

# How to Pray in a Cave

David the Fugitive Pt.2  
1 Samuel 22:1-5 3-15-2009

Summary: Psalms 142 and 57 - David's loneliness in the cave is turned to confidence and praise. The real king gathers an army of riffraff and David's great leadership transforms them (just like the Church). Then David goes to the ideal place (Moab), but God sends him back to Judah (!) and David instantly obeys (leads in loving God's will). God is situating David to rescue Keilah.

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**1 Samuel 22:1 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. 2 All those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him, and he became their leader. About four hundred men were with him.**

**3 From there David went to Mizpah in Moab 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?" 4 So he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him as long as David was in the stronghold. 5 But the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not stay in the stronghold. Go into the land of Judah." So David left and went to the forest of Hereth.**

## Introduction

### Already but not yet

David is anointed as king of Israel in chapter 15 of 1 Samuel, which is the midpoint of the book. Pop quiz – in which chapter of 1 Samuel does David actually take the throne? No chapter. It does not happen in 1 Samuel. It is not going to happen until many years later when Saul finally dies. God said, “OK – I am going to take the throne from Saul and give it to David,” and yet, Saul remained on the throne until he died. He ended up reigning 40 years!

So the entire second half of this book – from chapter 15 all the way to the end of the book (chapter 31), is this in-between period where David was God's anointed king, but did not have the throne yet. We could call this the “already but not yet” stage of David's reign. He is already king, but not yet on the actual throne.

That is interesting because the great Son of David, the Messiah, who will reign on the throne of David forever, also begins his reign with an already but not yet stage. When does the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ on the throne of David as Messiah begin? In Luke 11:20 Jesus said His kingdom had already started – 2000 years ago.

But on the other hand Jesus also spoke of His kingdom coming in the future at His Second Coming. Jesus is reigning as King right now, but not in as full and great a way as He will after His Second Coming. Right now there are still those who do not bow the knee. Right now He is mocked, despised or ignored by most. But one day He will be enthroned in the sight of every creature, and on that day every

knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord, and His full glory will be revealed. At that time He will finally eliminate all rebellion against His authority and rule a perfect Kingdom forever.

We are living in the “already but not yet” stage of the Kingdom of King Jesus.<sup>1</sup> And we enjoy the benefits of that Kingdom already in some measure, but not yet in the fullest sense.<sup>2</sup> So we are not really surprised to see that the most important picture of the Messiah, King David, also had an already but not yet stage in his reign. He is anointed, Saul is rejected, but he does not take the throne for probably another 10 years at least. We do not know the exact dates, so we cannot say for sure how much time goes by between chapter 15 and chapter 31, but it is probably at least a decade.

### ***To teach us that God is the true King***

I believe one of the purposes of this already but not yet period is to drive home to us the main message of 1 Samuel – that God is still the King. Humanly speaking, if you have a guy like Saul, who was crowned with massive popular support, who has been established in his office as king for probably 30 years, and who has control of all the resources of the kingdom, and then on the other hand you have a young kid, quite possibly still a teenager, who has no resources at all, is an outlaw, a fugitive, running around hiding in caves - from a human standpoint you would expect the first guy to be a lot better off than the second guy. And yet, throughout this entire time David has nothing but success and Saul has nothing but failure. David is honored time after time and Saul is humiliated time after time. How can that be? Humanly speaking it cannot be explained. But if you see the whole picture, and you understand that God is the true King, and you see that David honors God and Saul does not, then it is no mystery at all.

Imagine watching a movie where someone went through and edited the main character out of every scene. The movie would not make any sense at all. That is what 1 Samuel is like if you do not pay attention to God – nothing would make any sense (especially this passage we are going to look at today).

God wants us to see that the only thing that matters is His favor. The throne – the crown – the title – the army - the palace – all meaningless if you do not have divine favor. Without the blessing of God those things are as worthless as they can be. God blesses the one who bows the knee to Him, the true King, and only the one blessed by the true King has ultimate success. And even that success is on His terms and no one else’s.

I believe that is the main purpose of this “already but not yet” period in which David is a fugitive. (In fact, maybe a better title for this series, instead of “David the Fugitive” would be “David the fugitive who is favored by God, contrasted with Saul the king who is rejected by God” but that would not be quite as catchy as “David the Fugitive.”)

### ***To get the Psalms written***

There is probably at least one other purpose for this hard period in David’s life, and that is to get the Psalms written. As we saw last week, the worship leader of the ages probably would not have had the joy he had in the attributes of God had he not experienced those attributes first hand in times of desperation. When you think of God’s attributes – refuge, provider, vindicator - you do not have exuberant joy in your heart over God as your refuge until you have been in some hopeless disaster and then God came and sheltered you. You are not moved to sing aloud about God’s provision until you have been in desperate need and then God came and supplied what you needed. Your heart does not shout for joy

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<sup>1</sup> That is the point of the parable in Matthew 13 – to describe this stage. Jesus needed to teach about it because it was not revealed in the Old Testament. The Old Testament people just knew the Messiah would come and set up His Kingdom. They did not know it would come in two stages. They did not know there would be an already but not yet stage, where the Messiah is already the King in some respects, but not yet in the fullest sense. And that is why Jesus had to say, “The Kingdom is like...” and then describe a situation where there would still be rebellion, still be unbelief, still be suffering and death and all the rest of the things the Messiah was supposed to eliminate.

