

1 Samuel 27-28

- Over the past few lessons, we've studied David's testing
 - He offended the Lord by sinning against the Lord's anointed
 - So the Lord gave David a lesson in humility and what a servant's heart looks like
 - And David learned that lesson
 - And when the time came to show what he learned, David passed the test
 - He defended Saul and appealed to the Lord for his own protection
 - Though in the process, David showed his weakness for women by taking another wife in Abigail
 - So since David has passed his test, it's time for the Lord to move David into the position God has prepared for him
 - It's time for David to become king
 - But first, the Lord must orchestrate Saul's departure
 - So in the last section of this book, Chapters 27-31, we follow how Saul's reign comes to an end
 - But we also see that David's heart still has doubts and weaknesses
 - So the Lord will orchestrate circumstances to correct and strengthen David
 - Even as He moves to bring David into power
- And to illustrate that point, the story begins with David returning to hide among the Philistines

1Sam. 27:1 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."

1Sam. 27:2 So David arose and crossed over, he and the six hundred men who were with him, to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath.

1Sam. 27:3 And David lived with Achish at Gath, he and his men, each with his household, even David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's widow.

- David decides that he must once again flee from Jewish territory and hide among Israel's enemies in Philistia
 - He knows that Saul cannot move freely in the territory of the Philistines
 - So he goes with his 600 men to Achish, the leader of the Philistine city of Gath
 - David and his men take their families, who have been with them in their flight
 - Why would the Philistines open their doors to David at all?
 - The simple answer is that the enemy of my enemy is my friend
 - Anything that weakened Saul was to the advantage of the Philistines
 - David was the best military leader Saul had, so they were only too glad to take David away from Saul
 - Just as when a sports team tries to recruit a top player away from a rival team
 - Secondly, the Philistines plan to enlist David in battles against Israel
 - Once David fights for the Philistines, the Jews will never take him back
 - So this is a calculated move to weaken the monarchy in Israel
- Perhaps the more important question for us is was David right to escape to the Philistine city?
 - Was this move something God inspired for David's benefit?
 - We can answer the question by observing some details carefully
 - And then by remembering the purpose in David's flight
 - First, looking at the details, we see things that indicate David was not acting with the Lord's approval
 - First, in v.1 we were told David "said to himself"

- This phrase is very specific and stands in contrast to previous moments
- In the past when David faced difficult decisions, we've noted how David was faithful to go to the Lord in prayer seeking guidance
- David's tendency to pray was in marked contrast with Saul's tendency to seek no one's counsel or even worse
- But this time David seeks no one's counsel except his own
 - In fact, there is no mention of God in this entire chapter
 - David seems to be acting entirely without consideration for the Lord's will
- Furthermore, David's reasoning for this flight is that he won't live unless he finds sanctuary in Gath
 - And yet David has received assurances from multiple sources that he will in fact be king
 - From Samuel to Jonathan to Saul himself David has heard that one day he will be king
 - And yet he's convinced that the Lord might allow Saul to kill him before that day comes
 - Clearly this is a lack of confidence on David's part
- And then there's the comment at the end in v.3 that David was traveling with his multiple wives
 - Samuel is implying that David is paying the price of assuming the burden of these women
 - He's so concerned for their welfare that he compromises his walk
 - As a family man, he chooses to live safely among Israel's enemies than fulfill his calling to contend with Saul
- Finally, and most importantly, David's stepping away from the fight God wants him to experience
 - David's trial in fleeing Saul was something the Lord purposed for David's good

- David is being pursued by Saul so that he might be strengthened and matured for service as king
- God is using these circumstances for David's benefit, but David is tired and tied down
- So he opts for an escape from persecution
- Yet that persecution is exactly what the Lord wanted David to experience
- So all information points to David acting in disobedience in his flight to Gath
 - He has not sought the Lord's counsel
 - He is running for the wrong reasons
 - And he has forgotten that the difficulty of his circumstances are intended for good in God's purposes
 - So by fleeing, David is escaping the training he needs
- Thankfully, our mistakes can't ruin God's plans
 - One way or another, the Lord gets His way
 - By our disobedience, we may alter the playbook of our life
 - But not the outcome
 - So David's escape becomes opportunity for the Lord to simply work in a different way to achieve His goal
 - The Lord will work through the Philistines to continue David's training
 - And at the same time, the Lord will use these circumstances for a second good purpose
 - He will work through the Philistines to bring Saul's rule to an end
 - And David will play a central role in that process

1Sam. 27:4 Now it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath, so he no longer searched for him.

