

1 Samuel 27-28:2

"Success Is No Guarantee God's In It"

Let's open our Bibles this evening to 1 Samuel 27 as we continue our study through the historical books.

This chapter, if you've been with us at all, is really what amounts to the last story in this book that God gives us to study. It has lots of different parts. It is attached by a couple of years, actually, but the LORD weaves them all together. And we're going to look at the first part of this tonight down through chapter 28:2. So we're going to stop there. We're going to just do the twelve verses of chapter 27 and then the first two verses of chapter 28. And then we'll get to 2 Samuel where David, indeed, gets to be the king over the nation, but even that will come very slowly.

Most Old Testament lessons are set before us by the LORD through first-person experiences, and by watching how they live, you kind of know where they're coming from. There's a verse in Proverbs 27 that says, "Even as the water reflects a face, so the man's heart will reveal the man" (verse 19). And a lot of times that's just the case, isn't it? You see the heart of one sinner, and it really does reflect the hearts of all sinners, in particular. We find ourselves to be on very common ground in so many things. And I love the verse because in looking at others, you can see yourself and your failures and your weaknesses and also the benefits of walking with God. I think that's why personal testimonies - like we do from time to time on Wednesdays - are so helpful because you invariably relate to the things that the people are going through. Whether it's the successes or the failures or whatever they might be, God has a way of just ministering to each other through those common kinds of issues. I'm glad it is David's life on display in forty chapters, not mine. Maybe you're thankful it's not yours. It would be horrible to have forty chapters written about me, and people go, "He did what? He did where? He said what?" Because that's exactly how you'd be responding. And I think I would do the same thing if I was reading about you. But to be put on display for everybody's scrutiny, it's an invaluable way for us to learn. I'm just glad I'm not the illustration and David is. I don't know if you've ever made a decision in your life that was questionable, but you were determined. Maybe it was outright wrong, and yet because it turned out okay, you quickly found a way to spin it. "Well, I kind of thought maybe the LORD was in that. It turned out well, didn't it? Why have you

complained? It couldn't have gone better." And yet everyone knows what you did was wrong, and God just came to your rescue. If that's you, then tonight's lesson will be good for you because these fourteen verses will say that success is no guarantee that God is with you. I'll say that again: success is no guarantee God's with you or God's in it. Unfortunately, sometimes when we settle for less and get away with it, our hard hearts decide that it's victory in the LORD, and we somehow can ascribe some spiritual accomplishment to it.

So tonight we watch David and his band of merry men falling. But David is the leader down the path. If you've been with us, in chapter 25 and 26, in chapter 25, Samuel had died and David had a conflict with a family - Nabal and Abigail - whose sheep that he and his men had protected in the times of planting and sowing from the raiders of the Philistines. When David went to get payment for his men to eat, he was turned away. You remember the story - he sought vengeance, and was it not upon his wife Abigail's intercession, David would have taken him out and everyone that was near him. It would have been horrible. But David was angry. Shortly thereafter, the LORD took Nabal out. David married Abigail.

And then we get to chapter 26, and it's just the opposite David. He finds Saul for a second time. He could have taken out his nemesis, if you will. He just refuses to do it. God is in charge. "I can always trust the LORD. He made him king; He can take him out. I'm not gonna touch him." And, again, his six hundred men with him learn the lesson of letting God balance the books and that there's times that you just have to wait upon the LORD, even if that means you suffer as a result. Doing the right thing isn't always the easiest thing. But David learned it well.

So you would expect to get to chapter 27 and see David just flying high because he'd been doing well, and you'd be absolutely wrong. This is about as low as David can go. It does appear, just from all that we can gather chronologically, that a couple of years pass between this chapter and the previous one; that David has now been on the run for five years or a little longer; that it'll be another two-and-a-half years till you get to the end of the book. Now it won't take us that long, but that's kind of where you're at with David. Yet this last story over the next four weeks will bring him to the throne, but all of the stories themselves are attached together, and we kind of would like to teach them that way.

