

# I Kissed Grace Goodbye

David the Fugitive Pt.10

1 Samuel 27:1-28:2 5-17-2009

Summary: This chapter has a two-fold purpose: 1) To defend David from accusations of defection or treason, and 2) To set the stage for Saul's death (he drove away the one man who could protect him). Saul drives away the only connection he had to grace from God. He did it through unreliability. Be careful who you drive away, and when you are driven away turn exile into conquest (be like the Ark).

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
The last five chapters of the book: the demise of Saul <sup>3</sup>	
<b>Defection or Exile?.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Wisdom or Lack of faith?        3	
God Sees Your Heart    4	
Love always trusts?    4	
<b>The Foolishness of Pushing Away God's Grace.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>The means of pushing away God's grace: Unfaithfulness.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>What if you are the one being pushed away? .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Double Agent 00-David – verses 5-12 (conquest continuation, not treason)        7	
<i>David Takes Ziklag</i> .....	7
<i>The Raids</i> .....	8
<i>David stays busy</i> .....	9
<i>Like the ark</i> .....	9
Uh Oh - 28:1-2        10	

**1 Samuel 26:19** If the LORD has incited you against me, then may he accept an offering. If, however, men have done it, may they be cursed before the LORD! They have now driven me from my share in the LORD's inheritance and have said, 'Go, serve other gods.'

**27:1** But David thought to himself, "One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand." **2** So David and the six hundred men with him left and went over to Achish son of Maach king of Gath. **3** David and his men settled in Gath with Achish. Each man had his family with him, and David had his two wives: Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, the widow of Nabal. **4** When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him.

**5** Then David said to Achish, "If I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be assigned to me in one of the country towns, that I may live there. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you?" **6** So on that day Achish gave him Ziklag, and it has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since. **7** David lived in Philistine territory a year and four months. **8** Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites. (From ancient times these peoples had lived in the land extending to Shur and Egypt.) **9** Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive, but took sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes. Then he returned to Achish. **10** When Achish asked, "Where did you go raiding today?" David would say, "Against the Negev of Judah" or "Against the Negev of Jerahmeel" or "Against the Negev of the Kenites." **11** He did not leave a man or woman alive to be brought to Gath, for he thought, "They might inform on us and say, 'This is what David did.'" And such was his practice as long as he lived in Philistine territory. **12** Achish trusted David and said to himself, "He has become so odious to his people, the Israelites, that he will be my servant forever."

## Introduction

We are nearing the end of the book of 1 Samuel. We have five chapters to go, and what happens in these five chapters is not a pretty sight. Let me just read you a few verses that summarize what happens:

**28:4 The Philistines assembled and came and set up camp at Shunem, while Saul gathered all the Israelites and set up camp at Gilboa. 5 When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his heart. 6 He inquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him**

**31:3 The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him critically.**

**7 When the Israelites along the valley and those across the Jordan saw that the Israelite army had fled and that Saul and his sons had died, they abandoned their towns and fled. And the Philistines came and occupied them.**

That is how the book ends. The Israelites are defeated, the Philistines occupy the Holy Land, and they string up Saul's dead body in their pagan temples.

**8 The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. 9 They cut off his head and stripped off his armor, and they sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to proclaim the news in the temple of their idols and among their people. 10 They put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths and fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan.**

We know that Saul had that coming. But what does all this say about David? Where was he?

If you lived back then and you knew anything at all about what was going on – even if you were the president of David's fan club, you would probably have had some serious questions, because at the time this war happened, David was with the Philistines. He had been living there for over a year, and he had an alliance with a Philistine king. In fact, the king loved David because David had been conducting raids against Israel. And just in case anyone doubts that, David had the plunder from those raids to prove it. Not only that, David was in the service of this king. David was the Philistine king's personal bodyguard - during the very time when the Philistines defeated Israel and killed Saul and Jonathan.

None of that looks very good. And if some pro-David supporter comes along and wants to argue with that, and says, "No, David was not on the Philistines' side when that happened - he would never do that," then you could answer – "If that's the case, then where was he when Saul was being killed and the Israelite army overrun by the Philistines?" If David was not on the Philistines' side, then why didn't we see him in the battle protecting King Saul? Was he a coward? Did he run away?

We have hard evidence that David was on the Philistines' side during that time – even on the pages of Scripture.

**1 Chronicles 12:19 David ... went with the Philistines to fight against Saul.**

Even here in 1 Samuel – just skip ahead to chapter 29 and you will see David marching out with the Philistines to fight against Saul.

**1 Samuel 29:2 As the Philistine rulers marched with their units of hundreds and thousands, David and his men were marching at the rear with Achish.**

You can imagine the kinds of debates that went on. "Saul is dead. What are we going to do now - appoint as our king the bodyguard of Achish, king of Gath? Achish says David was the most loyal servant he ever had. Are we going to appoint a man who spent over a year raiding and plundering the cities of the Negev of Judah (his own tribe) as king of Israel? Shouldn't he be executed, rather than crowned?" Anyone who would support David as king has a whole lot of explaining to do.

Even to this day David is criticized for this. David really takes it in the chin from the commentators in this chapter. I read at least 15 commentaries on 1 Samuel in my preparation for these sermons, and I only remember one that does not say that David was in sin during this time.

So what are we to make of 1 Samuel 27? Is David doing good or doing evil? Does God approve or disapprove?

