

David's Wilderness Experiences (Part 8)

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Preacher: Don Coleman

[0 : 00] We are gradually, slowly, working our way through the book of 1 Samuel.

Just a few verses, two verses on into chapter 28.

So I think tonight we'd like to go ahead and read it so we can kind of get the whole story in our minds. And then we'll kind of walk our way through it.

So starting with the first verse of chapter 27. And David said in his heart, Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul.

There is nothing better for me than 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.

[1 : 09] So I shall escape out of his hand. Then David arose and went over with the 600 men who were with him to Achish, the son of Maok, king of Gath.

So David dwelt with Achish at Gath. This is in Philistia. You know, these are the Philistines. He dwelt with Achish at Gath.

He and his men, each man with his household. And David with his two wives. Ahinoam, the Jezreelites. And Abigail, the Carmelites.

Nabal's widow. And it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath, so he sought him no more. At least for now. Then David said to Achish, If I have now found favor in your eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country that I may dwell there.

For why should your servant dwell in the royal city with you? So Achish gave him Ziklag that day. Therefore, Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day.

[2 : 17] Now the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was one full year and four months. And David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Gerzites, the Amalekites.

For those nations were the inhabitants of the land from of old, as you go to Shur, even as far as the land of Egypt. Whenever David attacked the land, he left neither man nor woman alive, but took away the sheep, the oxen, the donkeys, the camels, and the apparel, and returned and came to Achish.

And 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 Jeremialites.

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.

[3 : 28] Therefore he will be my servant forever. Now it happened in those days that the Philistines gathered their armies together for war to fight with Israel. 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. Alright, so we'll end it right there.

Someone has observed, and I wonder if you did, that this chapter, chapter 27, and really on into the first few verses there of chapter 28, is a godless chapter.

I don't know if you noticed that. I didn't. When I read it, and then I was doing some study, and I went back and looked, you know, it's true. It's a godless chapter.

What I mean is, and what those who say this mean, is that God does not appear anywhere in this chapter. You don't read anything about God here in the story.

[4 : 39] And it's a bit strange, isn't it? I mean, when you think about it. I mean, we have here the continuing story of David. David is still the principal character here.

And remember, of course, David is, as the Bible says, a man after God's own heart. He's God's man. God's chosen man. The apple of God's eye. He's God's anointed king to replace Saul. And we know all about that, don't we? About David. And so the story is still about David. And, you know, what is going on in his life. And already, we have been reading, over and over again, we've been reading about how God's hand has been upon David every step of the way. Very overtly, very obviously, David has mentioned God, spoken to God, referred to God many times. and God has been leading David. He raised him up to be Saul's successor. You know, to be the king of Israel. God has delivered him from the bear and the lion as a shepherd out in the fields. [5 : 49] The Bible gives testimony of that. God certainly, in that kind of favorite story in the book, delivered him from the giant Goliath. And God has now repeatedly delivered David from King Saul, his mortal enemy.

And yet, there is nothing here in this chapter about God's activity in the affairs of David's life. As this portion of his life is being detailed, God is not there. God is not mentioned. Now, I think we could say, safely say, certainly say, and assume that God is still with David. I don't think God has left David alone. I think we can assume because there are other times, you know, as we read in the Bible and especially in these rich books, narrative books, historical books, we can see God behind the scenes.

And I think if we were to look at this and then compare it to the larger picture, we certainly would see that God is still there, God is still working, still involved in David's life, no doubt about that. [7 : 11] But, there's no mention of him in those events that take place in the chapter. Now, since we know that God has not departed from David, we know that, then, what's the problem?

David has departed from God for time, for season, and it marks even the time, year and whatever it was. David has departed from God.

That's the case, I think, in this chapter. Now, I will go ahead and add a little disclaimer. Not every commentator sees it this way. As the events unfold, the things in this story unfold, it's pretty clear that this is a godless chapter and it's teaching us something when we depart from God. And, you know, so here is David. And, this is not one of his stellar moments. We've already had an example of that in 1 Samuel.

As we go along in the story of David, we're certainly going to come to some of those times in his life where he miserably fails. Miserably. And, we're all thinking of that same one, you know, with Bathsheba and so forth.

[8 : 30] And, it's interesting, I think, you know, the Bible is pretty consistent in its presentation of its, quote, heroes, unquote. Pretty consistent about them.

It always gives us the unvarnished truth about them. I mean, go all the way back to Adam. Noah. I don't even have to mention some of these.

You know the stories. And Abraham, Moses and Abraham, and you go all the way up through the history as it's given to us in the old and on into the new. And even some of the greats in the New Testament, Peter and Paul, they had their moments.

And the Bible doesn't withhold those from us. It gives us the full truth. We look at Hebrews chapter 11 and that, you know, the hall of fame there, of faith.

