

## Introduction

In the early morning of June 24, 2021, the 12-story Champlain Towers South condominium building in Miami, Florida experienced a major collapse resulting the deaths of 98 people. You may remember photos of a mountain of rubble where the condo building used to be. The likely explanation for the collapse is cutting corners. Investigators found that together inadequate waterproofing, thin columns and faulty concrete contributed to the devastating collapse. Sometimes cut corners can lie hidden for long periods of time. At other times they are immediately observable. In our text this morning we will see how David cut A corner, but did not “cut corners” in his flight from Saul.

[Read text and Pray]

In a situation in which the stakes are huge, David refuses to take matters into his own hands. He resists doing what seems good to human reason. He chooses not the easy way. He rather behaves according to what he knows is the right thing even if it seems not to be the expedient thing. And in doing so, David displays a heart of faith and trust. He will rest in the Lord and allow him to provide what he has promised. This display of faith shines through three sections of the text.

In the first section,

### **I. David Cuts a Corner. (1-7)**

Saul had been right on the heels of David, but just in the nick of time, a messenger suddenly appeared to summon Saul away from the hunt to immediately deal with a Philistine raid on the land. Apparently Saul effectively addressed that situation. And now he was free to be concerned again with David. An informant told Saul that David was in the wilderness of Engedi, an oasis area on the west side of the Dead Sea.

So Saul amasses an army of 3,000 of the best soldiers in the country and resumes his quest to find and kill the man who threatens his throne. Remember David was surrounded by a mere 600 men who were anything but Israel’s choice soldiers. I mean this reminds me of an arrest carried out by the FBI last September. A pro-life sidewalk counselor from Philadelphia, who has now been found not-guilty of charges, had agreed to come in voluntarily. His offer was rejected as the Biden Department of Justice chose to make a show of potentially deadly force, sending twenty heavily armed federal agents to the residence. That kind of overkill reveals the sort of irrational hatred we see in scripture only produced within the hearts of those who despise what is right.

Saul goes into a cave to go to the bathroom. And it just happens to be the very cave where David and his men are hiding. David’s entourage begins to salivate over this golden opportunity. Surely this is the Lord’s doing! And what he has done is to provide for David a wide-open door to slay Saul and seize hold of the throne of Israel.

While Saul is engaged with his business, David stealthily cuts off a corner of Saul’s robe. Now, the robe is a striking feature in 1 Samuel. Hannah, Samuel’s mother used to take him a robe every year when she went up to offer the sacrifice. Saul tore Samuel’s robe and Samuel declared that the Lord had torn the kingdom from him. Jonathan gave his royal robe to David as to say he was giving up to David his right to the throne. Now David cuts a corner from the royal robe of Saul as to say, “I will take the kingdom from you.” Clearly, his purpose is not simply to be able to demonstrate to Saul

how he could have killed him. It is to assert his claim on the kingdom. He did not kill Saul, but this was a statement by which David staked his claim on the kingdom and which expressed David's enmity with Saul. It was a way of lashing out at Saul. And do not think for one minute that David was not hearing the voice of Satan join with that of his men to say, "Kill him! Kill him!" And do not think that there wasn't a part of David himself that wanted to do just that. All these factors explain why that as soon as David had done the deed, his conscience was smitten. He was ashamed and felt guilt. And he refused to go further. In fact he withstood the strong pleadings of his men to take Saul's life.

The conscience is a gift of God to sinners. It shows us that morality is bound up in everything we do because our conscience either accuses or excuses us. We approve inwardly of certain things we do and we are ashamed of the wrongs. God has woven awareness of his law into the fabric of our being. Hence, we feel inner discomfort and distress when we do wrong. Do not despise your conscience. It is not your enemy. Shame for sin is not a curse, it is an ally to your soul to prompt you to seek peace through forgiveness. It prompts you to go no further in wrong doing but to bolt and run away. It prompts you to seek a remedy for your shame. That remedy is Jesus. He died to cleanse the heart and put balm to the conscience by removing from us our sins and their indebtedness. Do you want a clean conscience? Turn now to Christ Jesus.

