

**GOD WITH US**  
**Part 3: A King in place of THE KING.**  
**1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel**

**Message 9 – David’s Faith Fails**  
**1 Samuel 27-30**

**Introduction**

The Bible provides snapshots of David’s life to encourage us in our own faith journey. In chapter 17, David was a young man of great faith who defeated Goliath. By chapter 21, however, he was lying to the high priest (leading to the death of their clan) and fleeing to Philistine territory (escaping only by acting insane). In chapters 23-26, he prayed often, heeded wise advice, and spared king Saul’s life twice, finding his refuge under the protection of God. Now, in chapters 27-30 we see his faith growing tired. After close to a decade of running from Saul, the “*man after God’s own heart*” hit a low point and decided to again seek refuge with Israel’s #1 enemy – the Philistines. The walk of faith is never a straight line. There are many ups and downs.

**David flees to the Philistines: 27:1-7**

***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).***

Even with the most devout man or woman of God, there are times when faith grows weary, when the presence of God seems far off and the promises of God feel like a false hope. At these times, we have a choice: We can look to God and find strength and a way of escape, or, we can look within ourselves and try to come up with our own plans to escape. David did the latter: he cast aside the *promises* of God, as well as the evidences of God’s *past protection*. He did not pray about this decision; rather, he “*said to himself.*” Had David inquired of the Lord, he would have been given God’s direction and protection.

Ironically, David moved to Gath, the hometown of Goliath the giant. Now we find David, wearing Goliath's sword, walking Goliath's streets, fighting for Goliath's king. *David had become the new Philistine champion ... the very thing he once so vigorously opposed in the name of Yahweh!*

*We need to practice the self-awareness to know when our faith is growing tired. We need to ask some honest questions: How did I get here? Am I taking enough time to tend the flame of my own passion for God? Who am I letting speak into my life and hold me accountable? If you KNOW that your faith is tired right now, what steps are you taking to prevent looking within yourself for a way to escape? The very first step should always be to ask God for direction. Also ask trusted friends to pray for you.*

For the time being, it seemed as if David's decision had achieved his purpose:

***“Now it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath, so he no longer searched for him” (27:4).***

*Stepping off God's path and going our own way usually appears like an attractive idea . . . and it often works for a while. In the end, however, it is always costly. “There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death” (Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25). In the short run, David's decision seemed like a win. Yet, as the weeks turned into months, he paid a steep price for his decision to step outside of the umbrella of God's protection.*

After an unspecified amount of time in Gath, David asked Achish for a city of his own where he could settle down with his men and their families. He was given the city of Ziklag, which was on the border between Philistia and Israel.

***“The number of days that David lived in the country of the Philistines was a year and four months” (27:7).***

Sixteen months. God can leave us on our own path for as long as it takes for us to finally realize the cost of our choices. He is always inviting us to join Him on His path.

### **David's raids: 27:8-12**

From Ziklag, David and his men made regular raids on southern tribes that were hostile to Israel. He lied to Achish, telling him that he was making raids against Israel's allies (v.10). In order to conceal his lies he was forced to adopt cruel policies.

***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’” (27:11).***

Imagine the impact of David’s ruthless extermination policies on his wife, Abigail, who earlier had kept him from this very same sort of needless bloodshed! David was no longer heeding wise counsel from godly people like her.

***So Achish believed David, saying, “He has surely made himself odious among his people Israel; therefore he will become my servant forever” (27:11,12).***

David deeply betrayed Achish, the very man who had provided him a safe refuge from Saul. Often we do not think through the cost of how our actions impact other people, and their ability to trust again.

One step away from God usually leads to another. Soon, we are in way deeper than we ever imagined. Sin is rarely just a single step . . . it is more often a series of steps in the wrong direction. Soon, it becomes the trajectory of one’s life. “Sow a thought, reap an act. Sow an act, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny.” Be very, very careful about those first few ‘little’ steps away from God’s will. They can lead you further off course than you ever imagined.

### **David’s predicament: 28:1-2**

When the Philistines decided to make war against Israel, David suddenly found himself being called by Achish to accompany him into battle against his own people. David may have given a somewhat ambiguous answer because he *did not know what to do!*

***Achish said to David, “Know assuredly that you will go out with me in the camp, you and your men.” 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” (28:1,2).***

### **Saul visits a spirit medium: 28:3-25**

How ironic that while David was taking his future into his own hands, God was preparing for David’s future by removing Saul. The looming Philistine threat terrified Saul. He tried to consult the

Lord, but received no answer. Thus, he turned to a spirit medium in order to try to communicate with the departed spirit of Samuel. Saul had banned all sorcerers from the land of Israel; nevertheless, he found a spirit medium in the city of Endor and disguised himself so that she would not fear his punishment. He asked her to bring up the spirit of Samuel, which she did. Samuel solemnly announced that Israel would be defeated, and that Saul and his sons would be with him (dead) by the next day!

