

David Said to Himself – When David Fought with the Philistines

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MAIN VERSES

Good morning, everybody. My name is Pete Wilson. For those of you who don't know me, I am one of the community pastors here. Obviously, I'm not Matt, but I am usually with the teenagers. So this morning you get me. So unsurprisingly to those who know me, we're going to be talking about David. You see that graphic right there? Made that myself. I'm telling you, I didn't have to ask a single child how to put those words on a screen and then send it to another person. So someday I'm going to experiment with flame or something. I don't know. But anyway, that's what you get right there.

Reading Chapter 27

So we are going to be in, for those of you who would like to follow along, we're going to be in [1 Samuel 27](#), a little bit of 28. We're going to completely skip 29, a little bit of 30. I'll explain why I'm jumping around as we get into it. But to start us off, we need a little bit of background. So I'm going to go ahead and read the entirety of chapter 27. Don't worry, it's short.

David said to himself, for those of you who care, I am reading out of the Christian Standard Version, the CSB, Christian Standard Bible. David said to himself, one of these days I will be swept away by Saul. There is nothing better for me than to escape immediately to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me everywhere in Israel and I'll escape from him. So David set out with his 600 men and went over to Achish. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you? That day, Achish gave Ziklag to him, and it still belongs to the kings of Judah to this day. The length of time that David stayed in the Philistine territory amounted to a year and four months. David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Gergesites, and the Amalekites. From ancient times, they had been the inhabitants of the region through shore as far as the land of Egypt. Whenever David attacked the land, he did not leave a single person alive, either man or woman. But he took flocks, herds, donkeys, camels, and clothing.

Then he came back to Achish who inquired, where did you raid today? David replied, the south country of Judah, the south country of the Jeremelites, the south country of the Kenites. David did not let a man or woman live to be brought to Gath. For he said, or they will inform us and say, this is what David did. This was David's custom during the whole time he stayed in the Philistine territory. So Achish trusted David thinking that Since he has made himself repulsive to his people Israel, he will be my servant forever.

So that's the background of where we are, what we're going to be looking at. Just so you know where we are, at this point in David's life, he is on the run from Saul. He has not been made king over Judah yet. Obviously, Saul is still alive. And he's been on the run for quite some time. We don't know exactly how long.

David Had No Business Being King

But before we get directly into what I want to talk about, I want to get a little bit of background. Knowing who David eventually becomes, and that is the king of Israel, it can be hard for us to see this for how it was or for how it would have been seen then. David would become king, and we all understood that he would become king from the very beginning of the story because that's what Scripture says. But that was not clear to the people who were alive at this time. They didn't have the inside information that we have about the fact that David would be king. In fact, based on the realities of their culture, David had no business being king. And at this time, that still would have been the predominant thinking amongst not just the Israelites, but the nations around him as well.

First of all, David was the youngest of eight brothers. That right there alone would have disqualified him from ruling anything. In the culture he came from, he would have never been called upon to lead anything except the sheep. Secondly, he lacked status, meaning that his family did not come from higher status within Israel. Now, they didn't particularly come from low status as well, but they did not come from the status of individual that would have been seen as somebody who could lead and be a king. So he wasn't in a position to claim any authority without events putting him there.

At this point, David has been leading men. He started out with 400 when he first ran from Saul and then eventually it ballooned to 600. He has already killed Goliath. He has served in Saul's court. He was even placed over a third of the army. And he was extremely successful in battle and has continued to be. At least for some years now, we don't know exactly how long, he has been an outlaw. He's been running from Saul, who's been trying to kill him. He has made

narrow escape after narrow escape. All of this with his wives and kids in tow. And he has remained safe. Up until this point, he has made good decision after good decision. And God has kept him from making at least one really bad one. And has kept him safe.

But being an outlaw has taken its toll. And relying on God can only last so long when what God seems to be asking us to just keep relying. When the end just doesn't come the way that I think it should come.

What We Say to Ourselves

So we arrive at chapter 27, verse 1. I want all of those circumstances to be dancing around in your mind as we break this down. And the very first thing that I want to point out is what I consider to be the most significant verse in all of [1 Samuel 27](#). And it is that right there. David said to himself. Now, why is that significant? How important are the things that we say to ourselves really? What does the Bible mean when it said David said to himself?

