

# Wait for It // 1 Samuel 24, Psalm 57

## // *The Life of David* #8<sup>1</sup>

### Announcements:

Last weekend I got to help celebrate the launch of the SEE at BRC / God is doing something / so here on HHM, we rejoice at what God is doing in this community.

Also: this is a season at TSC where we give you multiple opps to get connected... church shouldn't be an event you attend on the weekend, but a community you belong to. So, get connected.

### Introduction

1 Samuel 24, if you have your Bibles...

**I hope you are reading these stories of David as we go through them.** I can't cover everything in these chapters, and there's some really fascinating stuff in them.

David's life in these chapters reads like a good news/bad news story. You know, good news/bad news story--like the story of the two friends who wonder, "Will there be baseball in heaven?" and they agree that whichever one dies first will come back and tell the other one the answer. Well, sure enough, one dies, and his ghost appears to the other one the next day and says, "I have good news and bad

---

<sup>1</sup> Works Consulted: Tim Chester, *1 Samuel For You: For reading, for feeding, for leading (God's Word for You)*, The Good Book Company, September 15, 2014; John Sailhammer. *NIV Compact Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994); Beth Moore, "Survival Skills and He Who Wills," session taught with LifeWay, published in 2010; Joby Martin, "Prophets Priests Kings - Week 12: The Lord Judge," sermon preached at The Church of Eleven22,

news." "Good news is there is baseball in heaven. Bad news: you're pitching on Friday."

David's story reads like a good news/bad news story.

- In 1 Samuel 16, Samuel shows up to anoint David as king (that's good news...)
- After that, he gets sent back to the sheep pasture where he's forgotten about for several years (bad news).
- Then, David wins an epic battle against Goliath, becomes a national hero, marries the king's daughter and gets a job on Capitol Hill (More good news!).
- But King Saul turns out to be an egomaniac who tries 5x to pin David to the wall with a spear (bad news), and then gives David's wife to someone else and uses the state-controlled media to trash David's reputation (bad news), then puts out a warrant for David's arrest and says he'll pay a bounty to anybody who brings David to him, dead or alive (bad news)

Just as David presses through one challenge, and you think things are about to get better for him, he is greeted with another obstacle.

Reading through these stories this time reminded me of reading about the Lewis & Clark expedition in Stephen Ambrose's book *Undaunted Courage*. For two years, Lewis & Clark and their team battled fatigue, hunger, raiding parties, desertion by their crew and a lot of other setbacks as they pressed Westward in search of a waterway that would carry them to the Pacific. They had been led to believe that once they reached the continental divide in Colorado (or in what we today call Colorado), they would find the Columbia River,

posted on July 14, 2019; Charlie Dates, "I'm Willing to Wait' | 1 Samuel 24 | Pastor Charlie Dates," sermon streamed live from Progressive Baptist Church Chicago on Nov. 29, 2020; Andy Stanley, sermon on 1 Samuel 24, "Your Move, Pt. 3 – Pay Attention to the Tension."

where they could put their boats in and float lazily all the rest of the way to the Pacific Ocean. Ambrose says that as they approached the continental divide, Meriwether Lewis ran ahead of everybody so he could be the first to see what he assumed was going to be a long, sloping valley that stretched all the way to the Pacific. Instead, he became the first non-native American to lay eyes on the Rocky Mountains. Just when you think things are going to get easier for David, Rocky Mountains.

And that raises this question I want us to consider today: **What do you do when the path you're on takes an expected turn for the worst?**

- Your career hits a snag. And, you're like, "I didn't see this coming!"
- Or maybe you say, "Career snag? My career can't hit a snag--it's never gotten started!" I graduated high school with high hopes but now I can't even find a job."
- Or your kid starts having problems when they get into middle school--eating disorder, or depression, or bad behavior.
- Or maybe you're not married and you thought surely by this age you would be.
- Or you are married but this is a far cry from the marriage you'd always dreamed of
- Or you just got divorced and never in a million years did you ever think that would happen to you

**What do you do when life takes a negative turn you weren't expecting?**

I want to use these stories of David today to warn you against a temptation we tend to fall into in moments like that--and that is, to take matters into your own hands; or, to put it in theological terms: **to attempt to perfect by the flesh what was promised in the Spirit.** This is a major theme in the Bible; you see almost every Bible

character go through a season like this, and today we'll see it happen to David.