So let's start in chapter 27:1 where we read this, "And David said in his heart," (two years after letting Saul live for the second time) " 'Now I shall perish

someday by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape to the land of the Philistines; and Saul will despair of me, to seek me anymore in any part of Israel. So I shall escape out of his hand.' " Two years have passed, and God has brought David through many things. But David, now in his late 20's, is still on the run. Saul is angry enough to where, five years later, his whole motivation is still the same. "I've just gotta kill this kid before I go." He had worked as tirelessly as he could for five years now. Imagine someone chasing you around Whittier for five years or L.A. County or the Pacific Northwest. From a natural perspective - if you are just looking at this without any kind of spiritual eyes - David looks like he's at an extreme disadvantage. He's destined to be caught. You would think eventually he'll get killed. He has six hundred guys, but Saul has the time and the resources and the manpower, and he's got nothing to distract him. David wants to serve the LORD and minister to these men. He has families to care for and a people to serve. He's a king in exile. Saul has only one duty. And except for a few emotional regrets - and we've pointed those out a couple of times - Saul has no problem killing David. David has all kinds of problems killing Saul; twice refused to touch God's anointed. And so his threat is permanent until Saul goes. Saul's only desire is to make sure David goes first.

From a spiritual perspective, David has all the advantages. He's been called by God to be the king. He has the Holy Spirit, according to chapter 16, dwelling upon his life, resting upon his life. He's been offered assurances by the LORD time and again. He has seen God's hand deliver him for five years, sometimes just one mountain, one turn; if it wasn't for one thing, he'd have been caught. Early on, as a shepherd boy, he learned that God could deliver a sheep from the mouth of a lion or of a bear; he was able to fight them by himself with God's help. He had experience since a young man. And then he had that awesome victory over Goliath and those many years of escape. Saul really didn't stand a chance if you look at it from a spiritual standpoint. And then God had raised up six hundred guys that moved to the heartbeat of David. They loved him, they loved his God, they wanted to know what God was like. And David had been teaching them, and they'd been growing. But try telling that to a man who's been on the run for five years with no end in sight. How long do you put up with something before you just throw in the towel? "I've just had it! I can't do this anymore. I can't do this any longer." In many ways, it's kind of a picture and a word to all of us. We have to stay faithful to the LORD in this life. I'm sure there are days you just want to go, "Forget it. God's not answering my prayer. The devil seems to be too powerful. My flesh is way too weak. Nothing seems to be going my way." And yet we've been saved, and

His Spirit lives with us, and we have these glorious promises, and we walk down this road of faith. But a lot of times, it's way too difficult, seems way too narrow, and we're tempted to get off somewhere, to take a turn.

We find David here, in this chapter, forgetting everything he's learned. And everything we just summarized, he hasn't remembered. He's overwhelmed by the length of the trial, and in that condition, he's headed for a big-time stumble. According to the headers on some of the psalms, David wrote quite a few during this time. He wrote Psalm 10, which starts off with the words, "Why are You so far off, LORD? Why do You hide in times of trouble?" He sought the LORD, or he thought he did; he couldn't find Him. He wrote Psalm 13, and he begins with the words, "How long will You forget me, O LORD? Forever?" He wrote Psalm 22 during this time. "My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me and from the words of My groaning?" He could relate to seeking God, but he didn't seem to be able to find Him now. Maybe your faith has been staggering because the road's been difficult. Soon obedience falls victim to circumstance, and life gets more difficult on the surface, and outwardly we see no changes. And so we make changes, but they're not the LORD's choosing; they're our own. David, in his dilemma - his despair and his depression - sets aside everything that we know, and he decides to make some dramatic improvements for himself, for his men, for his family. He's got an idea - it is driven by this despair. And in so doing, he does the absolute wrong thing, and at least for a year and four months, it works out just fine. Perfect. Good move, David. Wasn't a good move at all. We have to have God's Word and not our circumstance dictate the direction that we choose to take. The Bible says that "His Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path" (Psalm 119:105). Satan, here, shoots a dart at David, and it hits its mark, and David falls headlong into despair. Notice it says he began to "say in his heart." He might not have vocalized these fears, but there was plenty of dread here; self-reasoning, rationale. This from a guy that, six years earlier, had said, "You're not able to go against this Philistine on your own," said Saul, and David said, "No. I'm not, but my God who I serve can. And the LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this uncircumcised Philistine." And then he went runnin' at him. Same guy. Same David who, five years later, says, "I'm gonna get killed here eventually. Man, I am runnin' out of luck. How long will it be before he catches up with me?"