<sup>2</sup> Are you saved? You are already saved in some ways, but not yet in the fullest sense that you will be after the Second Coming. Are you delivered from sin? Yes, you are already delivered from the penalty of sin and the power of sin but you are not yet delivered completely from the presence of sin in your life. Are you redeemed? Yes, you are already redeemed in one sense but not yet in the fullest sense. We still await the redemption of our bodies. Do you know God intimately? Already to some degree, but not yet in the fullest sense like you will in heaven. Is Satan defeated? Already but not yet.

about God as your vindicator unless you have been unjustly accused in some terrible way, and then God shows everyone that you were in the right all along.

Rejoicing in who God is does not happen in the deepest way until you have suffered the agony that comes when His attributes are absent. An attribute is anything that is true about God. God is loving – that is something that is true about God. But you do not appreciate His love until you have experienced what it is like to not be loved. God is faithful, but to really love that about Him you have to experience some unfaithfulness from someone. God is just and kind and wise and reliable and gentle and awesome and powerful and satisfying and eternal. But you do not get real excited about all that until you have experienced injustice and cruelty and unreliable people and harshness and dullness and weakness and that which does not satisfy and that which ultimately fails.

So David has to walk through a decade of suffering so that the saints of the ages can have the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm and Psalms 139 and 16 and 36 and so many of those prayers that have touched and soothed and calmed and delighted the souls of God's people for 3000 years. There is a sense in which David suffered for all of us - not as a substitute like Jesus did, but just in the sense that he had to suffer so that through his prayers and songs God could teach His people throughout the ages to pray. Even the Lord Jesus Himself used one of David's psalms as a model for His prayer at the moment of His greatest agony on the cross (Ps.22).

## How to Pray in a Cave

OK, so we left off last week with David escaping from the Philistine king Achish. He got off by reason of temporary insanity. Achish was the first one to fall for that one.

### **1 David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam.**

That is Conifer. If you were not here last week, we overlaid a map of ancient Israel on top of a scale map of the Denver area, and what you get is Saul's headquarters in Gibeah right here at 104<sup>th</sup> and I-25, Nob is down there at I-25 and Thornton Parkway, and David's home in Bethlehem is way down at the 34<sup>th</sup> Street exit off I-25. When David went into Philistine territory in Gath – that's Blackhawk. And now he escapes from there he heads east back into Israelite territory, and a little bit south – down to Conifer (the first town you hit going up Turkey Creek Canyon on US 285).

### **Hiding**

Some commentators speculate that David picked this cave because it could be easily defended against Saul. I am no military expert, but it seems to me that a cave is a deathtrap if you get caught in one. If you have someone outnumbered and you were going after them, the best thing you could do would be to corner them in a cave. All you have to do is starve them out. If David wanted a place he could defend he would have picked some high ground – like Masada (which was in that area).

But more importantly, we need to remember - David is by himself at this point. The men who finally joined him came to him while he was there, but at first it was just David. He did not go to Adullam to fight Saul; he went there to hide. Caves are good hiding places, but they are not defensible strongholds.

So there is David, sneaking along from Gath down to Adullam. Trying to move silently, watching behind him in case Achish changed his mind, scouring the horizon in every direction for people to make sure he is not seen by anyone. Finally, he makes it to this area near Adullam where there are lots of caves in the rugged terrain. He tries to find one where he will at least have some ability to keep watch. And exhausted from the journey, and from the emotional stress of the past few days, he takes a seat in the darkness of the cave. The only sound is that of his own breathing. It starts to get cold, and as the minutes become hours he has plenty of time to think. Now what? What am I supposed to do now? Sit here in this cave the rest of my life? What do you do when you are a fugitive from the law, all alone, stuck in a cave in the middle of nowhere? Well, if you are David, you write another psalm – or two.

Both Psalm 57 and Psalm 142 were written by David in a cave. This is not the first cave where David hid, but if you read those two psalms they really seem to fit this situation better than later on.

## Psalm 142

**1 A *maskil* of David. When he was in the cave. A prayer. I cry aloud to the LORD; I lift up my voice to the LORD for mercy. <sup>2</sup> I pour out my complaint<sup>3</sup> before him; before him I tell my trouble.**

*God cares about your way  
Loneliness*

**<sup>3</sup> When my spirit grows faint within me, it is you who know my way. In the path where I walk men have hidden a snare for me. <sup>4</sup> Look to my right and see; no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge; no one cares for my life.**

(This is why I think this psalm was written on this occasion at Adullam and not later. When David hid in caves – later he had loyal companions. This is the only time when he is alone.)

David is overcome with loneliness. The only thing God ever looked at in His original creation before the fall and said “It is not good” was Adam’s aloneness. We need companionship. Something inside us longs to have someone who cares about our life – especially someone who cares so much about our lives that they care about the little things. Someone you could come home to at night and just say, “I had a rough time at work today” and they actually care. Not only did David not have anyone who cared if he stubbed his toe on a rock in the cave, he did not have anyone who cared or even knew if he lived or died. If a wild animal came upon him while he was sleeping and he laid there all the next day bleeding to death and then finally died in the cave – no one’s life would change in any way. No one would even know. The deep, compelling desire of David’s heart is for companionship, and yet – he does not pray for a companion.