1 Sam 24: Because of Saul's murderous egomania, David has been forced to flee to the wilderness. **Saul receives intelligence from some of his spies that David and his merry men** are hiding in the caves of En Gedi, and so... [24:2] **Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel and went to seek David and his men in front of the Wildgoats' Rocks. [3] And he came to the sheepfolds by the way, where there was a cave, and Saul went in to (PAUSE) relieve himself.** (The literal Hebrew here says Saul went in to the cave to "cover his feet," which is a Hebrew euphemism for... doing #2. I'll let YOU figure out how that phrase indicates that. Now, get this) **And David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave.**

- Talk about an awkward moment... Is this good luck or bad luck? David and some of his men are hiding in this cave, and Saul goes into that very cave, without his guard, to pop-a-squat.
- This couldn't have been a pleasant experience. That cave is dark, dank with no ventilation, BUT

[4] **And the men of David said to him, "Here is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold, I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it shall seem good to you.'"**

- I mean, there is **hardly a more vulnerable position** that a man can be in. Saul's over there, all by himself crouched down on the rock, britches around his ankles, reading the newspaper...
- **This is like a mafia hit**, like something on the Sopranos
- And the men are like, **"David, now is your moment!"**

**Then David arose...**

- In Hebrew, that word "arose" indicates decision. David grabs his knife, presumably to get up and kill Saul; and somewhere, as David is coming up behind Saul, holding his nose, he thinks, "Wait... this is murder! *Even if God* has put Saul here in front of me, taking his life is wrong."

**Could I just pause here and say:** Fortuitous coincidences are not always the sign that God is behind something. I say that because it's amazing how many people justify their behavior through some coincidence.

- "My current marriage was not working, and I met this new guy at work who is just perfect. It all feels just too coincidental--it feels like fate."
- "I really wanted that car and unexpectedly the price dropped and then unexpectedly I got approved for a loan--I feel like God is giving me a sign that he wants me to have that car. (Of course, taking out this loan is going to put me in significant debt and will likely make me car-poor and eliminate any possibility of being generous... but why else would all these circumstances randomly happen?)"

Friends, I'm not saying God **never uses coincidences** to direct us. But sometimes coincidences are just... coincidences and nothing more.

**Pastor John Muller of the CPC** said when he was about 12 his dad was trying to make a big decision--and one afternoon he and his dad were driving home, and as they pulled into their driveway, 7 doves flew up out of the yard. John said his dad counted out loud, "1, 2, 3...7! 7 Doves! Son, a dove is what descended on Jesus at his baptism, 7 is God's number of completion. There's our answer!" And John said, "But Dad, I think those are pigeons." And my dad said, "And with a closed heart like that, son, you'll never hear God speak."

Now, again, **I'm not saying God never uses circumstances to guide** us. But sometimes doves are just doves. And sometimes they are pigeons that look like doves. But the thing you can always count on to guide you is God's Word. So, the foremost consideration in David's mind is not, "What are these circumstances guiding me to do?" but **"What does God's word say?"**

**Furthermore, y'all know that God is not the only one who arranges lucky coincidences** in your life, right? You don't think Satan does that, too?

**This temptation David is going through follows a pattern.** Satan is tempting David to take matters into his own hands, and he even uses Scripture to do it. Did you see how David's men quoted Scripture to urge David to kill Saul? Vs. 4; "And the men of David said to him, 'Here is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold, I will give your enemy into your hand...'"

This was how Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness: Satan took Jesus high up on a pinnacle and said, "God wants to give you all of this." (And that was true. God had said he wanted to give Jesus all of that). But then Satan said, "I can give it to you all right now, if you take this little shortcut--you won't have to go through the cross or any suffering. You can have it all right now. Don't wait on God to give you this; go get it now for yourself"

**This is what Satan does.** He starts with a truth--he holds up something God wants you to have--and then urges you to step outside of God's will to get it--to take a short-cut.

