

“What Backsliding Looks Like” 1 Samuel Chapters 27

Wednesday 12/4/19 – Jeff Lyle

God declared David to be a man that had a heart like His own. David is famous for being the man after God's own heart. What an amazing description given to David by his God. Yet, we must never forget that the man after God's own heart was still a man. David, like all of us, possessed a sinful nature. This heroic man committed some very famous sins during his life and marred his testimony with some fleshly actions. Not as famous was the period of time where David spent living in fear and manipulation as he sought to preserve his life from King Saul. This message focuses on a sixteen-month season when David was operating according to his own wisdom and placed the lives of all who were following him in great peril. Motivated by fear, David compromised his commitment to live by faith and began living in a way that was mired in falsehood. God loved David too much to allow him to prosper in this season of backslidings, so we see Him go after this son who was feeling right while he was living wrong.

I. A Believer Motivated By Fear (27:1-7)

1. David's cowardice (1a)-V “Then David said in his heart, “Now I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul...”

David had once again spared the life of Saul in order to prove to the insane king that David was no threat to him. Saul promised to never again hunt down David, but David knew better. Something in that encounter with Saul caused fear to anchor in David's heart, and he convinced himself that it was time to come up with a plan to protect himself, his family and the men who were following him in loyalty. David had fallen into that trap wherein our enemies become larger in our minds than God. He decreed over himself that he would die by the hand of Saul if he did not do something to protect himself. He failed to retain confidence that God would protect him.

2. David's cleverness (1b) - "There is nothing better for me than that I should escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will despair of seeking me any longer within the borders of Israel, and I shall escape out of his hand.”

Not for the first time, David picked the territory of his enemy as the place where he would hide from Saul. David reasoned that Saul would stop sinking his life if he left the borders of Israel and joined himself to the dreaded Philistines. Clearly, David was not seeking the Lord at this stage. There is no mention of David praying for wisdom. He was operating by fear- fueled instinct. Where did this lead David and those who followed

him? Straight out of the land of promise and into the land of those who defied David's God. This is the essence of all backsliding: making our home in a culture where we have no citizenship, no inheritance and no promises.

3. David's compromises (2-7)

Sadly, David was making decisions that would impact all those who looked to him as their leader. Everyone else had to follow David down into the enemy camp. Backsliding not only negatively impacts the backslider, but also others whose lives connect with him/her. David feels like he is making reasonable decisions, but he is stepping further out of God's will as his fear and logic have replaced his dependence upon God.

1. He compromised his followers (2) - "So David arose and went over, he and the six hundred men who were with him, to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath"
2. He compromised his family (3) - "And David lived with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, and David with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and Abigail of Carmel, Nabal's widow."
3. He compromised his integrity (5-7) - "Then David said to Achish, "If I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be given me in one of the country towns, that I may dwell there. For why should your servant dwell in the royal city with you?" 6 So that day Achish gave him Ziklag. Therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day. 7 And the number of the days that David lived in the country of the Philistines was a year and four months."
4. He achieved his purpose (4) - "And when it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath, he no longer sought him."

Verse 4 tells us that David actually gained what he had hoped from moving into the enemy territory. Saul left David alone for a while. This is a picture of the reality that the enemy does not really need to fight against the life of a backslidden believer. With David out of his appointed place, connected to the enemy, settling down to begin a new way of life among the Philistines. David had walked away from all of that and was now settling down comfortably in the place far away from where he should have been. It seems that he felt perfectly fine as he lived month after month out of the will of God. So it is with most people at the beginning of their backsliding. Soon enough, however, trouble would come.

II. A Believer Mired In Falsehood (27:8-12)

- 1. Secretly serving God (8-9) - "Now David and his men went up and made raids against the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites, for these were the inhabitants of the land from of old, as far as Shur, to the land of Egypt. 9 And David would strike the land and would leave neither man nor woman alive, but would take away the sheep, the oxen, the donkeys, the camels, and the garments, and come back to Achish."**

Though he was backslidden on God, David had no loyalties to the Philistines. He had to become shrewd in figuring out how to survive in the enemy's territory while not acting as an enemy to his true people, Israel. David concocted the plan to fight secretly against various camps among the Philistines. He would go into a town and kill everyone, plunder them of their goods and then go back to where he and his people were living among the Philistines. Unwilling to battle Israel's enemies openly, David fought by stealth, taking his own reward and committing unjust acts of military violence.

- 2. Subtly speaking lies (10) - "When Achish asked, "Where have you made a raid today?" David would say, "Against the Negeb of Judah," or, "Against the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites," or, "Against the Negeb of the Kenites."**

When the King of the Philistines questioned David about his daily activities and desired a report on where David was gaining all the material goods he was coming home with, David openly lied about his doings. He told the king that he was destroying the villages in Israel and plundering his own people. David was now living the life of an active liar. David wasn't true to Israel, nor to the world. He was caught between two worlds and unable to fully commit to either. This is the essence of backsliding.

- 3. Strongly safeguarding his story (11-12) - "And David would leave neither man nor woman alive to bring news to Gath, thinking, "lest they should tell about us and say, 'So David has done.'" Such was his custom all the while he lived in the country of the Philistines. 12 And Achish trusted David, thinking, "He has made himself an utter stench to his people Israel; therefore he shall always be my servant."**

In deception, the tracks must be covered. David slaughtered all who might expose his lie. Nobody was left alive who might report David's deceptive activities to Achish. Think of how many people died in order that David could live a compromised life. What were David's actions communicating to his men? What did his family think about their backslidden leader? David had to cover the tracks of his

deception every single day. One little oversight might have exposed the life he was living. David went to extremes to protect himself.