**<sup>5</sup> I cry to you, O LORD; I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living."**

David knew that a human companion was not really what he needed. He needed a refuge from his loneliness, and a portion. (A portion means the supply of that which you need.) If you are lonely and God provides you with a great best friend or a wonderful spouse, that is no guarantee that you will be happy. But if you experience Him as your refuge and your portion, that *is* a guarantee that you will be happy and fulfilled and satisfied.

## *Prison*

**<sup>6</sup> Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need; rescue me from those who pursue me, for they are too strong for me. <sup>7</sup> Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name. Then the righteous will gather about me because of your goodness to me.**

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<sup>3</sup> Most complaining is sin. But there is one kind of complaining that is righteous, and that kind you see the psalmists and the prophets do often. It is when you complain about not having enough of God – not enough nearness to Him, not enough grace from Him, not enough fellowship with Him, not enough enjoyment of His attributes. And when you complain to God about that, it is not that you are saying God is to blame or is in any way at fault. It is just that you are saying He is the solution. If I am far from the presence of God it is me who is at fault, not God. But it is God who is the solution. **Psalm 119:176 I have strayed like a lost sheep. Seek your servant.** “God, I have failed to seek You. Now seek me, because I am lost.”

When you come home from work every day grumbling and grouching and complaining about your boss and how hard your life is and how unhappy you are, that is not much fun for your wife. But when you say to her, “I want so badly to spend a weekend alone with you. I am struggling to get by in life because I don’t get enough time alone with you” – that honors her. That is the kind of complaining she can listen to. The complaint of lack of nearness to God honors Him.

He felt like he was in prison. His anxiety comes from his powerlessness to do anything about his situation. His enemies are way too powerful for him. When you can at least chip away at your problem, when you have some control, then you feel some hope. But when you are absolutely powerless to do anything about it, that is when you realize only God can let you out of your prison.

## **Psalm 57**

### *Mercy*

**1 Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me for in you my soul takes refuge.**

That is the same way the other psalm started – begging for mercy. God’s mercy is what the soul in trouble needs. There is no other solution. His compassionate, tender care – the rescue that rises from His love, nothing else will help.

### *Trouble will pass*

**1 ...I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.**

The thing about disaster – it passes. For the child of God, trouble is a matter of time but mercy is a matter of eternity. Your present distress seems permanent, but it is not. It is like a cloud that passes over the sun, but then soon moves on and the sunlight returns. Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. And though the night seems long, you can bear it as long as you are in the sweet, quiet refuge of His shelter. That is why it is so important when you are in trouble to know how to take refuge in Him. Because if you don’t, you will still be unhappy even when the trouble is over. But when the world crumbles around you, you will be safe in the cleft of the Rock of ages.

### *What Grace has Promised Providence will Perform*

**2 I cry out to God Most High, to God, who fulfills [his purpose] for me.**

David knows that there is zero chance that God’s plan for him can be derailed. What grace has promised providence will perform. That was the anchor of David’s soul. That is what made his heart so steadfast.

**3 He sends from heaven and saves me, rebuking those who hotly pursue me; Selah God sends his love and his faithfulness. 4 I am in the midst of lions; I lie among ravenous beasts-- men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords. 5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth. 6 They spread a net for my feet-- I was bowed down in distress. They dug a pit in my path-- but they have fallen into it themselves. Selah 7 My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast...**

And then comes the music at the end of verse 7.

### *Concert in the Cave*

**7 ...I will sing and make music.**

You knew that was going to happen. David fled in such a hurry from Saul that he did not have time to grab a sword, but he evidently did find time to grab his harp and lyre. If your house is burning down

and you only have time to grab one thing as you are running out, and you have to choose between something that will save your life or something that will assist you in expressing praise to God – for David that is an easy choice.

So David is about to turn this cave into a cathedral. He will make Adullam ring and echo with the sounds of praises and his joy in God. But it does not come easy.

*Awake my soul!*

**8 Awake, my soul! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn.**

“I don’t want the sun to wake me up today – I want me to wake the sun up with my praises!” David wants to get up while it is still dark, and somehow rouse his soul and his body to start the music so that he can be the one to wake up the dawn itself. Twice he has to call upon his own self to wake up. He has to make an effort to summon all the strength within him for this work of praise. Joy does not come easy in a cave. When we are in the gloomy shadows of Adullam rejoicing is not the natural response of the soul. But it is not just suffering that puts the soul to sleep. Just the everyday routine of life can do it. The tendency is for our souls to drift into lethargic apathy and praiseless obedience to God as we grind through life devoid of real joy. And we constantly have to shake ourselves awake to the glory of God so our joy in Him can be revived. God’s massive love

**9 I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples. 10 For great is your love, reaching to the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies.**

The proud, ungrateful heart can see only little drops of God’s love and faithfulness here and there. But the humble, thankful heart is overwhelmed with gratitude. Even from the dark depths of Adullam David sees God’s love and faithfulness as a massive, overwhelming wave heaving all the way up to the heavens and filling the skies. When God seems harsh, and His mercies seem to dry up, it is not because the ocean of His love has evaporated. It is only because our eyes have crusted over with pride and we have become blind to reality.

