

Leadership Lessons

To make a man or woman of God, God usually has to break that man or woman of God. A. W. Tozer once wrote of the kind of easy and lazy Christianity that goes around today expecting high reward for no suffering.

“We expect to enter the everlasting kingdom of our Father and to sit down around the table with sages, saints and martyrs; and through the grace of God, maybe we shall; yes maybe we shall. But for the most of us it could prove at first an embarrassing experience. Ours might be the silence of the untried soldier in the presence of the battle-hardened heroes who have fought the fight and won the victory and who have scars to prove that they were present when the battle was joined. The devil, things and people being what they are, it is necessary for God to use the hammer, the file and the furnace in His holy work of preparing a saint for true sainthood. It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until He has hurt him deeply.”

The Bible verifies Tozer's words. God was willing to put Moses into a 40-year school of Egyptian life, followed by a 40-year school of being a shepherd in Midian, before being the leader of the Exodus for the last 40 years of his life. Joseph needed the fire and affliction of a pit and the lying of Potipher's wife, and the prison, the forgetfulness of the baker before he was exalted.

And before David could be the best and humblest king of Israel outside of Jesus Himself, he needed to be broken and shaped. We already saw his desperation in the last chapter, where he turned to lies and deception. But now David gather himself and turns to his God. Beginning in this chapter, and continuing to the end of 1 Samuel, David's life on the run is going to teach him some of the most crucial leadership lessons. He will learn about betrayal in chapter 23, about submission to ungodly authority in 24, about revenge and restraint in chapter 25, about justice and vindication in 26, about loyalty in 27, about guidance in 28, about tragedy and rejection. These are essential lessons to mold a king who will be wise, yet shrewd, firm but gentle, just but merciful, strong but forgiving. But each of these lessons is a lesson of breaking. Think in your life of experiences of being betrayed, of having an ungodly authority oppressing you, of having to restrain yourself when you could take revenge, of seeking vindication when you've been unfairly treated, of painful tragedy, of the rejection and disloyalty of people close to you.

These experiences will break and humble a child of God, but they can also harden and stiffen an unbeliever, or a believer living far from God. That's what happened respectively to David and to Saul. In this chapter we have deliberate contrast between these two kings. We will see these trials beginning to soften and humble David, while Saul's problems are hardening Saul and turning him into a very wicked man.

I. A Leader Who humbles Himself

1 Samuel 22:1 David therefore departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. And when his brothers and all his father's house heard *it*, they went down there to him.

2 And everyone *who was* in distress, everyone who *was* in debt, and everyone *who was* discontented gathered to him. So he became captain over them. And there were about four hundred men with him.

Chapter 22 is where David begins to adapt to life as a fugitive. He first makes his way to the cave of Adullam. The caves are in a fairly remote part of Israel (even today), and so David knew he could get some respite from Saul. To get there from Gath, he would have walked right through the Valley of Elah, where he had killed Goliath. It was a trip of about 16 kilometres. The cave of Adullam is actually a huge network of caves. You can hide a small army in there.

And once David was in the cave, do you know what he did? Did he carve angry graffiti on the walls? Did he create little effigies of Saul and throw rocks at them? No, the Bible actually tells us what David did.

Psalm 142:1 <A Contemplation of David. A Prayer when he was in the cave.> I cry out to the LORD with my voice; With my voice to the LORD I make my supplication. 2 I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare before Him my trouble. 3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, Then You knew my path. In the way in which I walk They have secretly set a snare for me. 4 Look on *my* right hand and see, For *there is* no one who acknowledges me; Refuge has failed me; No one cares for my soul. 5 I cried out to You, O LORD: I said, "You *are* my refuge, My portion in the land of the living. 6 Attend to my cry, For I am brought very low; Deliver me from my persecutors, For they are stronger than I. 7 Bring my soul out of prison, That I may praise Your name; The righteous shall surround me, For You shall deal bountifully with me." (Ps. 142:1-7)

David prays. David makes God his refuge. David is repenting of his lies and deception, and foolish self-sufficiency. Look at Psalm 57:

