Decisions in the Darkness

Troublesome times have a way of distorting our view; just ask David. A fugitive, he was on the run from Saul, his king and father-in-law. His trust in God had been unwavering as he’d side-stepped Saul’s hurled javelins, escaped from the palace before henchmen came to slay him in his sleep, and camped out in the wilderness with a group of 600 misfits. But the life of a vagabond had grown wearisome; David wanted more than sleeping in caves and scrounging for food. So, he went to Gath. *Gath.* The hometown of Goliath, the giant he’d killed. Land occupied by Israel’s foe. He’d sought refuge there once before, and realizing it wasn’t the smoothest move to seek help from an enemy king, he’d escaped by pretending to be a mad man. Again, the dangerous heathen kingdom beckoned, and he sought sanctuary in Gath. Perhaps because he brought his companions with him, perhaps because he was an enemy of Saul--and by default Israel, the Philistines extended refuge to David. But dwelling in enemy territory wasn’t best for the psalmist. Instead of writing songs, his focus became raiding, looting, and lying for survival. So, what set him on this path, and what can we learn from it?

*“And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand. And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that were with him unto Achish, the son of Maoch, king of Gath,”* (1 Samuel 27:1.)

**It started with a thought.** The negative thought took him away from God’s promise. God had said he would be king; therefore, David’s life was guaranteed. Under stress, however, he forgot the promise. We can do the same, tossing God’s Word out the window when contrary circumstances get in the way.

**The thought necessitated a plan.** When David’s emotions spoke to him, he felt the need to DO something to fix the problem. Solutions arising from hopelessness tend to lead the wrong direction. Real solutions come through faith.

**The pressure required quick action**. Emotional responses demand immediate actions that don’t think things through, and the subsequent swift decisions are usually bad ones. Leaning on Jesus often requires being still. Waiting for a season enables wisdom to speak.

**Self-governed choices led away from trust in God.** David sought refuge with the Philistines, haters of God’s people. This took him away from the people and kingdom God loved. Making league with things that oppose God closes the gap between us and God’s enemy and puts distance between us and God.

**Self-preserving choices resulted in negative consequences.** David lost his song, his vision of God’s purpose became cloudy, his methods for “ministry” were tainted, and the Philistine king expected David to protect him and to go to battle with him against Israel, God’s people. We get ourselves in mess and become confused and misguided when we set a course directed outside of faith.

**God interrupted the cycle and provided another opportunity to choose.** Philistine princes took issue with David’s going to war with them against Israel. They were fearful he’d switch sides and fight against them. So, David left the battlefield only to discover that the Amalakites had burned Ziklag taken their women and children captive. Upset, his own men threatened to stone him. Once again, David found himself needing to make a choice in a stressful situation. He could have again leaned in to negative thoughts and their subsequent actions. This time, however, David paused. He “encouraged himself in the Lord his God” and sought God’s direction. The crisis became a spiritual blessing, restoring David’s faith, and he watched God come through for him, granting him recovery of all that was taken, plus spoils of war, which he shared with people who’d helped him during his wanderings. Turning to God leads to victory, which inspires gratitude and generosity.

**The promise doesn’t have to be forfeited.** The same war that interrupted the cycle for David sent Saul to his death. David chose to believe before he knew that his season of affliction was soon to end, and while he was returning to full relationship with God and building rapport with others, God was setting the stage to fulfill His promise and elevate David as king.

When issues are working against the promises of God in our lives, it’s easy to our emotions shape us into shallow versions of who we know we can be in God. Thankfully, God presents us with situations in which we can choose to exercise trust in Him. When we do, we gain our victory voice, reclaim what we’ve lost, recover fellowship with like believers, and possess the promises God intended for us all along.

Tip/tidbit: “The darkest night is just before the dawn.” Make good decisions in the darkness.