**BE STILL…*peace is possible*/ Week Two Notes/God is Always Working/ 1 Samuel 18-31**

Moving from the victory of killing Goliath to being the next king of Israel should have been a seamless transition. At least in our minds. But Chapters 18-31 are the tumultuous “in between years” for David. Years of fleeing, fighting, loneliness, and often despair. Years of being an exile and an outlaw. Yet God ordained these years to mold young David into a great king, a forerunner and picture of Christ. You and I can study his life in these difficult in between years (In between the victory over Goliath and the becoming king) and realize that God is at work. God is always at work even in our lives…even if we feel we are living in the in-between.

An overview of the difficult years:

**1 Samuel 18-19:** David and Jonathan become friends. Saul tries to kill David 8 times in these two chapters. David marries Saul younger daughter Michal who eventually helps him escape her father’s murderous plan. David flees from Saul and runs to Ramah where Samuel lives. They confer with the prophets in the area. When Saul hears where David is, he sends three groups of assassins before going himself to kill David. All four attempts result in Saul and his assassins praising the Lord. (*God is always working!)*

**1 Samuel 20**. David returns to Gibeah to confer with Jonathan. They pledge a covenant with each other. From this point forward, David is on the run from Saul. He is considered an outlaw and is exiled from Israel’s cities. (*But God is always working*)

**1 Samuel 21**. David flees to Nob, a city of priests and their families. The priest Ahimelech gives David food and Goliath’s sword. In a hasty, perhaps foolish decision, David then flees to Gath which is Goliath’s hometown and enemy territory ruled by Philistine king, King Achish. David realizes he is in deep trouble. Psalm 34 and 56 were written during this dangerous brief stay in Gath. David must pretend to be insane for King Achish to finally send him away. (*But God is always working.)*

**1 Samuel 22.** David flees to the cave of Adulliam. Verse one and two are noteworthy. His entire family from Bethlehem joins David. His brothers desert Saul’s army to join their little brother David. David’s mother and father come as well. Additionally, 400 fighting men and possibly their family join David as well. David moves his parents to Moab, the ancestorial home of his great grandmother Ruth, securing their safety during turbulent times. Meanwhile, Saul sends his wicked chief shepherd, Doeg, to murder the priests in Nob for helping David. To me, it is a low point for Saul murdering God’s priests and their families. One priest escapes the rampage and joins David. *(But God is always working)*

**1 Samuel 23**. David recues the Israelite city of Keilah from the Philistines. After the victory, Saul threatens to kill all the people of Keilah if they don’t turn David over to Saul. The one surviving priest of Nob warns David to flee because indeed the people will indeed give him over to Saul. David flees (verse 14) to the wilderness of Ziph, constantly moving from place to place. Saul relentless pursues David every single day. (*But God is always working)*

**1 Samuel 24.** David flees to Engedi and is hiding in the caves. Saul hears of David’s location and pursues David. While relieving himself in a cave, Saul removes his outer cloak. Unknowingly, David and his men are in the back of the same cave. David sees the opportunity to kill Saul. Instead, he cuts off the edge of Saul’s out cloak. Verse 5 reveals David ‘s tender heart. His conscience bothered hm for stretching out his hand against God’s anointed king Saul. (*God is always working)*

**1 Samuel 25**. Samuel dies. David moves his men again to the wilderness of Paran. He passes through the area of Carmel/Maon. And asks Nabal for supplies. David’s men have helped Nabal’s shepherds in the past. Nabal refuses to help them, and David loses his temper. He tells his men to draw their swords to take vengeance on wicked Nabal. Nabal’s wife, Abigail intervenes. She is wise and discerning and persuades David to abandon his rash plan for vengeance. David hears her and thanks her for her discernment. God takes Nabal’s life. David marries Abigail. *(God is always working)*