***“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. 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. 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!” (28:17-19).***

David had no idea that God was at work preparing a way forward for his future kingship. He had lost sight of God’s sovereignty and was too busy trying to manage his own life. At an earlier stage, David had commented as to all the different ways that God *could* remove Saul, when He was ready to do so (26:10). Now, God was at work to actually remove Saul . . . and He was simultaneously at work to let David experience some hard consequences for his own bad choices.

*It is hard to learn to be patient. We so often grow impatient and don't realize how close we are to God moving in our lives in a powerful way. God is patient (2Peter 3:9). The first quality of true love is patience (1Corinthians 13:4). A fruit of God's Spirit in us is patience (Galatians 5:22). The ability to be patient for God's timing is an issue of trusting His character. He gives us just enough light for the step we are on. He asks us to patiently trust Him for tomorrow, rather than impatiently doing our own thing.*

### **About sorcery:**

There are only two sources of spiritual power – God and Satan. When appeals are made to Satan for help, this is “sorcery” (also called witchcraft, black magic, spiritism, occultism), which is strictly forbidden in Scripture (Deuteronomy 18:10-12; Galatians 5:19; Malachi 3:5; 2Chronicles 33:6). Satan and his demons are the evil counterparts to God and his angels. They *are* capable of

counterfeiting the works and ways of God. Satan will even “*disguise himself as an angel of light*” in order to lead people astray (2Corinthians 11:14). Recall how Pharaoh’s sorcerers were able to partially duplicate the miracles performed by Moses and Aaron (Exodus 7:11,22; 8:7,18). Thus, while there are many hucksters who only pretend to tap into dark powers, there are others who actually have aligned themselves with Satan and are able to tap into his evil power (eg. Acts 13:4-12).

In the case of the witch at Endor, she seems to have had some real connection with Satanic powers (although she would not have recognized Satan as the source). However, it was GOD, not Satan, who allowed the spirit of Samuel to “arise” from Sheol (the place of departed spirits in the O.T.) to communicate with Saul. This may explain why even the witch herself was terrified by the appearance of Samuel (v.12). What happened, in essence, was a momentary “resurrection” of Samuel, without a body. God sent Samuel’s spirit with a message of judgment for Saul.

*In practical terms, it is unwise to dabble in any modern forms of occultism (psychics, spirit guides, tarot cards, Weegie boards, astrology, etc.). By doing so, you are opening yourself up to the possibility of contact with evil spirits, of which there are many (1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the angels fell with Satan and became demons). If an evil spirit does ‘assist’ you in some way, you may be deceived into thinking this is a benevolent (good) spirit, and you may become hooked on the help provided by that spirit. In the end, however, you are cooperating with an army of spirit-beings, headed by Satan, that are bent only on opposing God and enslaving and destroying people. Satanic activity is still very visible in parts of the world (village with doctors, etc.). In the West, his strategies may be more disguised, yet they are no less dangerous.*

### **David sent away from the Philistine army: 29:1-11**

David had been called into the service of the Philistine king, and performed well; but he had never been called to fight against Israel. Now, found himself in a predicament as he and his men were called upon to accompany the Philistine army in a battle with Israel. If he fought *against* Israel, he would have forfeited the right to be Israel’s future king. If he fought *for* Israel, he likely would have helped Saul remain as king, thus making his own rise to kingship an even more distant hope.

Fortunately, God intervened in an unexpected way to get David out of this predicament. The Philistine commanders were moved in their spirits to question David's allegiance. They were skeptical enough that they demanded Achish send David away.

***“Make the man go back, that he may return to his place where you have assigned him, and do not let him go down to battle with us, or in the battle he may become an adversary to us. For with what could this man make himself acceptable to his lord? Would it not be with the heads of these men? Is this not David, of whom they sing in the dances, saying, ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands’?” (29:4,5).***

Thus, David and his men returned to Ziklag, while the Philistines continued on in their march toward war with Israel.

### **The faithfulness of God toward David: 1Chronicles 12**

The faithfulness of God toward His servant, David, stands out in many ways during this period of David's crisis of faith. While David was in Philistine territory for 16 months, God was adding to his number a long list of mighty warriors who would help David when his kingship finally became a reality.

***“For day by day men came to David to help him, until there was a great army like the army of God” (1Chronicles 12:22).***

- Many of Saul's kinsmen joined David at Ziklag:

***“They were equipped with bows, using both the right hand and the left to sling stones and to shoot arrows from the bow; they were Saul's kinsmen from Benjamin” (12:2).***

- Men from Manasseh joined David at the most surprising time:

***“From Manasseh also some defected to David when he was about to go to battle with the Philistines against Saul” (12:19).***

The apostle Paul wrote: “Even if we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself” (2Timothy 2:13). It should encourage us greatly to know that God's faithfulness toward us far exceeds our faithfulness toward Him. Even when we are weak in faith, He loves us and moves toward us. How should we respond to such love? The kindness of God should move us toward repentance (Romans 2:4). The amazing grace of God should cause us to run toward Him, not away from Him.

## David returns to find Ziklag destroyed: 30:1-6a

All of David's self-made plans came crashing down in a horrible way when he and his men returned to Ziklag.