I think, because the LORD sets this story before us, it's important for us to ask ourselves - how did this happen to David so that we can avoid it happening to us.

Well, let me give you a couple of things to think about. Number one - David suffered from confused thinking. Leaving the truths of God aside - the ones he'd learned for years, his experiences, the promises of God that had been fulfilled - he develops a new truth based solely upon observable circumstance. He says to himself, "One day soon I'm gonna perish at the hands of Saul. Just a matter of time. How long can I keep running and get so lucky?" Instead of how able God is to help him and keep him, he turns his eyes off the LORD, and he "gets real" with himself. His promises are set aside. The past work of God is set aside. He focuses on the challenge. He focuses on Saul. And he just comes to the conclusion, "Time's running out. How long do I pray before I give up?" David lapses in his faith, concludes there's no end in sight, decides, "I can't run like this forever. Eventually, I'm gonna be caught." And, in that frame of mind, his solution will be, "Let me go try to hide amongst my enemies, a place where Saul won't come looking for me. I'll position me and my men and my families back out there somewhere, not in God's land but in the enemy's land. And if I can go there, then I can have some rest." His reasoning is faulty. He leaves God's ability out of the equation entirely. But that's his solution. But it is based on this confusion of his mind and his outlook in verse 1 here. The LORD, when He spoke to Joshua and the people before entering the land, said (Joshua 1:9), "You be of good courage. Don't be afraid, and don't be afraid of them. I'm going with you. I won't leave you, I won't forsake you. You don't have to worry about them. Just know that I'm here." And Joshua went, "That was good enough for me." Not for David. Not right now. Not at all.

David is reacting confused in his outlook, and he's feeling very sorry for himself. Usually one of the attributes of depression, "Oh, woe is me. Nobody suffers like me. No one feels like I do. No one's gone through what I've gone through." Which is baloney, by the way; back to the first one - confused thinking. "Why haven't things gotten better? How can I go on so long? Why does the LORD want me to suffer so much and I've remained faithful? Twice I've let this guy walk, and he's still walkin'! Should have been dead by now. I've always done the right thing. And look at me." It's almost a veiled kind of claim that God's not being fair. It's one of those attitudes that is hidden under a pile of self-pity. "Oh, look at me." And it is exacerbated, in verse 1, by the lengths of the trial. The road is long. It continues to be difficult. It is pressure-packed. It is so uncertain. And every day doesn't bring a change, just more of the same. He's been betrayed by his own countrymen more than once. He's been hunted down for years without cause. There's no deliverance on the horizon. And David says to himself, "I gotta bring an end to this before it brings an end to me. I can't do this anymore." He leaves little options

except his solution because, in his mind, God has been set aside, and he's feeling sorry for himself, and it's been such a long time. And if that isn't enough, it is complicated by the fact that he's just a man. The best men are men at best! I know we expect so much from him. I had several people ask this week about that young man that took his own life at Greg's (Laurie) church. "How could a pastor do that?" Just a man! Pastors aren't immune. You don't get off the hook. Life isn't any easier for them, as far as I know. If you know anyone, I'd like to be told. Please help me. Life is difficult. People stumble in faith. But thank the LORD we can be restored. So it isn't a hard lesson to learn how feeble you are. But I know that sometimes we just hang on by a thread. God help us. Get us through, just today.