Now, we can be sensitive to our conscience or insensitive/hardened. Saul was hardened toward his conscience. He just pushed right past the awareness of his wrongs. Meanwhile, David was soft toward his, absorbing its message to him. Hence David was emboldened NOT to sin further against God. As he said to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my lord." And not only that, he had to strongly oppose his men to keep them from doing so. You see, David knew that even though Saul had been rejected by God, he was still the Lord's anointed. To act against Saul was to act against a representative of the Lord, and was to sin against God.

It is apparent that David's men did not have as sensitive a conscience as David. They persisted in their belief that this was the day the Lord had given David's enemy into his hands. There were those of them who apparently insisted if David was not going to do the deed, they would. So David not only had to withstand inward and outward pressure in regard to himself. He also had to restrain others. And as he did he showed true leadership. Two clear lessons arise. The first is this: just because a lot of people want you to do a thing does not make it right. Listen to God's word, not the crowd.

The second lesson is that opportunity does not equal divine approval. That was a lesson taught way back in the garden of Eden. Here was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was available but it was off limits. It was a test of obedience not a provision for indulgence. The same is happening here with David.

Commentator Dale Ralph Davis writes, "it was one thing to have the promise of the kingdom; how the kingdom should come to [David] was another matter. Yahweh's will must be achieved Yahweh's way; the end that God has ordained must be reached by the means that God approves." In other words, there are no shortcuts. Fulfilling God's will is not a cause that will allow for cutting corners. But expect to be tempted to do so. Holiness does not come without sacrifice and diligence and striving and discipline. As Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life."

It was certainly true in Jesus' case. He was offered a shortcut. Satan tempted Jesus on this very point. Jesus came to become king over all, right? And this is precisely what the devil offered him in an easier and painless way, a way that would avoid the cross. The devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Jesus repudiated him as David withstood the urging of his men—with words of persuasion. "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve." Later recall that Jesus was speaking of his being delivered up and dying, and Peter disputed with Jesus. He said, "You surely shall not die." But Jesus said, "Get behind me Satan for you are setting your mind not on the things of God but on the things of man." The right way, the God-ordained way, for Jesus to come into his kingdom was to come by the way of the cross. No short-cuts. No cutting corners. And because of full obedience, because he humbled himself even to death on a cross, God has highly exalted him.

You and I and everybody around us are looking for the easy way, the painless way, the popular way. But like Jesus, let us instead be certain we are taking the right way, God's way, even though it is a harder way and a selfless way, even though it may involve greater risk. But love and glory have never nor can ever be displayed in a greater way than God's way. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sin.

In the second section,

## **II. David Displays His Innocence. (8-15)**

When Saul was sufficiently relieved, he rose up and departed from the cave. He was oblivious to all that had transpired deeper within that very den and what had happened to his robe. When he was at a sufficient distance, David also left the cave and called out after Saul with a different spirit than that with which he had sliced through the fabric of Saul's royal garment. He was respectful as a human should be toward those in authority, saying, "My lord, the king." He bowed his face to the earth and paid homage.

David's intent now is to demonstrate that Saul's belief that David is seeking his harm is mistaken. He holds up the corner of Saul's robe to prove that when he COULD have killed him, he SPARED him. Even though others were urging him to kill Saul, he refused, saying, "I will not put out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed." He will not take matters into his own hands even though Saul persists in hunting him down to take his life. David has no evil intent in regard to Saul. David asserts that he is harmless to Saul. To Saul he is actually no more of a threat than a dead dog or a flea.

What David does here is to commit his way to the Lord. He commits the outcome to the Lord. He knows the Lord is sovereign over Saul, and he will do what is right. Therefore, David will not seize the throne by his own doing, but he will cast himself on God. He will entrust himself to the Lord and to his judgment. He says, "May the Lord judge between me and you, and may the Lord avenge me against you, but my hand shall not be against you." "May the Lord give sentence between me and you, and see to it and plead my cause and deliver me from your hand."

Eventually, David did sit on the throne of Israel, but he did not seize it for himself. God set him on that throne despite his enemy. The second psalm resonates with this theme. Listen:

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying,

“Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.”

He who sits in heaven laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.  
Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying,  
“As for me, I have set my King on Zion my holy hill.”