**11 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.**

One thing is for sure, David is a king who knows who the real King is.

So that is how you pray in a cave. Spurgeon said, “If David prayed in the palace like he prayed in the cave maybe he would not have fallen into such horrible sin.”

## **The King Gathers an Army**

**Family comes**

So as usual David’s heart has gone from anxiety and distress to joy and hope and praise – not because he prayed, but because in his praying he spent time in the presence of God.

And he does not know if his situation will ever change, but he is about to find out. One day as he is sitting up above the cave keeping watch, trying to hum a couple different ideas he had for melody lines for Psalm 57, all of the sudden he saw some movement. *Instantly* he was behind cover, completely out of view but still able to see. And just as quickly his hand was on that magnificent sword, ready for action.

They were still too far away to be able to make out. Couldn’t be Philistines – not traveling in that small a group. Scouts from Saul maybe? How many are there? As he hid in total silence and strained his eyes, it started to look like...some of them might be women. They are!

Oh, oh – there are two who are real close. He did not see them at first - they are out ahead of the others as scouts. Hey, wait – that’s Eliab and Shamma – David’s brothers! Now he can recognize them all – his sisters and his mom and dad – this is his family coming out here!

Within seconds David is down there embracing each one of them. They fill him in on all that has happened while he has been gone, and it was a wonderful reunion.

### **1 When his brothers and his father's household heard about it, they went down to him there.**

No doubt they knew they were in danger from Saul if they remained at their home in Bethlehem. So here they are, and David helps carry all their things into the cave.

### **The 400**

But now David knows he really has to keep watch. If his family heard where he was, that means it is known. Saul’s soldiers could show up at any time. But at least now he has some others who can take turns keeping watch.

Not too many days later David gets the signal from his brother – *someone’s coming!* The front of the cave is covered up and everybody scrambles into hiding. David and Eliab silently work their way back behind the approaching men, and quickly realize that these are definitely not soldiers. They look like a couple of bums.

And it turns out – they are. They are on the run from their creditors. They got too far into debt, and now they do not want to deal with the consequences, and so they just skipped town.

And behind them are coming some others...and then others.

### **2 All those who were in distress and all those who were in debt and all those who were discontented gathered around him**

So David’s cave becomes the dumping ground for the three “D’s” – those in distress, debt, or discontent. The word translated “in distress” is just a general word for serious trouble of any kind. It could be physical illness, injury, legal trouble, enemies, or just a run of misfortunes, etc. The word “discontent” refers to people who have a hard, bitter life.<sup>4</sup> It just describes men whose lives are nothing but pain. Their whole existence just seems to be calamity after calamity with no rest.

This is the group that comes to David. They are broke. They are hopeless. They are on the run. They have made a mess out of their lives and now they are in deep trouble with no way out.

### **2 ...and he became their leader. About four hundred men were with him.**

So now they are having to have committee meetings in the cave about their need for a bigger facility. Four hundred men plus families can get pretty crowded in a cave. (Actually, there are to this day, lots of caves in that area, so they probably were not all jammed into one cave.)

I don’t know how many had their families there, but potentially there could have been well over 1000 people there. So now David not only has all the troubles and sorrows he already had, but on top of that he has to figure out how to deal with hundreds of people in his cave. Kids are running around getting hurt, and all this riffraff constantly getting in fights, and the logistics of feeding everyone and medical issues and all kinds of problems. One thousand Christians in a church is a huge amount of work. One thousand troublemakers in a cave would be a nightmare.

What is God doing here? He is gathering an army. These are the people who would become David’s army. His mighty men of valor come out of this group of bums and deadbeats. God knew that David was

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<sup>4</sup> It is the word Naomi used when her husband and sons all died and she said, “Don’t call me Naomi – call me ‘bitter’ because the Almighty has made my life bitter.” I do not think that means bitter in the sense we use it – to describe anger and resentment and grouching. It is more the way we use the term when we say, “That was a bitter pill to swallow.”

going to need an army, and David was not really in a position to go around recruiting, and so God just brings them to David. And that makes sense, because who is the real King? (God.) So it makes sense that He would be the one to gather the army. And this is actually fairly typical of how God gathers an army. This is just the sort of thing God tends to do. He loves to do His greatest works through the least likely candidates so it is obvious that the power comes from Him.

If you have a business or some sort of organization, if you want to really strengthen your organization, the best thing you can do is round up all these types and get rid of them. If you take a company that has 2000 employees, with 400 of these types, and you get rid of that 400, you have got a lot stronger company. Working with discontented, bitter, unhappy, distressed people is very hard. Those of you who have been managers understand this. If you have a crew of 20 people with just three or four are people like this you know how hard they are. Those three or four take up 80% of your time as a manager. Imagine David's organization here. One hundred percent bad apples. What kind of leader does it take to lead an organization made up of 100% problem people?