So David makes a hasty decision based solely on his emotions. Notice the words here: "nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape." You see, with these kinds of emotional outlooks, David's solution not only is erroneous, but it has to be done today. Isn't that interesting? "I should get it done now." Once David was so stirred to do little until he sought the LORD; now he moves quickly for his own plans. I think "speedily" is a word from hell when it is attached to our sinful choices. If you're in sales, I get it. Salesmen are taught to close the deal. It's crucial. Last time I bought a car, I went to the car, drove away, and then the salesman calls me in the car. And then, when I called him back, "Oh, you gotta come back. We can work this out!" Because if you can get 'em now, that's the way to go. That's Sales 101. But that doesn't work in serving the LORD, and discovering His plans is very difficult sometimes. "I must hurry and do something" is flawed theology. It doesn't work. It shouldn't work here, but David has had enough. God doesn't work through fear. God doesn't work through panic. God doesn't work through self-generated solutions without prayer. I can only begin to tell you how many decisions I've made over the years that were wrong simply because I thought something oughta be done now when it didn't need to be done now; what needed to be done now was to pray and wait upon God. But experience is the best teacher if you can afford the tuition. (Laughing) So, moving speedily without the LORD's leading will not lead to solutions; it'll just lead to more problems. And David would teach us that.

So, verse 2, "Then David arose and went over with the six hundred men who were with him to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath. So David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, each man with his household, and David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's widow. And it was

told Saul that David had fled to Gath; so he sought him no more." With all that we saw in verse 1, verse 2 would tell us that David then decides this, "I will seek refuge among my enemies." You know, when we're under pressure, the one thing flesh wants is relief - get me out from under this. And unless we're in the habit of praying about everything, this drive for relief can send us to the world looking for answers quickly rather than waiting upon the LORD to show us what He might want to do. So I say, "Well, I'll just lie a little bit about my experience to get a job because the truth doesn't pay the rent." And I compromise out of necessity, and I cut a lot of corners, and I do it in the name of the LORD. And I reason, "What else could I do? Where else could I go? What was I supposed to do anyway?!" And I do the wrong thing with an explanation. What a horrible choice David makes here. And it isn't just David now. Now he has a wife, or two, and six hundred men who also have wives and children, and they're all following David. This is David setting the tone. He goes to the heathen. God had constantly warned the nation of never doing that for any reason. I don't doubt that David knew this was wrong, but he rationalizes it. It is self-preservation for him. He is weary of his faith. He is even more weary of running, and this just seems like a great place to rest.

Now, if you've been with us in chapter 21, I don't need to remind you that the place David ran to is the very place he ran the last time and got burned. Back to Goliath's hometown. Back to the relatives. Back to the place he'd been arrested and had to act like a crazy man to be released by the king. We know, as Christians, the consequences of sin, yet when you go back to the old way of life, of unbelief, look where you can end up. And David did. He went back to the same bar, back to the same woman, back to the same lie, back to the same sin, back to the same way of life. He went back. He didn't go forward. He went back....to seek refuge and safety among the relatives of Goliath. Yet this time he doesn't arrive alone or with just a couple of guys (as he had back in chapter 21). This time he showed up not in panic but with determination, not by himself but with six hundred very highly-trained fighters, and I think they looked more like an army than they did a couple of guys on the run. And he was in a bargaining position. And, to be honest with you, the king of Gath needed and longed to have someone with him that hated Saul as much as he did. He saw this as an opportunity, "Let me just use David to overcome my enemy," and he opens the door for David to receive him. He wanted an ally. David had inflicted huge, heavy casualties on the Philistines for some five years. "But better to have him with us than against us." And, politically, it worked.

As a result, verse 3 tells us that David dwelt with Achish at Gath. He was well-received in the capital. Look where David is resting. Look what he's exposing his men to. Look what his wives and children are learning about the idolatry and the perversion of the Philistine religion. There's an old quote that I wrote in my Bible on this verse, and it said, "It's an easy thing to run from the place of trial, but in so doing you often flee from the place of greatest blessing." And David did. He ran from the place of God's dwelling to the place where God wouldn't want him to go. The king of Gath might have liked the idea that David had defected, but that hardly sounds like the way of the LORD, does it?