So let's get into it. I want to ask three questions to start this out. The first one being, what is something that you believe? Not something that you think, but something that you believe. The second question, why is that thing something that you believe? And then the third thing, how did you come to believe it? Now, if you're like me, when you really start thinking about this, you might have a hard time narrowing down the exact time that something went from a thought to a belief. For most of us, our belief system feels like it's something that's always been there. And that makes sense when we look at the biochemistry of belief. That is a thing, by the way. The biochemistry of belief.

Put simply, beliefs are the present organized filters to our perceptions of the world, external and internal. Beliefs are like internal commands to the brain as to how to represent what is happening when we congruently believe something to be true. Our belief system, therefore, are the stories that we tell ourselves to define our personal sense of reality. Now we all do this all the time every day. This is not strange. This is how the brain works. Every human being has a belief system that they utilize and it is through this mechanism that we individually make sense of the world around us. So that's exactly what your belief system is. Belief brings an order to your world. And that's actually a really good thing, I think. Because if I didn't have an order to the world that's going on out there right now, if I couldn't at least categorize it and put it somewhere and try and break it down in a way that I could understand it, it would feel pretty hopeless, I think, at times. And it's hard enough to look at the world around us sometimes and not feel that way. So our belief systems are there to bring an order to what we see around us,

and that's very important. It keeps us sane. It gives us the sense that all is right with the world, even if it's not.

In order for a thought to become a belief, it first has to bypass our emotion and then get itself into our hearts. I don't have a scientific explanation for what it means to believe something in your heart, but I trust everybody understands that. That'd be an idiom, maybe? I don't know. The heart is considered to be the source of emotion, desire, and wisdom. Now, David definitely would have understood this. In his culture, that would have been his scientific explanation for the biochemistry of belief. And once all that happens, a thought becomes a belief. Something rooted in the subconscious mind that we can speak to ourselves about without even knowing it. And when those beliefs are in there, they're pretty well in there. What we say to ourselves has a massive impact on who we are and what we do. Every day we all make split-second decisions about all kinds of things, and we usually don't even understand that we're doing it. But throughout that process, we are speaking to ourselves in a way that allows our reality to make sense to us, even if it's wrong.

David Said to Himself

By the way, the King James translation of [1 Samuel 27](#) says, David said in his heart, not David said to himself. So there you go. Across many hundreds of years. And this is what David does. So let's get to the first part. 7 verses.

It was reported to Saul that David had fled to Gath. He no longer searched for him. Now David said to Achish, if I have found favor with you, let me be given a place in one of the outlying towns so that I can live there. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you? That day, Achish gave Ziklag to him, and it still belongs to the kings of Judah today. The length of time David stayed in Philistine territory amounted to a year and four months.

And why does any of this matter even? We have to go all the way back to [1 Samuel 16](#), to understand the promise that God made to David anyway.

The Cost of Running

And it has likely been at least 10 years, maybe even a little bit longer since that happened. When we're putting David into the context of what he's thinking, this is part of it. What are the consequences of the things that David says to himself? In the short term, it looked like a great decision. Saul stopped looking for him. Achish first takes him in and then gives him a whole city. He gets to stop running. Let's take a look at that real quick.

We know he becomes king of Judah when he's 30. He was in the land of the Philistines for a year and four months. It was sometime after that that he becomes king. He was most likely in his early 20s when he began running from Saul. So we can reasonably guess that he's been on the run with no home for about five years now. Maybe a little bit longer, maybe a little bit shorter. Doesn't really matter. Has anybody in here ever been without a home for a period of time?

What a Home Provides

What does a place that myself, my wife, and my kids get to go to—it's nobody else's, I don't have to share it—provide that I never think about day to day because I have a home? Stability is a big one. Security is a big one. Comfort is another big one. Consistency, that's huge. It provides safety. It provides security, not just physically, but mentally. And it provides a sense of belonging because in our culture, you live in a home. Or you don't, but we all live in a home, right?