And beyond that, what is the purpose of this chapter anyway? Why is it in the Bible? How does it fit in to the overall message of 1 Samuel? And what possible application is there for our lives? We read about David settling in Ziklag and conducting raids and all his dealings with King Achish – what application does that have for you tomorrow morning when you get up about your day?

### **The last five chapters of the book: the demise of Saul**

With all the wide range of opinions in the commentaries about chapter 27, one thing they all had in common was that none of them offered any suggestion at all from what I could tell about the purpose of chapter 27 in the book of Samuel. Any time you are studying the Bible and cannot see why a passage is there, there is a good chance you do not understand the passage.

So let's back up a little bit and see if we can figure out from the surrounding context what the purpose of this chapter is. I think one reason this chapter has been tricky is because the keys to understanding how it fits in lie mostly in the chapters to come, not so much the previous chapters. I really wish we had the time for me to preach the last five chapters of the book in a single sermon, because chapters 27-31 have one basic purpose – to show the demise of Saul. It has been obvious in the previous chapters that the writer is very concerned with defending David in the manner in which he rose to the throne. He did not usurp it, he did not take it by force; he was completely innocent in the whole process. In fact, if anything has been established it is the fact that David is the defender of Saul. Not only has David saved Saul's life more than once, but in chapter 26 last week we saw that David is the only man in Israel capable of protecting Saul. The mighty Abner, the most valiant warrior in Saul's army, was sawing logs when he should have been on guard protecting the king. Every other defender of the king deserves to die for their ineptitude and incompetence. Only David proves both able and willing to protect Saul's life.

But if David is such a great protector, where is he when Saul dies? God is going to answer that question for us in chapter 27. I said a moment ago that anyone who supports David as being fit for the throne has a lot of explaining to do in the matter of Saul's death. And God supports David as king, and chapter 27 is where he does His explaining.

The reason there is so much confusion over whether David is doing good or doing evil in chapter 27 is because the method most people use is to simply make a judgment about David's actions. But that is not a good method here because David's actions could be interpreted in more than one way. We do not really have enough information to make an assessment just from watching his actions. The way to determine what to make of David in chapter 27 is going to have to come from the tone of the narrator and most scholars do agree that the tone of chapter 27 is remarkably apologetic. That is, apologetic in the sense of defending David. The whole chapter is devoted to showing us that things were not what they seemed.

I believe 1 Samuel 27 is in the Bible for two main reasons: To show David's innocence in the occasion of Saul's death and to show God's method of judging Saul.

## **Defection or Exile?**

The first thing that needs to be explained, if David is innocent, is his apparent defection to the Philistines. Did David defect? How did he end up with the Philistines – living with them on friendly terms? David's reason for going to Philistia is in verse 1.

### **Wisdom or Lack of faith?**

**1 Samuel 27:1 But David thought to himself, "One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines.**

That is as far as you get in the chapter before the commentators start jumping all over David. They say David's faith is having a "fainting fit" here. God already made it clear that He is going to protect David, so isn't it just unbelief for David to say he is going to be destroyed by Saul?

Not at all. All David is saying is, "*If I stay here* Saul will destroy me." That is not much different from what God Himself said to David at Keilah. God said, "David, if you stay in Keilah Saul will come and they will turn you over to him," so David left Keilah and Saul did not come.

Has God promised to protect David? Yes. But that does not mean David should discard wisdom and sit around and do nothing. God will protect David from Saul, but He will do so by means of David's own actions in many cases so David still has the responsibility to make wise decisions.

What David does here is no different from what he has been doing all along. Nobody accuses David of unbelief when he hears Saul is coming and moves to a new hideout. David is simply using wisdom. Everything he has learned tells him that Saul's repentance will probably only last a matter of hours or days at the most, and he will be right back after David. And it is not a lack of faith for David to flee any more than it was a lack of faith for him to duck when Saul threw the spear at him.

If you want to understand how divine protection and human responsibility go together, a good rule of thumb is, "Trust God and use your head." Proverbs 3:5-6 doesn't say "Do not *use* your own understanding;" it says, "Do not *lean* on your own understanding." We should use our understanding and lean on God – rather than use God and lean on our own understanding. Follow wisdom, then trust Him.

So I do not think we can say that it was wrong for David to think this way in his mind. All we know is David was operating on the assumption that if he stayed in Israel Saul would keep coming after him. And the only thing that would prevent that would be for him to go to Philistia. Was David wrong about that?

#### **4 When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him.**

David was right. The only reason Saul finally gave up was because David made this move to Philistia, which means Saul would have reneged on his promise not to come after David anymore if David had remained in Israel.

Sometimes we pat ourselves on the back for the fact that we do not commit certain sins, when in reality the only reason we don't is because the opportunity is not there. I think many of us would be shocked to find out the degree of sin we would fall into if we had the opportunity. When you find yourself longing for some sin, do not say, "It's OK – I'm safe. I'll never have the chance to do that anyway," be careful. You would be amazed what the Devil can arrange. And even if he does not arrange it and you never do get the opportunity, if the willingness and desire are there, isn't the sin in your heart whether you carry out the action or not?

#### **God Sees Your Heart**

Remember, God can see your heart. He knows your desires. Remember in chapter 24 I joked about when Saul went into the cave to relieve himself and the writer of 1 Samuel in essence says, "Smile Saul – you're on Candid Camera"? Everyone in the world from that time to the Second Coming gets to see Saul squatting down in the cave. And we chuckle at that, but it is actually a really important lesson – especially for our culture where we worship our privacy. It is going to come as a shock to this culture someday when they find out that there is no such thing as privacy. It is a myth.

