

1 Samuel 28-31 • The Danger of Compromise

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1 Samuel chapter 28. Last week, we saw how David determined that it was only a matter of time before Saul found him and killed him. And in a fit of somewhat desperation, he decided to go to live among the Philistines, because he assumed that he wouldn't be followed there by Saul, and he was right.

Problem is, he went to go live among the Philistines, and they're pagans. And they're the ungodly and sometimes we do that. We get discouraged and we go and live among the world. And pretty soon we find ourselves acting like the world.

But anyway he's been living a life of compromise as we read last week and we're going to see in this. Well, I think we're going to see here today how depending on how far we get, how this life of compromise begins to collapse in on him.

Chapter 28, beginning in verse 1. It says, *“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.”*” (ESV) Stop there for just a moment.

This was probably bound to happen. I mean, David's been living there for about a year and four months, roughly. And, the Philistines and the Jews got into skirmishes. I'm surprised it took this long for them to get into. They're perennial enemies of one another and skirmishes like this came up all the time. Finally it happens.

Now David is living among the Philistines. He has endeared himself to the king and it's time to go to war. And so the king says to David, okay, you need to understand that you're coming with me, and you're going to fight in this battle, right? David says, well, fine, now you're going to get a chance to see what I can do.

I'm not sure what David is thinking, exactly, because I can't imagine David going to war against his own people. Can you? I mean, here's the man who's been anointed king over Israel. He just hasn't taken the position yet. And I'm sure he, there's some place in the back of his mind that remembers that this is what God has called me to be and to do. And is he really going to march against, his own people?

Fortunately, he doesn't get the chance to find out, but man, I would have loved to have found out. I mean, I think I'm going to have to ask him someday when I see him. Cause I have every expectation that I'm going to sit down and have a talk with David. Probably have to stand in a very long line. This is the line to talk to David. That's okay, we've got eternity, right? We can hang out, it's like, I'll see you in about a thousand years, I'll come back when the line gets a little shorter.

But I would ask him, love to ask him, David, what were you thinking? Were you going to? Would you have ridden out with the Philistine army? I mean, was the life of compromise so much a part of your life by that time that you would, I mean, what were you thinking? Would you have turned on the Philistines once you got out and the battle was engaged? That's what we'd like to think would happen.

Later on, that's what we're going to find out that the commanders of the Philistine army were afraid was going to happen. We're left wondering the whole question. Suffice it to say, when we get ourselves into a place of compromise, where we're living in the world, situations present themselves and it's, we find ourselves in compromising situations where we're asked to go along with something that we wouldn't go along with in a million years. But here we are faced with it because we've been compromising and we're living in the world like a person in the world. And suddenly we find ourselves in this situation. It's like, what in the world am I doing here? And we don't belong.

And it's interesting, at this point in the thing, David doesn't seem to get it, that he doesn't belong. We're going to find out that it's the Philistines that actually figure it out, that he doesn't belong.

Anyway, the next verse is verse 3, and it's given to you and I as a stage setter for the rest of the chapter. And it's going to make two specific points that we've already, well, one of which we already know.

“Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city.” That's the first point, but we've already knew that. We

found that out a few chapters ago. But secondly, here's another stage setting comment, and that is that, “...*Saul had put the mediums and the necromancers out of the land.*”

Okay, that's a statement that simply is going to play into the chapter as we keep reading. But in years past, David had taken all of the mediums. If you have an old translation, your Bible may say, witches but these are truly mediums. These are those individuals who are involved in a form of black magic where they communicate with the dead, or at least claim to communicate with the dead.

And Saul had ousted them because God had forbade the Israelites to have anything to do with them. Okay. In the Word of God. This was very popular in paganistic sort of circles, but for the people of God, they were to have nothing to do with this sort of a thing.

Now, some of you may have had a background doing these kinds of things. I remember as a kid, in grade school, having sleepovers at a friend's house and playing foolishly, having absolutely no concept of what we were dealing with. I mean, as dumb as a doorknob, as they like to say about these things, and yet playing with seances and trying to communicate with the dead.

