

Sloth

2 Samuel 1:1-4

Today, listen to the voice of the Lord.

How is he calling you this summer?

You are with David, preparing for kingship. David is in a moment of great triumph. His time has come. Like David, your nemesis the devil, has been defeated by the grace of God. You may be tempted to relax, let your guard down, and bask in a celebration of victory. Since the urgency of the battle with sin has decreased over the last months, sloth threatens to lull you into a moral and spiritual sleep. Sloth is a kind of ambivalence about spiritual discipline and one's duties, while the remedy is a sharp conscience.

Pray that the Lord draws you out of sloth to embrace the kingly mission he has given you. Pray for the grace of freedom and humility for all Exodus Men, just as they are praying for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord and Master of my life, spare me from the spirit of indifference, despair, lust for power, and idle chatter. Instead, bestow on me, your servant, the spirit of integrity, humility, patience, and love. Yes, O Lord and King, let me see my own sins and not judge my brothers and sisters; for you are blessed forever and ever. Amen.

A Reading from the Second Book of Samuel

After the death of Saul, when David had returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, David remained two days in Ziklag; and on the third day, behold, a man came from Saul's camp, with his clothes rent and earth upon his head. And David said to him, "How did it go? Tell me." And he answered, "The people have fled from the battle, and many of the people also have fallen and are dead; and Saul and his son Jonathan are also dead."

Reflection

We are starting our Scripture reading and reflection in 2 Samuel. In 1 Samuel, God called Saul to be Israel's first king, and he was found unworthy through his disobedience. God then called the boy David to be king, pouring out his Spirit upon him and enabling him to conquer the giant, Goliath. He was persecuted by Saul as he formed his own fighting force. Now in 2 Samuel, he is poised to assume the kingship over Judah and then all of Israel.

In our passage, Saul, who had persecuted David for several years, is dead. Now, David can finally become king and assume his rightful place in God's plan. It might seem that now David can relax and enjoy his new position. Perhaps David should take a brief vacation or delegate his responsibilities to others to rest from all the turmoil he had been experiencing from Saul's hand.

Likewise, you have passed through many spiritual trials. By God's grace, through your Exodus exercises you have progressed in a disciplined life and loosened the enemy's grip on your soul. Can you relax a little now? Well, it all depends upon what you mean by "relax." This is what we want to think through over these next few weeks of summer, drawing on the theme of spiritual lethargy or sloth.

In the tradition of the Church, spiritual lethargy is often referred to as "sloth," "sadness," "despondency," "acedia," or "the noonday devil." Sloth is a kind of laziness or, more specifically, a lack of endurance or perseverance. A slothful person might appear very busy, but that's because he cannot see any one task through to the end. The slothful person tires out quickly and, thus, changes tasks frequently. A slothful person is characterized by a listlessness that keeps him from stability.

"Sadness" and "despondency" refer to someone who is prone to self-pity. They are a "sad" or "despondent" person in the sense that it feels like the world is against him. He is likely very irritable, oversensitive, and prone to overreaction. There is a general dissatisfaction and discontentment that leads to a downcast spirit.

"Acedia" is Greek for "lack of care." It was nicknamed "the noonday devil" because it tended to afflict monks in the middle of the day when they started to feel like it was time for a nap. A person with acedia has contempt for hard work. There is a sense of entitlement that a person with acedia has; a belief that things should be easy or that he deserves better. The person with acedia is unlikely to help others, but is ready to accept their help. Someone with acedia is prone to a kind of escapism—a daydreaming about what it would be like in other circumstances.

For our purposes, we will primarily call spiritual lethargy "sloth," since it is the one that is traditionally identified as one of the seven deadly sins. We will be unpacking sloth as we go forward, but for now, ask yourself whether any of these descriptions stuck out to you. Ask the Holy Spirit to call your attention to slothful tendencies in your life.

Are there times when you are prone to sadness or self-pity?
Are there times when you make too many commitments to distract yourself from your main duties?
Are there moments when you hate hard work?
Take this topic before the Lord in prayer today.

Now place yourself before God, and converse with him.

Day 2 Action Items

You are invited to join our Summer Book Club on Acedia and Its Discontents. Starting tomorrow, we will be offering a supplemental book study on R.J. Snell's book, Acedia and Its Discontents. As we follow the steps of King David in our daily reflections, the book study will help us to go a bit deeper into the nature of acedia and how we can overcome it in our lives and culture. Join us every other Tuesday for a conversation even if you

haven't read the material. You can access it through the app.

Form or evaluate your Plan of Life.

During the Easter season, we formed a Plan of Life. See this overview for what a Plan of Life is and how to form one. We have a baseline of prayer, disciplines, and fraternity for all Exodus Men, while the Plan of Life allows for additional elements based on your needs. What disciplines do you need to continue and intensify to prompt your growth? The Plan of Life is ordered to help you to fight the spiritual battle in a way tailored to the needs of where you are at and how you need to grow.

Where are your current spiritual battles? Are there places where you need to step back to focus somewhere else? This requires discernment, so we must ask the Lord to guide us in forming this Plan. You can always make adjustments later if need be.