

Series: Life's Defining Moments

VBC

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1 Samuel 24

“Expedience Over Obedience?”

It was 1924—Colombes Stadium, Paris

- and members of the British Olympic Committee were flabbergasted and outraged
- not to mention the Scottish people—many of whom felt betrayed
- for a young Scotsman—in a defining moment—chose not to run
- and this would ruin Scotland's chances for national glory
- for it was clearly his race to win—and give Scotland its first Olympic Gold Medal ever
- but there was a stubborn resolve—he was an immovable object—he would not budge
- in his mind—to run a race scheduled on the Sabbath—was disobedience
- for him—it was to dishonor God's holiness—he could not do what everyone else wanted
- no matter the earthly rewards
- and to this day—Eric Liddell (Chariots of Fire) is remembered

-there will be moments we too will be faced with the choice—expedience or obedience?

- it may be advantageous—but it may not be right
- in I Sam 24—David had a similar defining moment
- he too was presented with an amazing opportunity
- would he choose to do what was personally useful—or go against what everyone else wanted, expected?
- we find the setting in the first part—read verses 1-4
- David is in En-gedi—part of the badlands of Israel
- but David is not alone—everybody who has anything to do with God spends time in the wilderness—Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Jesus, Paul, YOU! ME!
- Nelson Mandela, after becoming South Africa's leader, remarked—“Every great leader must cross the desert”
- it may be a season of unemployment—a setback—a timeout

-there's a reason for this—God is invested in shaping the heart
-and He does some of His greatest heart work in the quiet, in the caves, in the barren—FOR TWO REASONS—

1. everything proceeds from the heart-

“The human heart, will, or spirit is the executive center of a human life. The heart is where decisions and choices are made for the whole person. That is its function”—Dallas Willard

-our heart will determine our sexual choices

- our posture towards things—whether we will own possessions or possessions will own us
- the state of the heart determines whether we are greedy or generous; honest or deceptive; coarse or gracious; arrogant or humble; foolish or wise
- sound in judgment or prone to misjudgments

2. our hearts need a lot of work—sin has warped them

“Out of the heart comes evil thoughts, sexual immoralities, thefts, murders, adulteries, greed, evil actions, deceit, lewdness, stinginess, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness”—Mark 7:21

- David is a man after God’s heart—but David’s heart has its own perversions-
- David is a mix of courageous and conniving; loyal and self-serving; architect and adulterer; sensitive and vengeful*
- he is not ready to be the king

- so it is in the desert God purges interior impurities that would otherwise remain
- here He surfaces destructive feelings—exposes motives
- unmasks the things that have attached themselves to us
- strips away layers of self-deception—layers of rationalization
- tests us with opportunities and asks—will we be obedient or expedient?
- will we use good judgment or bad judgment?

- “Leadership is, at its marrow, the chronicle of judgment calls”—Judgment, Tichy*
- as king, David will have to make a lot of judgment calls—and so he is tested—
- trained in sound judgment-
- what does that look like?

A. SOUND JUDGMENT ACCURATELY READS THE CIRCUMSTANCES

- note—reads—not ruled by circumstances
- it does not immediately assume open doors are synonymous with the will of God
- does not automatically conclude that a sudden opportunity—or a sudden closing—is a “God-thing”

-for David’s men—the events had all providentially lined up fortuitously... THIS WAS OPPORTUNITY KNOCKING—pounding!

- Saul’s men just happened to be in this area—verse 2
- the call of nature just happened to come by this cave—verse 3
- Saul just happened to become very vulnerable
- how could anyone read it differently?—this was a God thing!*

- sometimes we are tested in the same way-
- we are presented with an unexpected job inquiry—is this God calling us to somewhere else?
- there is an amazing sale—is this God saying—BUY!!?
- there is an open door—is this God saying—GO IN!!!?

In his book, Decisive, Heath points out—*we're not the rational creatures we think we are*

-we're all prone to "narrow framing"

-quick to make a decision—fixed on what's in the spotlight—w/o stopping to shift the light—see from multiple angles

-it helps explain why some 70,000 tattoos were reversed last year

-here's what God is teaching David—*the real test of a person's character is not what one will do without opportunity—but WITH opportunity*

-David is learning that a man of God must not be compelled by the circumstances, ruled by open or closed doors (1 Corinthians 16; 2 Corinthians 2)

-David would be led by other things—not what is immediately in front

B. SOUND JUDGMENT WISELY HANDLES THE PRESSURE OF PEERS

-David suddenly found himself pressured to make a decision

-to resist following the herd might have seemed like he was resisting God Himself—verse 4

