

DAVID: A MAN OF PASSION AND DESTINY

STUDY TEN

Cloudy Days . . . Dark Nights

1 Samuel 27:1–30:6

The timeless truth woven all the way through this passage is that dark days call for right thinking and a vertical focus. The storms of life aren't designed to throw us on our backs but to bring us to our knees.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

Do you ever feel like you're adrift at sea . . . with no sense of direction and no idea how to find the refuge of dry land? Does it ever feel like life is hitting you with wave after wave of disappointment, disillusionment, and distress?

You may look around and wonder, *How did I even get here?* Many times, people find themselves caught in the stormy seas by no act of their own. There is nothing morally or spiritually wrong if someone feels this way. Humans can't control the storm!

Occasionally, however, a person will actively put his or her own boat into the choppy waters by making a poor decision in a moment of folly and frail faith.

The ship of King David's life faced both high tides and low tides, both stormy seas and calm waters. Yet, in one grim season, David looked up to see the cloudy skies fade into the blackness of night. David felt hopeless and found himself drowning in a whirlpool of despair. And he was there because of the bad choices *he himself* had made.

This *Searching the Scriptures* study will join David at one of his darkest moments to see how God was working even in the darkness of David's sin to bring him into the light. Perhaps, by pointing to David's example, God wants to lead you through the storm into the dawn as well.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Scripture records no psalms of David from this tumultuous time. But David still wrote many psalms *after* this season, and he likely looked back to these difficult times as inspiration for some of his psalms about God's faithfulness. Pray in faith the words of *Psalms 30:1–5*, and look ahead to the hope God offers, even if everything feels totally hopeless right now.

*I will exalt you, LORD, for you rescued me.
You refused to let my enemies triumph over me.
O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,
and you restored my health.
You brought me up from the grave, O LORD.
You kept me from falling into the pit of death.
Sing to the LORD, all you godly ones!
Praise his holy name.
For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favor lasts a lifetime!
Weeping may last through the night,
but joy comes with the morning.*



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Just when he thought he was free from Saul's relentless pursuit, David heard news that Saul and 3,000 of Israel's best soldiers were on the hunt once again. One night, David sneaked into Saul's camp. Finding Saul asleep, a soldier offered to kill Saul for David. How did David respond to this offer in *1 Samuel 26:9–11*?



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When David finally confronted Saul, the king humbly confessed, “I have sinned. Come back home, my son, and I will no longer try to harm you, for you valued my life today. I have been a fool and very, very wrong” (1 Samuel 26:21). Turn now to 1 Samuel 27 to see what David did after Saul and his army went home, leaving David no closer to the throne than before.



Observation: Clouds and Darkness Come

The story preserved in 1 Samuel 27 may strike you as strange or confusing, but before you reach for any Bible study resources, read through the chapter a few times using several translations. Make sure you really understand what the passage *says* before you consider what it *means*.¹

In your own words, summarize what David thought to himself in 27:1. What was David’s problem? What did he consider to be the solution? What stands out to you about David’s response in light of the events of the preceding chapter?

When Saul heard in 27:4 that David went to Gath, he stopped his pursuit. Why did Saul stop, even though he had been chasing David relentlessly for so long? What irony do you see in David’s choice of refuge? (Hint: See 17:4 to remember who was from Gath.)



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When David lived in the land of the Philistines, he and his men did some questionable things. Realizing that King Achish would not approve of David’s actions, he carefully bent the truth to win the king’s approval. Read *1 Samuel 27:8–10*, and using the chart below, compare what David *actually* did with what he *told* Achish he did.

	What David <i>actually</i> did (27:8)	What he <i>told</i> Achish (27:10)
Whom he fought		
Where he fought		

According to *27:9*, what was the result of David’s battles with the people he actually fought? According to *27:11–12*, why did David do these things?