Think about it:

- **In the Garden of Eden,** Satan said: God wants you to be happy and to have God-like wisdom. (And that was true). But then he said, "To get there, I'm going to show you a short-cut. Eat this forbidden fruit."
- **To Abraham, Satan said:** "God has promised to make you the father of a great nation." (And that was true) But then he said, "But Abe, you're childless, and Sarah your wife is old, so have a kid with your servant Hagar." IOW, step outside of God's will and take a shortcut.

**Do you see the pattern? The temptation is to pursue the promise of the Spirit by the power of the flesh--by stepping outside of God's will. You will never find God's will doing things your way instead of his**

**Watch what David does:** David crawls right up behind him, and as Saul leans over to grab some toilet paper or whatnot, David ...stealthily cut off a corner of Saul's robe. [5] But afterward David's heart struck him, because he had cut off a corner of Saul's robe.

- David felt guilty for even doing that. Now, at this point, David's men are just apoplectic. They're like, "First, David, you don't kill the guy who has been trying to kill us when God puts him right in front of you; but now, you feel guilty about messing up his clothes?"

[6] But David said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the LORD's anointed."

- Even if Saul is in the wrong, David says, this is God's appointed king and these are God's appointed circumstances and it is not for me to take matters into my own hands.
- **I cannot achieve the purpose of God by breaking the commands of God.**

*Think about it, y'all:* **Killing Saul would have solved so many of David's problems!** And he could have framed it as self-defense. Or he could have played the victim card: "Saul is using his position of power to abuse me and manipulate me." And wasn't Saul guilty of death for what he'd done? And hadn't God promised David the throne anyway?

**All those things are true and David could have used them as justification.** But David knew you never achieve the purposes of God by breaking the commands of God. Never. [7] So David persuaded his men with these words and did not permit them to attack Saul.

Saul finishes up his business, gives it a royal flush (I guess), uncovers his feet, and exits the cave. **David waits for a few minutes** until Saul is a little distance away, and then he calls out to Saul from the mouth of the cave... [8] "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked behind him, **David bowed with his face to the earth and paid homage.**

[9] And David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Behold, David seeks your harm'?" [10] Behold, this day your eyes have seen how the LORD gave you today into my hand in the cave. And some told me to kill you, but I spared you.

I said, 'I will not put out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed.' [11] Then he waves the little corner of his robe that he cut off...By the fact that I cut off the corner of your robe and did not kill you, you may know and see that there is no wrong or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, though you hunt my life to take it. [12] May the LORD judge between me and you, may the LORD avenge me against you, but my hand shall not be against you.

[13] As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Out of the wicked comes wickedness.' IOW, "Your sin doesn't justify mine. To do wicked would make me wicked, regardless of what you did to provoke it." "Only from the wicked comes wickedness," and when you do wickedness it makes you wicked regardless of what someone did to you to provoke it. **The opposite of this proverb would be,** "The ends justify the means."

David then finishes his soliloquy with this plea: [14] **After whom has the king of Israel come out? After whom do you pursue? After a dead dog! After a flea!** (A dead dog can't bite you. A flea can't hurt you. I'm no threat to you at all!)

16 As soon as David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. 17 He said to David, "You are more righteous than I, for

you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil... May the Lord reward you with good for what you have done to me this day.

20 And now, behold, I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. 21 Swear to me therefore by the Lord that you will not cut off my offspring after me, and that you will not destroy my name out of my father's house." 22 And David swore this to Saul. Now, watch this: Then Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

Notice: David didn't go back with Saul. It looked like Saul had repented. He had said he was sorry, asked for forgiveness, cried about it; he even acknowledged that David one day would be king. Yet David still went back to the stronghold. This is not a major point in the story, but I think it's worth pointing out because maybe somebody in here needs to hear it: **Just because someone says they are sorry, and you forgive them, doesn't mean you can always go right back to normal.**

When you have been abused, someone simply saying, "I'm sorry" and crying about it doesn't mean that you are obligated to move back in immediately. He says he's sorry, and he might be! She says she forgives him, and she does. But that doesn't necessarily mean she needs to move back in. There can (and often should be) a good gap of time to know if the repentance is real and will endure. David wisely says, "I forgive you, but I'm staying here for a while."

But that brings us back to the question: **What do you do when the path you're on takes an expected turn for the worst?** You basically have 2 choices: (1) You can take matters into your own hands. Or (2), you can do the hardest thing in the Bible: Trust God and wait on his timing.

