

I SAMUEL

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to I Samuel chapter 29 as we continue our study through the Word of God and we finish this book. Last week we concluded with Saul fearful of the Philistines gathering their forces to fight against the children of Israel. And as we saw, David was picked by Achish to join them in this battle against Israel since he was living in Philistine country and it looked like he broke his ties with his people and joined with the Philistines. In desperation, Saul tried to inquire of the Lord but the Lord was silent and thus, he goes to a medium in En Dor to bring up the dead for guidance in what he should do.

And up comes Samuel, I believe it was a demon and Saul never saw him, only this medium did, and this demon tells Saul that the kingdom was torn away from him and that within 24 hours he and his children will die in battle. This devastated Saul and he refused to eat but this medium or witch gets him to focus his attention away from his sin and on eating and drinking and in a sense, being merry just as Satan loves to do with us. That is where we will pick up our study this evening, in I Samuel chapter 29, starting in verse 1 as Saul and his men return from seeking guidance from this medium and now the focus is going to shift to this ensuing battle between the Philistines and the children of Israel.

I SAMUEL 29**VERSES 1-3**

1. The Philistines wanted to push into Israel and deliver a deathblow to them. Thus, both sides are preparing for war. The Philistines are gathered at Aphek, which means, “the place of restraint” and the children of Israel are gathered at Jezreel, which means, “seed of God”, in the northern part of the land, at the foot hills of Mount Gilboa. This Valley of Jezreel, (Joshua 17:16, Judges 6:33, Hosea 1:5) is also known as the Valley of Esdraelon in the Greek and we know it as the Valley of Megiddo where the battle of Armageddon will take place just prior to the Lord’s return to set-up His Kingdom on this earth, (Revelation 16:12-16, Revelation 19:11-21).

2. Prior to this battle the troops pass by the lords of the Philistines, these leaders and at the end are David and his men, and they can’t believe what they are seeing. “What in the world is David doing with us?” is what they are saying! And who stands up for David and his men? Achish, a Philistine and he tells these leaders that David is with us, he is no longer the giant killer and enemy of the Philistines. David’s lies brought him to this situation!

3. It truly is tragic when the world has to expose our sin and we see that here with David. David was blinded to what he was doing and yet, these Philistine leaders saw what David could not see. It is as Meyer wrote, “It is very terrible when the children of the world have a higher sense of Christian propriety and fitness than Christians themselves, and say to one another, ‘What [are] these Hebrews [doing] here?’”

Not only that but Achish is defending David, and to make it applicable to us, it would be like saying, “No, David is not a Christian, he is one of us!” That is not something you want to hear from an ungodly coworker and yet, are we listening to what people are saying about us? Are we doing things that will make others think we are not Christians? God will use the unsaved to awaken us but we have to be willing to listen and see and then obey. And keep in mind that Achish was not making this up, David lied to him making him think that he had forsaken his people and joined forces with the Philistines. Another important lesson for us to learn, don’t try to fit in with the enemy, you are salt and light unless you lose your flavor and hide your light!

VERSES 4-5

1. Isn’t this interesting. David’s victory over Goliath was just a distant memory to him and yet, these Philistine leaders, they remembered it as if it were yesterday. They did not buy this idea that David was now on their side as Achish did! You see, the name Aphek means “the place of restraint.” David found himself in a difficult situation. He was about to fight with the Philistines against his own brethren, the children of Israel. But God interceded and caused the leaders of the Philistine army to refuse to allow David to fight with them.

Please understand that this does not mean that God approved of what David was doing or just because David put himself in this situation God had to intervene and deliver him. It was all about God's grace and mercy that He extended to David so that he would not have to fight against his own family. The key is this, don't put yourself in situations that can hurt you or others, because God does not have to intervene but may allow you to go through it.

