

Ziklag: David's Revelation of God's Delight

This is maybe a strange title: "Ziklag." Ziklag was a city in David's generation. David was king of Israel three thousand years ago, which was 1000 BC. Most of you know the story of David and Goliath. We are going to look at an episode in David's life where he faced a tremendous crisis of circumstances but also the crisis of his own failure. And this is what he discovered and what he said to the Lord in the city of Ziklag, so though that city may be a new name for you, I think that for many years you will always appreciate the story of David in Ziklag. I first heard this when I was maybe nineteen or twenty years old. I am sixty-eight now, so that was fifty years ago. I heard the story of David when I was a nineteen or twenty-year-old, and I was so grabbed by his story because God called David the man after His own heart. And we will look at that in a few moments to see exactly what that means.

However, we are going to look at one episode in his life. Now, one thing about David's life were the sudden shifts that took place. David started off in a poor family in a little town called Bethlehem. That is why Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in David's town. And Bethlehem was just a little town of some hundreds of people, and he was the youngest son of eight boys in this family. He was number eight in a poor family in a small town. David was actually rejected by his seven older brothers and by his family, but I am not going to go into that right now.

And so, from a poor family, rejected, troubles, forgotten, then suddenly David went to a battle that he had not been invited to go to, and he killed Goliath. Overnight David became a national hero. He went from a poor family, rejected, to becoming a national hero at about eighteen years old. He married the King's daughter. The king of Israel was named Saul, and King Saul had said, "Whoever kills Goliath can marry my daughter!" So David was suddenly a national hero, and he was suddenly in the royal family, and he was suddenly living on the royal estate and all of the people in the nation knew who he was. And he went from obscurity and poverty to instant fame, and that fame lasted about five years, but it happened overnight.

Then about five years later—let's say David was between seventeen and twenty-three or something like that; we do not have the exact dates in the Bible—then suddenly he has seven years of trouble beyond anything you could imagine. Everything seemed to be going against him. That happened for about seven years, maybe ages twenty-three to thirty. Then at age thirty, it suddenly shifts again, and now he is in favor. That goes on for a few years and then suddenly he is in trouble! You look at his life, and of course his story is so dramatic. There is more about David in the Bible than any other person besides Jesus. We see these sudden shifts, and we say, "David, how did you respond to these sudden shifts in your life?" The Lord wants us to know David's life so when sudden shifts happen in our lives we know how to respond like a man or a woman after God's own heart. And equally important is not just how David responded to the surprising shift but also how David responded to the Lord in his failure and in his weakness. It is an amazing story.

Now, of course, we are not going to get very far tonight as I am just telling you really one episode of his life—The episode found at Ziklag found in 1 Samuel 30—all the notes are here. However, before we get to that episode of his incredible encounter he had with the Lord, which I believe we will all relate to in a very personal way, I want to give you some background and some context to understand from the biblical point of view of what is happening and how to respond.

I. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STUMBLING AND FAILING IN OUR FAITH

Roman numeral one: We are going to start with Jesus. Jesus made a very important distinction, and you really have to get this. Not only do you have to get it for your own life, but for many of you—fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen—the Lord is using you now or will be using you very soon in the lives of people younger than you

who are twelve, thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen. So, you want to learn these lessons for your own heart, but you also want to learn them so you can impart this to those who are just a little bit younger than you, who will be looking to you for direction in their youth group back home.

Let's look at this very, very significant differentiation between stumbling and failing in our faith. At a quick read, they look like the same thing, but they are very different because everybody stumbles but not everybody fails in their faith. Well, what is the difference? Let's look to what Jesus said.

- A. Jesus told Peter that he would stumble by denying Him, but that his faith would not fail (Mt. 26:31; Lk. 22:31-34). *Stumbling* refers to a short-term compromise. Our faith *failing* speaks of quitting, of giving up our wholehearted pursuit of God and seeking to walk in the fullness of His plan for us.

³¹**"All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night..."** (Mt. 26:31)

³¹**"Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.** ³²**But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren...** ³⁴**...Peter, the rooster shall not crow...before you will deny...that you know Me."** (Lk. 22:31-34)

Paragraph A: This takes place at the Last Supper when Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, the night before He would go to the cross the next day. Most of you know at the Last Supper He washed their feet, and He had this message to them. Then they went to the Garden of Gethsemane, and then He prayed and sweat drops of blood, and then He was killed the next day. So this is a very important conversation that He was having, and as a matter of fact, it is His final conversation with them.

He told them in Matthew 26:31, "Every one of you, all twelve of you, are going to stumble tonight!" meaning they were going to draw back in fear and run away and abandon Jesus while He was being surrounded by the Roman soldiers. They all stumbled and that was bad, but a couple of hours later, in Luke 22, He looked at Peter and said, "Peter, I have something both discouraging and yet something encouraging to tell you. Satan has asked God, the Father, for permission to sift you like wheat!" Ugh! "And God the Father said yes! He is going to let Satan come and sift you!" Now to sift like wheat meant: they would take wheat and put it into this container and the big husks would be separated. The stuff that was worthless and they could not use was thrown away, and the seeds of the grain would come through. And so it would separate that which is valuable from that which was not valuable at all; that is what the "sift wheat" means.

And He looked at Peter and said, "Satan is going to sift you." In other words, "he is going to reveal the weakness in your life tonight!" Then He said in verse 32, "I am going to pray for you"—and this is really good news because the Bible makes it clear that even now Jesus prays for the believers on the earth. The Bible says that "He never, ever stops making intercession for us while He is before the Father" and that is really good. A lot of good things happen in our life that are much beyond the maturity of our dedication because God's heart is so kind and because Jesus is praying for us. And we do not even know all of that but He is doing it anyway.

And so He told Peter this and then said, "And here is My prayer: your faith is not going to fail"

"What do you mean, my faith is not going to fail?" Peter could have said. "You just told us a couple hours ago that we are all going to stumble."

