

“When God is Gone”
1 Samuel 21
(Preached at Trinity, September 24, 2017)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I've pointed out before, David stands before us as a man of strong faith in the power of God to preserve him.
 - A. He demonstrated mighty faith as he stood before Goliath:
1 Samuel 17:46 NAU - "This day the LORD will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel,"
 - B. It was David who would write the stirring words of faith:
Psalms 27:1 NAU - "The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread?"
Psalms 18:2-3 NAU - "The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. ³ I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, And I am saved from my enemies."
 - C. But David was but a man, and as men we can be beaten down to the point that our faith is weakened and our hearts fall into fear and doubt.
 - a. Such was the case with Elijah as he fled from the murderous schemes of Jezebel.
1 Kings 19:2-4 NAU - "Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and even more, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." ³ And he was afraid and arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. ⁴ But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers."
 - b. Such was the condition of David in these chapters. As he fled from the murderous designs of Saul his faith was weakened.
He cried out to Jonathan in **Chapter 20:3** - "there is hardly a step between me and death."
 - D. David's chief problem in these chapters is he wasn't crying out to God. Instead he is relying upon the carnal ground of human reason. He had completely dismissed that he was God's anointed. Was God not able to preserve his life?

2. There can be many causes of our turning away from God.
 - (1) It could be that unconfessed sin has caused God to withhold the light of His countenance.
Psalm 66:18 NAU - "If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear"
 - (2) It could be because of carelessness and the cares of this world have begun to overshadow the glories of eternity. Worldliness begins to rob our spiritual strength.
 - (3) It could be that some physical affliction has consumed our both our physical strength and our spiritual vitality.
 - (4) Perhaps some great fear or anxiety had swept over us drawing all of our attention upon the here and now. We forget our great God who governs all things.
This is the condition of David. He can only see his impending death and instead of turning to God he flees without direction.
3. As we enter **Chapter 21** David has fled to Nob and has come before the priest, Ahimelech. And once again, he uses the tactic of deception. He isn't standing before an enemy but before the priest of God. Ahimelech listens to David and trusts his word. David's deception would result in a massacre of Ahimelech and 85 other priests.
1 Samuel 22:16-18 NAU - "But the king said, "You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's household!" ¹⁷ And the king said to the guards who were attending him, "Turn around and put the priests of the LORD to death, because their hand also is with David and because they knew that he was fleeing and did not reveal it to me." But the servants of the king were not willing to put forth their hands to attack the priests of the LORD. ¹⁸ Then the king said to Doeg, "You turn around and attack the priests." And Doeg the Edomite turned around and attacked the priests, and he killed that day eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod."
4. David's life is falling apart. It is sad to see David reduced to deception before God's high priest and drooling before the Philistine king. We must never forget the proverb, "The best of men are men at best."
If William Blaikie was willing to excuse David's deception in the previous chapter he is less generous now, "Here was a statement not only not true, but the very opposite of the truth; spoken too to God's anointed high priest, and in the place consecrated to God's most solemn service. . . prompted by distrust, prompted by the feeling that the pledged protection of the God of truth, before whose shrine he now stood, was not sufficient. David now lent himself to the devices of the father of lies."¹
5. David's life stands as a mixed pattern of both great faith, and dismal failures. The mighty warrior and military commander would also be the one who steals another man's wife and sends him to his death. The man of great faith and fearless trust in God was also a man who flees in terror. What we are witnessing in these chapters is a man overcome by faithless fear. In his despair, he leaves off praying, he leaves off seeking God. God is no longer near and David has lost the very source of his strength and confidence.
"The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."

¹ Blaikie, William Garden. (2005). *Expository Lectures on the Book of 1 Samuel*. Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books, page 333.

6. This chapter is a display of what happens when God is gone.
This is really a misnomer. God is never really gone. He is omnipresent. There is no place where He doesn't dwell. But there are times when we turn away from God; we leave off praying and crying out to God; we are left without light of His countenance. It's as if God is gone.
1689 LBC 5:5 – "The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave for a season His own children to manifold temptations and the corruptions of their own hearts, to chastise them for former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their own heart, that they may be humbled; and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for support upon Himself . . ."
7. In this chapter we see three consequences of God's absence in the life of a believer. It is dreadful to consider, but understand clearly, while Saul was forsaken of God David was still God's anointed. While the Spirit of God departed from Saul, the Spirit continued to abide with David. In due time David's faith would be renewed.
- I. The first consequence of God's absence in our life is you will resort to the carnal reason instead of Godly wisdom
- A. David's solution to his problems was lies and deception
1. It began with his deception with Saul in **Chapter 20**
 2. It continued with Ahimelech, the high priest
As I pointed out before, David put his own safety ahead of even the high priest.
1 Samuel 21:2 NAU - "The king has commissioned me with a matter and has said to me, 'Let no one know anything about the matter on which I am sending you'"
 3. Such carnal reason was the methodology of Saul during his entire reign. It is the lies of Satan deceiving the human heart.
 4. We'll see this displayed again in **2 Samuel 11** when it seemed like a perfect plan to in David's eyes to have Bathsheba's husband killed. Such is the carnal reason of man when we are not led by God's Spirit.
- B. The human heart is deceitful and full of foolishness
1. This is the universal consequence of sin that plagues all of humanity
 - a. Paul described this terrible curse
Romans 1:21-22 NAU - "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools"
 - b. The imaginations of our mind fill us with carnal reasoning that we think is wisdom
Ephesians 2:3 NAU - "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."
 - c. Jeremiah described it well
Jeremiah 17:9-10 NAU - "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?"

