

Two Sides of Faith
2 Sam. 5:22-25

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In our text this morning, David has become king over all twelve tribes of Israel. He has conquered Jerusalem and made it his new capital, and He had dealt a defeat to the Philistines at Rephaim. But now they have rallied their troops and come against him again. Follow with me as we read from

2 Sam 5:22-25.

“Then the Philistines went up once again and deployed themselves in the Valley of Rephaim. 23 Therefore David inquired of the LORD, and He said, ‘You shall not go up; circle around behind them, and come upon them in front of the mulberry trees. 24 And it shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall advance quickly. For then the LORD will go out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines.’ 25 And David did so, as the LORD commanded him; and he drove back the Philistines from Geba as far as Gezer.”¹

This passage begins with a problem. An enemy has come to destroy David. The problem is real and the problem has to be dealt with. My focus this morning is on how David dealt with his problem. And I want to suggest that it may help you understand how to deal with your problem.

Anybody here have a problem that needs a solution? I doubt any of us are currently dealing with Philistines. But we may be dealing with an illness. We may need to resolve some relationship issues? There may be problems on the job. There may be problems in the home. Sometimes there are financial problems that are dogging us. I don’t know what problems you may be facing in life right now; but there may be some wisdom in David’s behavior here that would be instructive and helpful for you.

How did David deal with his problem? I want you to notice three things that David does right in this passage.

- (1) He inquired
- (2) He waited
- (3) He acted

I. David INQUIRED of the Lord.

He did that before he did anything else! Sometimes we impulsively act on a situation and then when our action blows up in our face, we inquire of the Lord. That’s better than never inquiring; but David gets it right when he does that first. If you skipped that step, you might want to go to that before you do anything else.

David did not assume that he knew what to do. The interesting thing about this particular situation is that David just fought the same enemy at the same place. What he did last time worked. So it would be very tempting to assume it would work this time. Had there been pride in David’s heart as a result of his last victory, he might have made that assumption. But, in his heart, David knew where his last victory came from. Therefore He inquired of the Lord rather than presumptuously assuming he already knew the answer.

This inclination to inquire of the Lord is a key to David’s success. Even before he fought the previous battle, 2 Sam. 2:19 says he “...*inquired of the Lord.*” On another occasion, before David became king, the Amalekites had attacked his camp while he and his men were gone on a raid. They kidnapped all their wives. David’s men were so distressed over the matter they were even talking about stoning David. So here is David with his wives kidnapped, his men freaking out. You would think it would be a “no brainer:” go get the wives! But 1 Sam 30:8 says, “... *David inquired of the LORD, saying, ‘Shall I*

¹ All Scripture quotes are in New King James Version unless indicated otherwise.

pursue this troop? Shall I overtake them?" God gave David the go ahead and they rescued their wives. David had learned the value of asking the Lord's guidance. You get some insight on his thinking in Ps 27:3-5 *"Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear; Though war may rise against me, In this I will be confident. 4 One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple. 5 For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock."*

Are you asking God what to do about your problem or are you just assuming you know what to do? James 1:5 from TLB: *"If you want to know what God wants you to do, ask him, and he will gladly tell you, for he is always ready to give a bountiful supply of wisdom to all who ask him...."*

So in our text, David inquires of the Lord and God gave him a strategy for dealing with his problem. He has him approach the problem in a different way than before. In the last battle, David won through a frontal attack on the enemy. But this time God tells him to circle around behind the enemy and catch him off guard.

II. David WAITED on the Lord.

God told David to wait until he heard the sound of marching on the tops of the mulberry trees; then attack. That was God's signal to David that the time had come. Can we wait on the Lord for His timing of things? Pride proceeds with or without God; humility knows it must have God or fail.

Ecc 3:1 says, *"To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven."* Notice the way that verse ties timing to purpose. I need to understand and commit myself to God's purposes in my life. But I also need to allow God to orchestrate the timing. That means I do not get impatient and ahead of God. It also means I don't procrastinate and let opportunities pass me by. I stay alert. I stay in step with God. And I listen for His go ahead.

That also means I develop an ear to hear what God is saying. I tune in to His frequency. I listen to His voice. I truly believe that the church in America has become too mechanical and methodical in its approach. Instead of inquiring of the Lord and listening for His direction, we go down to the Christian book store, get a book on the subject, and proceed. But God might have some interesting and unique strategies for us that will throw our enemy for a loop if we will get it straight from Him.

Before His ascension, Jesus emphasizes the purposes of God. He told His followers that repentance and remission of sin was to be preached in His name to all nations. You have your assignment. Then He gave this strategy in Luke 24:49, *"Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."* Wait on God for empowerment from Him before you try to make it happen. As your pastor, I have tried to exemplify prayer and I have encouraged you to wait upon Him in prayer—because I know that anything of any real spiritual consequence must begin there. We must be a people who inquire of the Lord before we act. We must be a people willing to wait on the Lord for instruction. We must have the empowerment of the Spirit to accomplish God's purposes in our lives. As those disciples waited in Jerusalem in obedience to Jesus' command, nothing significant happened at the end of day one. Day two was the same, and so was day three. By day six some may have wondered what was being accomplished. "This prayer thing may be good; but what are we actually going to do?" Prayer is actually doing something. In fact, it's just about the only thing to do until you get some direction from the Lord. The value of prayer became evident on the Day of Pentecost. Acts 2:2-4 *"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."* A sound from heaven came suddenly. Suddenly everything changed. If you have been waiting on the Lord, I've got good news: a suddenly can come. It can all change by one touch of God.