And one of the most dangerous aspects of operating your life outside of the will of God is the sometimes positive results you get as a consequence - that it works out. I've heard it a lot. Achish received him. We read Saul quit chasing him. His people, his men, their families could finally just settle down, not have to get up every morning and pack the tent up to move to the next place and look over their shoulder. They could raise their own crops. The kids could play outside. Look, what could be wrong with this? It is all good! Or so it looks. What could be so bad? Regular house, regular home, a place I can call my own. It's the old debate of the ends justifying the means. Does it work? An argument invented in hell, I believe. Right? It's the situational-ethics argument. "I need rent money. I'm gonna rob Satan's liquor store." Not Joe's liquor store; Satan's liquor store. With the same rationale, I can cut corners in business, I can act like the world, I can look to the enemies of God to provide for me and my family, I can act like the world when I need the world and walk with God when I think I need him. It's David. It's his picture. And to be able to say, "Look, it worked out, didn't it? God is still blessing, isn't He?" is an argument absolutely from ignorance. So, though it may have looked like a sensible move for David at the moment, in reality, he's heading down a road that he doesn't want to go down, and it's a slippery slope, and it's headed downhill, and there's a rock at the bottom. No matter the argument you make, the fleshly choices will produce fleshly life.

So we read this, in verse 5, "Then David said to Achish, 'If I have now found favor in your eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there. For why should your servant dwell in the royal city with you?' So Achish gave him Ziklag that day. Therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day. Now the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was one full year and four months." I love how the LORD says, "one whole year and then four more months." So it continued for a time. David settled in. He had a good

relationship. "I want my own town." And he couches it in such humility. "I don't want to live in the kingly town with you. I need to move out of the royal place to my own little Podunk area. If you could just give me one of those, it'd be great." Maybe he couldn't afford city life. He flatters him with baloney and much deception. This isn't the honest David who trusts in the LORD; this is David working David's life out by the seat of his pants. And we are told in verse 6 and in verse 7 that Achish granted David a city - Ziklag. The word Ziklag in Hebrew means "to wind" or "to turn in many different directions," which is interesting. It's a small little southern-Judah holding now. You'll find it in Joshua 15. The Philistines caught it later, and still later, under David's rule, it was returned back to Israel, and the borders were moved. But for now it was in the hands of the Philistines. By the time we get to 1 Chronicles, Ziklag becomes a real rallying place for all of the dispersed Jews to come to gather to David to stand in his cause. And God will do a good work here. But not now. Now David is here by himself.

Now, David could argue that this was more proof that his coming here was an acceptable judgment in God's sight. "I just want some rest. I don't want to die." But he could still never have been more wrong. If you measure your decisions by success, you'll never discover whether God's in it or not. If you put it next to God's Word and the character of God that you know, you're far better off then deciding whether the LORD's in it or not. Is this the way God would work? Is this the thing God would have me to say and do? Is this representative of who He is? To say, "Well, a lot of people came to church as a result, didn't they? Win, win." No, "You tried to burn your neighbor's house down!" "I know, but the LORD turned it around! No one got hurt. It all works out." Okay, crazy person. Can you imagine King David, our hero, spending sixteen months with a conscience ill-at-ease, deep in enemy territory, hiding from his enemy, bringing his family to expose them to all of the idolatrous ways of the Philistines' way of life, and then somehow want to turn around and teach them to trust the LORD? How does that work? How do you teach both of those things? You can't. And neither could David. But here's the argument: "Hey, this is easier, isn't it? No running, no hiding. We can go hang out at the In-N-Out burger. No problem." All right. Maybe not there.

Verse 8 says this, "And David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites. For those nations were the inhabitants of the land from of old, as you go to Shur, even as far as the land of Egypt. Whenever David attacked the land, he left neither man nor woman alive, but took away the sheep, the oxen, the donkeys, the camels, and the apparel, and returned and came to