So David had none of that for a long period of time. Plus, he had people relying on him. It is my belief that this had a massive amount to do with that really small thing he said to himself—that he began relying on himself and stopped relying on God. And this is completely understandable. If you get on the HUD website, Housing and Urban Development, individuals experiencing homelessness are more likely than others to become physically or mentally ill. Homelessness exposes individuals to multiple health risks, including communicable diseases, the elements, malnutrition, and can exacerbate existing health conditions. Contrary to popular belief, mental illness does not cause homelessness. Rather, homelessness worsens mental health and exacerbates the symptoms of it. The mortality rate of people experiencing chronic homelessness is four to nine times higher than that of people who do not experience homelessness. So yeah, I'd say in the short term, it looked like a fantastic decision.

David's Raids Against the Peoples

Let's move on to verses 8 through 12 real quick. David and his men went up and raided the Gishites, the Gizzites. I'm going to mispronounce all of them except the Amalekites. From ancient times, they had been the inhabitants of a region through shore as far as the land of Egypt. Whenever David attacked the land, he did not leave a single person alive, either man or woman, but he took flocks, herds, donkeys, camels, and clothing. Then he came back to Achish, who inquired, where did you raid today? David replied, the south country of Judah, the south country of the Jerahmeelites, the south country of the Kenites. David did not let a man or woman

live to be brought to Gath. For he said, or they will inform on us and say, this is what David did. This was David's custom during the whole time he stayed in the Philistine territory. So Achish trusted David, thinking, since he has made himself repulsive to his people Israel, he will be my servant forever.

Now, one thing that is not completely obvious to us reading this today is those differences of peoples. So the three peoples mentioned at the beginning, I'm not going to get into the history of it, but the Geshurites are possibly related to the Philistines. Possibly they're just friends. The Gerizaites, possibly the same thing, and the Amalekites were allied with them. Whereas the other three that he mentioned were all allies of Israel. So long story short, he is attacking the allies slash possibly family of Achish and then telling him that he's attacking somebody else. Just so we're clear about what's going on.

A Man After God's Own Heart

Two things we need to look at. The first one is—and maybe this is just me that needed to come to grips with this—how difficult it is sometimes to admit that I'm talking about the future king of Israel, the greatest king they ever had, a man after God's own heart, a picture of my Messiah. That is who David is right here. The way he is presented here, which would have been obvious to those reading it at the time, not so obvious to us, is as a vassal of Achish. That's not a controversial point, by the way. All scholars, whether liberal or conservative, agree with this point.

It's hard to look at David, what David becomes. The star of David is still on Israel's flag. David was far and away their greatest monarch. Very important person in scripture. It's hard to come to grips with the fact that David is serving a foreign king, slaughtering some people that God did not give him permission to slaughter—I mean, that's not even the point—and then he's lying about it to the person who has provided him with all of this security and safety.

The Question of Loyalty

And that's the second thing. How does David act when he is a vassal of somebody else? What would we call it if we gave asylum to somebody from another country, gave them access to free housing, gave them health care, gave them food stamps, job training, military training. David did receive some of that while he was there. Gave him a job, raiding his enemies, but you know, it's income. And then you found out later that not only were they planning to attack some important sites in your own country, but they actually carried them out and then hid it from

you. What would we call that? Terrorist. Yes. Treasonous only if they're already a citizen, but we would call that a terrorist. That is exactly the way that David acts.

Not only that, the way that David raided wasn't new. In the culture, that was actually pretty normal. David had already done some of that. But the way that he did it was different than he had done it before. And in that context, it was not considered honorable. He didn't leave anyone alive to report because, well, they would have been found out. Not a single person. This is one of the big areas for me where David really crosses the line.

Confronting Uncomfortable Truths

I think it's easy for us sometimes to read the story and understand all the things we've been taught about David from the time that most of us were very young. For most of us, it's that man after God's own heart thing. That was the first thing I learned about David, by the way. He was a man after God's own heart. And then the second thing was he fought a giant because he had great faith. He took down this giant. He couldn't do anything so terrible as to include the death of countless numbers of Yahweh's image bearers. Following that logic further, I couldn't picture a man after God's own heart doing something so terrible.