VERSES 6-7

1. Notice how Achish is completely fooled by David's actions. He sees David as an honorable man who is willing to assist in the fight against Israel, when all along David has been living a lie! What was the problem with David? Yes, he was not walking with the Lord like he should have but I think there is even more here. David had too much of the world in him and he was not at peace with the Lord because of that. Also, David had too much of the Lord in him to be at peace in the world. He was in the worst place possible, sitting on the fence instead of walking in faith and guess what, the fence is pointed! Where are you at this evening? Are you in this condition like David? The only solution is to turn back to the Lord, get off the fence and serve Him, follow after Him!

VERSES 8-10

1. Are you kidding me? God spared him in fighting against his own people and now he is arguing with Achish, wanting to go and fight. How confused David is. Now is this just more of his lies, trying to make himself look good before Achish? Maybe, but that is still not a good thing to do and there is no reason for him to act like this. God gave him a way out and David is fighting to get back in! Obviously David's heart is in a bad place and yet, how often do we do as David did instead of thanking God for delivering us out of a sin, but wanting to go back and sin? That is just foolish and God is going to teach David an important lesson regarding this.

VERSE 11

1. So the Philistines gather for war against Israel and David returns home to Ziklag, in the land of the Philistines instead of heading home to the Promise Land, the land of Israel! Now before we move on, let me say this. God loves David too much to leave him in this condition and He will do whatever it takes to draw him back. That is what we will see as we move on into I Samuel chapter 30.

I SAMUEL 30**VERSES 1-2**

1. David and his men make this 3-day journey from Aphek to Ziklag, traveling about 25 miles per day. And as they return home, tired and hungry, they find their town destroyed and their families taken captive. And the Amalekites were very smart, while the Philistines moved their army northward to fight against Israel; they attacked the south with ease, taking the city of Ziklag also. But make no mistake about this, this was not an accident, God had a purpose, He had a plan and the destruction of the city of Ziklag and the capture of David's family and friends were going to teach David some lessons he needed to learn. It was not that God hated David, but He loved him so much that he was not going to leave him where he was! And imagine coming home, ready to rest and be refreshed and this is what you find. What is David going to do? Let's read on and see.

VERSES 3-6

1. Can you imagine what they saw as they got closer to Ziklag, smoke rising from their city and what was to be a time of joy and refreshing broke their hearts. I am sure their pace picked up when they saw the smoke and when they arrived in Ziklag it was even worse than they thought; everyone was gone, taken captive. But at least he had his men, or so he thought. As they lamented over this they began to turn against David, they wanted to kill David! All had forsaken David now, well, not exactly!

We are told that, “**David strengthened himself in the LORD, his God.**” He had no one else to go to and that is exactly what David needed at this time, as Spurgeon tells us, “God was beginning to cure his servant by a bitter dose of distress, and the evidence of the cure was that he did not encourage himself by his new friends, or by the hope of others coming; but he encouraged himself in the Lord his God.” I believe this is one of those turning points in the life of David as he turns back to the Lord. He is falling into the arms of God for safety, for rest, for comfort and many times it takes a crushing blow to our lives for us to turn back to God, but God will allow it because it is what is best for our lives!

2. How did David strengthen himself in the Lord? I think there are several ways and it is what we need to do also. David remembered God’s unconditional love for him. Yes, all had forsaken him but the Lord, and that strengthened him. David strengthened himself in the Lord by remembering God’s promises to him and that God’s promises will never fail even though we fail many times. David remembered his past deliverances by God’s strength and that strengthened him for what he was facing at this present time. How important that is for us to remember as we face difficult situations in our lives!

It is as David said in Psalm 25:1-5, 15-18, **“To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in You; Let me not be ashamed; Let not my enemies triumph over me. Indeed, let no one who waits on You be ashamed; Let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause. Show me Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day. . . . My eyes are ever toward the Lord, For He shall pluck my feet out of the net. Turn Yourself to me, and have mercy on me, For I am desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart have enlarged; Bring me out of my distresses! Look on my affliction and my pain, And forgive all my sins.”** That is our Lord; He just wants us to come to Him and to look to Him to be the strength of our lives!