And you can do a little character study, biblical study on each of the characters. And you'll find with very few exceptions. You know, Enoch, of course, Enoch was perfect.

[9 : 33] He walked with God and then he just went on with God. Never did have to die. But, you know, without a few exceptions, other than a few exceptions, the Bible gives us the truth about its heroes.

It's heroes. And so the question is, can we learn anything from a godless chapter in the Bible? And the answer, of course, is absolutely. Absolutely we can.

And so I'm going to give you four things that we can learn in this not-so-glorious part of David's life. Four things. And so let's just get right to it.

Here's the first one. David's unwarranted discouragement. That's what I would call it. That's the first thing we see right out of the barrel.

Just right out of the, at the very beginning. Verse one. David's unwarranted discouragement. That's what we have here. It's discouragement. And it's really difficult, I think, maybe for most of us, really all of us, difficult to imagine David's saying what he said in verse one.

[10 : 43] If you really analyze what he's saying here, really get the, you know, the emotion of it and the depth of what he's saying here, it's a little difficult to imagine David saying this.

I mean, what did he say? David said where? In his heart. He said in his heart, now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul.

Saul's going to get me in the end. Really? Can you imagine David saying that? How could he say that? He said, well, he could say that. I mean, I can kind of empathize with him.

I mean, you know, his life has been pretty hard, hasn't it? He's been on the run now for a long time. In exile, being hunted down at every turn, narrowly escaping Saul's fury and hatred and murderous desires and designs against David, you know.

Not once, but several times. You know, the first time it was made to appear like an accident, but eventually Saul makes no bones about it.

[11 : 58] He gives orders that David is to be destroyed, and so he's being hunted everywhere he goes, and there are spies who are informing on him and getting word back to Saul, and so no matter where he goes, Saul seems to be able to find him and so forth, and so, you know, we can kind of understand how he might be feeling, and so he's been wandering everywhere, and no home to call his own, living in holes and caves, wherever, you know, he can find a place, and not only that, but people have even died because they've dared to help him, I mean, that would weigh heavy on you, wouldn't it?

Certainly it would, and it certainly did for David, so of course he's discouraged, discouraged, right? That's kind of how we would approach it, and we would have sympathy for him, and empathize with him, and we could even see ourselves feeling the same way that he feels, maybe even worse, but I guess, though, if we really think about it, kind of look at the bigger picture, we cannot help but come to the right conclusion that David's discouragement is really unwarranted, it's unwarranted, I mean, think about it, what happened to the David who courageously stood, you know, stood his ground before Goliath, he just a little lad, and Goliath, a nine-foot giant, and, you know, a man of war, since he was a child, no doubt, and David's just a little shepherd, and what happened to that David who stood there, and he boldly declared, you know,

God has delivered me from the bear and the lion, and he will deliver me from this uncircumcised Philistine, that was one of the lines that my boys really loved when we'd tell that story, read that story, I mean, what happened to that David?

Think about it, and also, we don't even have to go that far back, what happened to the David who in the very last chapter, as a matter of fact, if you look there, in the chapter just before this, chapter 26, and verse 9, look at it, you remember kind of the setting, David, you know, David and Abishai, they can take care of Saul, I mean, he's right there, just kill him, and so what happens in verse 9, but David said to Abishai, do not destroy him, for who can stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless, but then this is what he said, he said, David said, furthermore, as the Lord lives, the Lord shall strike him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish, that is, he's in the Lord's hands, he's in the Lord's hands, that's what he said, just the last chapter, right?

Alright, so does David believe differently about himself? does he have a different thought about himself and about his life before God?

[15 : 18] I mean, he said, Saul will die by the Lord's hand, but I will die by Saul's hand. Does that make any sense? No, it doesn't make any sense.

And hasn't David forgotten something? God chose David, has chosen David to be king. He has anointed David to be king.

He's already done that. And he's also made promises concerning David's lineage. They're very exciting. What, has he forgotten all about that? Do you understand how his discouragement is so unwarranted?

So, that's what we're to make of this. I mean, it's very simple. This is what happens when we leave God out of our calculations. And for a moment, for a season in David's life, that's exactly what he had done.

And so, he'd failed to consider God when he was making certain conclusions about life and about his future, and sometimes we do the same thing. And what happens? We get discouraged.

[16 : 24] That is so unwarranted. Do we read, by the way, as we look at verse 1 there, do we read anything about David praying?

No. Read anything there about David consulting a prophet, one of God's prophets, get a word from God? Nothing about that.

We don't even read anything about him, you know, seeking guidance from the Urim and the Thummim, which he's done before. No, none of that is there. Instead, what do we have?

We have these illuminating kind of exposing words. David said in his heart, which is the same as saying that he made this self-evaluation, all of it on his own.

And his evaluation, his conclusion about his future was skewed by his human weakness. He departed from God.