Psalm 57:1 <To the Chief Musician. Set to "Do Not Destroy." A Michtam of David when he fled from Saul into the cave.> Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, Until *these* calamities have passed by.
2 I will cry out to God Most High, To God who performs *all things* for me.
3 He shall send from heaven and save me; He reproaches the one who would swallow me up. Selah God shall send forth His mercy and His truth. (Ps. 57:1-3)

In fact, he also wrote psalms 34 and 56 during this time, psalms of deep dependence, trust, devotion. David's heart is like a boomerang, he might wander from God, but he always comes back to his refuge.

Here is where a true child of God is distinguished from the world. When trials deepen, the heart of a child of God becomes more dependent, more childlike, more trusting, not less. As Paul says, the trials remind the believer of the great principle of the Cross, and of humility: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9)

As David draws near to God, people are drawn to him.

First, his own family comes to him: probably his father and mother, his brothers and their families. They know that they are in as much danger as David is. Saul will either target them as revenge on David, or use them as hostages to torture or kill to lure David to himself. They are in danger, and somehow receiving word, they make their way about 12 miles west from Bethlehem to these caves.

Second, he begins to draw to himself other outlaws, misfits, fugitives, people on the run. People who could not pay and were being pursued, or who were very unhappy with life in Saul's Israel, or people who had nowhere to go except follow this leader. It's bad news for Saul when people who are overtaxed, unhappy and have nothing to lose are all being drawn to David.

So David becomes the first real Robin Hood, a great captain outlawed and hiding in caves and forests.

David has repented of his sins of chapter 21, and now takes the leadership and spiritual-teaching responsibility for this band of dependents. He writes psalms and teaches these people to worship God and love God. Such was his influence on these people that they became fiercely loyal to David. He inspired them to live for something greater than selfish concerns. During this time, these men become something of not only like Robin Hood's men, but also like the knights of King Arthur. They become what Scripture calls David's mighty men. At the end of 2 Samuel, there is a chapter that looks back and recaps some of the events of these mighty men when they were on the run with

David.

8 These *are* the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb-Basshebeth the Tachmonite, chief among the captains. He was called Adino the Eznite, because he had killed eight hundred men at one time.

9 And after him *was* Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, *one* of the three mighty men with David when they defied the Philistines *who* were gathered there for battle, and the men of Israel had retreated. 10 He arose and attacked the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand stuck to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to plunder.

11 And after him *was* Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines had gathered together into a troop where there was a piece of ground full of lentils. Then the people fled from the Philistines.

12 But he stationed himself in the middle of the field, defended it, and killed the Philistines. And the LORD brought about a great victory. 13 Then three of the thirty chief men went down at harvest time and came to David at the cave of Adullam. And the troop of Philistines encamped in the Valley of Rephaim.

14 David *was* then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines *was* then *in* Bethlehem.

15 And David said with longing, "Oh, that someone would give me a drink of the water from the well of Bethlehem, which *is* by the gate!" 16 So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that *was* by the gate, and took it and brought *it* to David. Nevertheless he would not drink it, but poured it out to the LORD. 17 And he said, "Far be it from me, O LORD, that I should do this! Is *this not* the blood of the men who went in *jeopardy of* their lives?" Therefore he would not drink it. These things were done by the three mighty men. (2 Sam. 23:8-17)

These great men of God had been drawn to a leader whose heart was set on God. David did not have to guilt-trip or shame or bribe these men, he just lived out his love for God, and his leadership drew men to himself.

The trial is never enjoyable, but when it has done its work on you, you are more like Christ, and more the sort of person others wish to be with and learn from and grow from. Harden yourself to the trial, and you give up the ability to be shaped into a Christlike believer of influence.

Well, these mighty men were able-bodied warriors, but what about David's relatives, which include the elderly, and women and children? So at some point, David escorts his relatives out of Israel to the land of Moab.

3 Then David went from there to Mizpah of Moab; and he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and mother come here with you, till I know what God will do for me." 4 So he brought them before the king of Moab, and they dwelt with him all the time that David was in the stronghold.