3. There are times, as here with David, that God will burn away our plans, our ideas, our hopes so that He might draw us close to Him and get rid of those things that are hampering our walk. And yes, Ziklag was hampering David’s walk in that it was in enemy territory, he made a deal with the enemy to live there, he was lying to the Philistine Lord and-so-on. It is as Spurgeon wrote, “May you see your self-righteousness burned like Ziklag, and all your carnal hopes carried away captive, and may you then encourage yourselves in Christ, for he will recover all for you, and give you spoil besides, and there shall be joy and rejoicing.”

VERSES 7-8

1. David found out that when he tried to do things on his own, when he did not seek the Lord, it left his life in a mess. And you have to give David credit here, because the first thing I would want to do is destroy the enemy but not David. He first seeks the Lord to see if he should go and attack the enemy. David does this by seeking the priest, Abiathar and he uses, I believe, the Urim and Thummim to inquire of the Lord. And I love this because the Lord tells David not only to attack the enemy but that God would give him and his men the victory!

2. Remember the song we use to sing, part of it goes like this, “Oh what peace we often forfeit. Oh what needless pain we bare. All because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer.” So simple and yet so true, if we would only learn the lesson and do it!

VERSES 9-10

1. You can't call Him Lord if you don't obey what He has said and David did obey! Now, why did David's men, who just wanted to stone him for the situation he put their families in, now follow him? I believe that it was because David was now following the Lord and these men saw that David was walking with the Lord now and thus, they were willing to follow! And think about this, David and his men just completed a 3 day, 25 miles a day, journey from Aphek home to Ziklag, and now they were on the move again, after the Amalekites. The Brook Besor was not always filled with water but it was very difficult to travel through. Thus, 200 of David's men had to stay back, they did not have the strength to continue on the journey, let alone fight against the Amalekites.

I thought the Lord told David that they would win this battle and now they lose one-third of his men! What is up with that? I like what Spurgeon had to say regarding this, “But mark this, he was not delivered without further trial . . . Many a leader would have given up the chase with one out of three of his troop in hospital, but David pursued with his reduced force. When God means to bless us, he often takes away a part of the little strength we thought we had. We did not think our strength equal to the task, and the Lord takes away a portion even of the little power we had. Our God does not fill till he has emptied. Two hundred men must be rent away from David’s side before God could give him victory . . . Expect then, O troubled one, that you will be delivered, but know that your sorrow may yet deepen, that you may have all the greater joy by-and-by.” Again, may we remember that as we are walking with the Lord, that He has given us the victory but it is not always easy and it is not always the way we think!

VERSES 11-15

1. As David and his men are in pursuit of this army that took their families and burned their city, they come across a man who is sick, dying and they come to his aid! Why did they do that? They could have justified their refusal to help, “He is going to die anyway” or “We have to rescue our families, we will come back later to attend to him” or whatever. But they didn’t, which shows me that the love of God was flowing through David at this time and he comes to the aid of this dying man, looking out for others first, just as we are to do!

2. And look at how God blessed their efforts. As this man was strengthened he answered their questions and said that he was an Egyptian slave who was with these raiding Amalekites who invaded the southern area of Judah and Ziklag, which was now Philistine territory! I wonder what would have happened if David did not stop to help this man? He now has the information he needs and the help of this Egyptian slave to find these Amalekites and get their families back!

VERSES 16-20

1. So David and his men make a surprise attack on the Amalekites and it is better translated from dawn until evening of the next day. And what a victory this was as only 400 of the Amalekites were able to flee from this slaughter. And David was able to not only get everyone's family back, including his own, but there was a great spoil taken from this victory. Now why was David allowed to take this spoil and Saul was not? Because the Lord told Saul not to and he disobeyed the Lord! Also, David was taking back what the Amalekites had taken from him and his men. God will bless our obedience but not our rebellion!