So I needed to come up with a reason why it was okay for David to do it. Well, the Geshurites, the Gergesites, and the Amalekites, these are all groups that worship foreign gods. This is my thinking in my head, by the way. These are all groups that worship foreign gods. So at least in my head, that's one way to justify it. These are people that are against God. So that's okay. You see the road I end up down? I end up arguing in favor of terrible violence in the Bible because, at least for me, I grew up learning that I was on one team and everybody else was on another team.

I forgot that when God created man, he created them, men and women, Adam and Eve, human life. He didn't create this group over here that agrees with me and then everybody else. No, he created human life. I was on David's team, man after God's own heart, picture of my Messiah to come. If he is a man after God's own heart, then this must be God's heart for these people to die. If David was anything more than a human ruler ruling the way that humans rule, whether he's a picture of my Messiah or not, my Messiah would not have needed to come. Let me say that again. If David was anything more than a human ruler who ruled the way that humans rule, whether he is a picture of my Messiah in some areas or not—if he was so perfect—my Messiah would not have needed to come. And my Messiah still did need to come.

Just like every other character in the Bible, David is very complicated. Just like every character in the Bible, I am very complicated. I thank God that he didn't stop with David, that he still sent his son.

David Before the Philistine War

Now we're only going to deal with the first two verses of chapter 28, and then we're going to skip all the way ahead to 29. So the first two, at that time, the Philistines gathered their military units into one army to fight against Israel. So Achish said to David, you know, of course, that you and your men must march out in the army with me. David replied to Achish, good, you will find out what your servant can do. So Achish said to David, very well, I will appoint you as my permanent bodyguard.

Now, this is the first time since David and Goliath's story that all five cities of the Philistine pentapolis came together to attack Israel. So this is a big deal. This is all of the Philistines at the same time. The outcome will have huge ramifications. Achish says David must fight as any vassal would be expected to, and David says, fine, you will see what I can do. So Achish says, hey, I'll make you my personal bodyguard. Another way to translate that is eternal servant. I'm going to summarize chapter 29 here because there's only one point that needs to be made about chapter 29, but we're coming up on the end of David's time in Philistine territory.

David Before the Battle

But as of now, David is getting ready to invade Israel. Some historians think that David's real intentions here were to turn on the Philistines in battle. I don't personally hold that view, and I'll tell you why in a minute. But for one, it doesn't make sense to the narrative to think that David and Saul would just automatically start fighting together as well. I think it's poor understanding of human nature. Regardless of his intentions, though, it's clear that the Philistine leaders are not as sure as Achish is that David is going to fight on their side. They cannot understand why he would bring Hebrews with him, so they tell him to send David away. Now, David protests, but ultimately he goes back to Ziklag. What we know for sure is that this is the end of Saul because God doesn't want David anywhere near this battle, and that's the whole point of what's going on here.

And the reason I think David was going to go through with it is that it's likely been a year and four months. He's been doing what he's been doing for that long. It's been working. Trusting in himself has become—I mean, it doesn't take me a year and four months to really start trusting

in myself. So after all that time of it seemingly working, not only that, he argues with Achish, "Why are you sending me away?" He's not at his best at this point. When David said to himself, it began a 16-month period of his life where he chose good and evil, and he did not allow God to choose it for him.

As far as we can tell from everything else that David wrote and from the rest of the historical narrative, David does not speak or converse with God at all during this 16-month period. And if you've studied David the way that I have, there are 74 different psalms that are attributed to David and they pretty much cover his entire life. They don't cover this period right here. He doesn't write any psalms. He doesn't speak to God. It doesn't sound like he speaks about him to his men. If David had invaded Israel like it appears he was planning to do, it would have done untold damage to his chances to be king. God needed him not to be at this battle. So he steps in.

All right, everybody doing okay so far? We're in the homestretch. Bring it back in. We're skipping ahead a whole other chapter now. We're going to chapter 30, the first six verses. I'm sorry, the narrative jumps around. The thing about Saul and the medium probably happened after chapter 30, and it just moves all around. So I'm just putting it all in order, skipping what doesn't go there.

