

**Text: 1 Samuel 27- 28:2**

**Theme: David, A Man After God's Own Heart: David's Battle with Discouragement**

**Sermon delivered by Dele Agbelusi during Service of the Word on 16/07/2017 at 10.30am**

### **Introduction**

God showed David a token of his love by calling him and anointing him to be the next king of Israel - a time when his family did not consider him to be worth anything but a servant in waiting. In chapter 17, by the power of God almighty, he stands up against Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, and kills him.

From chapter 18, Saul begins to get nervous about David's popularity with the people and sets out to bring about David's death. At first, he wants to make it look like an accident, but eventually he gives orders for David to be put to death. Eventually David is forced to flee for his life, living as a fugitive from justice. But in all this, at every turn, David could testify to the guiding presence and love of the Lord.

God has done some incredible things in the life of David trying to prepare him for his ascendancy to the throne. David is the benefactor of ministry by others. There was Samuel, who not only anointed him as Israel's next king, but to whom David could flee when Saul was pursuing him (1 Samuel 19:18-24). There was also Abiathar, the only surviving heir of Ahimelech, who joined David, along with the ephod (1 Samuel 22:20-23; 23:6). Then there was Jonathan, son of Saul, who constantly stood behind him, assuring David he would be the next king (1 Samuel 20:12-17, 41-42; 23:15-18). And there was also Abigail, who greatly encouraged David to do right as Israel's next king (1 Samuel 25:26-31).

Chapter 26 seems to be a spiritual high point for David. Once again, Saul is in pursuit of David. David learns of Saul's presence and sends out spies, who pinpoint the exact location of his camp. David and Abishai then enter the camp as the soldiers of Saul sleep the deep sleep of a divine sedative (26:12). David does not allow Abishai to kill Saul, as he clearly intends to do (26:8-9, 15). Instead, only Saul's spear and water container are taken, as proof of how close they were to the king, yet unhindered by any of Saul's men.

**David acknowledged that the Lord would lead him to the throne at his own time and this attitude must have elicited some words of repentance from Saul who addressed David as his son. (1 Samuel 26:21-25).**

Here David triumphed over Saul but he was becoming discouraged after being on the run for close to 15 years! **Triumph over Saul is fast turning to despair and too soon for that matter. What was going through David's mind? Was this the reality he expected after all these years? Could he still trust God to deliver?** He was losing his eternal perspective that underneath him are everlasting arms of the One who anointed him to be king of Israel and who has been his protector. He now felt alone and withdrawn.

Even though David was accompanied by over 600 people, he seems somehow to have withdrawn into himself. **His conversation in 27:1 is with himself (literally, the text informs us he "said to his heart")**. David suffers from what I call the "Lone Ranger syndrome." It is that false sense of "being alone" in your spiritual struggle, pain, or suffering. Even the prophet Elijah experienced a similar condition: *Then he came there to a cave, and lodged there; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"* <sup>10</sup> He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to

death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”” (1 Kings 19:9-10).

Whenever we think we are alone in our spiritual struggles, we are self-deceived and ripe for a spiritual fall. David seems to be in that “Lone Ranger” frame of mind. He is certainly not seeking wise counsel or the will of God here. He was leaning on his own understanding.

But was he alone? No. God was with him and the problem he allowed himself to fall into was taking his eyes away from God. Like Peter in (Matthew 14, 28-30) who Jesus called to come to Him on water and Peter believed and started to walk on water, but as soon as he concentrated on the water instead of Christ, and became afraid that he would sink, he started to sink.

The sad story of 1 Samuel 27 begins with something David thought, or said in his heart. That was a word of discouragement coming from a heart tired of trusting God for His continued deliverance. In his discouragement David forgot God’s past deliverance. When I read the account of David’s flight to Gath and his alliance with Achish, king of Gath, I must ask this question: *“What’s a Man Like David doing in a Place Like This?”*

The renowned preacher Charles Spurgeon once said: “I remember on one occasion, to my shame, being sad and doubtful of heart, and a kind friend took out a paper and read to me a short extract from a discourse upon faith. I very soon detected the author of the extract; my friend was reading to me from one of my own sermons. Without saying a word he just left it to my own conscience, for he had convicted me of committing the very fault against which I had so earnestly declaimed.” (Spurgeon). David was so discouraged that he thought there was nothing better for him in Israel and among God’s people, so he decided to leave Israel and leave among the idol worshipping people and sworn enemies of Israel.