2. Now notice that God did not rain fire and brimstone on the Amalekites, but David and his men had to go down and fight against them. Why is that? Listen to what Spurgeon had to say, “Many who get into trouble seem to expect an angel to come and lift them up by the hair of their heads; but angels have other matters in hand. The Lord generally helps us by enabling us to help ourselves, and it is a way which does us double good. It was more for David’s benefit that he should himself smite the Amalekites than that God should hurl hailstones out of heaven upon them, and destroy them. David will have their spoil for the wage of battle, and be rewarded for the forced march and the fight. Brother, you will have to work and labor to extricate yourself from debt and difficulty, and so the Lord will hear your prayer. The rule is to trust in God to smite the Amalekites, and then to march after them, as if it all depended upon yourself.”

VERSES 21-25

1. Not all of David’s men were godly men. Some were wicked. And they refused to give to those who did not fight in the battle any of the spoils of victory. They only would return to them their wife and children. I find this interesting because David was a man of God, not perfect and some of his men were godly men and some were not. What happened? Folk’s, each person had a choice to make and even with the godly influence of David, some rejected the Lord and served their own interests, served the flesh, that was their god.

But David rightly recognized that those who stay back to watch the stuff should share equally with those who fought in battle. The reason the Amalekites were able to come in and plunder Ziklag was because David and his men all went off to war, leaving no one to watch the stuff or the city. Ziklag was a walled city, and David felt no one needed to watch over the stuff, but now David recognized that there are those who need to go to war and those that need to remain behind to watch the stuff! And in this battle against the Amalekites it was not David and his men that gave them the victory but God gave them the victory, and David is saying because of that, we should share it with the others.

2. This is a very important principle that we need to not only understand, but also apply to our lives. I go to work, I am in the ministry, and my time at home is short. But my wife when our children were young, was at home, you might say she was guarding the stuff. She was taking care of our children, our home and so on. And that means however God blesses me in the ministry, she will share in it equally. Both are important. The same is true with missions; some can go to the mission fields while others can support them financially and prayerfully. And both will share in the reward. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 10, **“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.”** Matthew 10:40-42.

VERSES 26-31

1. David spread the blessings of God to those around him. He shared what God had given to him. David gave to over 13 cities in Judah the spoils of this victory and David got more in return than what he had lost in the first place. As Jesus said in Luke 6:38, **“Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”** It is as Spurgeon wrote, “David became rich and able to send presents to his friends; but he was also the better man, the holier man, the stronger man, the more fit to wear that crown which was so soon to adorn his brow. Oh, brothers and sisters, the deeper your trouble the louder will be your song, if you can but trust in God and walk in fellowship with Jesus.” May we learn to trust in Jesus and walk by faith and see the salvation that He will bring to our lives, to our situations, to our circumstances that we face each and every day!

2. Yes, David was in a backslidden condition but now he has returned to the Lord and look at how he did it, it is the same way we must return to the Lord and continue to walk by faith.

- David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.
- David inquired of the LORD.
- David believed in the promises of God
- David obeyed what the Lord told him to do.
- David showed unexpected kindness and care to others.
- David saw that this victory was of the LORD and not what he was able to do.

- David shared the spoils of the victory, the blessings with others.
- David tried to mend relationships.

It all comes down to this, “David’s genius was his spiritual resilience. He expected to find the resources he needed in the Lord his God, and he was not disappointed.” (Baldwin). May we do the same and I will guarantee you this, you will not be disappointed either!

And folk’s, Jesus is our victor and when he triumphed on the cross of Calvary He won a far greater battle for us and He shared the spoil you might say with us! Paul, in Ephesians 4:7-8 makes this point as he wrote, **“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.’”** The Amplified Bible puts these verses like this, **“Yet grace (God's unmerited favor) was given to each of us individually [not indiscriminately, but in different ways] in proportion to the measure of Christ's [rich and bounteous] gift. Therefore it is said, When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive [He led a train of vanquished foes] and He bestowed gifts on men. [Ps 68:18.]”** And The Living Bible tells us, **“However, Christ has given each of us special abilities-whatever he wants us to have out of his rich storehouse of gifts. The psalmist tells about this, for he says that when Christ returned triumphantly to heaven after his resurrection and victory over Satan, he gave generous gifts to men.”** Look at the spoil that Jesus has for each of us from his victory on Calvary! Never forget that!