*Then it happened when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had made a raid on the Negev and on Ziklag, and had overthrown Ziklag and burned it with fire; and they took captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great, without killing anyone, and carried them off and went their way. When David and his men came to the city, behold, it was burned with fire, and their wives and their sons and their daughters had been taken captive. Then David and the people who were with him lifted their voices and wept until there was no strength in them to weep. Now David's two wives had been taken captive, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite. Moreover David was greatly distressed because the people spoke of stoning him, for all the people were embittered, each one because of his sons and his daughters" (30:1-6).*

Think of it: their city was gone, their wives and children were gone, David's men were so disillusioned by his leadership that they wanted to stone him to death. This was one of the lowest points of David's life up to this point. (Note also the mention of David's two wives – Ahinoam and Abigail. He had already begun to violate God's command to NOT multiply wives [Deuteronomy 17:17]. David will further depart from God's will in this regard when he becomes king [2Samuel 5:13].)

*David was given a taste of his own medicine. God could easily have allowed all the women and children to be killed (as David had done to his enemies repeatedly); but in His mercy toward David He allowed them all to be taken alive. God does not typically give us "what we deserve." Rather, He lovingly disciplines each of His children "so that we may share in His holiness" (Hebrews 12:10).*

## God's mercy and David's repentance: 30:6b-8

***"But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God" (30:6b).***

David was a flawed man who made great mistakes in life. Yet, one of his best qualities was that he kept coming back to a place of brokenness and repentance before God. Here, as his men spoke of stoning him, he went to God to renew His spiritual strength. The first evidence that he is "back on track" was that he called for the

high priest to “inquire of the Lord” – something David had not done for the past 16 months. Finally, David is seeking God again.

***Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, “Please bring me the ephod.” So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. David inquired of the Lord, saying, “Shall I pursue this band? Shall I overtake them?” And He said to him, “Pursue, for you will surely overtake them, and you will surely rescue all” (30:7,8).***

David was given not only direction; but also the merciful assurance from God that he *would rescue all* of the lost women and children.

### **David pursues the Amalekites: 30:9-25**

David and his men chased down the Amalekites with the help of a sick Egyptian slave that had been left to die by his Amalekite master (30:11-15).

God can answer our prayers and fulfill His will in many different ways. While David was repenting and praying (30:6), God was preparing a sickly Egyptian castoff slave who would assist David in tracking down the Amalekite raiders. Someone put it this way: When we pray, ‘coincidences’ happen. When we don’t pray, they don’t happen. Pray about your situation, and let God delight in His ways to answer your prayers. This will assure you of His personal presence in your story, and build your trust in Him.

Having caught up to the Amalekites, David defeated them and took back all that had been lost.

***So David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and rescued his two wives. Nothing of theirs was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that they had taken for themselves; David brought it all back” (30:18,19).***

### **David sends gifts to the leaders of Israel: 30:26-31**

From the spoils of war David sent gifts to many of the elders of Israel. By doing so, he was showing his people that they were in his heart and, hopefully, in his future. A proverb points to the practical wisdom of how a timely gift can open important doors:

***“A man’s gift makes room for him and brings him before great men” (Proverbs 18:16).***

## What can we learn from David's struggles?

David's faith-struggles are unashamedly recorded in the Bible to give us all hope. He was prone to bad choices, just as we all are. Yet, his story also shows us the love of God toward His flawed children . . . and the power of brokenness and repentance to bring us back onto God's agenda. There are many lessons we can learn:

**1. Preparation:** God often touches a person's heart to become a follower and future influencer for His glory. However, He lovingly uses many people, choices (good and bad) and challenges to prepare them for their God-given assignments later in life.

**2. God's presence:** God always delights in being our personal, ever-present heavenly Father as we walk through life. Even when we drift from Him and go our own way, He mercifully reaches out to reconnect with us and draw us back onto His path.

**3. Deeper issues:** At times, David's deeper fears and emotional reactions overruled what he "knew" in his head about God. Intellectual knowledge about God is not enough. We need daily disciplines of faith to keep us from gravitating toward our own self-centered and self-protective strategies of "escape."

**4. Mercy:** God's mercy always triumphs over our greatest failures. Yes, there are consequences for our choices; but God's love for us is without restraint and condition. He loves messed up people like David . . . and He loves each one of us. Do not be afraid of God when you fail. Run to Him in a spirit of humility and find refuge again in His love and faithfulness.

**5. Forgiveness:** Jesus Christ, the ultimate "son of David," bore our shame and sin on the cross. Take time to think about the amazing price that the sinless Son of God paid, so that the justice of God could be satisfied and the mercy of God could flow freely to you. Shame and guilt no longer keep us from God. We are forgiven!

David's failures in future chapters will be *even greater* than the ones we have just surveyed. Have hope . . . and be resolved: to love God and walk in brokenness with Him is the greatest decision you can make. It is *that* decision (not living a perfect life) that qualifies you to be called, like David, a man or woman *after God's own heart*.