And maybe even some of you in your life before Christ owned a Ouija board or something like that. And you turned from it hoping what, when you came to the Lord. But some of us got involved and I never got heavily. I mean, we, it was nothing more than a passing fancy for some of us kids, but I know some people have really delved into this and it became a lifestyle. And it became part of their means of determining their destiny, or their choices that they were going to make.

And it— delving into the world of the occult it, it all looks very innocent at first. It looks like child children's games. But then farther down the road you begin to actually make contact and the spiritual world is very real. It's not unreal. And there are demonic beings who would absolutely jump at the chance to bring some kind of deception into a person's life who is open in their life to hearing from, something in the spirit realm. And we know that demonic spirits can even emulate a familiarity of people from the past and so forth. And so it's, let's just suffice it to say, it's a dangerous situation.

But we're told here that Saul, in obedience to the Lord, at least at some point in his life, had told all the mediums to get out of the land or, and or put them to death. All right. Okay, so we've set the stage with those comments.

Verse 4, *“The Philistines assembled and came and encamped at Shunem. And Saul gathered all Israel, and they encamped at Gilboa. ⁵ When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. ⁶ And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets. ⁷ Then Saul said to his servants, “Seek out for me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her.” And his servants said to him, “Behold, there is a medium at En-dor.””*

Apparently, while Saul has been busy chasing David for the last 10 years. The mediums have made a bit of a comeback in the land to the point where Saul's servants, some of the people in his army, knew right away where one of these gals lived. And when he inquires as to where he can get in contact with this individual, they say, well, actually there's one over in Endor. Okay, interesting.

Now, this is how far Saul has gone. It says that when he saw the Philistine army, he was afraid and he inquired of the Lord. God, what do you want me to do? Are You going to give the Philistine army into my hands? Silence. And the Lord did not respond however, Saul attempted to communicate with the Lord. And so he decides that he's going to communicate with a medium. It's crazy. It just shows how far he has actually fallen. But it's going to get even more absurd as we go through this.

In verse 8 it says, *“So Saul disguised himself and put on other garments...”* He wanted to look a little less kingly, obviously. Because everybody knew that Saul had put the mediums out of the land. So for him to go in his kingly raiment and seek a medium, he wouldn't get anywhere, and he knew that. So he put on the clothing of a commoner.

“...and went, he and two men with him. And they came to the woman by night. And he said, “Divine for me by a spirit and bring up for me whomever I shall name to you.” ⁹ The woman said to him, “Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the necromancers from the land. Why then are you laying a trap for my life to bring about my death?” ¹⁰ But Saul swore to her by the LORD, “As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing.””

Saul is now using the name of the Lord to say to this woman who is involved in this form of black magic, I promise you by the name of YAHWEH that no harm is going to come upon you for this situation. It's interesting. Saul had at one time in his life been very, very hard on these individuals who practice this kind of sorcery and divining. And I think he was pretty proud of it too. But now

because of his rebellion, the Lord is no longer speaking to him. And make no mistake about it people, it's because of his rebellion. Okay.

But do you remember what Samuel said to him back in chapter 15? We won't take time to turn back there. But Saul had failed to follow the command of the Lord. He rebelled against the command of the Lord. Do you remember what Samuel said to him back at that time? He said, because Saul was supposedly, he was saying, I have been obedient to the Lord. I did this. And we, we, da-da-da. I won't go through the whole story again. You might remember.

But Samuel said to him that, "*rebellion is as the sin of divination.*" (1 Samuel 15:23) Do you remember that? And you hear that quoted today. And we like to quote it like as if we're making this big, powerful statement about these two equal horrible sins. And you hear people say, hey, rebellion is as the sin of, some people say witchcraft. Or divination as if they're kind of making a statement that pulls itself out of the context and lives to be quoted over and over again.