I SAMEUL 31**VERSE 1**

1. The Philistines pushed deep into Israeli territory and Saul and his men assembled together on Mount Gilboa, but Saul was fearful, he was not ready for this battle at all. Saul's problem was that he did not seek the Lord but instead sought answers to his problems from a medium, someone who speaks to the dead. And the Philistines killed many of the Israelites and the rest fled in retreat. You will never be victorious outside the Lord and in the end things will be a mess as we see here!

VERSE 2

1. Here we see the tragic death of Saul's three sons, including Jonathan. Why did Jonathan have to die, he was not a threat to David, in fact, he said that he would serve David? Jonathan recognized and acknowledged the fact that David would be the king in Israel and Jonathan was not. So again, why did he have to die?

I like what Poole had to say regarding this, and I believe he is right. He wrote, “There was also a special providence of God in taking away Jonathan, (who of all Saul’s sons seems to have been the fairest for the crown,) for the preventing divisions, which have happened amongst the people concerning the successor; David’s way to the crown being by this means made the more clear.” You see, David will have to deal with another son of Saul who was not killed in battle, Ishbosheth, and we will see that as we get into our study in II Samuel next time. Remember, the death of Jonathan was not a punishment upon him, but the Lord was calling him home, which is far different than the death of his brothers and his father Saul, who I don’t believe knew the Lord!

VERSES 3-6

1. As the battle continued on and many of Saul’s men died and the others fled, the Philistines focused on this man who towered above the rest, Saul, the king of Israel and they shot Saul with several arrows and he was mortally wounded, but life still remained in him. But, instead of repenting and getting right with God, he asks his armorbearer to kill him but he refuses and thus, Saul falls on his sword so that he might die! When his armorbearer sees this, he kills himself! Imagine, some 20 years or so since judgment was pronounced on Saul for disobeying the Lord and his heart is still so hard that he refuses to repent. There are many people out there who refuse to get right with God and keep hardening their heart to Him and at the end of their life, they refuse to repent. It is as Saul said, **“I have sinned. . . . I have played the fool.”** I Samuel 26:21. And many do the same today!

2. Now did Saul die here or is there a contradiction in the Bible because in II Samuel 1:4-10 we are told that an Amalekite came upon Saul and killed him? I don't believe Saul died here but he appeared to be dead and with his life still in him, he was killed by an Amalekite. You see, the Amalekites would come in after another army destroyed the enemy and they were still in pursuit of the rest of the enemy and they would come in and gather the spoils of victory before the real victors came back. That is what we will see in II Samuel and we will deal with it more next time, but keep in mind that the Philistines are still going after the remaining Israelites to destroy them at this time. I do realize that many feel that Saul is dead here and that the Amalekite just lied to David when he said that he killed Saul, but again, I don't believe that is what we see here. And yes, Saul did die this day, but it was not at this time.

VERSE 7

1. Look at how devastating this victory by the Philistines was. It was so bad that those on the other side of the Jordan even fled for their lives, all because their king refused to get right with God and it led the nation into captivity! And what the Philistines did was cut the nation in half, drawing a line from east to west, and thus, making the rest of the nation ripe for them to come in and wipe them out!
2. In this battle, we will find out in II Samuel 4:4 that Jonathan had a five-year-old son named Mephibosheth that was injured as they fled and he was left lame.

VERSES 8-10

1. The battle is over and the Philistines come back to gather what they could from the soldiers and they come upon king Saul lying there dead. And they cut off Saul's head; maybe remembering what David did to their hero Goliath, and hung his body on a wall in Beth Shan. You can go to this city and see the area where his body was hung in disgrace for all to see with the bodies of his sons. Not only that but they now place his armor in the temple of Ashtoreth to show that their god was stronger than the God of the Israelites. How often our sin gives the enemies of God a chance to reproach our God, may we keep that in mind before we do something foolish!