Achish" and gave a report. If David realized he was wrong - like I think he did - I think this was his way of making up for it. Here's his justification: "I'll hide among the enemy, but then I'll go out under cover of darkness and kill as many enemies of Israel as I can; those that the Jews have not taken care of yet, the Amalekites that are running rampant. I'll just go after all of their enemies." Not the Philistines, which happened to be their big enemy. But in his renewed efforts to spare the kids and the children of Israel from their enemies - other than the Philistines - he went to slaughter whole communities of people; not in the name of the LORD but in the name of "Achish better never find out what I'm doing because I'm about to come back and tell him that I'm beatin' up on the Jews," which is exactly what he did. And this was the cost of sixteen months of hiding. And, if you at least go and look at the people that are mentioned here (in verse 8), most of them were shepherds who posed little to no threat to Israel compared to the brutality of the Philistine army that David was protecting and living amongst. They were just insignificant threats that just about anyone in Israel could have dealt with. But the bigger sin was in hiding amongst these folks. David needed food. He needed to clear his conscience. What a great way to bring the two of them together. Self-preservation, hide it with spiritual jargon. We see it sometimes. We see people come to church - and I hope I don't see you doin' it - but they'll come, and, "Oh, we want to worship the LORD," but what they really want to do is hand out business cards, and they use the church for sales; not for worship, not for serving, but for self-profit. And we tend to frown on that. But you look good doin' it. "I just want to praise the LORD. Here's my card if you need something. Amen. There you go, my brotha. Call me anytime, 818, yeah, yeah, here's my number. My picture's right on it so you'll know who I am."

So we read this, in verse 10, "Then Achish would say," (when David showed up) " 'Where have you made a raid today?' And David would say, 'Against the southern area of Judah, or against the southern area of the Jerahmeelites, or against the southern area of the Kenites.' " Or, if you will, "I've been fighting against the Jews, your enemies." Verse 11, "David would save neither man nor woman alive, to bring news to Gath, saying, 'Lest they should inform on us, saying, "Thus David did."' And thus was his behavior all the time he dwelt in the country of the Philistines." "Were have you been at, David?" "Oh, I've just been fighting our enemies, oh king. I've been in the south, I've been in the north, I've been in the east, I've been causin' havoc." And the king had no reason to disbelieve David. For one thing, Saul was tryin' to kill him; he was already an enemy of the state. And then David would just come back. No one ever said a word. It must be so. And for

sixteen months, verse 11, this is the way David carried on. It's hard to believe that any child of God could live like this, slaughtering innocent people, by the way, whom God hadn't sent him to, to protect his tracks so he could hide. The cost of David hiding here was the lives of all of the people that he had killed. Sin blinds, doesn't it? And to make it worse, David would just lie about it every step of the way. One of David's great sins that so easily beset him was he was a liar.....a lot. It was one of his weaknesses in his life. He asked Jonathan to lie to his father so he could get the truth about Saul's intention. He went and lied to the high priest, Ahimelech, which caused the death of every priest and everyone that lived in the city there with him. He lies for the second time to Achish; he lied to him the first time as well. And now he lies for only one reason - survival. It's explained to us here, verse 11, "so that no one might get back here and report what I'm really doing." In Psalm 119:29, David will write this, "Remove from me the way of lying, and grant me Your law graciously."

For now, verse 12, "Achish believed David, saying, 'He has made his people Israel utterly abhor him; therefore he will be my servant forever.' " "Ah, you see, it's workin' out! Now the king's all about me." He had him for good. One lie led to another to another to another, and for a year and four months, he felt like he was on top of the world. But to live with himself during this time was horrendous. He would try this with Bathsheba, too. He would spend well over a year keeping it all quiet; about took him out. Well, here's David again. He feels the same way.

Well, we get to chapter 28, and the plot begins to thicken. Because if you live a deceitful life, it will catch up with you eventually. You'll reap what you sow (Galatians 6:7). Your sin will find you out (Numbers 32:23). And David was about to find out from the old line, "There's no benefit to sleeping with the enemy." War was about to break out in a big way. The winter had passed, the spring had come. It's when everyone rose up to go to war, and the Philistines were wanting, in a big way, to charge into Israel and take back lots of territory. And they were hoping that David, the warrior, would lead them in this challenge. Uh oh. This really wasn't on the list of plans.

