

## Discord, Defeat, and Death

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We rejoin David still beyond the borders of Israel in our scriptures studies this week. We will focus on difficult times for both David and Saul. In our first passage we will see that Saul continues to pursue David and narrowly escapes death. David chooses to find respite from Saul by seeking asylum among the Philistines, but at great price. And finally Saul enters into the final battle of his life. It is an exciting study ahead of us this week. May God bless you at every turn and reveal what it means to be a woman after God's own heart as we examine both David and Saul's choices and actions this week.

### **David Again Spares Saul's Life**



Read 1 Samuel 26. Yet again David is close enough to strike down Saul and again he refrains. In this chapter we are introduced to one of David's closest brothers-in-arms. His name is Abishai and he becomes one of the leaders of David's mighty men. Look ahead to 2 Samuel 23: 13-19. What does it say that Abishai did and became in verses 18-19?

According to 1 Chronicles 2:16, who is Abishai? What is his relationship to David? Name Abishai's brothers.

Turning back to our passage in 1 Samuel 26, describe what Abishai *wanted* to do for David and what he *did* do for David. What character traits does this passage reveal about Abishai and his relationship to David?

How did David respond in verse 10-11?

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♥ Abishai is obviously a man who has a great deal of respect for David as a leader and commander. Because of that respect he is obedient to David's command even when it would seem to defy common sense. The men who have come to David and pledged their allegiance, while being described in chapter 22 as "*in distress, or in debt or discontented*", are being molded into a true army and formidable fighting force. What does this tell you about David's military training?

Verses 17-21 record the exchange between David and Saul. Again David demands Saul to explain what he has possibly been guilty of doing to have incurred the king's wrath and to desire his death. He says if it is the Lord who has incited him (Saul) against David let an offering – a sacrifice – be made in atonement for whatever offense David has made. Saul cannot answer to that charge because he knows full well that David has done nothing of which to be guilty in this matter. Look carefully at David's next statement:

*If, however, \_\_\_\_\_ have done it, may they be cursed before the LORD!  
They have now driven me from my share in the LORD's \_\_\_\_\_  
and have said, 'Go, serve other gods.'*

The second blank, inheritance, has the Hebrew meaning: possession, property, inheritance, heritage. The KJV words that verse slightly differently: "...*for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD...*" (Emphasis added). From what and where is Saul driving David? What is the extent of that sin against this particularly anointed man?

David is pointing out that the sin "men" are committing in driving him from his share in the Lord's inheritance refers to the fact that Israelites are separating him, an obedient son of Abraham, from partaking in a relationship with God. As a member of the covenant community of Israel, David had a physical "share in the Lord's inheritance", a right to a plot of land entrusted to his family by the Lord. When dispensed the promise land, portion by portion to each tribe, the tribe then divided their portion of land amongst

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the families of the tribe. David had a physical share in the land given to the tribe of Judah. Inseparably tied to this land was also the spiritual obligation to fulfill the terms of the covenant relationship with the Lord. That obligation included serving the Lord, participating in fellowship feasts and sacrifices three times a year before the presence of the Lord. By forcing David out of Israel and into the land of the pagans the “men” of Israel were attempting to cut David off from his inheritance and from the covenant relationship with God. David pleads with Saul to allow him to return from an undeserved exile. David’s words bring Saul back to a (temporary) repentance and reconciliation.

Saul again confesses that he has sinned against David in verse 21. Complete Saul’s statement:

*21 Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Come back, David my son. Because you considered my life precious today, I will not try to harm you again. Surely I have acted like a \_\_\_\_\_ and have erred greatly."*

The Holman Dictionary defines the word fool as:

“... fool is described as the one who denies that God exists: “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Ps. 14:1). Foolish behavior is also characterized by an inability to recognize the true character of God.”

♥ Saul very accurately describes himself in this passage. In what ways is this description fitting? Thinking over previous chapters dealing with Saul’s actions, what are some examples of this trait in Saul?