Jesus would have said, "Yes, you are going to stumble, but your faith will not fail." Hmmm, that seems like a confusing idea! Well, it is not, and I have the difference written out here. He said, "Peter," verse 32, "you are actually going to return to me with all of your heart. You are going to stumble, you are going to deny Me, but you are going to return, and when you return not only are you going to return to Me with all of your heart, but I am going to anoint you and use you to bless other people."

You can read the story in John 21 that, after Peter failed, he thought he was a hopeless failure and he was finished. He would never be in leadership again. And so, even before he failed, Jesus said, "You will return, and you will love Me with all of your heart, and I am going to anoint you again." And so, look at verse 34, He told Peter, "Before the rooster crows you are going to deny that you even know Me!"

Now, what is interesting is that this is the second time—Luke 22—that Jesus told this to Peter. He told him back in Matthew a couple hours earlier when they were in the Upper Room at the Last Supper. Now they are on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane, and He said, "Peter, I am going to tell you again: you are going to deny Me."

Peter doubled down, when you read the whole verse, and said, "No, I am not!"

Jesus said, "Actually, you are, but you are not going to stay in a place of compromise for a long time. It is going to be very short."

And so what it means to "stumble" is that it is a short-term compromise, and every believer knows what it means to have short-term compromises. What it means to "fail in your faith," it means that you give up and give in, and you make it a long-term giving up. When you stumble, the enemy wants you to confuse what is happening so that you will give up completely and just say, "It is worthless! I am a hopeless hypocrite!"

The devil will tell you, "Your love is not real! You are a fake! God is finished with you! Look, you stumbled!" But the truth is, you have not quit! And if you do not quit, you win! That is what the enemy does not want you to know: that stumbling is very different from quitting.

Again, I am going to mention this point. I do not have all of the verses here, but if you look at Matthew 26 and then compare it to Luke 21, two times Jesus tells Peter, "You are going to deny Me," and two times, several hours apart, he says, "No, I am not!"

I remember when I was a younger believer; I met the Lord when I was fifteen. I went to a sports camp of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and they told the testimony that you could know Jesus and have a relationship with Him and that Christianity was not a religion; it was a relationship. I had never heard such a thing. I didn't grow up with any kind of Christian background at all in my family life. So I was hearing these guys at this sports camp—it was a Christian one, Fellowship of Christian Athletes—say that you can have a relationship with the living God.

I thought, "Really?" I prayed that night, and it was not like really dramatic, but it took! I said, "This is amazing!" I came home from that camp and told all of my friends on the football team, "I have a relationship with Jesus!" They thought I was nuts because I didn't know anything. I did not know any Bible verses or anything.

I was really committed to the Lord, and I got involved with an on-fire youth group. I want to say this to you that whatever happens in your life if you are involved in a youth group that is on-fire—I do not care if there are ten people in it, three people—if they are people going hard for God, you have a far greater chance to succeed if you are with some people your age who are on-fire. Now, it is not that they are mature in their faith and not that they are not going to stumble. They are going to make mistakes and they are going to stumble but if they have this thing, "I am going to go for God!" they will make it.

Well anyway, I was graced to be in a youth group like that. I didn't even know that I was supposed to join a youth group. I just stumbled into it. And it was fantastic! They were on-fire for the Lord, and you know that was over fifty years ago in 1971! I mean, my goodness! I think Abraham Lincoln was president right about then, or something like that. I get it mixed up sometimes! ☺

Anyway, I did not realize how important it was to be in a youth group that is on-fire because I stumbled into one. And then years later—I have been pastoring for almost fifty years, not quite but about forty-seven—I found that is one of the most significant things about your spiritual life. Get into a group that is on-fire. They do not have to know it all, but they have to be going hard for God. When they stumble, they have to understand God is for them and that God actually delights in the relationship with them because the devil wants to tell you that when you stumble God is finished with you. He wants to tell you that your love is fake, that you are a hypocrite. The enemy wants to deceive you so that you never see the truth about God's heart that David saw.

And that was the great truth of David: he saw that God delighted in His relationship with him even when he was struggling. That is, God did not delight in his struggle, but He delighted in the relationship with him.

Well, I got into this on-fire youth group, and now I was sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, and I had moments of compromise and sin, and I was shocked! "Oh, my God!" I was like Peter, I was proud, meaning, "Lord! I cannot believe I did that! Can You?" I did not actually say that and it would be really stupid if I said that, but that is what I thought subconsciously, and it is almost like the Lord would have said, "Hey little guy, there is a whole lot more sin where that came from! But I love you far more than you understand! And if you know that, you will run to Me and not from Me when you see your own weakness!"

That is really the message of Ziklag: that when we see the heart of God like David saw it, the truth about God's delight in His people, not in our weakness, but He delights in the relationship and that He loves us and delights in us even in our weakness. Again, if you get that one truth and you are involved with an on-fire youth group that is trying to go hard for God, if you get those two things right and you are fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, I assure you that you are set up for spiritual success. I did not get that back then, but by the grace of God I stumbled into that because that is what the people around me were like.

- B. King David is a premier example of one who trusted God's love in times of failure and difficulty. The Lord called him *a man after God's heart*—he was committed to obeying the commands of God's heart, studying the emotions of God's heart, and contending for the purposes of God's heart.

¹⁴"The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart..." (1 Sam. 13:14)

Paragraph B: Again, David, in 1000 years BC, is the king of Israel. That is three thousand years ago, just so you can get the context. It was 1000 years before Christ. The Lord called David a man after God's own heart.

Now, the prophet Samuel: Samuel was the great prophet, I mean when you think of the great prophets, you think about Elijah, maybe you think of Isaiah. However, Samuel was right at the top of that list with those guys, and maybe you have not learned much about him, but the whole book of 1 Samuel is named after him. He was an incredibly accurate prophet. Anyway, he talked about David and how the Lord was searching—isn't that an interesting phrase?—he said, "The Lord has sought for the man." There is a passage, 2 Chronicles 16:9, that says, "The eyes of the Lord are searching all over the earth for a person, for a people who will have a yes in their spirit to God." That is 2 Chronicles 16:9. So "He is searching," and He finds David. David was only about twelve years old at that point; we do not know the exact age but he was twelve or maybe just a little bit younger when God told the famous prophet, "I have found a young man." He called him a man! Like, "Really?" Yes, because God saw the yes in David's heart to obey God long before David ever grew spiritually or matured.