#### **1 Corinthians 4:5 [when the Lord comes] He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts.**

You are always on Candid Camera. And your desires and longings and what you would be willing to do if you had the opportunity – all that is on display before the eyes of God. Imagine if you were like Saul or David and the writer of Scripture was reporting all your inner thoughts and motives and feelings as you did all that you did? Can you imagine how hard it is to appear in a Bible story and be godly, when all your motives are exposed?

#### **Love always trusts?**

So, David leaves because he does not trust Saul to keep his word. But that brings up another problem. Was David wrong not to trust Saul? 1 Corinthians 13:7 says **Love ... always trusts**. If you love someone you will always trust him. So was it unloving for David not to trust Saul?

Saul told David he could come back and Saul would not come after him again. And look at how David responded:

**26:21 Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Come back, David my son. Because you considered my life precious today, I will not try to harm you again. Surely I have acted like a fool and have erred greatly." 22 "Here is the king's spear," David answered. "Let one of your young men come over and get it.**

Why doesn't David just go hand it to him? David knows Saul well enough now to know that even if his remorse is genuine, it might not last the 10 minutes it would take to run the spear over there.

This is the same thing that happened the last time Saul repented – back in chapter 24.

**24:22 Saul returned home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.**

Was David guilty of violating 1 Corinthians 13:7? We could ask the same question about Abigail. She did not trust her husband to have the right response, so she did not even tell him what was going on until after it was done. She did not trust him. Was Abigail guilty of violating 1 Corinthians 13:7?

Does God require us to believe absolutely everything everyone says to us? If you ask your two year old, "Did you get into the cookies?" and she says, "No" but there are crumbs all over her mouth and shirt and behind her back she has a cookie with a bite out of it, does 1 Corinthians 13:7 require that you believe her? Or when you put the cookie jar out of her reach when you leave the room because you don't trust her to obey, are you violating 1 Corinthians 13? No. The statement "Love always trusts" does not mean you should believe everything everyone says.

**1 John 4:1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit**

**Proverbs 26:24 A malicious man disguises himself with his lips, but in his heart he harbors deceit. 25 Though his speech is charming, do not believe him**

It is a sin to believe some people.

"Love always trusts" means if you love someone you will always believe the best thing you can believe about someone without being irrational or violating wisdom. If someone has been in bondage to some particular sin for many years, and one day they come and express remorse and repentance, should you assume they are being sincere? Sure But does that mean you should assume they will have victory over that sin from now on? No. There is a lot more to gaining victory over a besetting sin than just sincerity.

## **The Foolishness of Pushing Away God's Grace**

So David leaves because he has to leave. It is not desertion; it is exile. At the end of chapter 26 we saw that David desperately wanted to remain in Israel where he could be near the presence of God. And he pronounced a curse on anyone who would drive him away. But Saul did just that, and so now, as much as he hates to leave, David is forced to go to Philistia. When the attack comes and the Philistines get the upper hand and kill Saul, why isn't David there to protect Him? Because Saul drove David away in chapter 27. Saul finally succeeds in driving him away for good. He wanted to be rid of David – he is rid of David. He will never see David again.

And that is bad for Saul, because David is Saul's only pipeline to grace. Saul forfeited any claim on God's grace a long time ago. But God favors David so much that just by being around David Saul can get a little bit of splash effect of God's grace. Think about it – everything good that happens to Saul comes through David. If Saul is tormented by a demon, only David can calm his heart. If Saul is threatened by an impossible situation with Goliath, only David can come to his rescue. If Saul's life is in danger, no one but David is fit to guard him. Abner falls asleep while David is saving Saul's life.

In His mercy, God has enabled Saul to benefit from His grace if he is near David. So when Saul drives David away he succeeds in cutting off his last tether to God's grace. That is why he ends up dead soon after David is gone.

Sometimes when you drive someone out of your life, God punishes you by allowing you to succeed. Be careful who you drive out of your life. Sometimes God is willing to give you the grace you need, but only through a particular person – in some cases, a person you do not even like. And no doubt one of the reasons for doing that is to test your heart, to see if you are more interested in being comfortable or more interested in

holiness. Saul was more interested in his own career than in grace from God, and so he pushes away the means of God's grace.

Is there ever anyone you should push away (or flee from)? Yes – when someone is corrupting your character.

### **1 Corinthians 15:33 Bad company corrupts good character.**

When someone is leading you into false doctrine, confusing you about the truth, enticing you into sin – flee from people like that. But do not push someone away just because he is making your life hard. Very often it is the people God has sent into our lives to shape us into His image who make our lives the hardest.

There is a lot of talk in the Christian psychology world these days about boundaries. You have to set up boundaries in your life to keep the difficult, taxing people at bay. You need to set up walls so that you deal with people on your terms, and no one becomes too much of an interference or inconvenience in your life. You have to guard your privacy and guard your free time and guard yourself against too much discomfort.

That is the attitude of the selfish man. That is worldly. People in the world have to do that – unbelievers have to do that, because they do not have a loving Father in heaven looking out for their interests, so they have to look out for their own. But the man or woman who is confident in God's protecting love, and who trusts in God's perfect justice does not have to worry about any of that. Does a godly person set up boundaries? Sure. You put up walls to protect your heart. The difference is they set up boundaries to protect themselves from pain or inconvenience; we set up boundaries to protect ourselves from sin. I do not need to protect myself from getting hurt. Pain is not my enemy. Sin is.