- David's plan works to stop Saul's attack

- Saul couldn't prosecute his attack against David without taking on the entire Philistine army
 - And he's clearly unwilling to do that
 - So David is safe for now
 - And it appears that David intends to remain in Philistine territory until Saul dies
- But this is a tricky plan
 - The Philistines aren't going to allow David to hide out just so he can return to rule Israel when it's convenient
 - David must convince them he is defecting from Israel
 - He's brought his men and their families, so it appears he's coming to stay
- But eventually, the Philistines will insist on a sign of loyalty from David
 - But David is anticipating this too
 - So he has a plan

1Sam. 27:5 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?"

1Sam. 27:6 So Achish gave him Ziklag that day; therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day.

1Sam. 27:7 The number of days that David lived in the country of the Philistines was a year and four months.

1Sam. 27:8 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.

1Sam. 27:9 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.

- David's plan begins with proposing to become a vassal of King Achish
 - David, quite deceptively, refers to himself as the servant of Achish
 - And then he proposes that he go rule over one of the cities of the Philistines

- The king likes where this is going, so he gives David the city of Ziklag
- So David took control of that city
- The location of Ziklag was perfectly suited to the rest of David's plan
 - It was in the extreme south of the Philistines territory at the edge of the hill country
 - The Philistine kings lived miles north, so David and his men could come and go and conduct themselves without being observed
 - This was the opportunity David wanted
- For sixteen months David lives in this town, and as the writer says kings of Judah never relinquished control of this town once David gained it
 - And immediately David begins to lead military excursions against the common enemies of the Philistines and Israel
 - The people were the descendants of the Canaanites living in the southern desert that separated Israel from Egypt
 - David was attacking the same people groups that Joshua told Israel to defeat when they first entered the land
 - Because Israel disobeyed, they remained even until David's day
- So David does exactly as the Lord had commanded Israel
 - He utterly destroys the inhabitants of the land so that the land could become Israel's
 - He leaves no one alive, which was the Lord's command
 - Notice in v.8 that these people included the descendants of Amalek
 - And Amalek and his descendants have been under a curse from God, though Israel failed to carry it out

Deut. 25:17 "Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt,
Deut. 25:18 how he met you along the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God.

Deut. 25:19 “Therefore it shall come about when the Lord your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget.

- David achieves these impressive victories with only 600 misfits
 - By now though, they are hardened soldiers
 - Nevertheless, his success only proves that Israel could have accomplished the same in earlier days
 - The people stop trying
 - The Lord didn’t stop awarding victories
- David’s raids are serving the purpose of clearing land for David’s future kingdom
 - But they also become an opportunity for David to convince the Philistines that he is on their side

1Sam. 27:10 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.”

1Sam. 27:11 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.’”

1Sam. 27:12 So Achish believed David, saying, “He has surely made himself odious among his people Israel; therefore he will become my servant forever.”

- David and King Achish meet again back in Gath
 - Josephus says that David brought spoils from the victories to Achish as a tribute
 - And of course Achish asks David where he was raiding to obtain the spoils
 - David responds that he was raiding in the Negev of Judah and surrounding areas
 - Technically, David is telling the truth, since the region where he battled is part of the Negev desert

- But he deceives Achish by indicating that the target of his raid were members of Judah living in that area
- In reality, David attacked only the Canaanites in the region
- And David knew what he intended to do in the end, which is why he utterly destroyed all the inhabitants
 - David wanted to destroy the evidence
 - There would be no one left alive to contradict his version of the events
- David's actions certainly achieve a measure of benefit for Israel but nevertheless he was wrong to enter the Philistines' territories
 - And every indication we have tells us that David was wrong to set about all that he is doing among the Philistines
 - David seems to be back to his old tricks of deception to get what he wants
 - He stepped into the Philistine territory without consulting the Lord
 - He has devised a plan of his own making thinking he was securing a victory for Israel
 - In the end he was substituting one set of dangers for another and sinning in the process
 - Later in Chapter 30 we will see the full effect of his sin in this situation
 - The Lord will teach David yet another lesson about taking matters into his own hands
 - As a result, David will grow another step in dependence on the Lord
 - Meanwhile, David's deception is working with King Achish
 - Achish is convinced that David has been fighting Jews in the south
 - And as a result, David has made himself a pariah, and so he must forever remain with the Philistines

- But Chapter 27 is merely set up for what's coming in the next several chapters as we work toward the end of Saul's reign

1Sam. 28:1 Now it came about in those days that the Philistines gathered their armed camps for war, to fight against Israel. And Achish said to David, "Know assuredly that you will go out with me in the camp, you and your men."