Do you understand what Samuel was saying to Saul? He's saying, Saul, you've prided yourself by putting all of the diviners out of the land. You've prided yourself thinking that you're good and they're bad. But you're a rebellious man, Saul. And you need to know something about your rebellion. God sees it as no different than divination. The very thing that you have abhorred is the very thing equal to that, that you are now involved in. Do you see? You see the point of what Samuel is saying to him?

And so the, the idea here is to try to get Samuel to see, to know, to understand, that it's so easy for you to look at other people and say their sin, their sin, their sin. It's horrible, but not ever get around to saying, but what about me? What about my sin?

We love pointing fingers at people and talking about how bad they are. Or if it's not people, we'll talk about sin. And, I mean, Christians have brought up the issue of witchcraft, and divining, and all these other things. And, oh, we'll criticize it up one side and down the other. And, appropriately so from the standpoint that it's wrong.

But are we looking at ourselves as if we're okay? And the little things, but my sin, I mean, it's a little thing. I just have these little sins. Now there are big sins, and then there's the sins that people like me commit. They're the little ones. And I think that's kind of the attitude that Saul had. And that's why Samuel said to

him, Saul, your rebellious attitude is as the sin of divination. In God's eyes, there's no difference. But Saul wasn't seeing it that way.

So he goes now to this woman, who's a diviner. And in verse 11 it says, *"Then the woman said, 'Whom shall I bring up for you?' He said, 'Bring up Samuel for me.'"*

It's crazy. Has Samuel ever said anything lately to Saul that wasn't a rebuke? I mean, before he passed away? I mean, Why would you want to talk? It's like God's not listening to you. God's not responding. So you want to go to Samuel, who's a servant of the Lord, and talk to him. What's he going to say? *"He..., (says) 'Bring up Samuel for me.'"*

Now, I want you to pay very close attention to what we read in the next few verses. *"¹² When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the woman said to Saul, 'Why have you deceived me? You are Saul.' ¹³ The king said to her, 'Do not be afraid. What do you see?' And the woman said to Saul, 'I see a god coming up out of the earth.' ¹⁴ He said to her, 'What is his appearance?' And she said, 'An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe.' And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid homage.*

¹⁵ Then Samuel said to Saul, 'Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?' Saul answered, 'I am in great distress, for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams. Therefore I have summoned you to tell me what I shall do.'"

Alright, I want to deal with this issue. I had someone say to me a number of years ago that the Bible supported the idea of communicating with the dead. And I said, really? And the individual cited this example and said, well, it worked here.

Now, first of all, you have to understand the difference between a narrative and a teaching from God's Word. Just because something is in the narrative, doesn't mean that it is being taught. Does that make sense? The fact of the matter is God has always forbidden His children against doing this sort of a thing.

He's always said, you may not speak to mediums, you know why? In fact, God said through Isaiah, why consult the dead on behalf of the living? (Isaiah 8:19) What makes sense about that? But beyond that, it was just flat out wrong.

So what is going on here? Well, some people have said, well, obviously that wasn't Samuel who came up. It's some demonic spirit who, cause that's what these mediums are used to dealing with. They're used to dealing with demonic spirits who come up and they're familiar spirits who understand and have a familiarity with these various characters so much so that they can speak like, emulate them, and even look like them, and they can so deceive you.

Well, the problem is we get on and read through the rest of what Samuel says to Saul, that's not a message the enemy would give to Saul. It's a message from the Lord, and Satan would have absolutely nothing to gain by giving this particular message to Saul, and we'll read it here in a bit as we go on.

I have every reason to believe this is Samuel. You might say, well, just wait a minute. First of all, where was Samuel? Well, you remember when Jesus told the story of Lazarus, a diseased beggar, it wasn't a parable, by the way. It was a story. He was relating a story about a man who was a beggar. He was a righteous man, but he was a beggar, and he lived his life begging for scraps. And he eventually died and he was taken, Jesus told us, to the place of the righteous dead. And then the man on whose steps Lazarus had begged, but had given him nothing, finally died, and then was taken to the same place, except they were in a different state.