## **The means of pushing away God's grace: Unfaithfulness**

So do not drive God's grace out of your life. But how do you do that? What is it that drives grace out? In Saul's case it was the fact that he was unreliable. When he said, "David, come back – I won't do it again" David could not trust him because he had proved himself so utterly untrustworthy.

Being untrustworthy is the opposite of being faithful, or reliable. Faithfulness is a wonderful virtue, and unfaithfulness is a terrible sin. Unfaithfulness destroys relationships. When you are an unreliable person you make yourself impossible to be around. Think about it – David was an incredibly forgiving man. He would forgive anything – even attempted murder. Saul throws a spear at him and David says, "Let's let bygones be bygones." David can forgive anything, but he cannot deal with unfaithfulness. Lie about me, take away my wife, hunt me down, try to kill me – I can forgive all that if you repent. But be unreliable and you force me to leave for good.

Dealing with an unreliable person is like having a walking stick that breaks when you lean on it. You know what it is like when you lean all your weight on something expecting it to hold you and it gives way? That is what an unreliable person is like.

**2 Kings 18:21 Look now, you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces a man's hand and wounds him if he leans on it! Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who depend on him.**

**Proverbs 25:19 Trusting an unreliable person in a time of trouble is like a rotten tooth or a faltering foot.**

There are at least two kinds of unreliable people. Some unreliable people are that way because they just simply do not care about following through on their word. They tell you one thing, and at the time they fully intend to do it, but if anything comes along that makes them think it is not such a good idea, they change their mind.

"I told you I would do A because I thought that was the best option. But now I can see that B is a better option, so I am changing my mind."

And the fact that they committed to A means nothing to them.

The other kind of unreliable person is the man or woman who is controlled by the flesh. They just cannot say no to the flesh so they will make all kinds of promises to you when no temptation is present, but then when temptation hits they collapse like a house of cards every time. That is the kind of man Saul was. He had

momentary flashes of repentance and resolve to do what is right, but only while it was easy. It never lasted long because he did not have any real love for the Lord that could carry him through any significant temptation.

One of the most delightful attributes of God is His faithfulness and one of the most authentic marks of a man after God's own heart is a guy who can be counted on. But the untrustworthy person makes himself impossible to be around and eventually drives away all the people God intended to bring grace into his life.

## **What if you are the one being pushed away?**

So from Saul's example we are reminded not to drive the grace of God away from our lives through unfaithfulness. But some of you might be thinking, "That's a good lesson, and I will keep that in mind, but what do you do when you are the one being driven away?" Maybe you are in a situation now where you feel God would use you to bring grace to someone, and you have something to offer them, but they keep pushing you away. How do you handle it if you are the one being banished?

We have answered the problem of why David went to Philistia. It was not defection; it was exile. He was not a deserter; he was driven out against his will by Saul. But now the next question – what about the time he was there? If David is loyal to Saul and to God and to Israel, how could he possibly survive among the Philistines for 16 months? And how is it that he is such good buddies with the Philistine king? And what about all these raids that made King Achish so happy?

Let's follow David's steps in Philistia and see what actually happened.

### **2 So David and the six hundred men with him left and went over to Achish son of Maach king of Gath.**

It is possible that Achish is a title rather than a name – like Pharaoh or Caesar. If so then it is possible that this is not the same Achish that let David go when David pretended to be insane. That would explain why this one is identified specifically as the son of Maach.

### **3 David and his men settled in Gath with Achish. Each man had his family with him, and David had his two wives: Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, the widow of Nabal.**

So now the 600 plus their families are all in Gath. And not just them. In 1 Chronicles 12 we find out that at this time David's army grows considerably. That chapter describes large numbers of troops that defected from Saul's army to David at this time. That chapter is a very long chapter. It goes on and on describing all the different people who came and joined David.

### **1 Chronicles 12:22 Day after day men came to help David, until he had a great army, like the army of God.**

#### **Double Agent 00-David – verses 5-12 (conquest continuation, not treason)**

So David and his army are there in the royal city. But David does not want to stay in Gath, right under the king's nose.

### **5 Then David said to Achish, "If I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be assigned to me in one of the country towns, that I may live there. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you?"**

David gives Achish this line about "I'm not worthy to live in the royal city with you. Just give me some humble little out of the way place and I won't bother you." And Achish goes for it.

#### ***David Takes Ziklag***

### **6 So on that day Achish gave him Ziklag, and it has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since.<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> If you are wondering when the writing of 1 Samuel was finalized, this verse makes it sound like it was during the time of the divided kingdom prior to the exile.

Throughout this study I have been telling you where places were on a map superimposed on top of a Denver map. And we found that if Saul's headquarters in Gibeah was right here in this area – 104<sup>th</sup> and I-25, then Gath would be in Blackhawk. The exact location of Ziklag is not known for sure, but we do know that it was a long way from Gath – probably at least 25 miles southwest. If you go 25 miles southwest from Blackhawk you are on top of a mountain – about half way to Fairplay. So David gets some distance between him and Achish.

But what is really significant about this is the fact that it is Ziklag. When God was dividing up the Promised Land back during the conquest of Canaan He mentions this area by name twice. In Joshua 15:31 it is assigned to Judah and in Joshua 19:5 it is assigned to Simeon. Evidently there was supposed to be some kind of joint ownership of it.