I have good news for you! The Lord's eyes are searching across the earth, 2 Chronicles 16:9. That is a good verse to get a hold of. And He has found many of you in this room, and He is seeing a yes in your heart that is

not fully mature yet, but He has seen it, and it moves Him, and He has chosen you. And His eyes are set on you more earnestly than you would understand.

After a few years of walking with the Lord, when I came to grasp that—maybe I was eighteen, nineteen, twenty or twenty-one—I thought, “Wow! That is amazing! I never would have thought that God would ever looked at a guy like me and even see the yes in my heart!”

What does it mean to be a person after God's own heart? Well, this seems a little shameless, but I wrote a book called, “After God's Own Heart.” I do not want to tell you about my book, but you can have it for free if you want it. It is on my website. So if some of you are thinking that you want to know this David story a little bit better, it is a dynamic story and again, there is more about David than any man in the Bible besides Jesus in terms of his personal life. So I wrote a book called “After God's Own Heart” because I wanted to be a person like that.

So when I was nineteen, twenty and twenty-one, I set my heart: “This is what I want!” And that is where many of you are now or you would have never come to this camp. I realize that some of you came to this camp because you had to come to the camp, but you know what the Lord can still ambush you and surprise you. He can show you that He has more in store for you than you have ever imagined. That He has seen a yes in your heart long before you saw it, a yes towards Him, and it is really important.

I love to emphasize this because a lot of believers do not get this, and so, again, when they stumble they think they have failed and they just give up out of shame because they are just so discouraged, thinking, “It is worthless! I will never get a breakthrough!” That is a total lie! You will get a breakthrough!

Well anyway, what does it mean to be a person after God's own heart? I have noted three aspects here. Did I mention that I wrote a book on this? Oh yeah, I think I did! Anyway, again, it is free. I have like two thousand messages and transcripts posted on my website, and all my stuff there is free because I want fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen-year-olds to take some of this and make their own handouts for their own Bible studies and put their own name on it. Don't put my name on it. Put your name on it. I do not care if you put your mother's name on it. Just do something with it and use it. Some people have asked, “Do we have to say that we got it from you?” No, you do not! If you like it, then it is yours. So I have a lot of material there to help young people make their own Bible studies, so do with that what you want.

Now, David was committed to obey the commands of God's heart. To be a man or a woman after God's own heart, you have to be committed to obey the commands of God. Now, he did not obey them perfectly, but the yes was real, and that is what I am talking about: a sincere “Yes,” not a perfect yes, not even a mature yes, but a sincere one. For the vast majority in this room you are set on that.

However, it is more than that. Second, being a person after God's own heart is to become a student of the emotions of God's heart. Now, that is a strange phrase, “a student of the emotions of God.” David understood more of God's emotions than any man in the Old Testament. David had an incredible measure of insight, I mean more than anybody in the Old Testament. He saw God's pleasure towards him. He saw God's delight. He saw God's joy. He saw God's goodness and God's gladness.

Those are themes that we do not hear much about. Everybody knows that God loves us, but when you tease out the emotions related to that like by asking, “What do you mean that He loves us?”

“Well, you know He loves us! I mean, He kind of has to love us, because Jesus died for us so He has to love us now, and He has to forgive us. I mean we are in the family forever.”

Let's think this through. How does God actually feel when He looks at you? What are His emotions like? Well, I determined back when I was about twenty years old that I was going to be a student of God's emotions, meaning

I was going to read the book of Psalms because that is what David wrote, most of the Psalms, not all of them, but most of them. I was going to look at the prophets, "Show me the emotions!"

One of our main leaders over the years, and some of you know his name, Allen Hood. He is in Florida right now. He was with us for many, many years and helped us start IHOPKC. Allen ran our Bible school, IHOPU, for many years, and I heard him tell the story that, when he was twenty years old—he is in his fifties now and I always loved it when he would tell the ATC camps years ago, saying—"I was sitting in this very auditorium as a young man visiting here, and Mike Bickle taught me to become a student of God's emotions. I determined I was going to go through all of the Old Testament and everywhere God's emotions were revealed I would circle it or I would put it in a colored marker and I wrote them all down." And so, Allen did this when he was twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, and he said, "I did it for years; it changed my life!" I was so excited when he told that story because he was a twenty-year old who actually did it! And he said, "I was visiting and sitting in this very auditorium. and I went back home and then came back years later" and he helped start IHOPKC.

And so, I want to challenge you to become students of God's emotions. You are going to study what the Bible says about how God feels, not just what He does and how He acts, but what He feels. What He thinks and feels about you while you are still stumbling, or while you are still growing and maturing.

The third thing that I identify as a person after God's own heart is that David was a person who contended, which means he was fighting for, the purpose of God in his generation. Now, many of you care about the purpose of God in this generation, and I have some good news for you. Most of you know this but some of you might not: I am convinced the greatest revival in all of human history will happen in your lifetime. I am convinced that you are a people who are being raised up to participate in the greatest revival with the greatest power far beyond the book of Acts, and that is what I mean by contending, meaning you are going for it! You are not just obeying God individually, you are not just studying His heart, but you are with other believers and you are wanting to see the missions movement explode and the great end-time revival and a billion-soul harvest, in your neighborhood, a revival on your campus. You are contending for the breakthrough of your city or your region.

C. The Spirit is raising up leaders (shepherds) with a heart for God like David had (Jer. 3:15).

¹⁵***"I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge..." (Jer. 3:15)***

Look at this prophecy. This is a fantastic prophecy, and it is one of my favorite end-time prophecies. Now, if you read Jeremiah 3—I am not expecting you to be familiar with Jeremiah 3. I mean who is familiar with Jeremiah 3 when you are fifteen? I mean give me a break, you know? Maybe some of you are because you are a lot further than I was when I was fifteen. I had never heard of Jeremiah when I was fifteen—this prophecy in Jeremiah 3, if you read it carefully, you'll see it is talking about the generation the Lord returns.