Verse 1 says (of chapter 28), "Now it happened in those days that the Philistines gathered their armies together for war, to fight with Israel. And Achish said to David, 'You assuredly know that you will go out with me to battle, you and your men.' So David said to Achish, 'Surely you know what your servant can do.' And Achish said to David, 'Therefore I will make you one of my chief guardians forever.' "

"Certainly you know you're goin' with us to fight." And he expected to hear, "Yahoo!" And David went, "Well, you know what we can do." And he said, "I know. That's why I'm putting you in charge of me, and you and your men are going to watch over me." Talk about a tight squeeze. This is when you're in too deep. Right? When you realize you can't just disappear, you can't just run across the border. You've got six hundred men and their wives and their children and your own family with you. You can't just up and go. And then, by the time you get to the Jewish border, if you will, where this conversation is taking place, Ziklag's a long way away. It's thirty miles away! How're you gonna get to them and get them all out and everybody safe before this is exposed? And then have all of their animals that they've been taking and the livestock and becoming wealthy, if not gorged with food. It was like David found out that a rock that rolls downhill doesn't stop till it hits a rock at the bottom. He's been playing with fire, and this is horrible. If he had any anxiety at all in his life to come here, imagine how he was feeling now. The Philistines were about to go kill God's people, and they wanted David to help. And he loved the LORD, but he's in too deep.

From this low point, David will start to make steps to go back to the LORD - all the way to chapter 30. But what could he do for now? Look at the mess he finds himself in. I think if you had spoken to David in chapter 27:1, and you had said to him, "David, you can't go to Gath; you know the Philistines live there; they hate God and His people; you're stepping backward, man; you're heading down the wrong path; this is the wrong decision; your family and your men are going to be compromised; you're going to lose out in the long run; there's a danger here; you're standing with the enemies of God's people," I don't think David would have listened. He might have said, "Get lost" or worse, "I'm givin' you the choice to live or die." It's amazing how people fall, even guys like David. Which tells you - and I hope that you know that by now - never rely upon people. They have feet of clay. Because you'll be disappointed. Better that you trust the LORD. But thank the LORD this story doesn't end in verse 2. Oh, we're going to end in verse 2, but the story doesn't. Soon the battle will come to Ziklag. Uh oh. "That's where everything I count dear and everything I own is hidden."

Now if you just flip ahead with me, we're gonna cheat; we're gonna go to verse 1 of chapter 30 for just a minute. I know in the middle here we've got stuff to do, but for now this is a preview. Verse 1, chapter 30, "Now it happened, when David and his men came to Ziklag, on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the South and Ziklag, attacked Ziklag and burned it with fire, and had taken captive

the women and those who were there, from small to great; they did not kill anyone, but carried them away and went their way. So David and his men came to the city, and there it was, burned with fire; and their wives, their sons, and their daughters had been taken captive. Then David and the people who were with him lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep. And David's two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite, had been taken captive. Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters." And then we read this, "But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God." Yeah. You can go to the place where everything that matters to you is lost, and then you can come back, and the LORD'll still be waiting for you. But why go that far? Why jump all of these chapters and live that kind of life?

Eventually, by the end of 2 Samuel, David will lead the nation of Israel to a time of unparalleled prosperity and spiritual devotion. There really won't be a time in Israel's history like under David's rule - and a little bit under Solomon's - until the LORD comes back to rule upon the earth. That's how good it was. It isn't ever too late to have God make something out of your life, yet here's a lesson of the sufferings that can happen to us and others that's astounding because he knew better. And oftentimes so do we. We'll make wrong turns, we'll make wrong choices, we'll let those that we love do those things without any kind of challenge. But I think here's a good warning in this chapter - just stop it! The sooner the better. It's never too late to turn back to the LORD. No sin too great that He can't forgive. No mistake so bad that He can't make it right. But you're gonna have to call upon the LORD. David would write, in Psalm 40:2 (a couple years later), "He's brought me out of a horrible pit, He's brought me out of the miry clay, He set my feet on the rock, He's established my peace." That was after this. "God has set me free."

So we're gonna leave David in this dilemma until next week. If you'll read ahead - I don't know where we'll stop, but somewhere. And we're gonna do about two or three more weeks in this book. Lots to learn.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
September 25, 2019