But now it is in Philistine hands.<sup>2</sup> It is possible that the Philistines had re-captured it, but I think it is more likely that the Israelites never even got around to conquering it in the first place. Ziklag is deep into Philistine territory. But whatever the history, what we see here is that through David's actions the providence of God did what previous military campaigns failed to do; brought Ziklag into Israelite hands.

### **6 So on that day Achish gave him Ziklag, and it has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since.**

So God says, "As long as David is in Philistine territory hiding from Saul, I might as well use him to resume Israel's conquest of Canaan."

#### ***The Raids***

And that brings us to the raids.

### **8 Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites. (From ancient times these peoples had lived in the land extending to Shur and Egypt.)**

So David spends this time raiding three different groups. The first was the land of the Geshurites.

### **Joshua 13:1 When Joshua was old and well advanced in years, the LORD said to him, "You are very old, and there are still very large areas of land to be taken over. 2 "This is the land that remains: all the regions of the Philistines and Geshurites**

So by Joshua 13 this land had still not been taken, even though God had given it to the tribe of Judah.

The second group was the Girzites. We do not know anything about them – other than the fact that they lived in this same region that had been allotted to Judah.

The third group was the Amalekites. God had also commanded that they be destroyed.

### **Deuteronomy 25:17 Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. 18 When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and cut off all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God. 19 When the LORD your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land he is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!**

This is the people that Saul defeated in chapter 15. God had told him to conquer them and conduct a HARAM - kill every person and animal. Saul disobeyed. He left the king and some animals alive, and that is when God finally rejected him and told him he would lose the kingdom.

This whole area was given to Judah and was under the HARAM of Deuteronomy 20.

### **Deuteronomy 20:13 When the LORD your God delivers [a city] into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it. 14 As for the women, the children, the livestock and everything else in the city, you may take**

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<sup>2</sup> We do not know if it was inhabited at this point or not. Perhaps it was not, and Achish figured if he gave it to David that would keep it from becoming overrun with wild animals.

**these as plunder for yourselves. ... 15 This is how you are to treat all the cities that are at a distance from you and do not belong to the nations nearby. 16 However, in the cities of the nations the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. 17 Completely destroy them**

These peoples were the one's raiding Israel. So David and his men became desert raiders of desert raiders. They raided the raiders. Although – most of the time raiders would try to avoid bloodshed. When you kill the people you cut off your source of future plunder. But David was not concerned about future plunder and definitely did not avoid bloodshed. That is another reason why people have said David was in sin during this period. He did not follow the Geneva Convention in his fighting.

**9 Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive, but took sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes. Then he returned to Achish.**

Killing every man and woman was what Deuteronomy 20 called for, but it also called for killing all the animals. Was David wrong to keep the animals alive? It is hard to say. In the normal activity of the conquest it was wrong, but David was in a special circumstance here. He was in the process of deceiving the Philistine king (which was a tactic of warfare that God did allow – even commanded it at times).

The text does not concern itself with the question of whether this was exactly the way David should have done it. The point of the text is simply to let us know that David's raids were not against Israel. It is establishing the fact that David was innocent of the charge of conducting raids against Israel. They were against Israel's enemies. But David told Achish they were against Israel. Evidently David was accountable to Achish. So after these raids he would go up to Gath and make a report.

**10 When Achish asked, "Where did you go raiding today?" David would say, "Against the Negev of Judah" or "Against the Negev of Jerahmeel" or "Against the Negev of the Kenites." 11 He did not leave a man or woman alive to be brought to Gath, for he thought, "They might inform on us and say, 'This is what David did.'" And such was his practice as long as he lived in Philistine territory.**

NEGEV is the Hebrew for “south.” The Negev was the southern part of Judah, and those three places are various districts within the Negev of Judah. So Achish thinks David is attacking Israel. (Judah is one of the tribes of Israel.) The purpose of this section is to explain how it was that David could be loyal to Israel and at the same time win favor with Achish. The people at the time may have heard rumors that David raided his own people, but that was not the case. He was protecting his own people, and letting Achish think he was raiding Israel.

David keeps adding things to his resume. Now in addition to errand boy, shepherd, songwriter, singer, harpist, giant-killer, soldier, armor-bearer to the king, commander, general, psalmist, and prophet he can also say, “Oh yeah, and I was a double agent for a while.” Double agent 00-David. All that and he has not even started his career yet. The only thing not on his resume is the one thing God called him to be – a king.

### ***David stays busy***

In fact, that crown has never seemed further from his grasp. God calls him to be the king, but circumstances seem to just drive him further and further away from that role. But even though that is the case, once again we see David keeping busy. He does not sit around. No matter what his circumstances, he always seems to be able to think of something to do in God's service. He is not hunkered down doing nothing waiting for all his troubles to blow over. They get settled in Ziklag and then say, “Hmmm – what should we do?” And David says, “Hey, I know – how about we resume the conquest of Canaan? We could just pick up where Joshua left off 500 years ago.”

### ***Like the ark***

You almost get the feeling that the writer of 1 Samuel is portraying David as being like the Ark. Remember when the Ark of the Covenant did a stint among the Philistines back in chapter 5? God judged Israel by allowing the Philistines to capture the Ark. It was a judgment on the Israelites, but it was no picnic for the Philistines either. They found that their god Dagon had fallen and couldn't get up. The presence of the Ark

humiliated their gods, caused a plague among the people, and finally became such a problem they sent it back to Israel. David is a lot like that. God removes David from Israel as a punishment against Saul, but while David is there he deceives Achish and works to further the interests of Israel.