Again, I believe there are people alive right now who will see the return of the Lord. I believe your generation will see the return of the Lord. And if that is true, you will see the greatest revival in history. Here is the part I want to point out: God promised that in that final generation of natural history, in that generation God would raise up shepherds after His own heart. This translation says, "according to His heart." Others say, "after His own heart," and everyone understands that Jeremiah is talking about David. Jeremiah was about four hundred years after David, and Jeremiah was saying that God is going to have, in the end-times, young men and women like David who will understand God's heart, they will understand God's purpose, and He is going to raise them up as shepherds that will feed other people on God's heart.

Here is the important part: you need to feed on this. That means study, let it touch your heart, and then you talk to God about it. That is what I mean by feeding on the knowledge of God. You are reading the Word and talking

with the Lord, and you are in different groups, Bible study discussions, in a youth group that is going hard, and you are learning God's heart. You are feeding on it personally. If you feed on it personally and you are fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, you will be able to feed others on it because you cannot feed others on it if you do not feed on it yourself.

So part of my desire for tonight and my goal is that you would determine: "I am going to be one of these shepherds after God's heart. I am going to! I am going to be a student of God's emotions. I am going to see the difference between stumbling and failing and giving up. I am going to be a voice to my generation and even the next ones under me."

You know those little five-year-olds back home? They are going to be fifteen years old in about one minute, and if you give it two minutes, they will be twenty-five, and, guess what? You will be the old people in leadership. I know that when you are fifteen, you think you will never be thirty, but you will be there in one minute, and then two minutes later you will be sixty-eight! I remember when I was fifteen. I never thought I would be forty. I mean I thought I technically would be, but it really goes fast. Okay, I am going to quit the "Grandpa talk," and get back to my handout here!

Okay, what I am saying is for you to set your heart, "I am going to feed on this. I am going to be one of these shepherds. I am fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, and I am going to feed the people younger than me and maybe some older than me. I am going to feed them on what feeds my heart. And tonight I am going to determine to be one of those shepherds!" If that happens, this has been a very, very successful night!

II. DAVID'S COMPROMISES BEFORE HIS GREAT DIFFICULTY IN ZIKLAG

A. David's first compromise was to lie to the high priest Ahimelech in the city of Nob (1 Sam. 21:1-9).

¹David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. Ahimelech...said to him, "Why are you alone...?"

²David said..."The king has ordered me on business..."³Give me five loaves of bread...

⁸I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons...because the king's business required haste."

⁹So the priest said, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine...there it is...take it." (1 Sam. 21:1-9)

Roman numeral two: I am quickly going to give you five episodes of compromise before David's discovery and encounter in Ziklag when he was thirty years old. David had compromises after he was thirty, but these are the five which are in the Bible from before he is thirty. So to pick up the story which I have already given you some of the detail: He was about seventeen when he killed Goliath, so he was the national hero. He was on the front-page of all the newspapers, everyone was talking about him, and he married into the royal family and lived on the royal estate. He was actually one of the main leaders of the military at twenty-one and twenty-two. Most of the leaders were forty and fifty and sixty, so he was one of the youngest.

He had so much favor but then suddenly, when he was about twenty-three—I am just giving you some context; those dates are not exact because the Bible does not give it but you can guess it pretty close—suddenly, the king, King Saul, looked at David, his son-in-law. He looked at David and said to himself, "Wait, David is so popular; and everybody likes David, so it is only a matter of time before David betrays me and gets rid of me!" So in one day King Saul determined to kill David, his own son-in-law. I mean this popular guy and he says, "That is it! I am going to kill him!"

Now, I am not going to break all of this down. And again, if you want to study this material, there is so much on it on the internet: the book I have on it and I have probably taught a 10-20 session series on the life of David like ten times in the last twenty-five years. These stories are so fun and they are dynamic! And I really want to grab your attention to decide to become someone who knows David's life. You do not have to this week or this

summer or this year, but say, "Note to self: I am going to get around to studying David's life if it is that exciting!"

Anyway, I am skipping a lot of details. David was about twenty-three and he heard the word that the King was afraid of him and was jealous. The most powerful man in the nation, the King, was going to kill him. David was twenty-three years old. He ran out of town because he was as scared as he could be and the king really was going to kill him.

1 Samuel 21, he went to the city of Nob. Now, that is a strange name for a city, but it was the city where some of the top spiritual leaders of the nation, the priests, lived, not all but many of them in the city of Nob. And so David ran to the city of Nob to Ahimelech, who was the High Priest, meaning he was the number one spiritual leader in the nation, the High Priest, the top guy. Ahimelech is quite a bit older than David, but David was really famous, and Ahimelech asked, as it were, "David, why are you running to this city alone? I mean you are famous in the nation. You should have a whole battalion of men. You are one of the leaders in the military. You have no weapons, you have no food, you have no bodyguards, and you have no battalion of soldiers with you. That is strange. What are you doing?"

David lied to him and said, "Oh, well," verse 2, "the king has me on high level business, top secret!" That was not what was happening, David was being accused of treason and as a criminal against the state because King Saul thought he was going to kill the King. Ahimelech, the High Priest, did not know the story because the story had not gotten out yet, so he was all excited to see David, verse 3. So he gave David food and weapons. He did not know that David was being accused of treason by the King. You do not give somebody accused of treason weapons and food, but this High Priest did not know it.

Look at verse 9—this is so bizarre—now this High Priest said, "Hey, I have a great weapon for you, the sword of Goliath!" Remember five years earlier—David is about twenty-three now—he was seventeen and he killed Goliath with the sling shot. They took Goliath's sword, this nine-foot, ten-foot man's big sword and put it in a trophy case in the city of Nob where the top leadership of the priesthood were so that when people would visit they would say, "Wow, Goliath's sword!" It was like in a museum. I am making up the museum, and the trophy case. I do not really know if they had a trophy case, but it is there!