-and David almost caved—he takes his sword—he approached Saul—his men silently cheer

-but better judgment stopped David—*as it must stop us*

-everyone may vote yes—but it does not mean we should

-everyone else may be doing it—but this does not mean we should be doing it

-*good judgment does not make decisions based upon the latest polls—what other churches are doing*

C. SOUND JUDGMENT CAREFULLY DISTINGUISHES BETWEEN THE PERCEIVED WILL OF GOD AND THE ACTUAL WILL OF GOD

-David's men were so convinced of divine providence—they cited what they believed to be God's revealed will—

"Behold the day God said to you—'Look, I am giving you your enemy into your hand—do what is right in your eyes'" (verse 4)

-here's what I want to know—when did God say this to David?

-no one seems to know—including David

-we are quite good at speaking for God without really checking to see if He said it

-God will occasionally test us with the question—will we pursue what God has actually revealed—or will we listen to a voice of our own making?

illustration—some years ago, I went through a low point in my ministry—and precisely at that moment—an inviting opportunity came along

-living in a castle in Austria—overlooking the valley—surrounded by the alps

-heading up a ministry—this thing had God stamped all over it

-like David's men—I immediately started using God language

-*it's amazing what God says when you speak for Him*

-we are all tempted to give life's events a sacred spin...

- especially when they promise relief from God's anvil, spare us from what God wants to do with us in the purifying fire of the furnace
- convince others when we want our way*
- but good judgment always tests everything through the grid of what God has actually revealed
- and avoids attaching God language where He has chosen to be silent

D. SOUND JUDGMENT STUBBORNLY CHOOSES OBEDIENCE OVER EXPEDIENCE

-taking Saul's life was the convenient thing to do—the practical thing to do—the advantageous thing to do

-the popular thing to do

- no longer would they be hunted by animals
- dark and dank caves would be exchanged for warm beds
- hideouts would be replaced with palaces
- short term living would give way to long term stability

-but life with God isn't necessarily about what is close at hand, what is most profitable, what is most convenient—what gets gold medals or increased pay or warm beds or the applause of men

-it is about duty—faithfulness—obedience

-the convenient thing is to kill Saul—but David is seized with God's holiness

-and the holy thing to do is to honor Saul

-he has a holy anointing that demands respect

-David is learning this—his men must learn this—read verses 5-7

-Liddell learned something of holiness at Oxford—joining the Oxford Group—men completely surrendered to God

-they held one another accountable every day to holiness—absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, absolute honesty

-and it became his pattern for life

-David learned something of holiness in the wilderness—a sense of the sacred was developing in him

-his heart was becoming finely tuned to God—the evidence being that when he crossed the line—his soul was pierced

-as benign as it seemed—Saul's robe was a sign of an office, the symbol of royalty—rank, position, divine glory

-to tear it was to take on constituted authority—something the people in the wilderness did against Moses—and it cost them their lives—Numbers 12

-if Saul—or his robe—is to be touched—it will have to be by God (verses 8-12)

-more than we realize—we are faced with countless situations in which the choice is expedience or obedience

-we see it throughout scripture—“Hey Abraham, since God has not given me a child, go to my slave—perhaps I can have children through her” (bad move)

- “Hey Jesus—I will give you all these kingdoms if you fall down and worship me”—this would have been expedient
- but Jesus was obedient—to the point of death
- to pay for our failures on the cross

-we will face the same temptations to do what is expedient

- what works—what is convenient—what is popular
- what feels so right in the moment
- what is expected—but may not necessarily be what is right

E. SOUND JUDGMENT CORRECTLY DISCERNs THE TIME

-it is our nature to misread, misjudge the clock—get ahead of God—take things into our own hands

- God was teaching David about HIS TIME
- had David gone ahead of God—and taken out Saul
- he would have shortened time in the wilderness

- he would have also missed writing some of his best psalms
- he would have set up succession by bloodshed
- he would have been accused—and rightly so—of cheap revenge
- of seizing the throne rather than receiving the throne

-but David will not seize in his own power what God has one day promised He will give by His grace

- he will not determine the moment—he will let God define the time
- if Saul is to be taken out—it will be by God in God’s time—as David notes in verse 12
- he will not get ahead of God

CONCLUSION

It was a defining moment—David passed the test

- how about you?
- what decision might you be facing—a decision calling for sound judgment?
- a purchase? A relationship? A career? A shift in direction?
- more time with God?
- a decision that will be decided by expedience or obedience?
- have you decided?