**Taking matters into your own hands** usually takes one of 4 forms-- think of these as **(Satan's Sinful Shortcuts)**:

- A. **Rationalized Revenge:** David's men urged him to settle the score and they felt right about doing that. Revenge almost always feels right, on one level.
  - Your wife doesn't appreciate or respect you. So you cheat on her.
  - Your boss has been a jerk to you—so you do sloppy work and find ways to undermine him, even steal from the company because you feel entitled to it, and brag to your friends about it.
  - Some group discriminates against you, so you discriminate against them. Members of that ethnic group are rude to you; so you are rude to some of them.
  - People are uncharitable with your motives on social media, so you are uncharitable with theirs
  - You cheat on your taxes because we know the government mishandles your money.
  - **These all feel justified** because of the wrong you've endured. But out of the wicked comes wickedness.
- B. Category 2: **Pilfered Pleasures:** Life hasn't delivered for you, so you find escape in some stolen pleasure.
  - **I can't help but think of Joseph in the Bible.** After all the unfair treatment he'd gone through--being sold into slavery and lied about... when Potiphar's wife propositioned him--I have to think how tempting it would have been for him to think, "As badly as my life has gone, I deserve this." Maybe that's what it is for you. An affair becomes an escape of pleasure in an unfair world.
  - Or maybe you **find that escape in a bottle or through looking at porn.** Or through retail therapy. You buy stuff. You think, "What's this really hurting anyway? My job (or my family) is so stressful, I need this. God seems to have forgotten me; at least I have this."
- C. **Cowardly Compromise:**
  - You think, "God's not delivering, so I'll take matters into my own hands." Like Abraham did with Hagar...

- You're not married yet--God hasn't brought along a partner for you--so you date someone you know you shouldn't be with, because you figure that's better than being alone.
- Financially, you're not where you want to be: so you overwork; you cut out giving your tithe.
- God's not moving fast enough, on your timetable, so you take matters into your own hands. Which leads to:

D. *Rationalized revenge; pilfered pleasure; cowardly compromise...*

- **Panicked Presumption** (Y'all, my alliteration game is ON POINT today)
- Because God is not delivering on your timetable, you start manipulating circumstances, forcing things.
- Now, I know that type-A people who get stuff done are the ones hustling behind the scenes. They don't take 'no' for an answer. And that's not necessarily a bad thing. But sometimes you're doing that because you're not willing to wait. Your behavior becomes unhealthy, obsessive and manipulative.
- For me this has always shown up through self-promotion. I'm not content to wait on God's timing, so I want to force myself ahead through self-promotion for manipulating situations or leveraging relationships. Or I subtly tear someone else down so someone else will look more favorably on me.
- Or if someone won't do what I want, I try to coerce them or guilt them.
- If God is not moving fast enough in the life of my kids, I try to force it.
- In all these things I am trying to complete in the power of my flesh what only God can do in the Spirit.

These things are the opposite of what David did. He said, "**I will not stretch out my hand** in wickedness against God's anointed no matter how justified I feel in doing so. **I will wait upon the Lord. I will do things his way.** He's the one that made the promises. He's the Shepherd to whom I've committed my soul. I will wait upon him.

**Say that phrase. Everybody: I WILL WAIT UPON THE LORD.** That one phrase would change so much in your life!

- If you're looking for someone to date:(SAY IT) ***I will wait upon the Lord.*** After all: God gives his best to those who leave the choice to him!
- If you're in a stymied career: *I will wait upon the Lord.*
- If you're financially not where you want to be: *I will wait upon the Lord.*
- If you're still in the pasture, wondering when God will put you into the game: *I will wait upon the Lord.*
- If your marriage is not where it should be, not fulfilling you: *I will wait upon the Lord.*
- If your kids are not where they should be, doing what they should do: *I will wait upon the Lord.*

And let me be clear, by waiting, I don't mean sitting around doing nothing. David is very active in these chapters. He's a busy little bee: He protects himself by running; he prays about the situation and asks God to change it; given the opportunity, he confronts Saul and passionately pleads his case before him. He just **does so from a posture of trust**, and with a **refusal to compromise** and sin.

