

1st Samuel

Lesson 53

e) His Conscience (26:21-25)

We come now to his conscience, Saul's conscience, after David has made his case. Verse 21.

"Then Saul said, 'I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will not harm you again because my life was precious in your sight this day. Behold, I have played the fool and have committed a serious error.'"²² David replied, 'Behold the spear of the king! Now let one of the young men come over and take it.'²³ The LORD will repay each man for his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the LORD delivered you into my hand today, but I refused to stretch out my hand against the LORD's anointed.²⁴ Now behold, as your life was highly valued in my sight this day, so may my life be highly valued in the sight of the LORD, and may He deliver me from all distress.'²⁵ Then Saul said to David, 'Blessed are you, my son David; you will both accomplish much and surely prevail.' So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place." (26:21-25)

Saul repented. Saul was given his sword back, and most likely his water bottle too, for David would not have wanted to keep anything that belonged to the LORD's anointed king. Saul went home. David went back to the camp.

It is at this point in the story where I am taken to grief in my heart because I know a pastor, an anointed pastor, who began a Church and led it to be one of the great congregations as part of the LORD's Bride for fifty-three years when some of his men decided it was time for him to leave the Church as its head minister. The plan was long and calculated. The pastor was tricked into participating in meetings meant to provide a way for the Church to seek a new pastor if he ever retired or died while in office. Near the end of the two-year charade, the staff was finally made aware of the committee's work and told that once the plan was finalized, it would go in the drawer for when it was needed. The pastor participated, thinking that was what was going to happen. But with evil men, the reason is never the reason. The lie was that the plan would be put in the drawer. That was never to be the case. Within seven days of the plan being completed, men went to the pastor's office and told him the day of his retirement. These were laymen, sheep of the Church, who had been led astray by specifically two staff members under the pastor. These laymen had been manipulated to believe that it was the LORD's will that they act on behalf of the LORD and the Church to end the anointed pastor's term. They did not give him a choice. He had a choice; he could have said, "let's put the plan in the drawer, and I will entreat the LORD concerning my retirement." Had they been honest with him all along the way, he could have been petitioning the LORD for two years – but they were not honest with him and their intentions. It was a surprise to him. Had he said, "let's put it in the drawer," the men would have been faced with the decision to take it to the Church floor. The pastor knew that, and he could not bear to see, for the very first time, such a thing on the floor of the Church for a vote. In addition, the pastor thought that the whole staff was involved and thought they were in unison. In reality, only a small part of the staff was involved and what they knew was what the pastor knew – the lie that had been told. The pastor was terminated. When you are told your retirement date, you are not retiring; you are being terminated. Their mutiny, instigated by specifically two of the pastor's top men, "*touched the LORD's anointed.*" We can only wait to see how the LORD will handle these men in eternity – and, do not be ignorant at this point; the LORD will handle them for touching the LORD's anointed. The LORD would have handled David had he touched the LORD's anointed – know that for sure.

We come to a most unfortunate chapter break in our Scripture. We must look on to chapter 27, verse one at least.

Chapter 27

f) His Conclusion (27:1)

With this unfortunate chapter break, we must continue on to see his conclusion, David's conclusion to his meeting with Saul in the dark of the night. Chapter 27, verse 1.

"Then David said to himself, "Now I will perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than to escape into the land of the Philistines. Saul then will despair of searching for me anymore in all the territory of Israel, and I will escape from his hand." (27:1)

When conflicts occur repeatedly in a person's life, sometimes it is just best to move on – literally, move to a new location, to start fresh, to get away from evil. I have always known that there are places in this world where evil is personified every day against good people. There is hardly a day that we do not hear on our national news programs of some evil tyrant persecuting his own people, striking fear in them to obey his every command. Our history books are filled with such atrocities. But it has always amazed me that such places exist in our own neighborhoods in the United States. At my last Church, it sat in a safe neighborhood. Even the homeless folk who lived under the bridges were kind and fit right into the neighborly surroundings. We fed them when their money ran out on their monthly allotment from the government for which they had spent the money mostly on wine and strong drink. In gratitude, they would come help sort food when we had a food drive, help with disaster relief and work projects. Even though I tried to influence them to get out from under the bridge and off the streets, they did not want to do so. Therefore, I would buy them totally enclosed and floored tents to keep them away from the insects at night. They were grateful. However, just a few streets over to the south was an apartment complex that was filled with evil. Most of the people living in those apartments have larger government checks than the homeless. They did not spend their money so much on wine as rather on drugs. They were always short each month on rent. But as you might not know, drugs tend to always be associated with guns. Now I am not against guns, I have my share. But I am horrified by what evil people on drugs and alcohol do with guns. Daily, anger fits flared in the complex and guns were fired. Daily reports came of robberies and beatings among people in the complex. One day my wife called me and told me she had gotten lost in an area behind the Dairy Queen. I asked her to tell me the cross streets she was at and I quickly told her how to get out of there. She could tell the fear in my voice. Once she was out and safe, she asked me why I was so fearful. I told her that people in that area were weekly hit by stray bullets. It was, and is still not a safe place for anyone. It is filled with every vice known to man – prostitution, drug running, etc. In Clear Lake, where I live, the same became true. For thirty years there was not a bad place to be in Clear Lake. You could walk the streets at night with no fear, no crime, no evil. But in this last decade, pockets of evil have developed. People who lived there for fifty years did what David is about to do in our story, they found it best just to move – and they did. In my forty-eight years of ministry, many times I have ministered to people in evil situations. One that became a glory to God in the highest moment was when a person who had fallen in with some worthless fellows, godless in every way dragged the person under threat to another state. We could do nothing to stop it because the person was over eighteen years of age. All we could do was pray. Regularly, reports came of the ungodly life going on in the house. Finally, the person was convicted, got in a car, and drove back to Texas. The person testified that health was declining with diseases and medical help was needed. The only way to continue living was to get away from the evil and get help. He made the right choice.

