

Lesson 21: Back in Enemy Hands (First Samuel 27, 28, 29)

13 David under a Philistine Master

Read First Samuel 27:9-12.

1. What is David's strategy?
2. How does he deceive Achish?
3. To what conclusion does Achish come when David brings back the spoil?
4. Is Achish master over David?
5. What is Achish's agenda that he expects David to pursue?
6. What is God's agenda?
7. How does David walk the line?

14 David in Conflict

Read First Samuel 28:1-2.

8. What does Achish ask David to do?
9. What issues does this raise for David?
 - Once Saul is dead and the war is over, will Achish let David go to become Israel's king?
 - What if David says no to Achish at this point?
10. What do David's words to Achish suggest about what he is thinking? (v2)

11. How does Achish interpret that remark?

16 David Rejected by the Philistines

Read First Samuel 29:1-11.

This picture is structured around two conversations, bookended by narrator's comments.

- 1) Princes of the Philistines and Achish
- 2) Achish and David

Narrator's Comment

12. Where does the action take place?

"And the lords [seren] of the Philistines passed in review by hundreds and by thousands, but David and his men passed in review at the rear with Achish." - 1 Samuel 29:2

While Achish may be king of Gath, he himself is subject to the consensus of the **Seren**, the term for the ruling body that consisted of five Philistine lords or princes. The **Seren** figure heavily in Judges and First Samuel but aren't referred to after that, which suggests that this consolidated alliance was broken up in the days of David's reign. Elsewhere in the text they are referred to as **sar** or princes.

Conversation 1: Princes of the Philistines and Achish

13. Why don't the princes want Achish bringing David into the battle?

14. Knowing what we know about Saul and David's history, do you think David is trying to get back into Saul's good graces at this point?

15. Would David kill the Philistine princes for another reason?

16. What is Achish's assessment of David's service to him?

17. Why would David argue to stay in this battle?

18. Do you think God is the one orchestrating David's removal from this situation?

Picture Summary:

DAVID'S MOTIVATION:

“And David said in his heart, ‘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.’” (27:1)

DAVID'S CHALLENGE:

To live in a Philistine world serving a foreign master whose agenda conflicts with God's, and yet continue to pursue a crown as king of Israel and serve the LORD's mission in the process.

DAVID'S STRATEGY:

“Then Achish would say, ‘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.’ 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. So Achish believed David, saying, ‘He has made his people Israel utterly abhor him; therefore he will be my servant forever.’” (27:10–12)

“. . . 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.’” (28:1–2)

THE FOREIGN MASTER'S ASSESSMENT OF DAVID:

“Surely, as the LORD lives, you have been upright, and your going out and your coming in with me in the army is good in my sight. For to this day I have not found evil in you since the day of your coming to me.” (29:6) David receives praise from the foreign master for his loyalty and good works toward that master. He is sent home in peace and not asked to compromise himself in battle against Israel.

THE QUESTION OF DAVID'S LOYALTY:

“So David said to Achish, ‘But what have I done? And to this day what have you found in your servant as long as I have been with you, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?’” (29:8)

Application: Myself in Enemy Hands

David's Motivation: After coming through an extensive time of testing, David stumbled over a lack of faith in God's promises and faithfulness to him, and he reverted to doing what was right in his own eyes. He made a conscious choice to decamp to the Philistines—the heathen world. It was a point of stumbling for him.

We end up in the Philistine world through two motivations. There are those of us who also decamp as a result of unfaithfulness. It is a wrong choice, because it reflects a lack of faith in God's power, His love, and the reward that He has reserved for us if we persevere.

But the rest of us as believers end up in this lifestyle because of our faithfulness. God sends us out into the Philistine world under the Great Commission as warriors for the faith. What David did for questionable reasons is something that we do intentionally.

David and his men were driven out of Israel when Israel refused to recognize their true king, and then went to the Gentiles instead. In a similar way, Jesus' disciples went first to the Jews in His name, and when they were driven out due to Israel's unbelief and refusal to accept Christ as king, the disciples then went to the Gentiles. To the Jew first and then the Gentiles. So we see this picture repeated over and over again in the New Testament.

David's Challenge: Regardless of how David came to be in this situation, he is now in this situation, and he has become a picture of a man living in a lifestyle we ourselves can relate to. We are children of God living in a world of Philistines with a particular mission that we are pursuing. Our

If we have decamped into unfaithfulness for a time, we will begin to align ourselves with the world, place ourselves under a new master, and begin to pursue the world's values and goals. We may think we can make a life for ourselves in the world and live on our own terms, and maybe we are given that luxury for a while. Maybe we experience the lull and slip into that sleep of delusion. But the peace will be a fleeting illusion, because at some point we will be asked to take a stand and declare our loyalty for one king or another—for God with His values and agenda or for a worldly master with his opposing values and agenda. We might find ways to defer taking that stand for a while, as David did, but eventually it will happen, and sometimes the choice ends up being made for us.

If we have decamped to the world as an act of faithfulness to our commission, then we, too, must find a way to be in this world but not of it—to find a way to live at peace with the world around us and serve an earthly master without compromising our identity, values, and relationship with God. We, too, face the same conflict of having to juggle the agendas of a spiritual master (God) and physical masters whose demands may put us in conflict with our convictions.