Lazarus was being comforted while the rich man was in torment. And the rich man, you'll remember the story, the rich man calls out, he sees Abraham and Lazarus in the distance, and he calls out and says, father Abraham, please tell Lazarus to come and dip his finger in some cool water, and cool my tongue, for I'm in agony in these flames. And Abraham said, he can't. There's a chasm that is fixed between where you are and where we are.

Now, this is that place that is referred to as Abraham's bosom, or the place of the righteous dead, where individuals went prior to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is kind of that holding place, if you will. And they were very conscious, very aware, as Jesus told in that story. But this is the place that was, part of it was emptied, when Christ after His death, burial and resurrection, it, the Bible says he took captives in His train, and he carried some of the people to paradise, where they went to be, in the presence of the Lord. The other people remained where they were, in a place of torment, awaiting judgment.

And now we know, from a post resurrection standpoint, that when we die in Christ, we are immediately taken into the presence of the Lord. Okay? That's what the Bible says. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. (2 Corinthians 5:8) So we go into the presence of the Lord at that time.

So this is where Samuel is at this time and he asks Saul, why are you disturbing me? And Saul asks his questions and so forth. And we'll get into that in just a second. But I want to show you something that's very, very interesting. And it surrounds this idea of how the woman responded when she saw Samuel being raised up.

Now, here's the woman who does this all the time. She's the medium for heaven's sakes, right? This is what she does but did you catch her response? He says, bring up Samuel for me. Verse 12. Look at verse 12 with me again in your Bible. *"When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice."* And she immediately knew who Saul was, and she said, *"Why have you deceived me? You are Saul."* And so forth.

He says, don't worry about that. *"What do you see?"* Look at verse 13. Now, I'm reading out of the ESV. It says, *"I see a god coming up out of the earth."* This is an interesting statement. But I have to, and I have to tell you, I the way the ESV puts this translation in here. And I'll explain why in a minute. But what I want to show you very quickly on the screen is how the major modern translations render this sentence.

(ESV) *"I see a god coming up out of the earth."*
(NIV84) *"I see a spirit coming up out of the ground."*
(NIV2011) *"I see a ghostly figure coming up out of the earth."*
(NKJV) *"I saw a spirit ascending out of the earth."*
(NASB) *"I see a divine being coming up out of the earth."*

Hebrew word: *elohim*

First of all, as we just read in the ESV on very top, *"I see a god coming up out of the earth."* The NIV from 84 says, *"I see a spirit coming up out of the ground."* The 2011 revision of the NIV says, *"I see a ghostly figure coming up out of the earth."* I don't care for that. The New King James says, *"I saw a spirit ascending out of the earth."* And the New American Standard Bible (NASB) says, *"I see a divine being coming up out of the earth."*

Now here's why they're struggling a little bit over what they refer to this as. It is the Hebrew word, *elohim*. And *Elohim* is often simply translated: God. But it can also be translated son of God, or a son of God, or a child of God, if you will. And even in some instances, according to the context, a spirit from God.

Suffice it to say, however, this medium, who is obviously used to doing this sort of a thing, sees Samuel, and sees something that she's never seen before. And

she screams and instantly knows what's going on. That she's been deceived by Saul.

And this is a unique situation. So what is happening here? Is this really Samuel? Yeah, it's really Samuel. Well, does that mean that these kind of seances and spiritist things actually work? No, this is a situation where God went beyond the norm here for this sort of a spiritual activity and He allowed Samuel to speak to Saul, to give him these final words. But this is not something that you and I are ever told to do. There should be a little sign on this chapter in the Bible. Don't try this at home.

I want you to look with me again in verse 14. It says, *“He said to her, “What is his appearance?” And she said, “An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe.” And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid homage.*

¹⁵ *Then Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” Saul answered, “I am in great distress,...”* He goes on and on. Talks about the fact again that God is not responding to him. Oh, and I want you to note that, please. That very important.