One commentary said that these people were all rough, tough types who were always looking for a good fight and who would be eager to join David in any kind of battle because they were just the scrapping, fighting type. So they might have been unruly and undisciplined and unreliable, but at least they were tough. But that is not even true. These are not tough people - they are weak, spineless cowards. In the next chapter David hears about a town in distress from the Philistines and he wants to muster these men to help him go rescue the town. And their response is pathetic.

**1 Samuel 23:2 ...The LORD answered him, "Go, attack the Philistines and save Keilah." 3 But David's men said to him, "Here in Judah we are afraid. How much more, then, if we go to Keilah against the Philistine forces!"**

David tries to lead them down into battle in a relatively small operation and they say, "Are you kidding? We're all scared to death just sitting here in the cave!" They are a bunch of cowardly wimps.

As we will see in the chapters to come, David does amazing things with these men. In fact, he ends up convincing them to fight and leads them in battle against the Philistines and just clobbers the Philistines. And before long they are the most powerful fighting force probably in the world at the time.

What kind of leader does it take to do that? It takes a leader of great patience and wisdom and skill. It takes a leader like the great King David. It takes a leader like the greater Son of David – the Lord Jesus Christ. I really believe the 400 losers at Adullam are a picture of the Church.

**1 Corinthians 1:26 Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup> But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. <sup>28</sup> He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that no one may boast before him.**

One of the things that made King David great was his ability to take a group made up of 100% bad apples and make them the most powerful and effective and loyal fighting force in the world. And God gave him that ability so he could stand as a picture of the Lord Himself, who builds his entire, world-wide kingdom out of nothing but bad apples. And this is one bad apple who is eternally grateful to have a King who can do that.

### ***Burn bridges***

Why did those people come to David? You come to David and you better not ever plan on going back home – ever. You make yourself a fugitive and an enemy of the king. Why would people do that? They did it because their lives were so worthless that they were not worth ever going back to. They would rather take their chances with David than keep their options of going back open.



And it is exactly the same with those who come to the Son of David. When you become a Christian you burn your bridges with the world, but you are happy to do it because by faith you can see that that old life is never going to be worth going back to.

## **The King Situates His Servant**

### **Moab**

Well, obviously now with all these men David cannot stay in the cave. It is clearly not much of a hiding place anymore – any dingbat in Judah seems to be able to find it without any problem. So David gathers everyone up and moves on. If you can not even hide yourself, how are you going to hide a whole village of people? Impossible. So David realizes he has to go outside of Israel once again. Going west into Philistia did not work out to well last time, so this time he heads east – to Moab.

### **3 From there David went to Mizpah in Moab 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?"**

That is not a bad idea. For one thing, Saul had defeated Moab in battle not long ago, so they might be open to give help to anyone Saul considers an enemy. And on top of that David actually had some Moabite blood in him. His great grandma was from there (Ruth).<sup>5</sup> Family connections were very big in that time, and so it is likely that David's relation with Ruth might have given him some favor there in Moab.

So David has everyone pack up, and make the trek across Judah, down a good 3000 feet in elevation to the Dead Sea, south around the sea, and back up a few thousand feet into Moab. That is about 70 or 80 miles as the crow flies, but much longer taking the paths and roads. So from where Saul is that is like going from here (104<sup>th</sup> and I-25) down about 15 miles south of Castle Rock, and then back up northeast to the Elizabeth or Kiowa area.

So with a group that size you know this takes a few days. And the whole time none of them know what will happen when they get to Moab. Will they even make it? Or will Saul catch up to them? Will the king of Moab attack them? Will they be turned away?

Well, when they finally arrive in Moab, they go straight to the capital and David requests an audience with the king. David is a winsome, persuasive man, and the outcome is favorable. He asked the king of Moab if his parents could stay there until he heard from God, and the answer is, "Sure."

### **4 So he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him as long as David was in the stronghold.**

So David leaves his family with the king, and he goes and finds a place that can be defended – a stronghold. Now David is sitting pretty. The Moab idea was brilliant. This is exactly what they needed. His family is safe, he is outside Saul's reach, he is out of that miserable cave, he has a fortress and an army – now he is all set.

And just about the time when David starts to open his mouth to sing praises to God for all this, the prophet Gad shows up and says, "Hey, God says, 'Get out of Moab'." What? Get out of Moab – and go where? Moab is perfect. I don't want to leave here. Where am I supposed to go?

### **5 But the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not stay in the stronghold. Go into the land of... Judah."(!)**

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<sup>5</sup> Ruth's husband died, so she left Moab and went into Israel, where she ended up marrying Boaz. And they had a son named Obed, and Obed was Jesse's father.

I just escaped from there. Judah is no good – that’s why I am here. Judah is the worst place to go – that’s why I left.

Actually – those are the things most people would say. But there is no record that David said any of that. He just immediately obeyed. When David knew for sure something was God’s will there was zero deliberation. David understood the absolute insanity of second-guessing the Word of God, as if we had a better perspective on things than God has. David understood that God is the true King, and David gave Him is absolute allegiance.

So now David gets to break the news to all these people. “Hey, I found out where we are supposed to go. You remember that long, arduous, dangerous journey we took from Judah to Moab? Well, it turns out, God wants us in Judah. So, pack up because we are going back.” Now most leaders, in a situation like that, would turn toward Judah, and say, “Let’s go!!” and start marching down toward the bottom end of the Dead Sea, and turn around to see 400 smiling faces waving goodbye from the stronghold. But that is not what happened – they all followed.