God had set David apart, and God would enthrone him. David realizes this and commits himself to God's path to the throne. It would not be through David's cutting corners and taking matters into his own hands. It would be the Lord's doing.

In this David foreshadows Jesus. Peter writes this of Jesus in 1 Peter 2:23: “When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.”

Paul states it this way in Philippians: Jesus “humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and given him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.” He humbled himself and God exalted him—obedience over expedience. It is by his wounds that we are healed and no other way.

Here is also an example for us. As with David and Jesus so also is it to be with us. Obey the clear word of God and do not cut corners. Do not look for a better way than God's way. Here is the way of God for us. As with David and Jesus, it is humility. Paul urges in Romans 12 that we believers “be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ...bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ...never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil. ...never avenge yourselves but leave it to the wrath of God.” As Peter says, “humble yourselves ... under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6).

In the third section,

### **III. David Swears an Oath. (16-22)**

David's approach has had a noticeable effect upon Saul. As soon as David finished speaking, Saul replies in a manner that is in striking contrast to recent references to him. Consistently he referred to David scornfully as “the son of Jesse.” Now he uses his name and speaks of David as his own: “Is this your voice, my son David?” Then notice, Saul's tears begin to flow. Weeping, he confesses the recognition of David's righteousness. He has done what few would do. Why would a man let his enemy go if he had him right there in his grasp?

Now Saul also admits that, like Jonathan had said, he knows that David will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in his hand. He understands that the nation will flourish with David as its regent. Nevertheless, his heart is still hard. How do we know? Because he does not step aside and invite David to take the throne over. Also because he asks David to swear he will not kill off every one of his descendants, to which David agrees. Saul is committed to being David's enemy even though he knows David will eventually be king. The tears of Saul are not the tears of repentance but the sorrow of the misery of being opposed to God and his plan. His life could have been so different. He was chosen. He was anointed. He was empowered. He was instructed. It was a position of high privilege. But he resisted God and he disobeyed his word. Now he is experiencing the anguish of divine rejection.

Do not let tears of regret be interpreted as tears of repentance. You may cry over sin. You may be sorry and wish you had not done what you have done. You may regret the consequences of sin.

You may regret the shame you feel as a result. But do not be fooled. If there is no change of life, there has been no change of heart. John reproved the self-righteous who came to him for baptism. He charged them to "bear fruits in keeping with repentance." True repentance will bear fruit in life that demonstrates itself. Without a change tears may represent shame and sorrow but not repentance.

The misery of Saul must be a mirror image of the misery of Satan. He also had such advantage, possessing exceeding beauty in heaven and being the anointed cherub. But like lightening he fell due to pride. He desired to take the place of God. Even now, he knows Jesus will reign over the kingdom of heaven. He knows his final and full defeat is at hand. One whose being is bent on stealing, killing, and destroying cannot be happy or satisfied, not for one moment. But he remains bent on wreaking havoc with the Lord and with his people. So look out. David swore but then he went to the stronghold while Saul, for a while at least, went home.

Sometimes Satan lets up for a moment but he never lets go. He is always looking for an opportune time. He goes around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Beware. Be on the alert.

### **Conclusion**

As a whole, this text shows us that David cut off a corner, but he did not cut corners. He is not without sin. His conscience gave testimony of that. But he did not ultimately take matters into his own hands. Entrusting himself to God, he determined to obey God, keep his hands off the Lord's anointed, and let the Lord fulfill his promise in his way in his time.

Psalms 27 is one of David's psalms. At the conclusion he says, "I believe that I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." That is, I don't have to wait to die to see the goodness of God. But he also insinuates he may have to wait some time, for he preaches to himself, "Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!"

Waiting means trusting. Trusting means waiting if necessary. It means not cutting corners through manmade wisdom but attending carefully to the word of the Lord and entrusting oneself to his power and his timing. This finds favor with God.

Remember when Saul would not wait? Samuel had instructed him to wait 7 days at Gilgal until Samuel should come. But when the 7<sup>th</sup> day came and Samuel was not there yet, Saul was not willing to wait any longer. He forced himself and offered the sacrifice. He acted foolishly and did not keep the command of the Lord. It was then that the Lord determined not to establish his kingdom. It is unwise and untrusting to be moved to action by circumstances when God's word has told you otherwise.