Did you notice here what he says? Saul says, I'm in great distress and then he gives two things: *“...the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and...”* no longer answers me.

Now, this is Saul. This is Saul. What do you see as the problem here? I see a man who's always pointing at somebody else, or something else, that's causing his problems. What's the problem? Why did you raise me up, Saul? Well, it's the Philistines, number one, and God has left me. And you know what? Longer answers me.

Rather than Saul saying, I have turned my back on God for about the last 23 years, rather than saying that. Rather than saying, I have just completely walked away from God and my life is a train wreck and the Philistines are threatening to kill, and I just need to fall on my face before God, and confess my sin. But he doesn't do that. He says the Philistines are a problem, and frankly, God's a problem because He's turned away from me.

Saul doesn't say, I turned away from God. Do you get that? That's the point that we really need to see. This is the life of Saul. It's always somebody else's fault. Now he's even blaming God. God won't talk to me! Tried to come talk to You. I

know this, isn't this is a little weird, but you know what? God's not talking. Tried to come I did talk to somebody.

“¹⁶ And Samuel said, “Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has turned from you and become your enemy?” Listen God never turns away from anyone who doesn't first turn away from God. I believe that with all of my heart. God never turns away from anybody who has not first themselves completely turned away from God.

And he says in verse 17, *“The LORD has done to you as he spoke by me, (he's reminding him of what he had said earlier) for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David. ¹⁸ Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you this day. ¹⁹ Moreover, (here comes the tough part) the LORD will give Israel also with you into the hand of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me. The LORD will give the army of Israel also into the hand of the Philistines.”*

“²⁰ Then Saul fell at once full length on the ground, filled with fear because of the words of Samuel. And there was no strength in him, for he had eaten nothing all day and all night.”

So what does Samuel say to Saul? He says, yeah, this is what's happening Saul, because of what happened in your life. God gave you a job to do, to go and wipe out the Amalekites. You didn't do it. You rebelled against the Lord and then you made excuses to make it worse.

And that has been the way that you've lived, Saul, all your all the time that you've been the king. So furthermore, here's what's going to happen. The Philistines are going to overwhelm the army. You and your sons are going to die. In fact, you're going to be with me tomorrow at this time and the whole army is going to be given into the hands of the Philistines.

And it says that when Saul hears this, he literally falls flat onto the ground and he can't move, and in fact, refuses. It says there was no strength in him. He'd been, he hadn't been eating because of his worry, and he just absolutely fell flat on the floor.

And it says in verse 21, *“And the woman came to Saul, and when she saw that he was terrified, she said to him, “Behold, your servant has obeyed you. I have taken my life in my hand and have listened to what you have said to me. ²² Now therefore, you also obey your servant. Let me set a morsel of bread before you;*

and eat, that you may have strength when you go on your way.”²³ He refused and said, “I will not eat.” But his servants, together with the woman, urged him, and he listened to their words. So he arose from the earth and sat on the bed.²⁴ Now the woman had a fattened calf in the house, and she quickly killed it, and she took flour and kneaded it and baked unleavened bread of it,²⁵ and she put it before Saul and his servants, and they ate. (obviously they were there for a few hours longer because that would take a long time) Then they rose and went away that night.”

Before we move on to the next chapter, let me just say one couple, maybe a couple more things. I've got to be careful to kind of pace myself. I want to get a little bit further in this thing tonight.

But have you ever thought about, have you ever read this story and thought to yourself, what if God told you, tomorrow you will die. I, personally, I, wouldn't care to hear that, but if, in fact, God said to you, tomorrow you will die. How would you spend the next 24 hours?

Wouldn't you at least take some time within the context of that period and get right with God? I think I would. I mean, if I knew that tomorrow I was going to meet Him, I think I'd probably get my act together and say, Lord, let's talk and let's make sure that we've got everything settled related to my sins. And I just want to come to You and I want to confess. And I want to get my life right with You because You've told me that tomorrow this thing is going to come to an end.