**Waiting on the Lord is a very ACTIVE thing: Think of it like this: Have you ever eaten at a true 5 star restaurant?** I only have once or twice, on special occasions. And I remember at this one, our table had one waiter who was devoted just to Veronica and me. He stood off to the side and just watched us. I'd just think "I need some pepper." And it was like he would suddenly just apparate beside my table, "Sir, would you like fresh ground pepper or our Malted Mediterranean blend?" He's my "waiter," but he's very actively attentive to everything I'm communicating. (The opposite of that are places like the **Waffle House**, where I could burst into flames and no one would notice. You have a waiter there, too, but because they are often understaffed they are usually preoccupied with a bunch of other things. I was in there the other day and the same lady sat me, took my order, cooked

my food, and mopped the bathroom, all in the space of like 10 minutes.)

The point is: **We're supposed to wait on God like a 5-star waiter** waits on us. Trained on who God is and what he wants us to do. I'm trusting him, but doing whatever he says.

It's like that **old Christian rock star Bob Hartman of Petra** used to say (anybody else listen to Petra growing up?): *Good things come to them who wait; but not to those who hesitate; so hurry up and wait upon the Lord.*

**Write this down:** *The biggest enemy in my life is not Saul. It's my inability to wait.*

I would say that learning to wait might be the most important skill to have as a believer.

- **I have told you before about the famous Stanford Marshmallow test, done in the 1970s.** "It's become famous as the marshmallow test, but it actually wasn't marshmallows. The participants were 32 children—between the ages of 3 and 5. The children were each led into a room, empty of distractions, where a treat of their choice (either two animal cookies or five pretzel sticks) were placed on a table. The researchers told each child they could eat the treat, but if they waited 15 minutes without eating, they would be rewarded with a second treat. Then they left the room and watched through a camera. Some kids just immediately grabbed the treats and gobbled them down. Can't trust adults. Bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. They said that kids who chose to wait developed all kinds of coping strategies: some covered their eyes with their hands so they couldn't see the treats; some got up and walked around the room; some avoid

making eye contact with the treat; one kid even got down and licked the table beside the treat as if somehow the treat had transmogrified into the wood. Researchers then tracked these children for the next 3 decades, and found that children who were able to wait had consistently better life outcomes, as measured by things like SAT scores, educational attainment, physical health, marriage satisfaction, and a whole host of other things.<sup>2</sup> **The researchers concluded that more than any other single factor they had ever studied,** the ability to wait predicted future successes.

- And since then, there's been other larger studies done that backed that up. One New Zealand study, done on more than 1,000 kids over four decades, concluded that the one factor that mattered more than any other on a child's **future health, material wealth, and relational harmony** was *impulse-control*. It was more significant than **social class, wealth of their family, or IQ**.
- **You say, "This depresses me about my kids."** Yes, it's something we have to help them with. But forget your kids for a minute. How many of you are like, "Yep, I'm the marshmallow grabber."
- **Pray for the ability to wait. Good things come to them that wait;** but not to those who hesitate; so, hurry up, and wait upon the Lord!
- You say, "Well, J.D., this all sounds easier said than done. Where do you find the resources to be a 5-star waiter?"

**Oh, so glad you asked!** David wrote a Psalm where he tells us!

**Psalm 57<sup>3</sup>** (middle of Bible; so important, I'm going to wait) **A MIKTAM OF DAVID, WHEN HE FLED FROM SAUL, IN THE CAVE.** ("Miktam" is Hebrew for 'R&B ballad.' And did you notice when he wrote it? He wrote it while he was hiding in these caves.)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2018/02/two-psychologists-followed-1000-new-zealanders-decades-here-s-what-they-found-about-how>

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Psalm 142.

<sup>1</sup> Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in *YOU* my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by.

<sup>2</sup> I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me. <sup>3</sup> He will send from heaven and save me; he will put to shame him who tramples on me. *Selah* (BTW, no one is completely sure exactly what SELAH in the Bible means; most likely it's something like, "Stop and ponder." It's a signal for a musical interlude; for us children of the 80's something akin to, "Stop! It's hammer time..." So, at this point in the Psalm, imagine David stopping and doing a little jig.)