2. This is why we so desperately need God's wisdom every day. Only God can enable us to have wisdom to rightly discern the right paths.
Jeremiah 17:9-10 NAU - "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? ¹⁰ "I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds."

3. Apart from God's wisdom our foolish hearts will convince us that our carnal wisdom is right. David would later pray:
Psalms 139:23-24 NAU - "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; ²⁴ And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way. "

C. Carnal wisdom will lead to all manner of sin and sorrow

1. You will make decisions that will have lasting consequences that lead to pain and sorrow in your life and the life of your family.
2. You will justify your actions as being right when they are actually sinful and destructive.
Isaiah 5:20-21 NAU - "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! ²¹ Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes And clever in their own sight!"

3. You will be quick to judge others without bothering to find out the facts. You will be critical of everyone else while excusing the sin in your own life. And you will feel perfectly justified in doing it. You'll feel no hint of conviction.

Matthew 7:3-5 NAU - "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? ⁵ "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

4. Only a life lived before God, trusting His guidance and wisdom can protect us from the foolishness of our hearts.

Proverbs 3:5-7 KJV - "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. ⁶ In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. ⁷ Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil."

II. You will lose the ability to discern the danger of the enemy

A. The enemy was in the presence of David and he failed to comprehend it

1. David's clear and present danger was not Saul but Doeg
1 Samuel 21:7 NAU - "Now one of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's shepherds."
2. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau. They were the perpetual enemies of Israel. Saul conquered them in **Chapter 14**.
1 Samuel 14:47 NAU - "Now when Saul had taken the kingdom over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, the sons of Ammon, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines; and wherever he turned, he inflicted punishment."
3. Apparently Doeg had gained esteem in the eyes of Saul but David should have been cautious, particularly since asking the aid of the priest would put him in jeopardy with Saul.
4. David would acknowledge his folly in **Chapter 22**
1 Samuel 22:22 NAU - "Then David said to Abiathar, "I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have brought about *the death* of every person in your father's household."

B. Our greatest enemy is Satan.

Ephesians 6:12 NAU - "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*."

1 Peter 5:8 NAU - "Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

1. Are you discerning enough to recognize his presence and his devices.
 Paul wrote:
2 Corinthians 2:11 NAU - "so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes."
2. Satan's lies and deceits can seem so convincing. The one lacking discernment is easy prey. We must be continually prayerful. Satan's lies can seem so right.
2 Corinthians 11:14 NAU - "Satan disguises himself as an angel of light."
3. Ananias and Sapphira thought their deceit regarding their offering was a minor thing. It didn't hurt anyone. They failed to recognize it was the lie of Satan.
Acts 5:3 NAU - "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back *some* of the price of the land?"

- III. We will flee from the very things we once faced boldly
- A. David was a mighty warrior
1. He was described to Saul:
1 Samuel 16:18 NAU - "Then one of the young men said, "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is a skillful musician, a mighty man of valor, a warrior, one prudent in speech, and a handsome man; and the LORD is with him."
 2. He stood boldly before the ten foot tall giant
1 Samuel 17:45-46 NAU - "Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. ⁴⁶ "This day the LORD will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel,"
 3. Now as David comes before the Philistine king, Achish, he trembles as one who had no strength.
1 Samuel 21:12 NAU - "*He greatly feared Achish king of Gath.*"
 4. Instead of standing before Achish as God's anointed with boldness and strength, he pretended insanity, drooling upon himself.
- B. Turning away from confidence in God will bring us to hearts of fear
1. Peter who took great pride in his courage trembled before a servant girl
 2. We will lack the courage to defend the faith.
 3. We will find it easier and easier to compromise our faith, particularly when standing firm becomes risky. We'll make compromises with family before whom we used to stand as an example of a follower of Christ.
 4. We'll tremble to share our faith or worse, lose interest in evangelism
 5. We will also begin to be fearful as we face the adversities of life. We'll fear health problems and financial problems; we'll fear natural disasters.

Conclusion:

1. Do you understand how important it is to walk with Christ daily, submitting to the indwelling Holy Spirit. Notice one of the fruits of the Spirit is "faith."
2. Turning away from God will always have devastating consequences. These are but a few.
 1. You will find yourself living more and more according to carnal reason.
 2. You'll lose your ability to discern the deceptions of Satan who continually assaults God's people with his fiery arrows.
 3. You will lose all confidence before your enemies. Your heart will be overcome with fear.
3. If you have already begun to stray from God there is but one solution. Cry out in confession and turn to Christ in repentance.
James 4:6-10 NAS - "But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." ⁷ Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you."