Moab is modern day-Jordan, and the city of Mizpah, also called Kir Hareseth might be the modern city of Karak. This was one of two stronghold cities in Moab. At any rate, it was a journey of about 100 kilometres, and would have taken some time. Again, David knows his family are in danger anywhere within the borders of Israel, so he is asking for refugee status for his family. It's not entirely clear why David chose Moab. It may be that David's great-grandmother was Ruth, who was from Moab. Perhaps David's family retained some friendly relations with the Moabites.

5 Now 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.

Once his family is safe, David then receives counsel from the prophet Gad. We don't know much about this prophet, except that he re-appears in the biblical narrative at the end of David's reign, when David foolishly numbers the people. He is given the title of "David's seer", so perhaps he accompanied David all along, and ministered the word to David. He also helped arrange the worship of Israel in later years. 25 And he stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for thus *was* the commandment of the LORD by His prophets. (2 Chr. 29:25)

There's a lot of debate over what the stronghold refers to, whether it refers to the city in Moab, or whether it was the cave, or perhaps was a fortress located at Masada by the Dead Sea. Whatever it was, Gad tells David not to stay there with his men. Instead, he should go into that part of Israel that belonged to the tribe of Judah. Though he won't be safe there, the inhabitants of Judah are the most likely to be kind to David, since he is one of them. That's not to say they won't fear Saul and betray David, but he is safer there than in any other tribe of Israel. David flees to the forest of Hereth which is a forest to the south of the caves of Adullam.

In the middle of chapter 22, we come back to Saul.

II. A Leader Who Hardens Himself

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

There Saul is, showing all the marks of a bad leader. Saul is standing there with the spear, a menacing figure, reminding people of what he'd tried to do to David and his own son, Jonathan.

He appeals to the worst possible things to get people to follow him: guilt, favouritism, self-pity. Standing there in the capital city of Gibeah, he says to his fellow Benjamites: "Listen! We're the top tribe right now! David is from the tribe of Judah! If he is king, you won't get the top positions, and the money and the property, like I will give you!

Whereas David ends up with loyal men from every tribe, Saul must appeal to base nepotism and sensual bribery.

Once he's finished bribing them, he tries to shame them: you have conspired against me! None of you is sorry for me! Apparently he has found out only lately that David and Jonathan were in covenant together, and he is smarting over the fact that others seemed to have known before he did, and he brings that up twice. You can picture a lot of officers and men just looking at their feet, not knowing how to answer an insecure leader.

David claims ownership for his sins and turns to God, but Saul is doing nothing besides blaming. It's a good test for how a trial is working on your heart: are you claiming ownership for sin and turning to God, or blaming people and circumstances for what is going on in your life?

Of course, one man does speak up, and it is Doeg, the Edomite, whom we met last week.

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."

Doeg tells Saul that he saw David at the Tabernacle city of Nob, where David received food and a sword. King Saul thinks he now has caught some conspirators red-handed and calls all the priests to appear before him. He accuses them of conspiracy and treason.

But as we know, Ahimelech had no clear knowledge of where David stood in Saul's sight, and

believed what David told him.

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!" And 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."

Saul insults the priest by calling him the son of Ahitub, not even using his name, and then falsely accuses him of conspiracy.

Ahimelech protests his innocence. David's reputation is blameless, David is Saul's own son-in-law, David is respected and admired. Why should Ahimelech have suspected him of any wrong doing?

But Saul is not interested in justice. He simply wants revenge, and to make an example of someone.

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.

Like a true tyrant, he commands the unjust slaughter of the priests. But Saul's men have enough piety to refuse to take it that far. Here is an example of civil disobedience. These men simply cannot obey the government, because the government is commanding evil.

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.

So Saul turns to the foreigner, the mercenary Doeg, who apparently had enough bloodlust and no conscience, and goes on a one-man rampage against every priest and living thing in the town of Nob.