David said, "Wow! I'll take that sword!" And so David ran out of town and fled with food and this weapon.

Well, Saul found out and went to that city. He said to Ahimelech, "Hey Ahimelech, I hear that David came."

Ahimelech said, "Oh yes, it was amazing. We gave him food; we gave him weapons."

"Yes, that is what I heard."

"Well, is that a problem? Your main guy?"

"Not anymore! He has been accused of treason, and you helped him!"

And Ahimelech said, as it were, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, slow down! He is your son-in-law, We are all on the same team!"

"No! No!" So Saul executes the High Priest and eight-five other priests who stood around and watched, though none of them had known that David was lying. Saul killed all of their wives and children; he slaughtered them all, hundreds of people.

And so this one priest, Abiathar, escaped and ran to David. He reported, "David, remember how you were in our town a couple of weeks ago?"

"Yes."

Abiathar said, "David, they killed eighty-five of the priests! Were you lying?"

David replied, "Oh my God! Yes, I was lying!"

Abithar might have said, "Do you have any idea of the crisis that you caused because of that lie?"

Okay, so that is trouble number one. It is a much bigger story, but most people do not tell the story of David at the city of Nob because it is not as exciting as David and Goliath. However, it is a really important story, and it is the lie!

- B. David's second compromise was to lie to King Achish by pretending to be insane. David fled to the land of the Philistines to join Achish, the king over the Philistine city of Gath.

¹⁰David...fled that day...and went to Achish the king of Gath. ¹¹The servants of Achish said, "Is this not David...?" ¹²David took these words to heart, and was very much afraid of Achish... ¹³So he changed his behavior before them, feigned madness...scratched on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva fall down... ¹⁴Achish said..., "Look, you see the man is insane." (1 Sam. 21:10-14)

Paragraph B: And so David took off running and he ran—verse 10, 1 Samuel 21—to Achish, king of Gath. Now, why is this strange and why is this important? Okay, you can picture Israel. The Philistines live on the west coast of Israel. You have to cross over the national border to the Philistines, to their arch enemies. And then there are other enemies on the east side or eastern border. And so David said, "I am going to run into the Philistine lands because I know that Saul is too afraid to go there. I remember that I fought the Philistines because Saul was too afraid, so I know he will never chase me over there, so I am going to go hide with the Philistines."

It seemed like it worked, except for a few problems. He went to the king of Gath. Gath was a city. There were five Philistine cities, and they each had a king. They were all like little nation states, though that is not important. What was significant about Gath? Goliath was the champion from Gath, and so David runs over to Gath with Goliath's sword in his hand! "David, wouldn't you be afraid? And you get crazy in your thinking! Go hide the sword. Maybe do not go to Gath. Maybe go to one of the other cities!"

And so David goes there, and you can see what happens. The servants of the king in verse 11 said, "King Achish, do you know who this kid is?"

"Well, no, not really."

"He is David!"

"Yes, yes, I have heard of David."

"Remember five years ago Goliath got killed, our main gold medal champion warrior?"

"Oh, yeah!"

"Remember how all of the ladies, and young maidens in the land were singing 'David has killed his ten thousand'?" It was a national, best-selling song! Everybody knew that song, if you read that story, even the Philistines, and they did not like it.

And Achish said, "Yeah."

"Do you know who the ten thousand were that he killed? Philistines!! Us!"

And so David heard that he has been discovered and recognized, and look what he did in verse 13. This is a bizarre story! He changed his behavior and pretended to be insane! He scratched the door, slimes it up! Verse 18, Achish said, "What in the world is this? Get rid of him. He is insane! I have no interest in him!"

However, what David was doing was lying. He was lying about who he was. He was lying about who he was loyal to. He was lying about how God sees him. He was denying it even in his own heart. I do not mean denying it in the final sense, but, "No, I am afraid! I do not care who I am before God! I have to get out of this!"

And so this is another moment of compromise because he is not only lying to the king and the court, but before the Lord, and the Lord could say, "David, what are you doing? None of this that you are doing is true!"

C. The prophet Gad gave the Lord's command to David to return home to Judah (1 Sam. 22:5).

³Then David went from there [Adullam] to Mizpah of Moab...⁵Now the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not stay in the stronghold; depart, and go to the land of Judah." (1 Sam. 22:3-5)

Paragraph C: Next, David left Gath after he found out that he had been discovered, and so now he leaves the west side where he crossed the national border to the Philistines because Saul would not chase him over to the Philistines. Remember, Saul was chasing David.

Oh, yes, I forgot to mention this—for these seven years during this difficult time in David's life, from ages twenty-three to about thirty, Saul was chasing David with three thousand dedicated soldiers to find David and to kill him. Can you fathom three thousand soldiers and their main assignment being to find you to kill you? And it went on, not for seven months, but for seven years! David was God's anointed, and he really got into despair because he was used to national favor for five years and now it has become horrible. He is a national criminal! He is a national criminal, running from cave to cave to cave. It is horrible, then after that seven years, he becomes the king, and it goes back and forth. What a life!

So now he went to Moab. He goes from the west side and crosses over the state line or the national border with the Philistines and he goes to the enemy's camp on the east side of Israel, where the Moabites were enemies like the Philistines, and so he was hiding there. This prophet, whose name was Gad, said, "David! Thus says the Lord, 'Get back to Israel and trust God and obey God!' He anointed you king; He can take care of you!"

David was thinking, "Well, I don't know, you know. I went to the west to hide with the Philistines because they are enemies of Israel. Now I am on the east side with the Moabites who are enemies."

And the prophet said, "Get back to Israel and stay there!" That is the idea here.

D. David's third compromise was to seek to avenge himself against Nabal (1 Sam. 25:13).

His fourth compromise was to disobey God's command from a prophet to stay in Judah (22:5).