♥ This chapter ends with the statement that “*David went on his way, and Saul returned home.*” Was there truly reconciliation? Why didn’t David go with Saul? What do you think David’s thoughts on this experience might have been? Look ahead to verse 27:1.

## **David Among the Philistines**

### *1 Samuel 27, 29 & 30*

In our study today we see that David returns to the land of the Philistines to escape Saul once again. When David first appeared at the gates of Gath, he was armed and alone. The Philistines knew nothing of David's reversal of fortune in Saul's court and were understandably suspicious of his presence. They knew David to be Saul's greatest warrior, not his enemy, and therefore justly feared some military ploy.

This time around things are very different for David. David was an extraordinary leader of a formidable force feared by Saul. Saul dedicated and funded the cost of sending thousands of troops in pursuit of David, only to be outwitted by him. The Philistines knew of Saul's pursuit and David's standing as an outlaw, using it to their advantage to raid outlying Israelite communities like Keilah. This time the King of Gath welcomed David and his men, likely hoping to employ them as mercenaries.

We will briefly look at chapters 27, 29 and 30 as we study David's time with the Philistines.



Read Chapter 27 and answer the following questions

For what reason did David go to the Philistines?

Complete verses 6-7: *So on that day Achish gave him Ziklag, and it has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since. David lived in Philistine territory a \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.*

Who went with David and his 600 men?

David spent significant time in the land of the Philistines. He and his people "settled" there for some time. If you go back to verse 1, David thinks to himself: *"One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul."* What did David either forget, or lose faith in? Look back

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over the following passages. Write the promise / prophecy and the person who spoke it to David.

1. 1 Sam 16: 1, 13 \_\_\_\_\_
2. 1 Sam 20: 14-15 \_\_\_\_\_
3. 1 Sam 24: 20 \_\_\_\_\_
4. 1 Sam 25:30 \_\_\_\_\_

♥ David seems to have entered a phase of his life where he has slipped into a pit of despair and disobedience. By his words in verse 1 he has lost faith in what has been promised to him. He doubts that God will protect him from Saul and that one day God will establish his reign over the kingdom of Israel. He knows he will be safe from Saul in the Philistine territories so he seeks a place there and is given the city of Ziklag by Achish, the King of Gath. What does David have to do in exchange for the privilege of living in Philistine territory? He puts his troops at Lachish's disposal. Where does David tell Achish he has been raiding? (v10 and 11)

The name Negev is a broad Hebrew word meaning "south". David's answer to Achish is purposely vague. David is leading Achish to believe that he and his troops are fighting against the people of Judah who were Israelites. In truth this vague response is a lie. Who does it say he is actually raiding (v8)?

These groups were indeed enemies of Israel. So David is fighting on behalf of his own people. They are also not allies of the Philistines. But notice no one is directing David to fight these people. Not the Lord, not even Achish. David is working on his own initiative. What does verse 9 say is spared in these raids?

What does verse 11 tell us about these raids? Where do you think the plunder went, and why?

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Complete these last verses: (starting in the second half of verse 11)

*"And such was his \_\_\_\_\_ as long as he lived in Philistine territory.*

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

At this point in David's life he has chosen to compromise his mission as God's anointed future king in order to find a bit of peace. This compromise has led him down a path of duplicity, secrecy and submission to the enemy. Not once is it recorded that David sought the counsel of the Lord. There is no mention of him seeking Abiathar, the Priest, and the Ephod. There is no Psalm linked with this time in David's life. Not only David, but everyone with him will reap the consequences of David's choices.

Read 28: 1-2. What does Achish tell David, and what is David's response? What do you think David's response could also have meant?



Skip over the rest of Chapter 28 (we'll come back to it later!) and read 1 Samuel 29.