What's interesting about this, is that Saul doesn't do that. And he is told, and God is actually being gracious to Saul here. He's given him about 24 years, give or take of his kingship, which lasted about 25. He's given him the majority of that to get his life right, and he has refused. And now, God is giving him very specific information that is usually denied the common person. And he is saying to him, tomorrow, you will be with Me. Now, what are you going to do with the time you have left, Saul? What are you going to do?

Fact of the matter is, you and I don't know when the Lord's going to call us home. We have no idea. Could be tomorrow, could be, you could have a lot of tomorrows left. None of us knows. How are we doing along those lines? Do we know that we're right with the Lord?

The other point that I want to make about this is, this whole thing about diviners, and necromancers, and all the black magic that goes along with trying to communicate with the dead and all that sort of thing. How inappropriate is

that for a believer to be a part of and to be involved in? Well, obviously very inappropriate. It's interesting, when Paul went, Paul and Silas went to Ephesus, God moved so powerfully there. And they stayed for a long time. Paul stayed in Ephesus longer than anywhere else. It was like two and a half years. And it was because there was just such an amazing awakening that was going on. It was not a revival. To have it a revival remember, you have to have been alive in the past. Now you need to be revived.

This is an awakening. These people were coming to Christ in huge numbers. It was blowing people away. Let me put a scripture up for you from Acts chapter 19. It says,

Acts 19:18-19 (ESV)

Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver.

Also many of those who were now believers (this is in Ephesus) came, confessing and divulging their practices. (what kind of practices? It goes on to say) And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books (that's scrolls) together and burned them in the sight of all. (in other words, in a public burning) And (it says when) they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver.

How does that translate into monetary values today? Well, if you have a different Bible translation, that piece of silver is a drachma. And a drachma was considered a day's wages. One day's wages for a common worker. So 50,000 days wages. Think about a day's wages today and multiply that by 50,000. And that's what all these scrolls were worth.

And yet these people who had been involved in all this paganistic black magic black arts, divination, all mediums, and all this other stuff. When they got saved, they turned their back on all of it and in a very public showing of their repentance, they took all these things and burned them so that everybody could see. They had this enormous bonfire just to declare that everything that I've been involved with in the past, is going up in flames.

And now I'm a new creation in Christ Jesus, and there's no longer consulting the dead. I now will consult the living God. And why wouldn't you? I mean, as a believer, why in the world would you think about talking to someone who's

dead when you have the living, eternal God, whom you can speak to at any time?

Chapter 29, *“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, ³ the commanders of the Philistines said, (wait, wait) “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’?””*

Wow, that was a hit song, wasn't it? It's been 10 years since they first sang that song. Do you remember that they actually started singing it when David was coming back after slaying Goliath?

So it's been at least 10 years, probably a little bit more, and the Philistines are still reciting the lyrics! I hear it on the radio all the time! This is the guy who they sing about, and so they're saying, what in the world is he riding with us to war against his own people for?

“⁶ Then Achish called David and said to him, “As the LORD lives, you have been honest, (actually, he hadn't been, we saw that last week) 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.” Would you stop there for just a moment?

This is crazy. The Lords don't approve of David. Here's what's crazy about it. David should know and understand that he's in a situation that is compromising. He should be very clearly understanding. I shouldn't be here. But you know what it takes? It takes the commanders of the Philistines to say, he doesn't belong here. This guy doesn't belong here. He's a Jew. He's one of the people of YAHWEH. Get rid of him! What better way could he endear himself to his

Master than by turning on us in the battle and slaying us? And he'd have a perfect opportunity to do that.

Especially, here's David and all his men riding in the rear of the thing, right? So they go out to war, and they're going against the Israelites over here, and David just basically brings up the rear and starts attacking the Philistines. You got, the Philistines are being attacked from the front and from the back. Wow. Great. And that's what these guys are afraid of. They're saying, get rid of this guy.