David's Strategy: When we look at David's actions, we can see that he is still aligned with God's mission. He found a common goal between what God expects of him and what Achish expects of him, and he pursues that. Achish is quite happy with the work David has been doing, even though he doesn't know the whole of it. But then events begin to spiral out of David's control, and his path is not so clear. He becomes pressed over his loyalty to Achish, and he fails to take a stand one way or another, choosing instead to give the wishy-washy answer: *'Surely you know what your servant can do.'*

Do we do this? We can end up in a situation where we are caught between God's agenda and the world's agenda, and then the world comes to us, expecting our loyalty, and they want us to do something that conflicts with God's agenda. And no matter what course of action we decide on, we know it will end badly for someone. So what do we do? Do we decide not to commit to anything but just let events play out a little longer with the hope of a solution presenting itself? Maybe we think the issue will resolve itself before we have to get involved.

David is engaging in a very subtle form of deception to achieve an immediate goal while avoiding confrontation, and this isn't the first time David has resorted to this strategy. When we started this semester in First Samuel 21, David fabricated a story for Ahimelech the priest to get some bread and a sword. And we questioned why David would lie. True, he may not have gotten the help he needed from Ahimelech, but was Ahimelech his only recourse? Was God powerless to provide for his king? That, too, was an act of faithlessness and stumbling.

What would David have told Ahimelech if he had told the truth? What would he say to Achish now? I will not fight against Israel or raise my hand to Saul? That wouldn't have gone over well. And what consequences would it have had? There are consequences for lying but also consequences for telling the truth. The consequences are even more serious now with Achish. Now David is not just responsible for himself alone, but for 600 men and their families who are relying on his leadership.

David has the reputation of being a truthful, upright man, but his use of deception runs counter to a godly character. He doesn't exactly lie. He just doesn't tell the whole truth, and he is hiding his actions by leaving no witnesses because he fears Achish's reaction.

- **While David may be pursuing God's mission, is the way he goes about it something we should model?**

God doesn't like deceivers, and if we are engaged in the Great Commission, the goal is not to hide what we are doing. He calls us to bear witness of Himself and to leave witnesses of our work on His behalf, even if it makes our earthly masters unhappy and they give us grief about it.

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." - Matthew 5:14-16

But didn't David's actions accomplish this? Didn't he receive praise from Achish for his good works and being an upright man without sin or evil in him? Yes. But then the world judges by what they see and according to their own values. God sees deeper.

"Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation."
- 1 Peter 2:11-12

- **How open are we to be about our actions in the world? (Matthew 10:16-22, 27-33, 38-39)**

We can try to live in this world and avoid confrontation by hiding the fact that we are Christians and pursuing God's agenda under the radar. We can exist on the fringes and maintain that image that

fits the world's perception of a "good" person without having to actually declare ourselves. And that may work—it may work really well. It may work so well that we actually convince the heathens around us that we are just like them and will go along with whatever they propose to do.

Have you ever found yourself among company where someone suggested doing something that you, in your heart, didn't feel good about doing? But before you could decide how to react, events suddenly spun out of control and you found yourself swept along with them into doing what you didn't want to do? How far do you go in letting them think you are onboard with their values and their mission before you push back?

Be wary of joining causes: When tides change in the affairs of this world, opportunities for vengeance like this can present themselves, and a reward can be gained in allowing yourself to be carried along in the flood of events. And being carried along like that can produce a motivation—a feeling of being compelled to do something, for better or worse. But what happens when you let yourself be carried along like this is that you become part of the mob—you lose a sense of identity and, with it, a sense of personal accountability, choice, and self-control.

David's deceptive actions may have achieved the immediate goal, but look at how they entrenched him deeper and deeper into a compromising situation. At each phase, Achish assumes more and more control over David, and David has to let him. The only other option is to take a stand. So, how do you strike a balance?

Serving Worldly Masters in a Way That is Pleasing to God

- **How do you serve a worldly master and still accomplish God's agenda? (1 Timothy 6:1-2, Ephesians 6:5-9, Colossians 3:22-25, 1 Peter 2:18-24)**

[1 Timothy 6] A worker must work for his wage and his food, and we end up serving masters in this world to this end. It is a luxury to serve a master who is a believer, but even if we work for an unbeliever, we are to grant them an honor as our master.

[Ephesians 6 & Colossians 3] Paul speaks to our motivation and understanding of where our reward and validation lies. We do not seek those things from the earthly master (the master according to the flesh) but the heavenly one. We learned that from David's experience with Nabal.

[1 Peter 2:18–24] Abigail was a faithful wife to her faithless and harsh husband. She looked after his interests, even when he didn't deserve it. In going to David with that gift, she went against her husband's wishes and would have incurred Nabal's wrath, but she did it to save his life as well as her own. She would have been made to suffer wrongly, but the Lord rewarded her instead.

The Question of Loyalty to a Master: David's argument over why he should not be sent from the battle calls into question just how far his loyalties have gone toward serving Achish.

Serving unbelieving masters does not always create conflict with our service to the Lord or even living out our faith, but we have to walk a fine line in one aspect—how deeply we allow ourselves to become yoked with them. When I say yoked, I am talking about having a relationship we share an equal authority level with them that then gives them power over us to force us off a righteous path or to implicate or obligate us in their sin. This is why Paul says:

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?” - 2 Corinthians 6:14–15

It is one thing to work for a master where you still have the autonomy to walk away from them, but it is another thing to give them power over you and to decide what direction the work will go. David has been doing some work for Achish, and David’s strategy for serving this master has worked pretty well, so long as he was the one deciding where to raid and what enemies he would tackle. But then he ran into a dilemma when Achish told him to raise his hand against Saul.

You will inevitably end up in this dilemma at some point when you fall into partnership with the world. For this reason, I would not recommend being yoked in marriage or even in business.

There is a right and wrong king to align yourself with when pursuing a crown, and a right wrong way to pursue a crown. And there are fights that you should and shouldn’t be in.