¹David said in his heart, "Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape to the land of the Philistines; and Saul will despair of me, to seek me anymore in any part of Israel." (1 Sam. 27:1)

Paragraph D: I am skipping the third compromise, and we are going to look at the fourth compromise. Look at David in verse 1, 1 Samuel 27. Now it is two or three years that he has been in the land, going cave to cave, running around. He has gathered six hundred discontented men. It says in 1 Samuel 22—I do not want to go into that—it says that a bunch of these vagabond guys who were in debt, so they were in trouble as everyone was trying to get their money. They were totally depressed. They were discouraged, and they found David and said, "Hey David, we do not agree with Saul. Can we stay with you?"

And David was probably thinking, "Really? Why do you want to stay with me?"

“Well, we know that you are the anointed king and eventually you will probably win. And we are in debt and everybody wants our money and everybody is mad at us, so can we stick with you?”

Can you imagine your first church plant and all six hundred of them are in debt, depressed, and discouraged? Every one of them! That was his team! Incidentally, that team betrays him at Ziklag, and so that is not a really good group to have as your initial team. You want a few stable folks in there, you know, as that would be helpful, but that is for another day. And so two or three years went by, and David was in the land, trying to obey that prophetic word from Gad, “Stay in the land!” which is what that word meant.

Look at chapter 27. David said in his heart, “I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul! There is nothing better for me than to escape back to the west, over to the Philistines, to Gath again. Saul will be in despair again of seeking to kill me because I will leave Israel and he is too afraid to go to the Philistine area.” So it looks like his plan worked, and I mean David was pretty excited. And so he went back over to Gath, it has been two or three years, and Achish said, “Hey David, long time no see. Where have you been?”

- E. David went back to Achish, the Philistine king. David's plan in 27:1 appeared to work. Achish gave David the city of Ziklag. David's team of 600 men and their families moved there.

²David...went over with the six hundred men...³So David dwelt with Achish at Gath...⁴And it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath; so he sought him no more...⁶So Achish gave him Ziklag...⁷...the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was one full year and four months. (1 Sam. 27:5-7)

Paragraph E: David said, as it were, “I want to be on your team!”

Achish was looking at him and said something like, “Well, you have been MIA. You were missing in action over the past two or three years, and I didn't know where you went.”

“No, but I want to be loyal to you, and I want to be against Saul.” It was a total lie. And Achish—I will not take time on this, but—he really loved David and really fell for it, and they became very good friends. This king and this young soldier, who was about twenty-eight years old at this time. And what David does, verse 4, he fled to Gath, and Saul did not seek him anymore, so it seems to have worked.

Verse 6, then King Achish gave an entire city to David. He said, in effect, “Since you have six hundred people and they all have wives and children, so there are a couple thousand people. Why don't I just give you that city if you will be loyal to me?”

And David said, as it were, “Oh Achish, I am your guy! I am loyal to you.”

David was totally lying! And his six hundred guys probably asked David, “Are you telling him that we joined his team?”

“Well, yes for now.”

“Really? We are against the God of Israel and we are against Israel?”

“Well, not really but sort of.”

“What!” I cannot imagine what these six hundred men thought or how he gave the story to them. The prophet, Gad, stayed with him, and it was the city of Gath, but the prophet Gad, so do not confuse the two.

This prophet is with them and look what it says in verse 7, that for one year and four months, sixteen months David was in Ziklag lying about why he was there and what he was doing. For sixteen months! I do not mean for a month and a half! Sixteen months! Every day he had to say, “Lord, you know that I know that You know!”

Oh, Lord! This is not good! This is not good! I am going settle this pretty soon! You know?" and it was not good that he was in total compromise over there. I mean compromise by disobeying because the prophet said to stay in the land of Israel.

But David said, "No," as it were.

Perhaps Gad had even said, "And do not go and lie to the king and do not go join his side against Israel!" This prophet, undoubtedly—I mean it does not give a lot on this but—he was probably talking to David regularly, "David, you have got to get right with God! This is not good!"

- F. David's fifth compromise in this season was *to lie to King Achish* (1 Sam. 27:8-12). Achish trusted David and asked him to join him in fighting against Israel (1 Sam. 28:1-2). The Philistine leaders did not trust David, so they refused to allow him to participate (1 Sam. 29:1-11).

⁸David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites...¹⁰Then Achish would say, "Where have you made a raid today?" And David would say, "Against the southern area of Judah..."¹¹David would save neither man nor woman alive, to bring news to Gath, saying, "Lest they should inform on us..." And thus was his behavior all the time he dwelt in the country of the Philistines.¹²So Achish believed David, saying, "He has made his people Israel utterly abhor him; therefore he will be my servant forever." (1 Sam. 27:8-12)

Paragraph F: David and his six hundred men were raiding these three different nations. Now, remember a nation in those days was like a city. A couple thousand people would be a nation-state so do not think of a nation like five million people. Think of a nation like two to six or seven thousand people or something like that.

And so, David was raiding these enemies of Israel that lived in the land of Israel. He was leaving Ziklag, going back to Israel, killing the guys, taking all of their livestock, gold, and property, and bringing it back to enrich Ziklag.

And so Achish came down to visit and said, as it were, "Hey David, it is me! How are you doing, friend? Wait! The last time I was here you had a thousand cattle, livestock. You have three thousand right now (made up numbers). Where did you get all of these cows?"

"Oh, I went and fought your enemies because that is how committed I am." He was lying! He was fighting Israel's enemies and telling King Achish, "I am on your team, trying to beat these guys up and get rid of them to help you!" He was lying the whole time.

Look at verse 11. David killed everyone when he went to battle with one of these little nation-states so nobody could carry the truth back to King Achish. And so David could live in this lie, and he did for sixteen months.

And it says, "This was his behavior the whole time that he was in Ziklag, or the land of the Philistines, for sixteen months." Verse 12 "And Achish believed him, saying..." Achish told the rest of his government, "David has made Israel totally hate him. He is killing Israelites! David is mine forever! This is fantastic! I have this great warrior hero on my team forever!" It is a lie! None of it is true!

