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The Life of David: Following God is NOT an Easy Road

(Psalms 17, 54, 35-36, 53, 16, 39)

As we open to I Corinthians 10:11-13, it is our reminder as we study the Life of David: following God is hard, it is not EASY!

For many years songwriter John W. Peterson (1921-2006) lived in Grand Rapids, Michigan. One song he wrote among the thousand that bear his name is titled: "It's Not an Easy Road". David, whose life we are studying, would have heartily agreed with these words:

It's not an easy road we are traveling to heaven,
For many are the thorns on the way
It's not an easy road, but the Savior is with us
His presence gives us joy every day.

It's not an easy road - there are trials and troubles
And many are the dangers we meet
But Jesus guards and keeps so that nothing can harm us
We'll rest in peace over there.

No, no, it's not an easy road.
No, no, it's not an easy road;
But Jesus walks beside me and brightens the journey,
And lightens every heavy load

One of Satan's greatest tools is to isolate believers in their minds from other believers around them. He makes us think we are the only ones facing such struggles.

Beware of Self-Isolationism

When Satan keeps us from sharing our struggles, bearing each other's burdens, and encouraging one another—he has pushed our spiritual lives into a potential cycle for constant defeat. He plants thoughts like: "no one else has ever faced what I am facing", or "I am so bad and no other Christian has ever done what I have done", or "no believer has ever failed as I have failed".

As we stand to read I Corinthians 10:11-13, it is our introduction to how much we need

to realize we are all weak, frail, and in need of God's grace.

What David faced, we all face; how David struggled, we all struggle. In varying degrees an in various flavors of sin, but we are all made of the same stuff. There are no super-saints.

Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Pray

Most of us who grew up in the twentieth century remember the comic books, cartoons, and TV shows portraying the exploits of super-heroes. Those superheroes had extraordinary abilities to fight a never-ending battle for truth and justice. Fans all over the world therefore idolized them—and loved hearing stories of their great feats!

In the 21st century many of these superheroes are coming back in the movies. As usual, movies often reflect deeper issues that can lurk in the back of our minds. It is easy to slip into a Bible-characters-were-superheroes mentality.

Those thoughts can lead to many Christians viewing God's choicest servants like David, or Elijah, or Paul as Supersaints. These servants actually fought for—*God's* Truth and *His* justice. And Christians all over the world love to hear stories about their great feats—like when David the shepherd boy slew the evil giant, Goliath; or when Elijah called down God's miraculous fire in front of the 850 prophets of Baal; or how the Apostle Paul was so instrumental in the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire.

Yet, when believers face the same "*good fight*" (I Timothy 4:6-8) of faith in hard times, Satan tries to rob them of encouragement and strength through the testimonies of these great saints. "Surely," he whispers, "their strength and ability to minister is way beyond what you as an average Christian can expect in your own life."

The devil has deceived many into thinking that these giants of faith were made of a different substance—as if the Lord gave them something extra that we didn't get. Or, that some were so special because they had been with Jesus in person, or were at Pentecost. But the truth is:

We All Face Similar Struggles

All too often we forget that Scripture declares that everyone is subject to the same passions and struggles. For example, Elijah—that great prophet who embodied all the prophets, who never had to die a physical death, who got to come back and stand on

the Mount of Transfiguration with Christ—was a monumental servant of the Lord “*with a nature like ours*” (James 5:17). In other words, Elijah was just like us!

The only other time this word “*with a nature like ours*” was used is when Paul and Barnabas were being besieged and bowed down to by the people of Lystra. As the multitudes started to offer a sacrifice to them, the two men tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude crying out:

“*Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you ...*” (Acts 14:15).

Paul and Barnabas refused to let those lost pagans think they were Supersaints—like some sort of special “gods.” So they clearly informed the people: “We are just normal men—human, not divine!” They let people around them know that:

Any Greatness in Life Comes from God!

God’s greatest servants—David, Elijah, and Paul—were made of the same stuff we are. Their greatness was *of God*, and not of themselves. And Paul even testified to that truth:

For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that **this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us** (2 Corinthians 4:6-7 NIV).

The apostle continued on by giving examples of how God’s “all-surpassing power” was his source of victory in manifold trials (2 Corinthians 4:8-10). So then, even when Paul’s whole world was crashing in all around him, and there seemed to be no escape, though they were not happy times for him—they were rejoicing times in the Lord. And that is a key spiritual secret of God’s greatest servants!

In his classic entitled *Spiritual Depression*, author Martin Lloyd-Jones explains the difference between rejoicing and feeling happy:

We must recognize that there is all the difference in the world between rejoicing and feeling happy. The Scripture tells us that we should always rejoice. In the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians he says: “Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice.” He goes on saying it. To rejoice is a command, yes, but there is all the difference in the world between rejoicing and being happy.

You cannot make yourself happy, but you can make yourself rejoice, in the sense that you will always rejoice in the Lord. Happiness is something within ourselves, rejoicing is “in the Lord.” How important it is then, to draw the distinction between rejoicing in the Lord and feeling happy.