When David was a boy, God promised to make him king. With the passing of time, though, this promise faded from David’s focus. Instead, he operated with:

- A humanistic viewpoint—“David kept thinking to himself” (27:1)
- Pessimistic reasoning—“Saul is going to get me” (27:1)
- Rationalistic logic—“The best thing I can do is escape to the Philistines” (27:1)



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These distractions led David to turn inward, away from God, to find solutions to his problems rather than trusting that God would do what He promised.



Interpretation: Winds and Storms Increase

Interpretation builds upon the foundation of observation and develops timeless truths based on David's example that the people of God can use in their journey of faith.

In what ways did David show a lack of faith in God in *1 Samuel 27*? What were the consequences of David's actions, and who, other than David, did these consequences affect?

To preserve his own life, David compromised his allegiance to his own people and joined the cause of God's enemies. In what ways did David show duplicity, vagueness, and secrecy to yield to the desires of both the Israelites and the Philistines in *27:8–12*? Why was this problematic? *Constable's Notes* at netbible.org provides a detailed discussion of these verses.

We don't hear much about the carnal Christian, do we? Not much is said about the believer who chooses to disobey God and operate in the flesh. David, at this point in his life, is a clear illustration of a man who is a believer on the inside, but on the outside, he looks just like a nonbeliever because of the way he's living his life. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: Finding Joy in the Darkness

About 1,000 years after the life of David, James (Jesus' own half-brother) wrote to a group of believers facing cloudy days and dark nights. They were scattered from their homes, their friends, and their families, and they were facing persecution for their faith in Jesus. James wrote to comfort them during a stormy season.

Read [James 1:2–4](#). According to this passage, what attitude are followers of Jesus to have when they face trouble?

Why did James encourage his readers to adopt this disposition?

The Greek word translated as “troubles” or “trials” can also be translated as “temptations.” How would this translation affect the way you understand the passage? How would David have benefited from believing this truth recorded by James?



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Contrary to the suggestion of James, David did not use his season of darkness to grow. He chose, instead, to fill his sail with his own sinful actions and move deeper into the storm. These choices ultimately harmed David, and his behavior serves as a warning to those facing cloudy days or dark nights today.

Application: Learning from David's Injury and Devastation

With each sinful action, David's life moved deeper into the darkness—like he was descending step by step into a pit. David experienced four feelings, each progressively worsened until he landed at the lowest point in his life.

1. *Displacement*: Although David tried to prove himself to the Philistines, they saw through his deception and removed him from his position under King Achish (1 Samuel 29:1–7).
2. *Disillusionment*: Once David lost the protection of Achish and the Philistine army, he had no protection from Saul's attacks (29:8–11).
3. *Depression*: When David returned to Ziklag, the land King Achish had given him, he found it in ruins and the women and children kidnapped. David, and his men wept “until they could weep no more” (30:1–4).
4. *Distrust*: The men David served and trained—the men who had faithfully followed him—lost their families, their home, and their safety . . . and they blamed David (30:5–6).

Have you felt any of these emotions lately?



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Reflect on your recent choices. In a moment of fear or anxiety, did you make any sinful decisions? Maybe you, like David, took refuge with “Philistines” and rationalized actions you knew were wrong. What would it look like for you to repent and turn away from these choices?

Pastor Chuck offers a timeless principle for those caught in the storms of life: *Cloudy days and dark nights call for right thinking and vertical focus.*

Are you in a stormy season right now? God doesn’t promise to miraculously cause the sun to rise and burn away the clouds. But He will remain faithful to His people and to His promises. How can you practically embrace right thinking and a vertical focus on God?

David began this journey by looking inward for a solution to his problem (27:1). But after driving himself deeper into the storm, David realized that he needed God to guide him to safety. When things couldn’t seem darker for David—when he was at his lowest point—he looked up and found “strength in the LORD his God” (30:6).

You may feel like you can’t gather enough strength to weather the storm for the rest of the dark night, but you don’t have to. God will be your strength, and He will bring you safely to shore.



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A FINAL PRAYER

Whether you are experiencing sunny days and clear skies or cloudy skies and dark nights, offer your own concluding prayer to God. Ask Him to give you the strength to carry you through life, both today and in the future.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."