Has someone pushed you away? Are you in a kind of exile? Make the most of your time there. Turn your exile into conquest. Do not stop serving God just because certain individuals are not cooperating. If you really have a heart for the kingdom of God you will be like David – no matter what your circumstances you will find a way to do the work of the ministry. If you are waiting to be asked, or waiting for certain people to get on board, or waiting for some ideal opportunity, fine – but do not sit there dormant while you are waiting. And if you are sitting dormant it probably means one of two things: Either you do not have a great passion for the work of the Kingdom, or you do not have faith that the Holy Spirit will work powerfully through His gifts that He has given you. But David had a passion for God’s purposes and God’s people, and he had full confidence in the power of God to work through him.

### **Uh Oh - 28:1-2**

Well, David’s whole scheme works out amazingly well.

**12 Achish trusted David and said to himself, "He has become so odious to his people, the Israelites, that he will be my servant forever.**

David is gaining more and more favor with Achish, and at the same time he is wiping out Israel’s enemies and conquering areas of the Promised Land that had still not been conquered. It seems like a great thing he has got going – but there is one problem with it. What is going to happen when the Philistines go to war with Israel? They think David is on their side now. He has got them fooled, but how is he going to keep that up the next time they attack Israel? David is going to have to pick one side or the other. Would David actually fight against his own people? How will he handle that? We find out in chapter 28. One pastor was preaching through Samuel and when the pastor read verse 1 of chapter 28, one of the little kids in the congregation said in a big loud voice, “Uh oh!” If you are paying attention in chapter 27, then as soon as you read verse 1 of 28 that is what you say.

**1 Samuel 28:1 In those days the Philistines gathered their forces to fight against Israel. Achish said to David, "You must understand that you and your men will accompany me in the army."**

Oh, boy. What will David do now? It looks like his scheme is going to be exposed. David answers in verse 2.

**2 David said, "Then you will see for yourself what your servant can do." Achish replied, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life."**

David’s reply is kind of vague. It is true – no doubt if they went into battle together, Achish would indeed see what David was capable of. But would it be the way Achish is thinking – that David would unleash his military might against Saul? Or is David thinking, “You’ll see what I’m capable of – if we go into battle together I’ll let loose on you?”

Achish does not suspect anything. In fact, he trusts David so much he is willing to make David his bodyguard. The Hebrew phrase for bodyguard is literally, “keeper of my head.”

“David, I would like you to be the keeper of my head.”

And David agrees. But is David thinking the same thing Achish is thinking? Or is David thinking – “Yeah, I’ll keep your head – on my mantle right next to Goliath’s head”? What is going to happen? To keep up the charade David is going to have to go to battle against Saul with the Philistines. How is that going to shake out? Stay tuned. The writer leaves us hanging at that point and tells us about Saul and the witch of Endor.

**Benediction: 1 Thessalonians: 14-15 And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.**

# Devotionals

## Day 1 - Wisdom or Lack of faith?

**1 Samuel 27:1 But David thought to himself, "One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines.**

God already made it clear that He is going to protect David, so isn't it just unbelief for David to say he is going to be destroyed by Saul? Not at all. All David is saying is, "*If I stay here* Saul will destroy me." That is not much different from what God Himself said to David at Keilah. God said, "David, if you stay in Keilah Saul will come and they will turn you over to him." So David left Keilah and Saul did not come.

Has God promised to protect David? Yes. But that does not mean David should discard wisdom and sit around and do nothing. God will protect David from Saul, but He will do so by means of David's own actions in many cases so David still has the responsibility to make wise decisions.

What David does here is no different from what he has been doing all along. Nobody accuses David of unbelief when he hears Saul is coming so he moves to a new hideout. David is simply using wisdom. Everything he has learned tells him that Saul's repentance will probably only last a matter of hours or days at the most, and he will be right back after David. And it is not a lack of faith for David to flee any more than it was a lack of faith for him to duck when Saul threw the spear at him.

If you want to understand how divine protection and human responsibility go together, a good rule of thumb is, "Trust God and use your head." Proverbs 3:5-6 does not say "Do not *use* your own understanding;" it says, "Do not *lean* on your own understanding." We should use our understanding and lean on God – rather than use God and lean on our own understanding. Follow wisdom, then trust Him.

So I don't think we can say that it was wrong for David to think this way in his mind. All we know is David was operating on the assumption that if he stayed in Israel Saul would keep coming after him. And the only thing that would prevent that would be for him to go to Philistia. Was David wrong about that?

## **4 When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him.**

David was right. The only reason Saul finally gave up was because David made this move to Philistia, which means Saul would have reneged on his promise not to come after David anymore if David had remained in Israel.

Sometimes we pat ourselves on the back for the fact that we do not commit certain sins, when in reality the only reason we don't is because the opportunity is not there. I think many of us would be shocked to find out the degree of sin we would fall into if we had the opportunity. When you find yourself longing for some sin, don't say, "It's OK – I'm safe. I will never have the chance to do that anyway," be careful. You would be amazed what the Devil can arrange. And even if he does not arrange it and you never do get the opportunity, if the willingness and desire are there, isn't the sin in your heart whether you carry out the action or not?