We speak about the importance of families often, and they are important, but in some cases, families are toxic. Some families have generations of toxic behavior. Crime families are called crime families because if you are related to the family, your business in life is going to be crime. Drug families are the same. Drunk families are the same. When you are around it, it is normal to you. In

such cases, sometimes a person who wants out of the evil must make the hard decision to abandon the family and take the chance on a new life away from that expected and taught in the biological family. I have had the opportunity to help a few in this case, but not many. Those who I have had the privilege to help have flourished. However, from time to time, because of their good choices and new property, family members arrive on their doorstep, expecting help – help to continue in their evil ways.

Even in David's days, he must have seen all that I have seen because he knew that the only salvation for his life was to leave the Promised Land and go where the king of Israel had no jurisdiction. Where would he go? It is interesting that he chose the Philistines, the constant enemy of Israel. Saul would probably think that David has hidden himself and his men somewhere in the Promised Land. However, after searching the land in vain, Saul would give up. It was David's plan. David moved on to the land of the Philistines. But David's plan did not layout as planned. Someone knew where David went and told Saul.

C. The Story of the Movement of David (27:2-31:13)

1. David's Time with the Philistines

a) David Lived with the King of Gath (27:2-4)

We come to the story of the movement of David and David's time with the Philistines. It is interesting because David lived with the King of Gath, the very king whom he had previously acted like a madman in order to escape his grips. Chapter 27, verse 2.

“So David arose and crossed over, he and the six hundred men who were with him, to Achish the son of Maoch, king of Gath.³ And David lived with Achish at Gath, he and his men, each with his household, even David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelite, and Abigail the Carmelite, Nabal’s widow.⁴ Now it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath, so he no longer searched for him.” (27:2-4)

The first time David stood before Achish, he was alone. This time, when David stood before Achish, quite a mass of humanity stood with him. Almost every time in the past passages I have mentioned that the men with David were not alone, they had not abandoned their families. Their families were with them with David. David's daily requirement to feed this many folks under his care was massive. And, as the writer tells us, David had his family with him also, Ahinoam and Abigail. We should not forget that Abigail had her five maids with her. This move from the Rocks of the Wild Goats was quite an endeavor. For whatever reason, Achish allowed David and all the crowd with him to remain in Gath.

b) David Given the Town of Ziklag (27:5-7)

After a while, and it was not long, David proved himself, fortified no doubt by the kind actions of his men and their families, that the writer tells of David being given the Philistine town of Ziklag. Verse 5.

“Then David said to Achish, “If now I have found favor in your sight, let them give me a place in one of the cities in the country, that I may live there; for why should your servant live in the royal city with you?”⁶ So Achish gave him Ziklag that day; therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day.⁷ The number of days that David lived in the country of the Philistines was a year and four months.” (27:5-7)

We are thankful to the writer because he has given us a time marker. However, we must be mindful that all three writers who contributed to this book, Samuel, Gad, and Nathan, always gave a summary in time markers before the time had actually expired. What do I mean by that? It means that the writer of this portion of the passage was writing long after all the events recorded in 1st Samuel had come to an end and David was the king of Judah. But at this time in the storyline, David was not yet the king of Judah; he would not become the king for another year and four months from the time David stood in front of Achish for the second time. During that time,

Achish gave David the Philistine town of Ziklag that was right on the border of the Philistine and Judah tribal lands. At this point in the story, Ziklag belongs to David but is still part of the Philistine property. If it was transferred to the Promised Land property, then Saul would have control of it and that was not the case. For now, Ziklag belongs to the Philistine tribal area although David owns the town. When David becomes the king of Judah, the town and that portion of the Philistine tribal area will become the property of all future kings of Judah.