If you are a leader, how do you get people to follow in a time like that? David had such a beautiful mix of confidence and joy in the will of God. He is not apologetic about it, he does not present it as if it were one of several options, he is not apprehensive about it. He loves God so much, and he trusts God so much, that when you are around David anything that would depart from the will of God seems like such absolute insanity that you do not even consider it.

I want to be a man with that kind of love for the will of God. I think that is real spiritual leadership. Later in the chapter we see Saul using guilt trips and bribes and begging and threats to get his men to respond – and they still don’t. But David just leads. If you read the books on leadership you will find that there are countless definitions of leadership floating around out there. Here is my definition: Leadership is when people are following you. Which means almost all of us are leaders at some level. We are all influencing someone. I want to be a leader with an infectious love for the will of God, so that when I am clearly following His will it makes it attractive to everyone around me.

David’s hopes were not in Moab – they were in God. All Moab was, was the place David was waiting to discover God’s will.

### **3 From there David went to Mizpah in Moab 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 when the answer comes – “Go back to Judah” there is not a hint of reluctance or hesitation or complaint – just instant obedience.

#### ***Situating David (Don’t stop fighting)***

So why does Gad tell David to leave Moab? One reason was probably the fact that as a prophet, Gad’s<sup>6</sup> job was to help David be faithful to the Law. And Deuteronomy 23:6 prohibited treaties with Moab. If David had stayed there in Moab, he may very well have been tempted to break that law.<sup>7</sup>

But that is not the only reason. God sends David to Israel because He has some things He wants David to do in Israel. In the next chapter the city of Keilah is attacked, and God wants David nearby to defend it. He cannot be off hiding out in Moab.

I once heard someone say, “God does not strand His people; He situates them.” That is exactly what is happening here. God is situating David for where He wants David to be in chapter 23.

And David does not doubt that for a second. Most people would think, “OK, I’ll hunker down and lay low and hide out until this whole Saul deal blows over, then I can get established as king and train up a good military and get organized, and then I will be in a position to start rescuing cities from Philistine

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<sup>6</sup> This prophet Gad stayed with David the rest of his life. In fact Gad was one of the ones who compiled the material for the archived records of David’s reign (1 Chr.29:29).

<sup>7</sup> Thanks in part to Gad, David never falls into that sin. In fact, when the time comes later in his reign, David defeats the Moabites in battle (2 Sam.8:2).

attacks.” But God says, “No, I want you to rescue Keilah right now.” No crown, no throne, no capital, no military, hiding from Saul, on the run, life in danger, and You want me to go try to rescue Keilah from the Philistine army? And God says, “Yes. Isn’t that what I just said?”

You see, there are no time outs in serving God. You cannot just call time because things are getting rough and take a break. We are in a literal war. And when you are fighting on the front lines, you don’t say, “Oh, this battle is getting hot – I had better sit out for a while.” The hotter the battle gets the more necessary it is to keep fighting.

Of course you need to rest when you get tired. Make sure you get enough sleep at night, and take a day off once a week, but this idea of weeks and months and even years of inactivity because you are trying to heal from some wound – I do not think that is biblical. Our refuge is not inactivity. Our refuge is the Lord. And if the Lord calls you to do something it is always the best thing for you to do it. And He is always calling you to do something.

And if you think you are a Christian who is disqualified from ministry – that is a copout. God calls all His people to serve Him, and no Christian is disqualified from obeying God. If you need emotional healing and recuperation from some trauma, fine. But seek that healing from nearness to the Lord, not from inactivity and disobedience. Sometimes the most healing, rejuvenating things you can do is break a sweat carrying out some ministry God has called you to do, because that is when grace is flowing through you. And it is grace that heals – not sitting around doing nothing.

And if you think about it – nobody sits around and does nothing anyway. Everybody is doing something all the time. People who are sitting out of ministry so they can rest or recover or whatever – those people spend their days doing something. They are just using their woundedness as an excuse to do what they really want to do rather than what God is calling them to do. But if spiritual and emotional health is what you are after, there is no more healthy place to be than right in the center of God’s will for you, even if that means leaving your fortress, making a hard journey to a dangerous place and leading a bunch of nincompoops into battle against the Philistine army.

### ***Hereth***

So what does David do when a prophet of God tells him to do something that does not seem to make good sense? Unlike Saul, he obeys anyway.

### **5 ...So David left and went to the forest of Hereth.**

That is military strategy. A forest is a hard place for someone to come in and attack you. You can not see very far, people get lost, you can hide and ambush, etc. Later on David would fight a battle against the forces of Absalom in a forest, and Absalom was killed when his mule ran under some branches and Absalom’s head got caught in the branches. In that battle, according to **2 Samuel 18:8 the forest claimed more lives that day than the sword**. So this is a good place to hide.

