Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape to the land of the Philistines; and Saul will despair of me, to seek me anymore in any part of Israel. So I shall escape out of his hand."

1 Samuel 30:6 Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.

- In chapter twenty-seven David talked only to himself.
- In chapter thirty he talked to the Lord.

Do your circumstances have you talking to yourself about how hard they are and how much you want to escape them?

Or do they have you talking to the Lord, seeking His strength to endure them? And I mean *really* talking to Him, from a place of submission to His will - whatever that might be.

Jesus Christ once was in circumstances He would rather have escaped. In the Garden of Gethsemane He asked His Father if it were possible to take the suffering of the Cross away. It wasn’t possible and your Lord said to our Father, “Nevertheless, not My will but yours be done.” Then He endured the Cross, despising its shame, for your sake and for mine.

- Let’s look to the Lord to endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.
- Let’s endure til we hear the trumpet sound and the Lord takes us home.

- Let's not grow weary in our doing good, knowing that in due season we will be rewarded by the Lord if we endure and do not lose heart.