III. DAVID'S GREAT DIFFICULTY IN ZIKLAG (1 SAM. 30)

- A. David's experiences in Ziklag give us insight into what he understood about God's heart. He spent sixteen months at Ziklag (1 Sam. 27-31). During this season, David *stumbled in compromise* and was tested by the *loss of his family, the burning of his city and the betrayal of his friends*, yet he did not draw back from God. Rather, he set his heart to pursue the Lord and to trust His mercy and love.

¹David and his men came to Ziklag...the Amalekites had...attacked Ziklag...³David and his men came to the city, and there it was, burned with fire; and their wives, their sons, and their daughters had been taken captive. ⁴David and the people who were with him lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep...⁶David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved... (1 Sam. 30:1-6)

Paragraph A: Now, David was up north talking with the king, which was only ten or fifteen miles from Ziklag, or something like that. It was not very far. And so, he and his six hundred men come back home, and they come over the hill and are saying, "Wait a minute! That looks like our city, Ziklag." There were all of these big pillars of smoke, and they asked, "Why is there so much fire?" They went down there, and you can read it on your own.

It was one of these nation-states they had been attacking. A few of them had escaped and got help and then went and burned Ziklag while David was gone. They burned the city to the ground, but worse they took all of the six hundred men's wives and children, several thousand, as slaves. And when they took prisoners of war as slaves in the ancient world, they did horrible things to those women and to those children, horrible.

Verse 3, then these six hundred men came, and their city was burned with fire, their wives and children now captives and prisoners of war. Verse 4, David and these six hundred soldiers cried so hard they had no more strength.

Verse 6, here it is: David was really depressed, and these six hundred men said, "You know we have been with you for a couple of years, but we are going to stone you. Your lies got us into this! We trusted you! Yes, we were discouraged, in debt, and depressed, and mad, and bitter. We had some unsettled issues, but we trusted you, and you got our families taken. So we are going to kill you!" These guys were really upset.

- B. David strengthened himself in God and inquired of, or asked, the Lord what to do (1 Sam. 30:6-8). He did not let his stumbling in sin result in the failing of his faith by giving up his vision to fully seek the Lord. David recovered all (1 Sam. 30:9-31). At this time, Saul died in a battle (1 Sam. 31).

⁶David was greatly distressed...But David strengthened himself in the Lord...⁸David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I pursue this troop?"...He answered him, "Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them..."¹⁸David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away... (1 Sam. 30:6-18)

Paragraph B: And so David, verse 6, was greatly distressed! I mean, is that like the worst day of your life? The worst day! Your city is burning, your families have been taken, and your team is going to kill you! Not Saul—his team is going to kill him!

And it is what you do in a crisis moment that reveals who you really are before the Lord. Crisis moments reveal us. With David, it is amazing what happens! David puts his foot down and says, as it were, "It is time for me to get right with God!"

"And David strengthened himself in God." That is the key phrase. David got quiet and said "God, here is what I know"—he is right at thirty years old—"Back when I was about seventeen, I killed the lion and the bear"—some of you know that story—"That was You! When I was eighteen, I killed Goliath. That was You! I became a national hero. That was You! You gave me promises about the future! You revealed Your heart to me. I know what You are like!"

And David recalled the past times God helped him and his future promises. David said, in effect, "I know that for seven years none of those promises have been happening, but I know that they are going to happen! What am I doing? I am going to get right with You! And I know this about You, God. I know what Your heart is like.

My men do not really know, but I know that You will take care of me. You love me even now.” And he strengthened himself in the Lord.

Beloved, we get ourselves into compromise and, sooner or later, Ziklag gets burned. God gives us time. He gave David a lot of time. Some of you, your Ziklag has been burned in a small way over the last year or two. Others of you, it might happen in the future. I am not prophesying that to anybody, but God let Ziklag to burn to wake David up. Because, do you know what happens when the trouble comes? You change your conversation with God. When trouble comes, you talk with God and ask different questions. When trouble comes, you make different prayers. When trouble comes, you talk with your team differently. Conversation changes with God, yourself, and others when trouble comes, and when the conversation changes God changes our thinking. And that is what happened. David was really depressed, and he said, “Wait! I know You, God, I know Your heart! I know what You are like!”

And so it ends up—I am not going to go into it but—in chapter 30, a total victory! It is a great story. He goes and chases that army that took his family, defeated all of them, got all their gold, all their livestock, children, and family out, and not one person died, not one of their families died. His men were so excited! It was the greatest turnaround, and do you know what else happened? The same day or two days later, up north, that angry, jealous King Saul was in a battle, and he got killed. And so in one day, maybe it was two days, the king that had been chasing him for seven years suddenly was killed! And the Amalekites, the nation-state that took his family, were conquered, he recovered his family, and that is the day that Israel said, “You are the King!” So in one day Saul was gone, the Amalekites were gone, he was king, and his men love him! And it is like, whoa! What happened? It all changed in one day! I mean things can change dramatically in one day, and it did that about five times to David over his seventy years.

- C. The title of Psalm 18 tells us that David wrote it *on the day God delivered him from Saul*.

¹I will love You, O LORD, my strength...¹⁹He also brought me out into a broad place; He delivered me because He delighted in me...³⁵...Your gentleness has made me great. (Ps. 18:1, 19, 35)

⁴But there is [mercy] forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. (Ps. 130:4)

Paragraph C: Here is the great takeaway, Paragraphs C and D. In Psalm 18, if you open your Bibles and read it, here is what it will tell you: “This is what David wrote on the day that God delivered him from Saul.”

King Saul was killed, the guy who chased him for seven years with three thousand men. It was is exactly the same time that he was delivered from Ziklag. The Ziklag miracle turned around. It happened the same day or two. Everything is great!

You know the national news comes, and they want to interview him, saying, “Wow! The King who has been chasing you for seven years was killed! You have been out of the country for the last sixteen months. We don’t know where you were.” The national news. “You are now going to be King! Everybody likes you! What do you have to say?”