1Sam. 28:2 David said to Achish, "Very well, you shall know what your servant can do." So Achish said to David, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life."

- After about 16 months, the time had come for the Philistines to mount their latest attack against the nation of Israel
 - So the army is assembling by the tens of thousands and David and his men are called to join as well
 - When King Achish sees David, he determines that David's men will March near the rear with King Achish
 - They will be his personal bodyguards
 - When the king tells David of the idea, David responds in a cryptic manner
 - He says "You know what I can do"
 - Achish's ears heard that as a promise that David could kill his own brethren
 - Once again, it's deception by omission
 - David knows how the king will hear him, though David means it in an entirely different way
- Meanwhile, back in Gilgal Saul is panicking at the prospect of a massive Philistine invasion
 - We can tell how distressed Saul was because he seeks the Lord's counsel, something we haven't seen him do much if at all

1Sam. 28:3 Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. And Saul had removed from the land those who were mediums and spiritists.

1Sam. 28:4 So the Philistines gathered together and came and camped in Shunem; and Saul gathered all Israel together and they camped in Gilboa.

1Sam. 28:5 When Saul saw the camp of the Philistines, he was afraid and his heart trembled greatly.

[1Sam. 28:6](#) When Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets.

[1Sam. 28:7](#) Then Saul said to his servants, "Seek for me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her." And his servants said to him, "Behold, there is a woman who is a medium at En-dor."

- At this point we're reminded that Samuel was gone and that Saul had previously removed all the mediums and spiritists in the land of Israel
 - Samuel was the prophet of Israel during Saul's reign
 - With Samuel gone Saul has no reliable source to consult for God's word
 - Of course, he didn't spend much time listening when he had the chance
 - Secondly, in one of his better moments Saul obeyed the Law when he acted to remove all mediums and spiritists in the land of Israel
 - Both groups are closely related in power and function
 - A medium is one who claims to communicate with the dead
 - A spiritist is a person who communicates with evil spirits
 - In both cases, they are tapping into demonic power
 - Therefore, the Law given to Israel prohibits God's people from accessing such individuals
 - These people were to be put to death in Israel, according to the Law
 - And at some point Saul had done this very thing
 - But now Saul begins to regret it
- Saul appeals to the Lord for wisdom on how to defeat the Philistines, but the Lord is observing radio silence
 - When Saul had the opportunity to hear the Lord's counsel through Samuel he didn't listen
 - So now the Lord refuses to listen to Saul
 - Saul received no dreams from the Lord

- And the prophets of the day had no answer for Saul
- Saul even went to his replacement high priest asking for a reading from the Urim and Thummim stones found in the ephod
 - Since we know David took the true high priest and ephod with him, then we know Saul can't have the true stones of God
 - Therefore, he must have had a new set made, which the Lord did not honor with an answer
- This detail tells us that the stones must have behaved in a supernatural way
 - They couldn't have operated in a natural way like ordinary dice
 - Otherwise, Saul could have made a counterfeit and posed a question and received an "answer" though a false one
 - But the text says Saul got no answer from his Urim stone
 - So there must have been some way to know that the Lord was speaking in the result
- So Saul resorts to asking his servants if they could direct him to a medium anywhere in the land
 - We've just heard that Saul removed the medium and spiritists of the land, yet he was hoping he missed one somewhere
 - So his servants direct him to a woman in En-dor
 - En-dor is located on the Hill of Moreh in the Jezreel valley
 - As it turns out, this town sits on the opposite side of the mountain where the Philistine army is gathering
 - So Saul goes to visit this woman seeking divine wisdom on how to fight the approaching Philistine army

1Sam. 28:8 Then Saul disguised himself by putting on other clothes, and went, he and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night; and he said, "Conjure up for me, please, and bring up for me whom I shall name to you."

1Sam. 28:9 But the woman said to him, "Behold, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off those who are mediums and spiritists from the land. Why are you then laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?"

[1Sam. 28:10](#) Saul vowed to her by the Lord, saying, "As the Lord lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing."

[1Sam. 28:11](#) Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" And he said, "Bring up Samuel for me."