Remember, God can see your heart. He knows your desires. Remember in chapter 24 I joked about when Saul went into the cave to relieve himself and the writer of 1 Samuel in essence says, "Smile Saul – you're on Candid Camera"? Everyone in the world from that time to the Second Coming gets to see Saul squatting down in the cave. And we chuckle at that, but it is actually a really important lesson – especially for our culture where we worship our privacy. It is going to come as a shock to this culture someday when they find out that there is no such thing as privacy. It is a myth.

**1 Corinthians 4:5 [when the Lord comes] He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts.**

You are always on Candid Camera. And your desires and longings and what you would be willing to do if you had the opportunity – are all on display before the eyes of God. Imagine if you were like Saul or David and the writer of Scripture was reporting all your inner thoughts and motives and feelings as you did all that you did? Can you imagine how hard it is to appear in a Bible story and be godly, when all your motives are exposed?

*Dear Lord God, teach me to live every moment as though all my motives were exposed – because they are. Everything is open and laid bare before Your sight, dear Father, and You know every thought, inclination, feeling, desire, leaning, longing, motive, mood, and willingness of my heart. What unbelief it is when I am alarmed at people seeing those sins in me, but I have almost no care at all about You seeing them! Teach me to fear You. You are holy and righteous and Your eyes are too pure to look upon sin, and in Your presence the wicked cannot stand. Forgive me, dear Lord, for when I have been content to make sure my actions are clean while letting sinful thoughts, feelings, or motives go unchecked.*

*I thank You, dear Lord, that You are a God who sees my heart. I cannot even see my own heart in the fullness of what is there. Only You can divide joint and marrow. If I couldn't count on You to rightly judge me, and expose the deadly sins that I am unaware of, I would be left to be destroyed by my own sin.*

## Day 2 - Love always trusts?

Was David wrong not to trust Saul? 1 Corinthians 13:7 says **Love ... always trusts**. If you love someone you will always trust him. So was it unloving for David not to trust Saul?

Saul told David he could come back and Saul would not come after him again. And look at how David responded:

**26:21 Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Come back, David my son. Because you considered my life precious today, I will not try to harm you again. Surely I have acted like a fool and have erred greatly." 22 "Here is the king's spear," David answered. "Let one of your young men come over and get it.**

Why doesn't David just go hand it to him? David knows Saul well enough now to know that even if his remorse is genuine, it might not last the 10 minutes it would take to run the spear over there.

This is the same thing that happened the last time Saul repented – back in chapter 24.

### **24:22 Saul returned home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.**

Was David guilty of violating 1 Corinthians 13:7? We could ask the same question about Abigail. She did not trust her husband to have the right response, so she didn't even tell him what was going on until after it was done. She didn't trust him. Was Abigail guilty of violating 1 Corinthians 13:7?

Does God require us to believe absolutely everything everyone says to us? If you ask your two year old, "Did you get into the cookies?" and she says, "No" but there are crumbs all over her mouth and shirt and behind her back she has a cookie with a bite out of it, does 1 Corinthians 13:7 require that you believe her? Or when you put the cookie jar out of her reach when you leave the room because you don't trust her to obey, are you violating 1 Corinthians 13? No. The statement "Love always trusts" does not mean you should believe everything everyone says.

### **1 John 4:1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit**

**Proverbs 26:24 A malicious man disguises himself with his lips, but in his heart he harbors deceit. 25 Though his speech is charming, do not believe him**

It is a sin to believe some people.

"Love always trusts" means if you love someone you will always believe the best thing you can believe about someone without being irrational or violating wisdom. If someone has been in bondage to some particular sin for many years, and one day they come and express remorse and repentance, should you assume they are being sincere? Sure But does that mean you should assume they will have victory over that sin from now on? No. There is a lot more to gaining victory over a besetting sin than just sincerity.

*Lord, keep me from using distrust as a means of punishing those who have been unfaithful to me. I want to have a merciful heart toward the unfaithful like You had toward me all the times I've been unfaithful. Teach me grace and patience and compassion. But teach me also to have the wisdom to know when trusting someone would be foolish. I don't want to have a policy that says, "When in doubt, doubt" so that if there is ever any question I always fall on the side of distrust. But I do want to walk in wisdom. Teach me how, dear Lord.*

### Day 3 – Driving away Grace

Saul finally succeeds in driving David away in chapter 27. He will never see David again. And that is bad for Saul, because David is Saul's only pipeline to grace. Saul forfeited any claim on God's grace a long time ago. But God favors David so much that just by being around David Saul can get a little bit of splash effect of God's grace. Think about it – everything good that happens to Saul comes through David. If Saul is tormented by a demon, only David can calm his heart. If Saul is threatened by an impossible situation with Goliath, only David can come to his rescue. If Saul's life is in danger, no one but David is fit to guard him. Abner falls asleep while David is saving Saul's life.

In His mercy, God has enabled Saul to benefit from His grace if he is near David. So when Saul drives David away he succeeds in cutting off his last tether to God's grace. That is why he ends up dead soon after David is gone.

Sometimes when you drive someone out of your life, God punishes you by allowing you to succeed. Be careful who you drive out of your life. Sometimes God is willing to give you the grace you need, but only through a particular person – in some cases, a person you do not even like. And no doubt one of the reasons for doing that is to test your heart, to see if you are more interested in being comfortable or more interested in holiness. Saul was more interested in his own career than in grace from God, and so he pushes away the means of God's grace.

Is there ever anyone you should push away (or flee from)? Yes – when someone is corrupting your character.