Take the fourth chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. There you will find that the great Apostle puts it all very plainly and clearly in that series of extraordinary contrasts which he makes: "We are troubled on every side (I don't think he felt very happy at the moment) yet not distressed," "we are perplexed (he wasn't feeling happy at all at that point) but not in despair," "persecuted but not forsaken," "cast down, but not destroyed"—and so on. In other words the Apostle does not suggest a kind of happy person in a carnal sense, but he was still rejoicing. That is the difference between the two conditions.¹

Now let's apply that perspective to an example from David's life. As we move on in this chapter to the last big events of David's "struggling years,"² we will see that he and his men fled the cave of Adullam and hid in the wilderness of Judah. Did he feel happy about having no sure place to live, no reliable source of income, and being responsible to take care of hundreds of men as well? Certainly not, but God empowered David to be victorious by rejoicing in the Lord in his unending struggles—whether he felt happy or not. Just as that was a key spiritual secret behind David's greatness, so it is for those who also seek to be a God-hearted servant.

Now let's look at what went on in David's life after moving out of the cave of Adullam. This was a challenging yet exciting period because God was in the final phase of preparing David to assume the throne as king!

David Faced Constant Insecurities And Huge Responsibilities

(1 Samuel 22:5; 23:1-14)

With his basic training in the cave of Adullam completed, it was time for David to further apply what God had been teaching him. Thus, the Lord let Saul discover where David and his men were hiding. However, through the prophet Gad, He warned David beforehand to relocate:

*... The prophet Gad said to David, "Do not stay in the stronghold; depart, and go to the land of Judah." So **David departed and went into the forest of Hereth** (1 Samuel 22:5).*

With no sure place to live and no reliable source of income, David faced constant insecurities and huge responsibilities caring for about 600 men on the run. While David is on the run, Saul finds out that David had been helped by the priest Ahimelech in 1 Samuel 21:1-9.

Here is the scene that prompts that 52nd Psalm in 1 Samuel 22:6-23 (NKJV)

6 When Saul heard that David and the men who were with him had been

¹ As cited in *Hymns for the Family of God* (Nashville: Paragon Associates, 1976), p. 47.

² What was deepest within David was often reflected in psalms during different stages of his life: the growing years, the struggling years, the strong years, and the waning years. This chapter covers the last four big events of his struggling years.

discovered—now Saul was staying in Gibeah under a tamarisk tree in Ramah, with his spear in his hand, and all his servants standing about him— 7 then Saul said to his servants who stood about him, “Hear now, you Benjamites! Will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands and captains of hundreds? 8 All of you have conspired against me, and there is no one who reveals to me that my son has made a covenant with the son of Jesse; and there is not one of you who is sorry for me or reveals to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as it is this day.” 9 Then answered Doeg the Edomite, who was set over the servants of Saul, and said, “I saw the son of Jesse going to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. 10 And he inquired of the LORD for him, gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine.” 11 So the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father’s house, the priests who were in Nob. And they all came to the king. 12 And Saul said, “Hear now, son of Ahitub!” He answered, “Here I am, my lord.” 13 Then Saul said to him, “Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, in that you have given him bread and a sword, and have inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as it is this day?” 14 So Ahimelech answered the king and said, “And who among all your servants is as faithful as David, who is the king’s son-in-law, who goes at your bidding, and is honorable in your house? 15 Did I then begin to inquire of God for him? Far be it from me! Let not the king impute anything to his servant, or to any in the house of my father. For your servant knew nothing of all this, little or much.” 16 And the king said, “You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father’s house!” 17 Then the king said to the guards who stood about him, “Turn and kill the priests of the LORD, because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled and did not tell it to me.” But the servants of the king would not lift their hands to strike the priests of the LORD. 18 And the king said to Doeg, “You turn and kill the priests!” So Doeg the Edomite turned and struck the priests, and killed on that day eighty-five men who wore a linen ephod. 19 Also Nob, the city of the priests, he struck with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and nursing infants, oxen and donkeys and sheep—with the edge of the sword. 20 Now one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David. 21 And Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the LORD’s priests. 22 So David said to Abiathar, “I knew that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have caused the death of all the persons of your father’s house. 23 Stay with me; do not fear. For he who seeks my life seeks your life, but with me you shall be safe.”

So Saul calls the entire group from the priestly city Nob before him, and when no one else will kill the innocent priests in cold blood, Doeg step forward and kills the entire band, murdering all 85 priests.

This makes David feel so responsible for their deaths that he writes Psalm 52, and in the shadow of that great tragedy, David finds God is there all the time!

Walk through Psalm 52 with me and see these precious lessons.