David writes of Doeg in Ps 52: "Behold, the man who would not make God his refuge, But trusted in the abundance of his riches And was strong in his evil desire." When all others refused, Doeg would do it for the sake of power and money. Doeg would not let this opportunity for personal gain pass.

Amazingly, Saul destroys the city of Nob the way God commanded Saul to destroy Amalek in chapter 15. It was known as the ban, when a city was to be placed under total destruction. God had commanded that for the wicked Amalekites. But Saul hadn't carried that out, but had spared the best of the animals and the treasure, and had spared the king. Samuel confronted him over that disobedience. Here, he carries out the ban, not on the idolatrous Amalekites, but on the city of Yahweh's priests.

Saul has become a murderer and a destroyer of good. On top of that, he becomes a truce-breaker. He does something, which is not found in the text here, but is reported much later when David is already on the throne, and facing something of a judgement on his kingdom which he has to unravel.

2 Samuel 21:1 Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, "*It is because of Saul and his bloodthirsty house, because he killed the Gibeonites.*" (2 Sam. 21:1)

It turns out that God is chastening Israel because Saul broke a vow made to a group of people called the Gibeonites. Back in the time of Joshua, Israel is busy driving out the Canaanites. A group of them come up with a deceptive plan. They dress up as people from a far country and come to Joshua, claiming they have heard of the great Israelites and ask for a treaty of peace. Flattered and not thinking to ask the Lord for wisdom, Joshua and the Israelites impulsively make a covenant with them, promising never to attack them. The next thing, they find out that the Gibeonites are not from a faraway land, but live next door in the land. Nevertheless, the covenant was made, and they could not go back on it. They had to allow the Gibeonites to live in peace, as long as they served Israel.

Well, it seems at this time, after Doeg destroys the priests at Nob, and the city of Nob, that Saul decides to move the Tabernacle further north into the tribe of Benjamin to the city of Gibeon. We know he did this because the Tabernacle is there during Solomon's time. The problem for Saul is, Gibeonites live in Gibeon. So Saul, breaking an ancient vow and covenant, launches an attack on them, and tries to wipe them out. He doesn't completely succeed, but kills enough of them that years later a famine is upon Israel and David has to seek justice for the remaining Gibeonites by punishing Saul's descendants.

The atonement for Saul's sin of killing the Gibeonites resulted in seven of his own relatives being hung at Gibeah of Saul, on the very location of Saul's palace, that was no longer in use.

Now after all this disobedience and sin, we return to David.

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.*" (1 Sam. 22:20-23)

Abiathar, Ahimelech's son, escapes, and finds his way to David, and tells him the story. David, again like a true king, acknowledges his fault, and realises it was his deception and carelessness that brought this about. Instead of being a destroyer, David offers full protection to Abiathar.

Since Saul has killed the high priest, and the next high priest is with David (and stays with him until he is king), it means that Saul had a an empty, non-functioning Tabernacle that lacked a high priest. And with Gad the prophet, Abiathar the priest, and David the future king, we have all three offices travelling together as one.

But now zoom out for a moment and consider who these two kings are like. We have one king, still reigning, but ruling through fear, intimidation, guilt, slander, injustice, bribery. His servants don't love him, but they serve him to get personal gain. He ever lives to secure his own throne, and hates and hunts those who oppose him.

This sounds like the prince of this world, the prince of darkness, the god of this world, the ruler of this world. He was the anointed cherub, but disqualified himself through his rebellion and pride. He was the ultimate leader who hardened himself.

But then we have another king, who is clothed in humility. His love and trust in His Father are so

complete, that he draws people to Himself. People want to serve him, and will lose their lives for His sake. He does not rule through pride and guilt, but through love and a perfect example. He does not threaten His people, but shelters them, protects them, as David protected his family and protected Abiathar. He is the ultimate leader who humbles himself. He is the prophet, the priest, and the king, all in one. All who trust in Him shall not be ashamed.

If that is you, then trust that the wilderness experience, and the cave experience is not a mistake, but a necessary lesson to break and make you into one conformed to the image of the firstborn among many brethren.