#### **1 Corinthians 15:33 Bad company corrupts good character.**

When someone is leading you into false doctrine, confusing you about the truth, enticing you into sin – flee from people like that. But do not push someone away just because he is making your life hard. Very often it is the people God has sent into our lives to shape us into His image who make our lives the hardest.

There is a lot of talk in the Christian psychology world these days about boundaries. You have to set up boundaries in your life to keep the difficult, taxing people at bay. You need to set up walls so that you deal with people on your terms, and no one becomes too much of an interference or inconvenience in your life. You have to guard your privacy and guard your free time and guard yourself against too much discomfort.

That is the attitude of the selfish man. That is worldly. People in the world have to do that – unbelievers have to do that – because they do not have a loving Father in heaven looking out for their interests, so they have to look out for their own. But the man or woman who is confident in God's protecting love, and who trusts in God's perfect justice does not have to worry about any of that. Does a godly person set up boundaries? Sure. You put up walls to protect your heart. The difference is they set up boundaries to protect themselves from pain or inconvenience; we set up boundaries to protect ourselves from sin. I do not need to protect myself from getting hurt. Pain is not my enemy. Sin is.

*Have I been driving Your grace away, dear Lord? Is there anything in my life that has been resisting some means of grace You intended to use for my good? Have I been more concerned about protecting myself from pain than from sin?*

*Grace from You is such a supreme treasure, Father, that it is worth any price. If it means having a person in my life who is a constant thorn, so be it. If it means irritation, loss, difficulty, trial – whatever; Your grace is sufficient for me. It is to be desired far more than any earthly treasure. Awaken my heart to understand and appreciate the vastness of the value of Your grace, so I would never do anything to drive it away.*

## Day 4 – Unfaithfulness

What is it that drives grace out of your life? In Saul's case it was the fact that he was unreliable. When he said, "David, come back – I won't do it again" David could not trust him because he had proved himself so utterly untrustworthy.

Being untrustworthy is the opposite of being faithful, or reliable. Faithfulness is a wonderful virtue, and unfaithfulness is a terrible sin. Unfaithfulness destroys relationships. When you are an unreliable person you make yourself impossible to be around. Think about it – David was an incredibly forgiving man. He would forgive anything – even attempted murder. Saul throws a spear at him and David says, "Let's let bygones be bygones." David can forgive anything, but he cannot deal with unfaithfulness. Lie about me, take away my wife, hunt me down, try to kill me – I can forgive all that if you repent. But be unreliable and you force me to leave for good.

Dealing with an unreliable person is like having a walking stick that breaks when you lean on it. You know what it is like when you lean all your weight on something expecting it to hold you and it gives way? That is what an unreliable person is like.

**2 Kings 18:21** Look now, you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces a man's hand and wounds him if he leans on it! Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who depend on him.

**Proverbs 25:19** Trusting an unreliable person in a time of trouble is like a rotten tooth or a faltering foot.

There are at least two kinds of unreliable people. Some unreliable people are that way because they just simply do not care about following through on their word. They tell you one thing, and at the time they fully intend to do it, but if anything comes along that makes them think it is not such a good idea, they change their mind.

"I told you I would do A because I thought that was the best option. But now I can see that B is a better option, so I'm changing my mind."

And the fact that they committed to A means nothing to them.

The other kind of unreliable person is the man or woman who is controlled by the flesh. They just cannot say no to the flesh so they will make all kinds of promises to you when no temptation is present, but then when temptation hits they collapse like a house of cards every time. That is the kind of man Saul was. He had momentary flashes of repentance and resolve to do what is right, but only while it was easy. It never lasted long because he did not have any real love for the Lord that could carry him through any significant temptation.

One of the most delightful attributes of God is His faithfulness. And one of the most authentic marks of a man after God's own heart is a guy who can be counted on. But the untrustworthy person makes himself impossible to be around and eventually drives away all the people God intended to bring grace into his life.

*Great is Thy faithfulness, Oh God my Father. There is no shadow of turning with Thee. Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not. As Thou has been Thou forever wilt be. Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!*

*Morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed Thy hand hath provided; Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

*Summer and winter and springtime and harvest, sun, moon and stars in their courses above join with all nature in manifold witness to Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.*

*Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth, thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide; strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow, blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!*

*Oh, Lord, make me a mirror that reflects Your great faithfulness. Forgive me for being so driven by the flesh that I am unreliable. Show me that areas where my faithfulness needs to increase that I might be like You.*

## **Day 5 - What if you are the one being pushed away?**

God had called David to be the king, but circumstances seem to just drive him further and further away from that role. The crown has never seemed further from his grasp. But even though that is the case, once again we see David keeping busy. He does not sit around. No matter what his circumstances, he always seems to be able to think of something to do in God's service. He is not hunkered down doing nothing waiting for all his troubles to blow over. They get settled in Ziklag and then say, "Hmmm – what should we do?" And David says, "Hey I know – how about we resume the conquest of Canaan? We could just pick up where Joshua left off 500 years ago."

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*Grant Your servant the twin virtues of passion for Your Kingdom and faith in Your enablement. Forgive me, dear Lord, for how lightly I have taken the spiritual gifts You have given me. And for the apathy I have had toward advancing Your Kingdom. So often I am more concerned about entertainment or recreation than about the eternal Kingdom of Your great Son. The slightest hardship causes me to drop my efforts to serve You in ministry, but woe to the person who steps in my way while I'm trying to watch TV! Reorder the priorities of my heart by showing me the glory and splendor of Your works that I might hold them above every other thing in life. Then love for You will drive me to diligence.*