But here's the interesting thing. David's not seeing it, but they are. When we are in that place of compromise, you guys, were just not thinking right. But have you ever noticed, have you ever had that temporary kind of a backsliding situation in your life? And you made your way kind of back into the world? And you saw how people were looking at you and you knew that they knew, you don't belong here.

And whether you're going out in the nightlife scene on the dances or you're the drinking scene or whatever thing you used to do. And then you go back and you start doing it again, and you're there, and you're hobnobbing with people. And you're trying your level best to have a good time. But there's this something that's just nagging you on the inside that says, you don't belong here. This isn't for you. This is not your place. This isn't where you should be. You should be with God's people.

I mean, it's one thing to go out among people like that when you're built up in the Lord and you're going out with the full armor of God. It's another thing to go out in a backslidden situation and to actually live like a Philistine. But it's interesting how even they recognize it.

Verse 7, so Achish is giving David the bad news. He says, *“So go back now; and go peaceably, that you may not displease the lords of the Philistines.”*⁸ And David said to Achish, *“But what have I done? (and this is the interesting, weird part that David argues for going into battle) 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?”*

Do you see how David is referring to Achish? And about his own people, the Jews? He calls them, the enemies of his lord.

*“⁹ And Achish answered David and said, ‘I know that you are as blameless in my sight as an angel of God. 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.

Now when David and his men came to Ziklag (and that's the town that they'd been given, remember?) on the third day, (took them 3 days to get there, it says) the Amalekites had made a raid against the Negeb and against Ziklag. They had overcome Ziklag and burned it with fire² and taken captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great. They killed no one, but carried them off and went their way.³ And when David and his men came to the city, they found it burned with fire, and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive.”

The Amalekites were raiders. Do you remember that these are the people that God told Saul to get rid of, to wipe out completely and he hadn't done it? Oh, by the way, do you know that Saul is going to die at the hand of an Amalekite? Even though he's in a battle with the Philistines? It's an Amalekite who's going to finish him off. Talk about poetic justice. The very people that he refused to get rid of.

I want to remind you of something. David went to live in Philistine territory because he was afraid. He was moved by fear and we saw it last week. He said, it's just a matter of time until Saul gets me so I'm going to go live among the Philistines. And he begins to live this one year and four month period of compromise where he's living among the enemy. Literally warming himself at the enemy's fire. And it seems to work.

We talked about that last week too, remember? How, when you do something contrary to the will of the Lord, and He lets it be successful for a while, and we kind of get ourselves all built up thinking, hey, that was pretty smart of me to do that. It worked.

And God will let it work for a while. But eventually, you start to realize, I'm living this life of compromise. David's been lying to Achish about what he's been doing all the time. And on it and on it goes. He almost gets himself into a battle situation. Except God, I'm assuming, God just moved upon the commanders of the Philistines and saved David's bacon, so he didn't have to go out and fight against his own people.

So he's sent back to Ziklag, and now look. The one thing David wanted that he couldn't get in the land of Israel. I want to just live normally. I want to live in a house. I want to have my wife with me. I want to have my children nearby. I

want to have my family here. I want to sit down at a table and eat instead of on a rock. I want to sleep in my bed instead of on the ground in a cave, which has been going on for, 8, 9 years, something like that. And I just want to live normally for a little while.

So what does he do? I can get that. I can have that if I just compromise. Go live among the pagans. That's all I got to do. So he goes and lives among the pagans, and he's living in a home for a while. And oh, isn't this great? We got our family together.

But the problem is, when you're compromising your walk with the Lord, you are ultimately and eventually going to put your family in harm's way. We can't live that life of compromise and just be immune from the effects of it. There is fallout from those sorts of things, and David is experiencing it now. This wouldn't have happened. So here he is, and he left his family, his, completely vulnerable, and the Amalekites came in and took them.

Verse 4 says, *"Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept until they had no more strength to weep. ⁵ David's two wives also had been taken captive, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel. ⁶ And David was greatly distressed, (look at this) for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God."*

Wow. It's one thing, to have a bunch of things go bad. Have you ever gotten to that place where there was no strength to be had except for finding strength in the Lord your God. I mean, usually we can find something to turn to. I can turn on the TV and lose myself in some entertainment.