**1 Samuel 26.** David has another opportunity to kill Saul but refuses. Saul has a lucid moment and is grieved over his own wicked pursuit of David. David begs Saul to stop chasing him because David is innocent of any wrongdoing. Saul seems to have a lucid moment and blesses David and returns to his own home. *(God is always working)*

**1 Samuel 27.** David does not trust Saul and decides to flee again to Gath. It seems Philistine territory is the only place Saul will not pursue David. When David goes to Gath for the second time, but this time he is not alone. He has two wives and 600 fighting men and their families. David earns the king’s respect and asks for a city for his fighting men and their families to live. King Achish gives David the Philistine city of Ziklag. David and his group settle there. The city remains an Israelite city and a base of military operation for every King of Judah that comes after David. While living in Ziklag, David tricks King Achish into thinking David is making daily raids on Israelite villages. Actually, he is raiding Philistine villages, killing everyone and taking the spoils. David is working on behalf of Saul and Israel even while living for 16 months with the enemy. *(God is always working)*

**1 Samuel 28**. A mysterious chapter. Saul in his paranoia and growing insanity, asks a medium to conjure up the spirit of Samuel. It seems God allows it, and the medium is successful. The spirit of Samuel tells Saul nothing new. The spirit of the Lord has departed from Saul and the kingdom has been given to David. *(God is always working)*

**1 Samuel 29**. The beginning of the end of Saul’s reign. While David and his men are still living in Philistine territory, Achish and the Philistine army prepare to do battle with Saul and the Israelite army. Achish tells David and his men to bring up the rear of the Philistine army. However, the Philistine soldiers do not trust David and convince Achish to send David back to Ziklag while they fight Israel. Achish listens to his army. (*God is always working)*

**1 Samuel 30.** Returning to Ziklag, David discovers that the Amalekites (another enemy of Israel that Saul was supposed to deal with) have raided Ziklag, burned the city, and kidnaped the women and children. David and his men hunt down the Amalekites, kill them, and rescue every kidnapped person. He also recovers all that was stolen and additionally David takes the spoils of war, dividing it among his men and other Israelite cities. *(God is always working)*

**1 Samuel 31.** This chapter is the end of Saul. It is a particularly sad chapter to me. The Philistines fight the army of Saul and win. Jonathan and his brothers are killed in battle. Saul is greatly wounded. He begs his armor bearer to finish the job, but the armor bearer refuses. Saul falls on his own sword killing himself. The Israelites abandon their cities and villages in light of the defeat. The Philistines inhabit the abandoned cites. After the battle, the Philistines cut off the heads of Jonathan, his brothers, and Saul. They send the severed heads from city to city, celebrating a great victory over Israel. The Philistines eventually place Saul’s head and his weapons in the temple of their idol. The Philistines fasten Saul’s headless body to the wall of Bethshan. *(But God is always working)*

What a story! What a journey for young David. These bloody chapters cover approximately 13 years of David’s young life (perhaps his entire 20’s). Yet in the difficulty, David writes 22 psalms which are attributed to these years of fleeing. In these psalms, David is honestly speaking of loneliness, desperation, discouragement. He admittedly feels overwhelmed, forsaken, afflicted and trouble. Yet in each psalm there is a conscious turning to God. He sees God at work. He trusts God’s mercy and goodness even in the darkest of days (Psalm 13 is a good example). In Psalm 59:6, David declares, “God is for me!”. David has been tried by fire and God is bringing forth gold. (1 Peter 1:6-7)

**So, what is the evidence that God is always working…in David’s life and in ours as well?**

**II. Evidence**

**His Presence.** God is omnipresent. He is everywhere. But He is also very personal. For David, He was with David. Read 1 Samuel 18:12,14,15. David prospered (acted wisely) because the Lord was with David. Looking at Genesis 39 and the story of Joseph. Five times in that one chapter we read the phrase, “***the Lord was with Joseph.***” The phrase means God is actively at work in the circumstances. It is the same phrase used in 1 Samuel. God is not just a silent presence. Rather He is actively at work in the circumstances of David’s life. As a result, David is confident that the Lord will never leave him. Read Psalm 139:7-12. God was even working in David’s life when the young warrior made impulsive decisions or decisions out of emotion or fear. (Fleeing to Gath twice as well as becoming angry with Nabal to the point of taking out his own vengeance). God never abandoned David even when David seems temporarily out of step with God.