VERSES 11-13

1. Praise the Lord there are always valiant men around and here they came from Jabesh Gilead. These men, upon hearing what happened to Saul and his sons traveled all night, took their bodies off the wall and returned to Jabesh Gilead with them, cremating them. Now this was not a common practice in Israel but it was done if there was severe mutilation and that was the case here!
2. Why did the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead do this? Because many years earlier Saul delivered them from the hands of the Ammonites, (I Samuel 11:1-11), and they are repaying the kindness of Saul.

3. Now let me deal with this subject of cremation. You see, some people are unsure if it is proper to cremate a body, they feel that it should be buried in the ground or placed in a building. Some feel that if you do that, if you are cremated, you won't have a body when the Lord returns for your spirit and soul to dwell in. First of all there is nothing in the Bible that says it is wrong to cremate a body. Secondly, the cremation process only speeds up what nature is going to do anyway. You see, it takes about 40 minutes or so to cremate a body, bring it to ashes. And it takes about 40 years or so for a body to decay and return to ashes, naturally. Thirdly, the Lord is making us a new body for our spirit and soul to dwell in so He will take care of this issue. I don't worry about that. You see, the most important thing here is that you need to do what you feel the most comfortable in doing. Don't let anyone talk you into doing something you don't feel comfortable in doing. For me, cremation is the way to go, and my wife is aware of that. This body is just a tent that is housing my spirit and soul. Once my tent is worn out, my spirit and soul goes to be with the Lord. Now I'm not giving my body to science because I'm afraid they might reject it. I did want to donate my long bones but they said I don't have any long bones only short ones! But seriously, do what you feel is right with your loved one and for you, for you don't want to do something that you will always regret.

4. Saul's life and career ended tragically. It is over now and this man of great potential fell far short of what God had planned for him. And the reason he fell was because of his disobedience to God, and we will see next week that the thing he did not completely do, which God told him to do, will be the thing that kills him, an Amalekite! Now I don't want to close tonight on this sad note, but I want to share with you something that I read in my devotional a few weeks back. It deals with praising God and believing in God and that these need to go hand in hand. This is what it said:

I promise to value praise more than before. Praise is the natural outgrowth of trust. The one who truly believes will automatically praise God. Before, I thought praise should come after the act was done. I asked, God answered, so I praised. But this is weak, sickly praise. Jesus thanked His Father before He raised Lazarus. I should look at problems, difficulties, impossibilities, and then praise God ahead of time for the opportunity of glorifying His name. If Romans 8:28 is still in the Bible, and believable, then praise should characterize my life.

Difficulties, to the Christian, are only miracles that have not yet happened. Faith cannot tell time very well. To say we should praise only after the miracle has occurred makes no sense to faith. Faith means God will just as much as God has.

To live a life full of praise, I must thank God for evil circumstances as well thank Him when I am in evil circumstances. The difference is whether I am going to endure evil or make it a vehicle of blessing. The Bible tells me that God is not complacent about evil, but He uses it for greater good.

When God surrounds me with harassments, He is preparing me for a breakthrough victory and growth that He could not accomplish in any other way. So, in a sense, evil circumstances are my friends and I should welcome them as much as David welcomed the lion and the bear, which made him ready for Goliath. If I welcome them, I will praise; and if I praise, they are no longer my enemies but my conquests. Therefore, as James advises, I will “rejoice and jump for joy” when surrounded by impossibilities (James 1:2, author’s trans.).

“Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God, for it is pleasant and praise is becoming” (Psalm 147:1).

- W. Glyn Evans, Daily With The King, February 9

Don’t negate the years in the wilderness, don’t fret over difficult times, but learn to praise the Lord, and as I have said, see the salvation that He will bring to your life!