- Saul prepares to see this woman by disguising himself in other clothes
 - Saul had previously destroyed all such people, but now he was hypocritically seeking this woman's help
 - If she recognized him as king, she would never have agreed to perform her magic for him
 - So Saul is now forced to disguise himself and travel by night to obtain what he wants
 - The nighttime scene also serves to reinforce the evil in Saul's actions
 - Despite his efforts to conceal his identity, the woman remains suspicious of the men and asks for reassurances
 - So Saul goes the next step of entering into a covenant with this woman
 - He vows that she will never receive punishment for this act
 - This goes hand in hand with Saul's previous actions
 - He wants to be seen as someone who upholds the Law but he is willing to go against the Law whenever it suits him
- Saul's request of the woman is to "bring up Samuel"
 - As we said earlier, a medium was a person who claimed to have the power to bring up the dead so loved ones could communicate
 - In reality, a medium never conjured up dead people
 - The spirits of the dead are held by God and cannot be brought up except by that same power
 - Instead, mediums were always communicating with evil spirits who impersonated a dead person
 - The evil spirits were willing to play this charade because it accomplished their purpose in trapping people in the occult

- By what they communicated, the evil spirit could influence the thoughts of people to suit their destructive purposes
- Obviously, knowing how these occult practices work reinforces the truth of God's word when it warns us to stay far away from such things
- Presumably, many mediums were equally fooled by these experiences thinking they actually possessed the power to raise the dead
 - Or in other cases, perhaps the medium was in on the trick
 - Maybe some understood that they were just toying with the spirit world and not speaking with the actual dead person
 - But either way, so long as their clients were fooled, the mediums were successful in business
- So Saul asks for the medium to bring up Samuel, because Saul wants to hear a word from Samuel concerning the coming battle
 - Saul knows that Samuel has been a reliable source of intel
 - Ironically, when Samuel lived, Saul didn't take advantage of Samuel's knowledge
 - And other times he flat out disobeyed the word of the Lord
 - But now that he is worried about his own skin, Saul is determined to know what God has to say
 - And of course the greatest irony is that Saul would consider doing so through a clearly ungodly method
 - Why would Saul suppose the Lord would honor him with a new word when Saul is acting so contrary to God's existing word?
 - This shows the warped thinking of a man who has descended so far into his sin nature
 - He is so ruled by his sinful flesh that he can construct such contradictory logic and believe it will work
- So then the medium begins her act for Saul

1Sam. 28:12 When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice; and the woman spoke to Saul, saying, "Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul."

[1Sam. 28:13](#) The king said to her, "Do not be afraid; but what do you see?" And the woman said to Saul, "I see a divine being coming up out of the earth."

[1Sam. 28:14](#) He said to her, "What is his form?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped with a robe." And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did homage.

- In an instant, a vision of Samuel appears catching the woman completely by surprise
 - She alone sees Samuel and it shocks her
 - In the process, it seems that the vision of Samuel names Saul in the room
 - Which leads the woman to turn to her client in anger knowing she was tricked
 - The woman's response to this vision confirms for us that this was not the normal experience for her
 - In the past, she had communicated with evil spirits which must have followed a certain pattern she knew well
 - But clearly this experience is proceeding in a very unexpected manner
 - She is so scared that Saul has to calm her down
 - Furthermore, notice that the text never indicates that the woman "called up" Samuel
 - It seems Saul named Samuel's name first
 - And then at that same moment a vision of Samuel appeared to the woman, catching her by surprise
 - She hadn't even the chance to begin her incantations
- So then what is happening here with Samuel?
 - The Lord brought the woman a vision of Samuel
 - The medium didn't call Samuel up from the dead
 - She didn't possess the power to do so

- We can see by her response that she wasn't in control of what was happening
- The Lord brought her a vision of Samuel to teach Saul a lesson
- I keep saying a "vision" of Samuel because I believe that's what the woman experienced
 - I don't believe Samuel's spirit was actually withdrawn from Sheol and brought into this room
 - Rather, I think the woman's experience was comparable to the experiences that Isaiah had or that the Apostle John had in Revelation
- In those cases, the men saw something, but their vision didn't require they were physically transported
 - For example, John saw the world destroyed while standing in Heaven, but we know it didn't actually happen in John's day
 - Likewise, the woman saw and heard from Samuel
 - But her experience was a vision provided by the Lord
- As Saul sees the medium's fear, he asks her to describe what she sees
 - She describes a "divine" being coming out of the earth
 - The Hebrew word for divine is *elohim*, which refers to God
 - This is further proof that the woman is seeing something very different than in past times
 - This spirit seems like God to her, not like the demons she normally speaks to
 - And then as Saul presses for more detail, she describes Samuel's appearance, and Saul knows it's him
 - And in another act of hypocritical piety, Saul bows to the ground
 - Obviously, Saul never gave Samuel any such consideration while he was alive, so we know his gesture is completely self-serving
 - More importantly, it was inappropriate in any case, because we don't direct our worship to men
 - Saul's heart is a hot mess at this point

- Then through this vision, the Lord gives Saul a judgment for his time of rebellion and sin

1Sam. 28:15 Then Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” And Saul answered, “I am greatly distressed; for the Philistines are waging war against me, and God has departed from me and no longer answers me, either through prophets or by dreams; therefore I have called you, that you may make known to me what I should do.”