Psalm 52: When Tragedies Strike God is there

To the Chief Musician. A Contemplation of David when Doeg the Edomite went and told Saul, and said to him, "David has gone to the house of Ahimelech."

v. 1 No matter what: God is Good all the time; All the Time God is good: Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? The goodness of God endures continually.

v. 2-5 People will ALWAYS Fail us: God never will: Your tongue devises destruction, Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. 3 You love evil more than good, Lying rather than speaking righteousness. Selah 4 You love all devouring words, You deceitful tongue. 5 God shall likewise destroy you forever; He shall take you away, and pluck you out of your dwelling place, And uproot you from the land of the living. Selah

v. 6-7 Don't Despair: Sometime Only God will come to our aid in Hard Times: The righteous also shall see and fear, And shall laugh at him, saying, 7 "Here is the man who did not make God his strength, But trusted in the abundance of his riches, And strengthened himself in his wickedness."

v. 8-9 Wait for God, Cling to Him; God is there, all the time; in the Worst of Times, God is there: But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever. 9 I will praise You forever, Because You have done it; And in the presence of Your saints I will wait on Your name, for it is good.

After this tragic event David goes on, and learns that the Philistines are nearby and had invaded the Judean city (David's tribe) of Keilah and were robbing their threshing floors.

When David heard about it, he immediately prays. This is the habit of his heart, but especially in this account we see David seeking the direction of the Lord. Note the repetition in I Samuel 23:2, 4, 10 as we read 1 Samuel 23:1-13 (NKJV):

Then they told David, saying, "Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and they are robbing the threshing floors." 2 Therefore David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" And the LORD said to David, "Go and attack the Philistines, and save Keilah." 3 But David's men said to him, "Look, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?" 4 Then David inquired of the LORD once again. And the LORD answered him and said, "Arise, go down to Keilah. For I will deliver the Philistines into your hand." 5 And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines, struck them with a mighty blow, and took away their livestock. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah. 6 Now it happened, when Abiathar the

son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, that he went down with an ephod in his hand. 7 And Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah. So Saul said, "God has delivered him into my hand, for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars." 8 Then Saul called all the people together for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men. 9 When David knew that Saul plotted evil against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod here." 10 Then David said, "O LORD God of Israel, Your servant has certainly heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah to destroy the city for my sake. 11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as Your servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant." And the LORD said, "He will come down." 12 Then David said, "Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?" And the LORD said, "They will deliver you." 13 So David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah and went wherever they could go. Then it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah; so he halted the expedition.

Psalm 17, the first psalm in the Bible entitled "A Prayer of David" appears to have been penned during this dangerous period in the wilderness. In spite of his insecurities and enormous responsibilities, David expressed great confidence in the Lord's protection as he sought the Lord in prayer in I Samuel 23:2, 4, and 10. So this time of seeking and trusting the protection of the Lord is seen in:

Psalm 17: A prayer when I feel Insecure

A Prayer of David.

v. 1-2 Like David I will Pour out My Troubles to the Lord: ¹ Hear a just cause, O LORD, Attend to my cry; Give ear to my prayer which is not from deceitful lips. ² Let my vindication come from Your presence; Let Your eyes look on the things that are upright.

v. 3-5 Like David I will Surrender My Life to the Lord: ³ You have tested my heart; You have visited me in the night; You have tried me and have found nothing; I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress. ⁴ Concerning the works of men, By the word of Your lips, I have kept away from the paths of the destroyer. ⁵ Uphold my steps in Your paths, That my footsteps may not slip.

v. 6-12 Like David I will Give My Insecurities to the Lord: ⁶ I have called upon You, for You will hear me, O God; Incline Your ear to me, and hear my speech. ⁷ Show Your marvelous lovingkindness by Your right hand, O You who save those who trust in You From those who rise up against them. ⁸ Keep me as the apple of Your eye; Hide me under the shadow of Your wings ⁹ From the wicked who oppress me, From my deadly enemies who surround me. ¹⁰ They have closed up their fat hearts; With their mouths they speak proudly. ¹¹ They have

now surrounded us in our steps; They have set their eyes, crouching down to the earth, ¹² As a lion is eager to tear his prey, And like a young lion lurking in secret places.

v. 13-14 Like David I will Give My Adversaries to the Lord: ¹³ Arise, O LORD, Confront him, cast him down; Deliver my life from the wicked with Your sword. ¹⁴ With Your hand from men, O LORD, From men of the world who have their portion in this life, And whose belly You fill with Your hidden treasure. They are satisfied with children, And leave the rest of their possession for their babes.

v. 15 Like David I will Get My Life's Direction from the Lord: ¹⁵ As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.

One of Satan's greatest tools is to isolate believers in their minds from other believers around them. He makes us think we are the only ones facing such struggles.

When Satan keeps us from sharing our struggles, bearing each other's burdens, and encouraging one another—he has pushed our spiritual lives into a potential cycle for constant defeat. He plants thoughts like: "no one else has ever faced what I am facing", or "I am so bad and no other Christian has ever done what I have done", or "no believer has ever failed as I have failed".

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We All Face Similar Struggles

And, the Lord has shown us in His Word the pathway to hope, peace, confidence and joy. Like David we all need to seek the Lord in all our struggles and find Him more than enough for every need!

What a Friend we have in Jesus # 354