"Stop!!" David says, and while all I do this little dance, think about what I just said: God WILL send from heaven for me AND he WILL help me. Vs. 3: **...God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness!**

*I WILL see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!*

**What do we see in these verses?**

### **(1) Sovereign purpose: (vs. 2)**

- In vs 2 (LOOK AT IT!--vs. 2, in your Bible. *I don't want to see your eyes right now; I want to see the tops of your heads.*) David said, "I know God, that even in this cave, you have a **purpose.**" Underline that word '**purpose.**' God has a purpose for me in this cave. "Saul's not really the one in charge here, God, you are." Which means I don't have to try to control Saul, or respond to Saul, I just have to honor you. And when I do, I can trust you with the results, because ultimately you're the one in charge.
- What if in every situation, you believed that a sovereign God with a good purpose was really the one in charge? My boss may be a jerk to me, but I don't have to respond to him. I don't have to pay him back or control him. God is the one in charge of this situation.

- My spouse may be insensitive and rude. But I'm going to respond to *God*, because he's the one ultimately in charge and he has a purpose even in this.
- Saul may not deserve your mercy; your boss may not deserve your integrity; your spouse may not deserve your kindness or faithfulness, but Jesus always does and so you always first and foremost respond to him.

### **(2) Steadfast love: (vs. 3)**

Not only does God have a purpose for my trial, that purpose is saturated through with steadfast, unchanging love.

**How would your perspective change if you really believed that in all things--even when Saul has you unjustly trapped in a cave--that a sovereign God had a good purpose in it, a purpose woven with the threads of steadfast love, and that there was not one stray thread in your life outside the control of that love? You may not always be able to see his purpose, but it's working.**

- One of my **watches... (Kinetic; clear back)**. They go every which way--backwards! And it looks like chaos, but it keeps perfect time.
- A lot of things in your life may feel like backward motion. "*Why did God allow me to be divorced? Why was I overlooked for promotion? Why did my parents let me down so badly?*"
- I can't answer every question for why everything happens in your life, but I can tell you that if you have entrusted your life to God, he has a loving purpose he pursues in every moment and through every movement, forwards and backwards.

You say, "J.D., this is easy for you to say... you don't know what I'm going through." You've had a bankruptcy; an unexpected pregnancy; a miscarriage; you've been betrayed by a friend or a spouse; you've been laid off from the company after 26 years with no prospects." And maybe I don't understand. I mean, I've got my own problems, too, but maybe yours feel worse to you.

**But listen to David:** <sup>4</sup> My soul is in the midst of lions; I lie down amid fiery beasts— the children of man, whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords.

- That sounds pretty bad. David is being chased by a rabid king who used to be a friend who is now trying to kill him!
- David knows a little bit of the anguish you are going through. The point is not to compare yours and mine or yours and his. As I've told you: **suffering is not a competitive sport**. The point is that the resources David avails himself of are available to you, too.

God watches over your life with sovereign purpose and steadfast love.

Now look at vs. <sup>7</sup> ...My heart is **steadfast**, O God, my heart is **steadfast!** I will sing and make melody! (With Saul just a few feet away, I can make a joyful melody!)

**What is the song playing in your heart during suffering?** Is it a melody of contented joy or a dirge of anxious complaining?

Write down: **(3) Steadfast confidence: (vs 7)** (Sovereign purpose; steadfast love; steadfast confidence--I told you, my alliteration game is on fire this weekend!)

**David says, "My heart is steadfastly locked on you."** Now, don't miss this: this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> time David uses the word "steadfast." The 1<sup>st</sup> time was in vs. 3 when David used "steadfast" to describe God's commitment to him. Now he uses the word "steadfast" to describe his commitment to God. **You see which one came first?**

*David can be steadfast toward God because he knows God is steadfast toward him.*

**The secret to steadfast obedience is steadfast confidence in God's steadfast love.**

And the opposite is true, too: When **you are not confident in the goodness of God, that's when you get anxious and want to take matters back into your own hands.**