1Sam. 28:16 Samuel said, “Why then do you ask me, since the Lord has departed from you and has become your adversary?”

1Sam. 28:17 “The Lord has done accordingly as He spoke through me; for the Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, to David.

1Sam. 28:18 “As you did not obey the Lord and did not execute His fierce wrath on Amalek, so the Lord has done this thing to you this day.

1Sam. 28:19 “Moreover the Lord will also give over Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines, therefore tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. Indeed the Lord will give over the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines!”

- Samuel asks Saul why he summoned him
 - Saul answers that he is afraid of the Philistines and that he can't get God to answer him, so he wants Samuel's advice
 - It's significant that Saul doesn't ask Samuel why the Lord has stopped responding
 - That would be the more important question
 - Saul may be afraid of what the Philistines will do to his body
 - But what he should be worried about is what the Lord will do to his soul
 - Samuel responds by giving Saul sobering news about the Lord's plans
 - First, the Lord speaks through the vision of Samuel to give Saul the answer to the question he never asked
 - That the Lord's silence is a result of the withdrawal of the Spirit
 - And the Lord has become Saul's adversary rather than a source of blessing
 - Samuel's point to Saul is why should he expect a prophet to tell him anything if the Lord was not inclined to speak?

- The prophet simply says what the Lord tells him to say, so that if the Lord is silent, so will the prophets be silent
- This is the central issues in Saul's life, but it's the thing he never gives any attention
 - He has set himself against the Lord and against the Lord's word
 - As a result, Saul was only going to know silence and frustration at each turn
 - There was no way for Saul to go around this barrier apart from repentance
 - And once Saul crossed the line, the Lord withdrew His Spirit and Saul's authority to act as His representative
 - As Samuel reminds Saul, the kingdom has been taken from him...it's only a matter of time before the end comes
- In fact, Samuel reveals that day is coming sooner than Saul expects
 - This massing of Philistines will be the instrument the Lord will use to put an end to Saul's dynasty
 - Not only will Saul die tomorrow in battle but so will his son Jonathan
 - Jonathan was to die as well so that the house of Saul would come to an end as the Lord promised
 - Samuel's statement in v.19 raises several interesting points
 - First, the fact that Saul and Jonathan die at the same time reflect the truth that bad things happen to both bad and good people
 - The Lord is choosing to end Saul's life on this day as a result of his sin
 - But his godly son, a friend of David, will die too, also because of Saul's sin
 - This is not a punishment against Jonathan
 - Jonathan is a victim of his father's sin
 - Nevertheless, the Lord is not unjust to take Jonathan's life too

- First, the Lord was going to take Jonathan's earthly life one day, one way or another
- So you can't judge God for the timing nor manner of Jonathan's death
- Furthermore, sin has consequences for us and others, and these are the consequences of Saul's sin
- Jonathan cannot live on to interfere with David's rise to power
- Then v.19 also provides us with the conclusive proof we've been seeking concerning the disposition of Saul's heart
 - So often we've puzzled at Saul's decisions, and in particular we've wondered at his ungodliness
 - Could Saul truly be a saint and do the things he did?
 - And I've taught along the way that Saul's life is an archetype for the carnal believer
 - And now we have our proof
 - Samuel tells Saul that at the end of the next day, Saul and Jonathan will both be where Samuel is
 - Notice Samuel says both the disobedient Saul and the obedient Jonathan will join the prophet Samuel
 - So whatever you think of Saul, you must think the same of the other two and vice versa
 - Had Saul been destined to occupy a different place, I doubt Samuel would have phrased his response this way
 - By connecting both both Saul and Jonathan to Samuel, the implication is they share the same eternal fate
- Finally, v.19 confirms the coming defeat of the army of Israel in the battle
 - This will not mean the end of the nation, certainly
 - But it does show that the people's fate is closely connected to the fate of their king
 - Saul's disobedience has produced consequences for the nation as a whole

- Next week we'll pick up here with the rest of the story