Even though David is trusted and respected by Achish, the other Philistine commanders do not trust him. Complete verse 4:

*He must not go with us into battle, or he will \_\_\_\_\_ us during the fighting. How better could he regain his master's favor than by taking the heads of our own men?*

David may have convinced Achish, but evidently not the rest of the Philistine commanders. Who does it say the Philistines were preparing to fight?

We have no way of knowing what David and his men would have done if they had gone into battle with the Philistine ranks. But it is clear that the Philistines do not accept him as truly having defected from Israel. He is rejected by the Philistines and is sent back to Ziklag.

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Read chapter 30.

Who raided Ziklag and what happened there?

Why do you think God allowed this to happen to David and his people?

Complete verse 6: *David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of \_\_\_\_\_ him; \_\_\_\_\_ was \_\_\_\_\_ in spirit because of his sons and daughters.*

♥ Why do you think David's men wanted to stone him? They have completely turned on him. What could have happened in the minds of his men from chapter 26 to this point?

♥ Verse 4 tells us that David and his men wept until they had no strength to weep any longer. Complete verse 6: *But David found strength in the Lord his God.* Who did David consult?

What did the Lord assure David would be the outcome of David's pursuit of the Amalekites?

For what reason did David leave behind 200 of his men?

How long did David and the remaining 400 men fight the Amalekites? (v 17)

What happened to the Amalekites?

This is huge victory. It may seem that David and his men were more blood thirsty in their response than the Amalekites in the initial raid. Bear in mind, the Amalekites had kidnapped all of the women, children and elderly of Ziklag. As we have discussed previously, the intent of the Amalekites is to do evil: to steal, kill and destroy. The fate of

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those kidnapped would have been more than slavery; it likely would have included prostitution and human sacrifice. David and his men fulfilled the Torah command to put to death kidnappers. This was a capital offense under the Law (Exodus 21:16). They also won back everyone and everything they had lost. Their efforts paid off immensely. In fact the Amalekites suffered such losses that they aren't mentioned again in the history of Israel until the time of Hezekiah in 1 Chronicles 4:43, some 400 years later. It was most certainly an overwhelming victory, but, what happened when David and the 400 men returned to Ziklag?

How does verse 22 describe some in David's service?

It is unknown from exactly where David and his soldiers departed to meet King Achish in Aphek in preparation for battle with Israel. Upon joining the Philistines in Aphek, David and his men were returned to Ziklag, a distance of over 40 miles. We are told in 30:1 that they reached Ziklag on the third day. They have been marching three days to discover their families missing and homes burned. Imagine the emotional reaction of David and his men discovering the loss of their wives, children and families.

Physical exhaustion is combined with emotional anguish, a dangerous combination. In frustration and fear the men lash out at David, blaming him for this catastrophe. I also believe that months of marauding in the Negev, giving tribute to the Philistine King, and cooperating with the Philistines, Israel's enemy, has caused many under David's command to begin to question his leadership and loyalties. Fear, desperation and exhaustion intensify their doubts in David's leadership.

David does the right thing and turns to the Lord for strength and guidance. They are assured of a victory over the Amalekites, but the skirmish causes dissension in David's army as some of the troops are left behind too exhausted to fight while the others continue on with the rescue mission. Those who fought the Amalekites felt that those who didn't fight didn't deserve a share in the plunder<sup>1</sup>. In fact, verse 22 refers to these grumblers as "*evil men and troublemakers*". In the Hebrew they are described as "*all the wicked men and men of Belial*". Belial is a reference to men who lead others to idolatry (Deut. 13:13) and is a synonym to the Hebrew word *rasha*, meaning "wicked rebellious one", one who plots against God.<sup>2</sup> The "evil men" and "troublemakers" amongst David's army have their eyes

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<sup>1</sup> David's troops took control of large quantities of goods and livestock left behind by the Amalekites. Much of this booty had previously been owned by the Kerethites, Calebites, and other Judahites. However, David and his men came into possession of it by right of conquest—after all, they were the ones who put their lives on the line to attack the Amalekites—New American Commentary

<sup>2</sup> Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words

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and heart set on greed and plunder, not on God. They want to keep all the plunder taken from the Amalekites (who had raided settlements other than Ziklag and taken their possessions.) Their greed was leading to contention and dissension in David's camp.