 We too can be confident in the Lord’s presence. But we have even more than David had. We have the Lord in us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. As He did for David, the Holy Spirit is actively at work in the circumstances of our lives. Read John 14:16-18, 26 -27. The work and presence of the Holy Spirit in us brings peace! Also read Matthew 28:20, Joshua 1:9.

**His Provision**. Certainly, God provided many things for David in these difficult years. But to me, the most notable provision is the people God provided along the way. God provided a faithful friend in Jonathan. He provided a spiritual leader in Samuel. He restored David’s brothers, mother, and father to him. He gave David an army of loyal fighting men and their families. God provided the prophet Gad to be an honorable spokesperson of God to David. And God provide a wise woman named Abigail at just the right moment.

 Who are the faithful people God has provided in your life.? People whom the Lord has worked through to minister and help you? And to whom have you been given: to be a friend or encourager or helper? God uses people, especially our fellow believers, to remind us that is He is always working in the circumstances of our lives. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

**His Preparation.** God is present and God is providing. But God is also preparing David to be king. He is using trials and difficulties to produce in David what ease and comfort could never produce. *God is cultivating faithfulness in David*. God would always be faithful to David, but David had to learn faithfulness to God. Duress would be the teacher. Psalm 137:3, David writes, “remain in the land and cultivate faithfulness.” At the time, he is writing to the Israelites. He is saying when hard times come (like drought or famine) stay in the land God has designed for you (the land of Promise). Don’t go running off to other nations looking for help. And in staying, God will cultivate faithfulness. You and I as Christians have not inherited a literal land. Instead, we have been given *a life* in Christ. When difficult times come, stand firm in Christ. Remain in the difficult circumstances until God changes the circumstances or God changes you in the circumstances. As you remain, letting Him work, He cultivates faithfulness in you. “Cultivate” is an agricultural word. Cultivation takes time and effort. It is an intentional process.

 God was also teaching David to seek God first and trust Him always. David developed a heart that always humbly turned to God whether it is for guidance, strength, or forgiveness. God became David’s fortress and his refuge. As David constantly sought the Lord, God strengthened David. He built endurance into David’s life. Endurance is the ability to remain in the difficult circumstance (James 2:2-4). As David remained faithful to God, The Lord strengthened David to fight battles, lead armies, build cities and shepherd the people. Endurance matures us. Read Romans 5:3-5, James 1:2-4, and 1 Peter 1:6-7.

**III. Psalms to Ponder**

**Read and compare Psalm 57 and 142**. Both are written in a cave while David is fleeing from Saul. While they are similar in language, they appear to be written at different times and perhaps in different locations.

Psalm 57 ends on a very high note of praise for the Lord (Verses 5 and following). But Psalm 142 seems to have been written when David is at an extremely low point. While the psalmist indeed seeks the Lord and knows the Lord is the answer to his difficult situation, the high note of praise is not as pervasive in this psalm. Psalm 142:7b, is about God keeping His promise for David to be king…someday. When writing this psalm, perhaps to David that day seems far, far away.

Certainly, God is our refuge, our safe place. Certainly, our hearts can trust Him even in a difficult season. Although at times we are discouraged and downcast, feeling like life is overwhelming us, be assured...God is always present. God is always providing. God is always preparing us, conforming us to be like Christ.

***Be still. Peace is possible because God is always working.***

*Psalms written during the years between the defeat of Goliath and David becoming king. (This list is a general consensus among people much smarter than me.)*

*Psalm 7, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 22, 25, 31, 34, 35, 52, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 63, 64, 142, 143.*