They put the microphone in David’s face. It is his first day! “Give me a minute! I do not even know what just happened!” David says what seems incredible. He says, “I love You, O Lord.”

The men around him could have said “You love Him? You didn’t look like you were loving God too much the last sixteen months,” and David could have said, “I did love Him, and He knew I did.”

“Well, you did not look like it!”

“But, I did.”

Here is the point, beloved: when your love is weak, it is still real, though the enemy tells you that it is not real and he tells you to run from God. And David did that for a while, but then he said, “No, no! I know I love You! And God, you know I love You!” The Bible proves God knew David did, and that is what is so beautiful.

Verse 19, and so then the national reporter said—There really wasn't one; I am making this up, but if the president of the nation died and you are the new president and you have had a national miracle, the kind that gets reported and where everybody talks about you right? And so maybe there really was a news reporter—They asked, “Hey, what is the deal for what's happened over the last seventy-two hours? How do you account for it?”

“Well, God has brought me into a broad place,” a broad place means a big place of blessing.

They said, “Yes, we think so! A pretty broad place: you are the King, all your troubles are over, your six hundred men like you, and the nation is going to receive you! Yes, I would call that a broad place.” That means a big place of blessing. “Why did this happen?”

Now, this is so fantastic! David said, as it were, “Do you know why God delivered me? He likes me!”

His six hundred men could have said, “There you go again! You did this “I love God” and we didn't see it! And you are telling us after fourteen months of compromise and several years of lying God delivered you because He likes you?”

David said, “Yes, that is actually the truth!”

“Are you serious?”

And the reports go around, “David thinks God likes him and that is why the miracles happened. He said that that was why the miracles happened.”

Look at verse 35—oh fantastic—then he turns it into prayer and says, “Lord, Your gentleness made me great! Meaning, “You were gentle to me when I was compromising. You gave me time.” God does not like our compromise and there is a time limit, but God's heart does not change towards us. He let Ziklag get burned to wake David up, not because He has written David off, but to wake David up. There is a big difference. He said, “In Your gentleness; You could have killed me, God. You could have wiped me out. You could have cancelled me out, but, because You did not do that, my life will be great now.”

Now when it says, “Your gentleness has made me great,” David does not mean “because You did not kill me or just kick me out, I am now going to be famous.” He means, “My spirit is going to be revived and I am going to live before You,” because for billions of years when we stand before the Lord after this life God is not impressed by how many people you touched or how much money you made or how much money you gave away. He is impressed by the commitment of your heart to love Him. That is what He calls great! And David said, “Lord, because You were kind to me, You could have wiped me out but because You did not....”

A verse that should be here on the notes is Psalm 130:4. You really want this one, “You forgave me; therefore I had the courage and the strength to fear You. If You would have wiped me out, I never would have recovered and feared You, but because You forgave me, I am going to have decades of a testimony that I feared the Lord.”

However, if the Lord were to look at us and wipe us out in our early sin, then we would not have those decades ahead of fearing the Lord. And David said, as it were, “I get it!” All of David's life, he said, “You were gentle with me and that is why I recovered.”

D. The title of Psalm 56 informs us that David wrote this psalm while with Achish in the Ziklag years.

⁸You number my wanderings; put my tears into Your bottle; are they not in Your book? ⁹When I

cry out to You, then my enemies will turn back; this I know, because God is for me. (Ps. 56:8-9)

Paragraph D: Now, here is the title of Psalm 56. This is fantastic. “David wrote this when he was in Ziklag with Achish.” The title of the Psalm says: “When he was with Achish”—that is Ziklag! Put Ziklag, sixteen months there; that is what it means.

Here is what David said as he was writing this in Ziklag. What was David thinking in these sixteen months of compromise? Not to mention the two or three years before that of sinning and lying and all of these things. David said, “Lord, You number my wanderings.” Instead of the word “wanderings,” put the word “compromises.” Wanderings means away from the path. “You saw them. I did not fool You. You got them all! You numbered them all. I did not fake You out at all! You put my tears in Your bottle and wrote them in Your book.” David was in Ziklag, crying, “God, I have to get free! Give me a little more chance. I love You. I want to be Yours. I want to be Yours!”

God did not mock David's tears. He captured them and put them in His bottle and stored them and wrote them in His book, saying as it were, “David, your tears move My heart. I will always remember Your tears.”

Another person, even a spiritual leader, might say, “God wrote him off! God was tired of him!”

David might have said, “No, no, no, no, He was not. He valued the tears of my pain and of my own compromise.” Verse 9, “And I began to cry out to God,” and eventually it took a while, it took a while, it took a while but, “my enemies I defeated them.” Why? “Because this I know”—he is in Ziklag—“You are for me. I know You are for me!” His six hundred men did not necessarily believe it, but he said, “I know I am Yours and I know that You are for me!”

Beloved, God has put our tears in His bottle, our struggle, our tears of our struggle with our compromise. He writes it in His book. They are precious to Him, and He delivers us because He likes us. And His gentleness gives us time to recover so we will go on to fear the Lord.

Amen, let's stand before the Lord. The enemy wants to cancel you out with shame and discouragement. I am going to pray for everyone all over the room. I don't even know who I am going to call forward, but we all need this.

Father, here we are before You. Father, I set my heart to believe You. I want to be a student of Your emotions. I want to know what David knew!

All over this room the Lord says, “I want you to see what I see when I look at you. I delight in My relationship with you. I do not delight in your compromise. I delight in who we are together.”

Lord, I pray for the power of shame to be broken.

The enemy is telling you that you are a hopeless hypocrite. You are not a hopeless hypocrite. Your love is real, even though it is weak. David said on the day of his compromise was over, “I've loved You, God!”

The Lord said, “Yes, I saw that, David. I saw your heart.”

Lord, I ask for the revelation of Your heart. I ask for the revelation of Your gentleness. I ask for the revelation that You put our tears in Your bottle. Our tears are precious to You, God!