If Saul told David, “You must leave the people of God and go live among the Philistines,” David would never bow to it. But discouragement and despair are more powerful enemies than Saul. Discouragement and despair will drive David to do something that Saul could never make him do.

**(Verses 2-4)** David goes over to Achish, leader of Gath.

**David’s discouraged and despairing heart didn’t only affect himself; he led six hundred men out of the land of promise to live with the ungodly.** Before David sunk into his pit of discouragement and despair, he would have never dreamed of doing this. And it was not just the fighting men, their families also were with them.

The first time (1 Samuel 21:10-15) David turned to Achish of Gath for succour, God allowed that experience to quickly turn sour, and David pretended to be a madman so he could escape. In his discouragement and despair David went down a road of sin he has been down before. Achish received David this time because David and Achish share the same enemy, and David now brings with him 600 fighting men, whom Achish can use as mercenaries.

**(4) When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him. David accomplished his immediate goal, because Saul stopped pursuing him. But now David is in a place of compromise that will leave him worse off than before.** He is actually submitting to a Philistine master. We have no record of any Psalms that David wrote during this time. This was not a high point in his spiritual life. He didn’t write sweet Psalms unto the Lord.

David becomes a bandit and the name of God was not referred to in 1 Samuel 27!

**(5-7) David receives the city of Ziklag.**

Then David said to Achish, “If I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be assigned to me in one of the country towns, that I may live there. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you?” So, on that day Achish gave him Ziklag, and it has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since. David lived in Philistine territory a year and four months. It smarts to hear David say to a Philistine ruler, “your servant.” But this is what you receive when you take your eyes off from you Sustainer.

**(8-9) David’s new occupation as a roving bandit.**

Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites. (From ancient times, these peoples had lived in the land extending to Shur and Egypt.) Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive, but took sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes. Then he returned to Achish. The Hebrew word raided comes from the verb to strip, with the idea of stripping the dead for loot. David attacked these villages or encampments, killed the men, stripped them for treasure or armour, and robbed the people of the village or encampment. **This was no way of life for a man after God’s own heart.**

Even though he attacked the enemies of Israel, David was nothing more than an armed robber and murderer. He killed all the people of the village or encampment, took the spoil, and did it without the approval or guidance of God. He now fought wars for profit instead of for God’s honour and in verses 10-12, he covered his tracks by lying to his Philistine host, king Achish.

In the opening verses of chapter 28, (verses 1-2), **David takes sides with the Philistines to fight against Israel. If not for God’s intervention, that would have been the end of David. But God intervened and the Philistine lords rejected David’s help.**

The Bible does not give us heroes, men or women who have the Midas touch, successful in all they do, who never seem to fail. The Bible gives us men and women with all their flaws, men and women just like us, to whom God has been gracious. David is far from perfect but as we shall see in his future experience, David was a good example in repentance.

But when we compare David with David’s greater Son, Jesus Christ, there was no carnality in Him. No chapter of his life was written without a mention of God, compared to chapter 27 where it appeared as though God was non-existent in David’s life.

**Many of us would be excited if we achieved half of what David achieved. But God said No! I want you to aspire to something greater and better.** I want you to aspire to the goodness of my Son; be as perfect as my Son. You ask why? If you trust in Him that He died for you. He takes away your propensity to sin and gives you a heart that longs after God. He gives you His own righteousness, His goodness and by His Spirit, you will be filled with goodness that is far greater than that of David.

So today, instead of leaving here and echoing the words of David in verses 1 and 2, you can say I want to leave here with the righteousness which Jesus offers to me freely. **If you are weary with a long time trial and you are almost giving up, let Jesus strengthen you. Focus on Him and He will lift you up.**

Let us pray.