**Miroslav Volf is a Croatian** who lived through one of the worst chapters of ethnic cleansing in history (in Serbia). He said this and I thought it was absolutely fascinating: "You know, people often say that if you believe in a God of judgment that you will become violent yourself." He said, it's actually exactly the opposite. *It's when you don't believe in a God of justice* that you become violent and judgmental. Who is going to pay these people back for what they did? When you've watched someone murder your parents and siblings, how can you not be filled with a rage that will eat you alive? He talked about how he wrestled with hating the people who had been so cruel to his people. But then he said, "As I contemplated the gospel, I realized that because the people who did these things would answer to God, I didn't have to make them answer to me. And **that gave me the resources to not hate them.**"

Because I believe in a God of justice and a God who has steadfast love toward me, I don't have to take matters into my own hands. But on the other hand, **if you don't believe in God's justice, you'll feel driven to pursue it to the point of rage.** You'll become like Chris Pratt in *The Terminal List* going through life with a list of scores to settle. But when you know you have a sovereign God, who has a purpose for you saturated with steadfast love, you can wait patiently with steadfast confidence in him.

Does that make sense?

**David's steadfast obedience came from his steadfast confidence in God's steadfast love.**

## VAMP

**Which brings us to the most important dimension in this story.** As I've told you throughout this series, ultimately, what David goes through in that cave in the wilderness of En Gedi gives us a picture of Jesus.

(Silhouette): So, when he steps in, we say, "Oh, that's you!"

You see, like David, Jesus was anointed King, but like David, Jesus didn't receive that Kingdom immediately; he had to wait, while he was disrespected and snubbed and persecuted and falsely accused.

But, like David, Jesus never took matters into his own hands. He waited on God, trusting that his Father would make things right in his own time.

And, like David, Jesus was tempted by Satan to take a shortcut. "Just take this shortcut," Satan said to Jesus, "and you can have it all right now." But like David, Jesus refused.

And like David, Jesus didn't take vengeance on his enemies when he had the opportunity to, and quite frankly the right to. After all, in this story, we are Saul. We, the human race, each of us, had usurped Jesus' throne; and we were the ones trying to kill him. We were all represented in that throng in Jerusalem that Friday afternoon crying out 'Crucify him!'

And that's where Jesus' story and David's story diverges a bit. You see, Jesus did more than just spare us, like David spared Saul. Jesus actually died in our place so that we could be forgiven and restored to the palace. David merely let Saul go; Jesus laid down his life for us.

And see, when you see that, **that gives you the confidence** to trust him. If Jesus came to you when you were in the midst of treason, and if he declared his love and acceptance of you when you were in full rebellion mode against him, doesn't that give you the power to trust him completely in everything.

Many of you hear this message today and in your heart you say, "I need to trust God more," and you think, "& maybe if I do that, God will accept me and I can be sure he'll always protect/provide for me."

**But you've gotten the order wrong--and the order is critical.** It's kind of like when you jump a dead car battery. You have to get the order right. Dead red to living red, then black to black. Then you turn the key. Get things out of order, and it either won't work or you might blow yourself up. Same thing here: you have to keep the order right: *It's not that you develop steadfast faith and then God accepts you. You develop steadfast faith **because** God accepts you.* Assurance of his acceptance comes first. God connects his cables to you, so to speak, and only then do you have power to start. Assurance of his acceptance precedes consistency in his commands.

So, when you see that this whole story is about how he came after you, how he's never stopped loving you and how he accepted you in mercy when he could have killed you for treason, then you start to trust him. Assurance of his acceptance enables obedience to his commands. Again: It's not that you become a person of strong, flawless faith and then Jesus accepts you; it's when you have the assurance of his acceptance that you develop the confidence to always obey *HIM*, no matter what, and avoid these devastating shortcuts. So...

Bow your heads...

**Christian:** Where do you need to trust God and wait? Where are you tempted to run ahead of him? Where do you need to stop trying to control the circumstances or make things work out but just trust him and respond to him? Can you say, “Jesus, if you loved me enough to come for me like this, I can trust you, surrender to your will, and respond only to you. I’m not going to respond to my boss anymore, or my spouse, or the unfairness of these circumstances, I’m going to respond to YOU.”

**Here’s another question:** Some of you have never received Jesus’ offer to save you. He came to the cross--he was the true King, and instead of taking vengeance on you, he offered you forgiveness. But here’s the deal: you have to receive that for yourself. Have you done that? Will you do that? You can do it today.