[17 : 25] David's unwarranted discouragement and, you know, for a child of God, discouragement is always unwarranted. In fact, discouragement is a sin. So, let's not dwell there ever.

Discouragement. In fact, 2 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 20, I love this passage, for all the promises of God in Christ are yes. Don't you like that? All the promises of God in Christ are yes, and in him, amen.

Amen means so be it. It'll be done to the glory of God through us. All right, so, with God out of the picture, first, we see David's unwarranted discouragement.

Second, we see David's unwise decision, and this kind of follows on the heels of his discouragement, and because he's discouraged, he makes a bad decision.

An unwise decision. Verse 1, look at it again. David said, there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape to the land of the Philistines. And his thinking is, Saul will despair of me, seek me any more in any part of Israel, so I shall escape out of his hand.

[18 : 41] But think about what he said, there's nothing better for me to do. Nothing better for me. Really. I mean, get a hold of that.

There's really nothing better than that. Really. You might remember, in fact, it's back in chapter 21, so it wasn't all that far back. You might remember that David tried this one time before to dwell in the land of the Philistines.

In fact, it's a little difficult to understand how he could go back and try that again. You remember what happened the first time. They discovered him, his identity, reported it to the king, king Achish. And what did David do? Well, verse 13 of chapter 21 tells us, he changed his behavior before them, pretended madness in their hands, scratched on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva fall down on his beard.

Remember when we talked about that passage? And so he was able to get away. They said, get out of here. Even king Achish said, we've got enough mad men around here, we don't need another one.

[19 : 53] So it didn't work so well the first time, so here he is making a decision to go back to the land of Achish. In fact, not just a decision as if somehow he was considering some other possibilities, there's nothing left for me to do.

But go and live in the land of the Philistines, the pagans, the enemies. I would say, you know, you could clearly say the arch enemies of Israel.

And so David's going to go live there. What a decision. You know, that's what happens, often happens when we leave God out. Stop praying, stop trusting, and then we start hobnobbing with the enemy.

Kind of hanging out with unbelievers. And what is worse than that, what did David do? He brought his friends with him, and worse than that, he brought all of his families.

His family and all his men and their families, that's what verse 3 tells us. There's not enough for David to make a bad decision, but because of the position in which he was in, that's redundant, he brought them with him, with him too, into the land of the enemy.

[21 : 11] I heard a story about a little boy's pet parrot. This parrot kept getting out of his cage. He'd fly out the window and he'd go out and fly around with the crows in the cornfield.

Well, one day the little boy's father went out with his shotgun. He was going to take care of these crows and he accidentally shot the parrot. Now, he didn't kill the parrot, he was just wounded and so the little boy looks and here comes his father holding his wounded, his poor wounded little parrot and the little boy runs and says, what happened?

And the parrot said, bad company. Bad company. That's pitiful, isn't it? I'm ashamed of myself. Didn't even do a good impersonation of a parrot, did I? Bad company. Well, you know, David's unwarranted discouragement. David's unwise decision.

He's leaving God out of the equation. And that's what happens with us. We just kind of go down that road. And that leads to a third thing, David's unworthy deception.

[22 : 19] A deception that was unworthy of him, being the apple of God's eye. David approaches this pagan king. Don't ever forget that Achish is a pagan idolater.

So he approaches Achish, king of the Philistines. Don't forget that these are the enemies of Israel. And he asks him for a city where he and his men can dwell with their families.

And so Achish gives them Ziklag, which was a city kind of on the border with Israel. In fact, in history, biblical history, sometimes Ziklag is spoken of as being part of Israel, sometimes not. And it's just kind of right there in the border. So he gives them Ziklag where they can be located. And what did David and his men do while they were there? Well, they fought against Israel's enemies.

enemies. They actually went out and destroyed enemies of his own people. These were covert operations, David and his 600 men.

[23 : 27] And so they fought, the Bible says, fought against the Geshurites. We don't have any idea who those people were. And the Gerzites, don't know who they were.

and the Amalekites. Now we've heard of them before, haven't we? All right. In fact, Saul had a little trouble with the Amalekites. We go back further and the people of Israel had problems with the Amalekites.

So we know about the Amalekites. But when you put all these together, who were these people? Well, they were Canaanites. I mean, in the broad term, they were people who inhabited the land of Canaan.

What's the land of Canaan? That's the promised land, the land that we was given to Israel, promised to Israel, promised by God to Israel. And so they're Canaanites, and we know that from verse 8 because it says, for those nations, the nations I've just mentioned, were the inhabitants of the land from of old, from of old, as you go to Shur, even as far as the land of Egypt.

So it's just identifying the region, not only in which they were inhabiting at the time, David's day, but they had always been there. So they were part of the Canaanites.

[24 : 45] Now, with that kind of as the foundation there, there are a number of problems here with what David is doing. And the first problem or the first question is, did David have God's permission to do this?