This greed led David to institute a statute and ordinance that would be in effect throughout Israel's history regarding the distribution of plunder. He reminds his men that the plunder is a secondary gift from the Lord in their victory against the Amalekites. David and his men were victorious because they were obedient in consulting the Lord before going after the Amalekites in vengeance. The Lord ordained that they would be victorious. The primary goal of their battle was to bring home their loved ones, and to defeat those who would harm them. Plunder takes second place to personal protection and defeat of the enemy. Those who guarded the supplies have an equal share in the plunder because their contribution to the battle was a necessity. They may not have been on the front-lines of the battle, but their protection of the supplies was vital to a successful victory.

♥ What do you think may be the lesson the Lord is trying to teach David?

What did David do this time with the plunder from raiding the Amalekites?

## The End of Saul

Our last passage of scripture this week will focus on Saul's downfall. We will turn back to Chapter 28 as Saul prepares for battle with the Philistines. We will see quite a contrast in Saul's preparations compared to David's preparations to pursue the Amalekites. Chronologically speaking, these two separate events likely took place on the same day strongly revealing in contrast why God had chosen David over Saul to rule his people.



Turn back to and read Chapter 28.

What was Saul's response to seeing the Philistines assembled at Shunem?

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Why do you think the Lord refused to answer Saul's appeals?

Read Deuteronomy 18:9-14. Saul, early in his reign had done as the Lord commanded by expelling the spiritists and mediums from the land. Why does he seek them now?

♥ Why do you think the Lord commands what he does in the Deuteronomy passage?

Complete verse 12: *When the woman saw Samuel, she \_\_\_\_\_ at the top of her voice and said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!"* This woman who proclaims herself to be a medium – someone in the practice of consulting the dead – why do you think she reacts the way she does when she sees Samuel?

What does Samuel prophesy to Saul in their encounter? (v. 16-19)

♥ Briefly consider Saul's actions regarding the medium and the Amalekites mentioned by Samuel in v. 18, with David's battle preparations against the Amalekites. Jot down a few notes in preparations for a brief discussion in class.

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Chapter 31 is the final chapter we will study this week. It very briefly and succinctly tells of the final hours of Saul and his reign over Israel. Read chapter 31 and answer the following questions.

Saul's three sons are killed by the Philistines on Mount Gilboa. Saul himself is critically wounded by Philistine archers. What does he command his armor-bearer to do to him and why?

♥ Scripture says they put Saul's' armor in the temple of their god and hung Saul's body from the wall of Beth Shan. What message are they sending their people and what are they saying of the God of Israel?

*<sup>11</sup>When the people of Jabesh Gilead heard of what the Philistines had done to Saul, <sup>12</sup> all their \_\_\_\_\_ journeyed through the night to Beth Shan. They took down the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth Shan and went to Jabesh, where they burned them. <sup>13</sup> Then they took their bones and buried them under a tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and they \_\_\_\_\_ days.*

Turn back to 1 Samuel 11:1-11. Why did the people of Jabesh Gilead owe honor to Saul?

Saul began his career as King of Israel with a valiant and heroic battle against the Ammorites. In those days, he was a godly King. Scripture tells us that upon hearing of the plight of the people of Jabesh Gilead, “*the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he burned with anger*” (1 Sam 11:6). Men from Israel and Judah assembled an army of 330 thousand men led by Saul on a mission to defend the town. The people of Jabesh Gilead no doubt felt indebted to Saul for their rescue, and honored the dead king by not allowing his body to be humiliated before their enemy. It took great courage for these valiant men to carry out this mission, and showed great honor for the first King of Israel. With the death of Israel's first king comes the end of an era characterized by war and godlessness; but opens the way for a new beginning.