The Devastating Loss

David and his men arrived in Ziklag on the third day. The Amalekites had raided the Negev and attacked and burned Ziklag. They also kidnapped the women and everyone in it from youngest to oldest. They had killed no one, but had carried them off as they went on their way. When David and his men arrived at the town, they found it burned. Their wives, sons, and daughters had been kidnapped. David and the troops with him wept loudly until they had no strength left to weep.

David's two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelite and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite, had also been kidnapped. David was in an extremely difficult position because the troops talked of stoning him. David was in an extremely difficult position—seems to be the understatement of his year. God needed David not to be at that battle, but he also needed him to be somewhere else too. He needed him with no place left to go. He needed him at the point so many of us have to be at before we remember who is in control, before we remember those promises that were made, before we remember that I can't make those promises happen in my own strength, even

though it looks good and feels good and might seem like such a great decision because, God, you're just taking so long.

I have the amazing ability to trust myself until there's nothing left, until I have nowhere else to go.

Bookended by Trust and Faith

Bookended: "David said to himself" (the first verse of chapter 27) and "but David found strength in the Lord his God" (the second half of verse six in chapter 30). David began this period by saying to himself; he ended it by remembering his strength was in Yahweh. The King James Version said he encouraged himself in the Lord. He begins to look and act like David again.

I'm not going to go into huge detail because we don't need to. But he starts acting like a leader again. He starts acting like that man who made such good decisions leading up to this point. He starts inquiring of the Lord again before he does anything militarily, which is another interesting point. When David is relying on God before he attacks anyone or even thinks of attacking anyone—even those who are the natural enemies of Israel—he calls a priest and he has him inquire of the Lord. Not while he was in the land of the Philistines. He did none of that. Here with his wives and children carried off by a foreign invader, he stops and he inquires of the Lord before he pursues them.

Speaking Truth to Ourselves

A couple of closing thoughts. First, I hope this section shows just how important the things that we say to ourselves are. Our subconscious speaks in ways that we believe, right or wrong. That's just what it does. So we need to recognize that the things that we say to ourselves are powerful, especially when we realize that we're doing it.

If we are speaking lies to ourselves, that's what we're going to believe. My good friend Jason Price says that we have to actively shout down those thoughts when we recognize them. And what he's talking about is actively out loud. Tell yourself, "I know this is going on in my head, so right now, actively out loud, I'm going to shout that down." And that's the way we can train ourselves to speak truth.

And in my experience, this has been true. We need to make sure that we are filling our minds with truth and that the truth comes from our king.

The Human Cost

Secondly, and with this, we will be done. There's definitely a human cost to David speaking to himself. And it's another thing that we can often forget about when we're reading a story from scripture that's 3,000 years old. Outside of the unknown number of innocent lives that he and his men took, I can't help but think about his wives and his kids. I just can't believe that a person can spend that much time being that violent without it affecting everyone else around them. And being that he was acting so far outside of character for himself, of course they would have noticed. So I wonder about that. Scripture is silent about it, but I just wonder.

And the other person I really feel bad for is Achish. I know that sounds terrible. He's the Philistine, right? It's easy to forget him because he's the Philistine and he's Israel's enemy. Yes, he wanted David to serve him forever, but you get the impression by the words that he uses, the things that he says, that Achish had really come to like and respect David and that he really did trust him. As far as we know, David never sees Achish again. I've always wondered about that because I personally, if I was in Achish's shoes, I would have been hurt. I would have been really hurt by that. And it's easy to forget that because Achish is the Philistine.

So there we have it. We need to take care of the things that we say to ourselves because they're powerful. It's easy to believe them, even if they're untrue. We don't have to live like that because our Messiah did come. Not just a picture of him—he came. He brought truth with him, and he doesn't rule like any human king.

A Final Blessing

Thank you, guys. Sing the Shema with me. Shema Yisrael Adonai Elohein Adonai Echad Baruch Shekevot. Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. Blessed is the name of his glorious kingdom for all eternity.

May the Lord cause you to increase and overflow in love for one another and for all people in order to strengthen your hearts as blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Yeshua with all his holy ones. And now may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance toward you and give you his peace.

Shabbat shalom, family.

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