And you might think, “What a minute – how do you know when to just risk your life for the kingdom of God and step out in faith, and when to use common sense and wisdom to protect yourself?” The answer is use common sense all you want – just do not use common nonsense. Common sense is when you use wisdom. Common nonsense is when you disobey God because it seems like another path is better than what God commands. Common nonsense stays in Moab. Common sense finds a good, thick forest in Judah where God said to go.

What do you do when God calls you out from under your earthly safety net to do something? God has called us to live by wisdom and wisdom demands that you make reasonable use of earthly protections. Set aside some money in savings for when you get old. Take precautions against troubles that could come about. But when God makes it crystal clear that He is calling you to something that requires giving up those securities, that is when you find out whether you are looking to Him as your security or to those earthly strongholds.

## Conclusion

This passage just seems to hit you no matter where you are, doesn't it? Some of you are here this morning in the cave of Adullam. You need to learn from David how to pray to the real King. Some of you are being mistreated by someone more powerful than you. Do not get confused – that person is not the real king – God is. Some of you are sitting pretty in Moab. Don't get too comfortable – keep your ear attuned to the Word of the real King. And some of you are being situated in the most inexplicable, strange way that you cannot even imagine what on earth God is up to. No place on earth is better for you than the place the real King situates you. So be ready for action, because He put you there for a reason.

**Benediction: 1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.**

# Devotionals

## Day 1

**1 A *maskil* of David. When he was in the cave. A prayer. I cry aloud to the LORD; I lift up my voice to the LORD for mercy. <sup>2</sup> I pour out my complaint before him; before him I tell my trouble.**

That phrase “poured out” is one of the keys to powerful prayer. When our prayers become dry and empty – just a rattling off of things we feel we should be praying about – running through a laundry list of prayer requests, when you do that you are not really pouring out your heart. If anything at all is even coming out of your heart it might be a slow drip or a trickle at best.

What is the key to pouring out your heart to God? I would say – having a full heart. Isn’t it when your heart is full that you pour it out to God in deep, impassioned prayer? Times when you are really, really sad or really, really happy, or you are in lots of pain or lots of danger or lots of *something*. Those times when your heart is full – that is when your prayers are a pouring out of your heart.

I believe all true prayer is the expression of desire, and the more powerful the desire the more earnest the prayer. When you pray for the person in your small group that you commit to pray for – the key to that is getting to the point of really, really wanting that request to be granted. Then you will pray hard because your prayer will be a pouring out of your heart. Beware when your prayers are not really expressions of passionate desire in your heart.

**<sup>2</sup> I pour out my complaint before him; before him I tell my trouble.**

God slaughtered the Israelites of Moses’ time by the thousands for the sin of complaining. Grumbling against God is a wicked evil. But there is one kind of complaining that is righteous, and that kind you see the psalmists and the prophets do often. It is when you complain about not having enough of God – not enough nearness to Him, not enough grace from Him, not enough fellowship with Him, not enough enjoyment of His attributes.

And when you complain to God about that, it is not that you are saying God is to blame or is in any way at fault. It is just that you are saying He is the solution. If I am far from the presence of God it is me who is at fault, not God. But it is God who is the solution.

**Psalm 119:176 I have strayed like a lost sheep. Seek your servant**

“God, I have failed to seek You. Now seek me, because I am lost.”

When we complain about what God is doing we dishonor Him. But when we complain about our lack of nearness to Him we honor Him. When you come home from work every day grumbling and grouching and complaining about your boss and how hard your life is and how unhappy you are, that is not much fun for your wife. But when you say to her, “I want so badly to spend a weekend alone with you. I am struggling to get by in life because I don’t get enough time alone with you” – that honors her. That is the kind of complaining she can listen to.

## Day 2

**<sup>3</sup> When my spirit grows faint within me, it is you who know my way.**

Nobody cared about David's way or what happened to him. But he took comfort in the fact that God cared. David enjoyed thinking about God paying attention to David's steps, and being interested in what happened to him and where he was going.

**In the path where I walk men have hidden a snare for me. <sup>4</sup> Look to my right and see; no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge; no one cares for my life.**

David is overcome with loneliness. The only thing God ever looked at in His original creation before the fall and said "It is not good" was Adam's aloneness. We need companionship. Something inside us longs to have someone who cares about our life – especially someone who cares so much about our lives that they care about the little things. Someone you could come home to at night and just say, "I had a rough time at work today" and they actually care. Not only did David not have anyone who cared if he stubbed his toe on a rock in the cave, he did not have anyone who cared or even knew if he lived or died. If a wild animal came upon him while he was sleeping and he lay there all the next day bleeding to death and then finally died in the cave – no one's life would change in any way. No one would even know. The deep, compelling desire of David's heart is for companionship, and yet – he does not pray for a companion.

**<sup>5</sup> I cry to you, O LORD; I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living."**

David knew that a human companion was not really what he needed. He needed a refuge from his loneliness, and a portion. (A portion means the supply of that which you need.) If you are lonely and God provides you with a great best friend or a wonderful spouse, that is no guarantee that you will be happy. But if you experience Him as your refuge and your portion, that *is* a guarantee that you will be happy and fulfilled and satisfied.

### Day 3

**<sup>6</sup> Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need; rescue me from those who pursue me, for they are too strong for me. <sup>7</sup> Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name.**

Was that cave a refuge or a prison? Neither. His exile was his prison, and God was his refuge.