With the gift of Ziklag, David and his men, with all their families, moved to Ziklag as their permanent home.

c) David Kills the Inhabitants from Shur to Egypt (27:8-9)

At some time, after settling in at Ziklag, a raid occurs and David kills the inhabitants from Shur to Egypt. Verse 8.

"Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites and the Girzites and the Amalekites; for they were the inhabitants of the land from ancient times, as you come to Shur even as far as the land of Egypt. ⁹ David attacked the land and did not leave a man or a woman alive, and he took away the sheep, the cattle, the donkeys, the camels, and the clothing. Then he returned and came to Achish." (27:8-9)

Why would David do this? We do not know, but we can speculate. While living in the walled city of Gath, David, his men, and all their families, had the resources to feed everyone. However, Ziklag was not a city. It was simply a village on the outskirts of Gath. Resources there may have been scarce and that was the reason for the need to raid some communities in order to provide for the families. That scenario is the most likely reason.

David raided the communities of three families, the Geshurites, Girzites, and the Amalekites from Shur to Egypt. In previous passages, we have discussed that coming out of Egypt there was a main trade route that led east to the village of Shur. The area around Shur was called the wilderness of Shur, and the trade route was called the Way of Shur. Sadly, the village of Shur has not survived and we do not know its location. However, the Way of Shur and the Wilderness of Shur have survived. One thing we might conclude about the village of Shur is that it sat on the far east of the wilderness on the major trade route that crossed through the border and through the Philistine land. In order to get to Shur from Ziklag, David and his men had to go through the Philistine land. If they traveled by the well known roads, they had to go through Gath. They may have gone around Gath on the way to Shur, but on the way back with spoils, it may have been better to stay on the well-known route on the way back to Ziklag.

These three families, Geshurites, Girzites, and the Amalekites, were not in just three villages, they were in multiple villages on the trade route from Shur to Egypt. The Wilderness of Shur and the Way of Shur were in the land owned by Egypt, but, in this case, we might well assume that the writer is telling us that David raided these families wherever they lived in the Wilderness of Shur on the Way of Shur west to the Land of Goshen and near the capital of Egypt at the time, a place called Tanis. David surely did not go into the capital, but kept his distance, yet, he killed these three families in as many villages as he could where they lived from Shur to Egypt.

The writer tells us about these three families that "*they were the inhabitants of the land from ancient times.*" All this means is that these families had lived in this part of Egypt's wilderness, on the Way of Shur for hundreds and hundreds of years.

You might notice that one family was called the Amalekites. Yes, this is the tribe of which Saul was supposed to "*destroy every Amalekite wherever they lived.*" Saul had failed to kill every Amalekite and it was his undoing as a king more than thirty-five years before this time in this passage. It was when the LORD pronounced that Saul's lineage would not hold the throne in the future and David was later anointed to be the next king. At this point in the story, David was twenty-eight years old.

d) David Questioned by the King of Gath (27:10-12)

Back in Gath with all the spoils of the raid, we hear David questioned by the King of Gath. Verse 10.

"Now Achish said, 'Where have you made a raid today?' And David said, 'Against the Negev of Judah and against the Negev of the Jerahmeelites and against the Negev of the Kenites.'"¹¹ David did not leave a man or a woman alive to bring to Gath, saying, 'Otherwise they will tell about us, saying, 'So has David done and so has been his practice all the time he has lived in the country of the Philistines.' "¹² So Achish believed David, saying, 'He has surely made himself odious among his people Israel; therefore he will become my servant forever.' (27:10-12)

David was nowhere near the Negev. Neither was he near the people of Judah, his own tribe, nor the Jerahmeelites, the descendants of the firstborn of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah (1st Chronicles 2:9; 2:25-26), a tribal family of Judah living on the southern border of Judah, nor the Kenites, who were living with and under the protection of Judah. These were the descendants of Moses's father-in-law who joined the Israelites when they left Sinai, (Judges 1:16-17).

The writer tells us that David did not leave a soul alive to bring word to Achish to dispute his testimony about where he had come from raiding that day.

Here we must admit the obvious. David lied to Achish. This was a dark period in David's life. He was on the run from Saul in fear of his life. David seemed to believe that all of Saul's men were instigating Saul's hatred of David. Therefore, David must have doubted his future as the king of Israel. According to this passage, David continued to raid and kill people, taking the spoil's no doubt to feed the men and families with him. And, David continued to lie to cover his actions and save himself and his men from the wrath of Achish, the king of Gath.

Finally, the writer reports that Achish believed that David's murderous raids had cast a disparaging opinion on David among all the Israelites. As such, David could not go back to Israel; therefore, Achish saw the opportunity to harness David, his abilities, and his men to help as a servant of the Philistines for as long as David lived. A most unfortunate chapter break occurs at this point. The thought of Achish is not complete without the first verses of chapter 28.