Think about others in the Bible who had to wait upon the Lord. Sarah waited and waited for a son. But in God's appointed time Isaac was born—not a moment too soon and not a moment too late. There was a specific day in Sarah's life when a major change came her way. There was a specific day when the word came down from Pharaoh to bring Joseph out of prison and seat him next to the throne. It was not a nebulous non-day; it was a specific day in time and space. It was not a vague "someday" I hope. It was God's ordained day to turn Joseph's life around. There was one particular day when God healed Job and gave him double for his trouble. There was a particular day when Cyrus signed a decree to release the Jews from captivity. There was a specific day when the woman with the issue of blood touched the hem of Jesus' garment and was healed. I am trying to help us realize how drastically it can all change in one day's time.

God knows how to reward those who wait on Him. I am sent here this morning to say to someone: verily there is a reward to the righteous. I am sent here to tell you that you have not waited on Him in vain. I have a word for some soul who has felt weary in the waiting. "*The Lord is not slack concerning His promises....*" (2 Peter 3:9). "*All the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus*" (2 Cor. 1:20). *Isa 25:9 "And it will be said in that day: 'Behold, this is our God; We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the LORD; We have waited for Him; We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.' 10 For on this mountain the hand of the LORD will rest...."*

In Isaiah 41:13-14 God said to the faithful remnant "*For I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand, Saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.'* 14 "*Fear not, you worm Jacob, You men of Israel! I will help you," says the LORD And your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.*" Verses 17-18 "*The poor and needy seek water, but there is none, Their tongues fail for thirst. I, the LORD, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. 18 I will open rivers in desolate heights, And fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, And the dry land springs of water.*"

Waiting on the Lord is hard work; it is one of the hardest things you will ever do. Waiting on the Lord is not passivity. Waiting on the Lord is actively anticipating the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living—in this life. It is the discipline of not taking matters into your own hands. G. Campbell Morgan put it well, "Waiting on God is not the abandonment of effort. Waiting for God means, first, activity under command; second, readiness for any new command that may come; third, the ability to do nothing until the command is given."²

David waited until he heard the sound of marching in the tops of the trees. He waited until God said go!

III. David ACTED in obedience to the Lord.

At the appointed time, in the appointed way, David stepped out boldly and attacked the enemy. Faith without works is dead.³ In other words, so-called faith that takes no action is a dead faith. James 2:18 "*But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.*" Faith is seen by the action one is willing to take.

Perhaps the most significant words in our text are found at the end of verse 24, "*For then the LORD will go out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines.*" This is why David inquired of the Lord. This is why David waited on the Lord. David did not want to take it on by himself. He knew the key to victory is the presence of the Lord. Without that presence we are weak as anyone else. You see the same conviction in Moses: Ex 33:15-16 (NIV) "*Then Moses said to him, 'If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. 16 How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your*

² G. Campbell Morgan, *The Westminster Pulpit*, vol. IX (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1955) p. 320.

³ In James 2:17 the Bible emphasizes the need for obedient action. Faith that does not have this characteristic is dead and powerless. Genuine faith produces obedient action. The apostle is not pitting the Moses' OT system of works against the Paul's NT system of faith. He is comparing a faith that only talks the talk (dead faith) against faith that walks the walk (live faith). Obedient action demonstrates that the real thing is there.

people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" The one thing that distinguishes the Church from all other institutions is the Presence of God. A church run on human energy alone is no light at all. It is God's presence activating us and shining through us that makes us the Church.

One of the challenges of this church plant is the command of the Lord to wait on Him—spend the time inquiring of Him—spend the time in prayer—spend the time seeking His will. My flesh wants to do something to make things happen. But I know enough not to do that. That is a sure way to create an Ishmael and wish you hadn't done it. So we wait for God's command.

I entitled this message, "Two Sides of Faith." One side of faith looks very inactive on the surface. It is David waiting for the signal from God. It is the 120 in the upper room the day before Pentecost. It might leave people asking, "What are you going to do besides pray?" The correct answer is, "Nothing until we have prayed! We must first inquire of the Lord; then, act at His command." One side of faith may appear to be passive and indecisive; but beyond that surface we are engaged in seeking the Lord and inquiring of Him. One side of faith is called waiting. It has no confidence in the flesh. It is unwilling to act without the command. The other side of faith is obviously active. As soon as the light turns green, it moves and it moves boldly. It moves in the confidence that God is also working with us. It moves knowing the results will be supernatural because the supernatural God is bringing them about.

The crazy thing about human nature is: (1) when it's time to wait, we're tempted to act presumptuously and (2) when it's time to act, we're tempted to draw back in timidity. Naaman was healed of leprosy when he dipped seven times in the Jordan River at God's command (2 Kings 5:14). Without that action there would have been no healing. The woman with the issue of blood was healed when she touched the hem of Jesus' garment. She acted in faith. Jesus told the blind man (John 9:7) "... *'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.*" When the command to act comes, genuine faith acts!

Conclusion

The pattern of David's response in our text is applicable to any problem. (1) David Inquired of the Lord. He went to God in prayer about the matter. He did not assume that he already knew what to do, even though he had successfully faced similar problems in the past. (2) David Waited on the Lord. He waited until He heard from God concerning the strategy. God told him what the sign would be that would let him know the right timing. David waited until he heard the sound of marching in the tops of the trees. (3) David Acted assertively once he knew he was in the will of God. He boldly attacked the problem using the God-given strategy. And God gave him victory. Everything David did, he did because he had been trained in the school of humility. Every step he took was based on faith in God and his dependence upon God.

I hope you will apply all this to the problem you are facing in your life. Where are you in this process? Do you need to inquire of the Lord for His strategy? Are you prayerfully waiting on the Lord for His go ahead? Don't lose heart; your day will come? Do you need to step out in faith and believe for the answer?

Pray