David's anxiety comes from his powerlessness to do anything about his situation. His enemies have such an advantage – they are way too powerful for him. That is why he feels like he is in prison – there is nothing he can do to escape. When you can at least chip away at your problem, then you feel some hope. But when you are absolutely powerless to do anything about it, that is when you realize only God can let you out of your prison.

**Then the righteous will gather about me because of your goodness to me.**

David's desire was always for the company of the righteous.

### Psalm 57

**1 Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me**

That is the same way the other psalm started – begging for mercy. God's mercy is what the soul in trouble needs. There is no other solution. His compassionate, tender care – the rescue that rises from His love, nothing else will help.

**for in you my soul takes refuge.**

The logic of love. He doesn't say, "Have mercy because I have been faithful," or "because I deserve it." He says, "Have mercy because I look to You alone for it. You are my only hope, my only rescue, my only option. Glorify Yourself by showing Yourself to be the great Caretaker that You are."

**I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.**

The trouble will pass. For the child of God, trouble is a matter of time and mercy is a matter of eternity. Your present distress seems permanent, but it is not. It is like a cloud that passes over the sun, but then soon moves on and the sunlight returns. Trouble is short; God's love is forever. Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. And though the night seems long, I can bear it for as long as it continues as long as I am in the sweet, quiet refuge of Your shelter. When the world crumbles around me I will be safe in the cleft of the Rock of ages.

## Day 4

### **2 I cry out to God Most High,**

From Your lofty height You can easily rescue me. However high my enemy is, You are higher still.

**to God, who fulfills [his purpose] for me.**

What grace has promised providence will never fail to carry out.

### **3 He sends from heaven and saves me,**

If there is no fit instrument on earth You will revert to the legions of heaven to save me. You draw down Your very love and faithfulness to come down upon me.

**rebuking those who hotly pursue me; Selah God sends his love and his faithfulness. 4 I am in the midst of lions; I lie among ravenous beasts-- men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords.**

*Forgive me, dear Lord, for all the times when I have become a ravenous beast with teeth and tongue that devour and destroy. If a person said, "Come over to my house tonight. There is a man I plan on butchering and grilling, and we'll enjoy the best cuts of steaks from his body for dinner" – even the average unbeliever would be shocked and appalled beyond words. And yet how often have I roasted some poor soul with my words, and my tongue has cut him into pieces and devoured his reputation as I bring his failings and faults to the attention of my own soul as well as to others? Oh forgive me, dear Lord, for being the very man David prays against in verse 4.*

**5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth. 6 They spread a net for my feet-- I was bowed down in distress. They dug a pit in my path-- but they have fallen into it themselves. Selah 7 My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast**

*I know You have been here with me. I know You have heard my prayer and answered, because the proof is right here. My weak, shaky, troubled, agitated heart is now calm, firm, strong, and steadfast. Nothing but Your presence can do that. And so now my heart is fixed. No matter what chaos surrounds me, nothing can push my heart off the track of praising You now.*



## **Day 5**

### **I will sing and make music.**

OK – here comes the music. You knew that was going to happen. David is about to turn this cave into a cathedral. With both lip and heart I will ascribe honor to You. I will make Adullam ring with the sounds of Your praises, and all the caverns of this place will echo with the sounds of my joy in You. It has to be alarming to the enemy when they start to hear joyful victory songs rising up from our side right on the battlefield.

### **8 Awake, my soul! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn.**

“I don’t want the sun to wake me up today – I want me to wake the sun up with my praises!”

David wants to get up before the sun comes up, while it is still dark, and somehow rouse his soul and his body to start the music so that he can be the one to wake up the dawn itself. Twice he has to call upon his own self to wake up. He has to make an effort to summon all the strength within him for this work of praise. The kind of joy David is expressing does not come easy. The tendency is for our souls to drift into lethargic apathy and praiseless obedience to God as we grind through life devoid of real joy. We constantly have to shake ourselves awake to the glory of God so our joy in Him can be revived.

David fled in such a hurry from Saul that he did not have time to grab a sword. But he evidently did find time to grab his harp and lyre. If your house is burning down and you only have time to grab one thing as you are running out, and you have to choose between something that will save your life or something that will assist you in expressing praise to God – for David that is an easy choice.

### **9 I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples.**

David had just come from Gentile territory. He had just been among the Philistines and would soon be among the Moabites. No matter where he went and what their religion was, if David came those people would hear praises being offered to the God of Israel.

### ***God’s massive love***

### **10 For great is your love, reaching to the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies.**

Think of the blindness of the ungrateful heart. Even in the midst of great blessing and prosperity it can see only little drops of God’s love and faithfulness here and there. But the humble, thankful heart has its eyes open to reality, and even from the dark depths of Adullam sees God’s love and faithfulness as a massive, overwhelming wave heaving all the way up to the heavens and filling the skies. When God seems harsh, and His mercies seem to dry up, it is not because the ocean of His love has evaporated, it is only because our eyes have crusted over with pride and we have become blind to reality.

### **11 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.**

Spurgeon: If David prayed in the palace like he prayed in the cave maybe he wouldn’t have fallen into such horrible sin.