Was this okay with God? It doesn't say. God's not mentioned in this chapter. So is David conducting these operations, these covert operations against the enemies of Israel?

Is he doing it under the instructions of God, the permission of God, the authority of God, or is he just striking out on his own? There's every indication to believe that he's doing this on his own.

These nations, if you will remember, were under the ban, the ban, which means that God had commanded, remember, commanded Israel to utterly destroy these people, every man, woman, and child, to destroy them when they came into the land, and that's what God commanded Israel to do.

So these were people under the ban. But let's remember that not only were the people a part of that ban, but so were all of their livestock, and all of their possessions were under the ban.

[26 : 13] Now, what do we read that David did? Well, verse 9, whenever David attacked the land, he left neither man nor woman alive, but took away the sheep, the oxen, the donkeys, camels, the apparel, and returned and came to Achish, and I think the implication is there that he gave Achish at least a portion of the spoil from conquering these people.

But now, these, that was all under the ban. Saul, you remember, lost his kingship for doing the same thing.

Remember? That's why God tore the kingdom away from Saul. He's giving it to another. That's David, and yet David is doing the same thing Saul did.

Those people who were under the ban. There's a problem there. There's a second thing, though. David lied to Achish about what he was doing.

He clearly lied. Look at verse 10 again. Verse 10, then Achish would say, where have you made a raid today?

[27 : 41] See, here's David with all the plunder that he's collected, livestock, clothing, jewelry, whatever, giving a portion of it to Achish.

Achish. And so Achish asks a very natural question, where have you been? Where did you do this? Where did you get this? Where have you made the raid today? And David would say, against the southern area of Judah.

That would be in his own land. The southern area of Judah, or against the southern area of the Jeromelites, or against the southern area of the Kenites.

Folks, he's lying. That's not where he got it. That's not where he got it. He's lying about this.

He told Achish that he had been plundering, essentially plundering, the people of the lands of the Israelites. But had he been doing that?

[28 : 42] Certainly not. Verse 11 says, 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 Philistine. So Achish believed David. He left nobody alive to report the truth. he's lying.

And I say that this is unworthy, unworthy behavior of a man who is after God's own heart. David's unworthy deception. But now someone will probably say, well, David, you know, he was doing a good thing, destroying the enemies of his country.

I mean, that's the right thing to do. Right? I mean, isn't it okay to lie to your enemies?

Achish, he has no, owes no loyalty to Achish. I mean, what am I thinking this way? Isn't it okay to lie to your enemies? Isn't it okay to lie to unbelievers?

[29 : 53] Let me just kind of follow the logic of this. Isn't it okay to steal from my wicked boss? Isn't it okay to cheat the IRS?

Isn't it okay to stuff the ballot box so that the good guy wins the election? However, you might define the good guy or good gal.

I mean, isn't it okay? I mean, the ends justify the means. What do you think about that? Well, this is what we learn from a godless chapter.

David's unwarranted discouragement, his unwise decision, his unworthy deception, and then one more. David's unworkable destination. Where did all this lead?

To a really tough place. I mean, when you get into chapter 28, you find that David's chickens really did come home to roost.

[31 : 03] I mean, think about it. Look at it. Chapter 28, verse 1. Now, it happened in those days that the Philistines gathered their armies together for war to fight with Israel.

So, they're getting ready to do battle against Israel, and guess what? Achish said to David, you assuredly know that you will go out with me to battle, you and your men.

You can join us in this battle against Israel, your people. Now, what did Achish base that decision upon?

Well, David's been such a loyal servant of his. Presumably, he's already been, you know, contributing to the cause of the Philistines, although that was a lie, but Achish didn't know that.

That's where lies lead, don't they? 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.

[32 : 05] What's David going to do now? I mean, it's one thing to be in Ziklag, you know, it was some 50 miles from Gath, and they didn't have, you know, communication like we do today.

It's one thing to be in Ziklag and carry on your kind of secret operations and then come and report to King Achish and say, this is what I've been doing when really you've been doing something else. One thing for that to work, but now David, Achish wants David right by his side, be his guardian, and he's going to bring his 600 men to join Achish's armies, and they're going to do battle against the Israelites.

How's he going to get out of that? Do you see how this has brought David to this place?

His departure from God has now put him, I mean, really, between a rock and a hard place. What's he going to do about it? How's that little diddy go? Oh, what a tangled web we weave when at first we do practice to deceive.

[33 : 12] And that's exactly what's happened to David. And it's interesting, by the way, that the author of 1 Samuel just kind of leaves the readers hanging there.

Because you get to verse 3, the very next verse, now we're back to Saul and his, you know, mediums and trying to talk to the dead, to dead Samuel, and it kind of leaves us hanging there.

And it's not until we get to chapter 29 that we see what happens. And so we'll wait until we get to chapter 29 and see what happens.