III. A Believer's Marred Faithfulness (28:1-2, 29:1-2)

1. David became comfortable (27:7)-

"And the number of the days that David lived in the country of the Philistines was a year and four months."

The man after God's own heart lived in a comfortably backslidden state for nearly a year and a half. The longer one survives in a backslidden state against God, the more comfortable they can become. They can even convince themselves that God is okay with how they are living. Nothing in this chapter or the ones that follow indicate that David would have ever repented on his own, had God not facilitated a coming crisis to wake David up. David was seemingly fine living outside of the will of God. This is a deadly way for any child of God to behave.

2. Circumstances became undesirable (28:1-2) - "In those days the Philistines gathered their forces for war, to fight against Israel. And Achish said to David, "Understand that you and your men are to go out with me in the army." 2 David said to Achish, "Very well, you shall know what your servant can do." And Achish said to David, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life."

God will always facilitate a crisis wherein the backslidden believer will have to decide what he or she will do. The father will not permit us to live in perpetual limbo between what He desires and what we desire. He will bring us into a situation or season that will force us to make a choice. David was thrust into a crisis that would remove his self-created comfort. The Philistines declared a full-scale war against Israel, David's people. Achish demanded that David join his militia with the Philistine army to go and openly fight against Saul and Israel. What would David do? Would he fully align himself with the enemy and make war against his own people, thus providing for him to continue to live among the enemy? Would he deny his affiliation with the people of God? Would he repent and return to Israel? David's compromise was no longer able to be hidden. What would the man after God's own heart decide?

3. Decisions became inevitable (29:1-2) - "Now the Philistines had gathered all their forces at Aphek. And the Israelites were encamped by the spring that is in Jezreel. 2 As the lords of the Philistines were passing on by hundreds and by thousands, and David and his men were passing on in the rear with Achish..."

The backslider typically waits as long as he or she can before making a decision. David did not know what to do. There was so much on the line in this moment in his life. Shockingly, he enters into the army array of the Philistines, positioning himself as far away as possible from the impending battle. He was doing whatever he could to avoid the conflict. He was not yet surrendered, but nor was David able to be comfortable hiding out with the enemy. With the war about to begin, David was trying desperately to wring out every moment of possible escape. He was a man being pressed between two worlds.

IV. A Believer's Merciful Father (29:3-11)

A. What the unbelievers discerned (3-5)-

"...the commanders of the Philistines said, "What are these Hebrews doing here?" And Achish said to the commanders of the Philistines, "Is this not David, the servant of Saul, king of Israel, who has been with me now for days and years, and since he deserted to me I have found no fault in him to this day." 4 But the commanders of the Philistines were angry with him. And the commanders of the Philistines said to him, "Send the man back, that he may return to the place to which you have assigned him. He shall not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he become an adversary to us. For how could this fellow reconcile himself to his lord? Would it not be with the heads of the men here? 5 Is not this David, of whom they sing to one another in dances, Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands?"

Those who were among the soldiers of the Philistines were able to discern what David himself had failed to discern. Even they could clearly see that David was fighting on the wrong side and did not belong among them. This is also a component of backsliding; when a believer lives among unbelievers in a way that is inconsistent with their true identity, the unbelievers almost always sense that the backslidden believer is not one of them. The Philistine soldiers did not trust David and his men to fight among them against Israel. They demanded that the Israelite hero and his soldiers leave the ranks of the Philistines. God, in mercy, sovereignly moved the hearts of the enemies to make the decision to kick David out of their army. David would not make the necessary decision, so God granted him grace and made the decision for him.

B. What David's lifestyle declared (6-9)

1. David had lived to appease the enemies of God (6) - "Then Achish called David and said to him, "As the Lord lives, you have been honest, and to me it seems right that you should march out and in with me in the

- campaign. For I have found nothing wrong in you from the day of your coming to me to this day. Nevertheless, the lords do not approve of you."
2. David had greater loyalty to God's enemies than God's people (7-8) - "So go back now; and go peaceably, that you may not displease the lords of the Philistines." And David said to Achish, "But what have I done? What have you found in your servant from the day I entered your service until now, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?"
 3. David had created unholy communion (9a) - "And Achish answered David and said, "I know that you are as blameless in my sight as an angel of God."

David had fallen so far in those sixteen months that his friend, Achish, considered David to be his loyal servant. Imagine that! David was the anointed leader of Israel who had so compromised his testimony that the very enemies of God considered David to be their friend.

C. What David's God determined (9b-11) - "Nevertheless the commanders of the Philistines have said, 'He shall not go up with us to the battle.' 10 Now then rise early in the morning with the servants of your lord who came with you, and start early in the morning, and depart as soon as you have light." 11 So David set out with his men early in the morning to return to the land of the Philistines. But the Philistines went up to Jezreel."

God sovereignly prevented David from making an utterly disastrous decision to fight Israel. God got David out of his trouble before he committed an irrevocable sin by warring against his own people. God got David out of the crisis, but David has still not repented of his backslidden state. God has David's attention, but not the full surrender of David's heart. There would need to be one more very painful encounter to bring David to his needed awakening. Where God is not welcomed to rule, He will soon overrule. David would be learning this difficult lesson in the next chapter.