And maybe I'm going to do a marathon entertainment session this time because we just got to keep it going. Or I'm going to, some people go out and find their soul is in a bottle. Or in drugs or in, some sort of play what they consider to be pleasurable activity. Whether it's sexual immorality, or partying, or whatever the case might be. It's like, I'm just going to just, I need to anesthetize myself against this constant rottenness. I need to numb myself from this sort of a thing and we turn to a lot of different things.

Eventually those things all come back to bite us because we become addicted. Sometimes it's spending money, sometimes it's work or whatever, but it all comes back, and eventually has all these negative consequences. And then we're brought to that place in our lives where there's nothing to turn to except God. There's nothing, there's no one.

Here, even David, he's been walking in this state of compromise. And he comes back to his home, and he finds his family has been taken captive, all his belongings. I can't even turn and enjoy my belongings. They're gone. Well, at least I've got my friends, my men, my sturdy men. They're here. They're with me. We'll be strong together. No, they want to kill him. They're talking about stoning him.

They're like, David, because of him, we never would have come here. And they're talking about literally taking him out and they could have. Six hundred men? Wouldn't have been a problem. Six hundred against one? Sure. We'll drag him out, let's stone him to death. This is what's going on.

This is what David is living with right now. This is the fallout of living this life of compromise. But it says here at the end of verse 6 again, *“But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.”*

It doesn't say how. I wish we knew exactly what David did to strengthen himself that we can probably guess just from reading the many Psalms that he wrote over the years that are recorded for us in the Book of Psalms. Worship, prayer, crying out to God.

David had this wonderful way of crying out to God. I mean he just told God like it was David was not, he did not mince words. He didn't patty cake around the thing He just came right out and told God, I need You. And if You don't help me, I'm dead. Flat out.

Verse 7, *“And David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, “Bring me the ephod.” So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. ⁸ And David inquired of the LORD, “Shall I pursue after this band? (this raiding party) Shall I overtake them?” He answered him, “Pursue, for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue.” ⁹ So David set out, and the six hundred men who were with him, and they came to the brook Besor, where those who were left behind stayed. (we find out why in the next verse) ¹⁰ But David pursued, he and four hundred men. Two hundred stayed behind, (they) who were too exhausted to cross the brook Besor.”* They were, 200 of these guys are just so exhausted they can't make another move. We've just got to stay.

“¹¹ They found an Egyptian in the open country and brought him to David. And they gave him bread and he ate. They gave him water to drink, ¹² and they gave him a piece of a cake of figs and two clusters of raisins. And when he had eaten, his spirit revived, for he had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights. ¹³ And David said to him, “To whom do you belong? And where

are you from?" He said, "I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite, and my master left me behind because I fell sick three days ago. ¹⁴ We had made a raid against the Negeb of the Cherethites and against that which belongs to Judah and against the Negeb of Caleb, and we burned Ziklag with fire." That's the city that David and his family had lived in.

"¹⁵ And David said to him, "Will you take me down to this band?" And he said, "Swear to me by God that you will not kill me or deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will take you down to this band."

¹⁶ And when he had taken him down, behold, they were spread abroad over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing, because of all the great spoil they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah. ¹⁷ And David struck them down from twilight until the evening of the next day, (wow!) and not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men, who mounted camels and fled."

If you wanted to get away quickly the camel was the way to do it. They could go, if you can hang on, if you can hang on for dear life, then you can probably get away. And "¹⁸ David recovered..." That's the Corvette of back in those days, by the way.

And "¹⁸ David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and David rescued his two wives. ¹⁹ Nothing was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that had been taken. David brought back all. ²⁰ David also captured all the flocks and herds, and the people drove the livestock before him, and said, "This is David's spoil."

²¹ Then David came to the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to follow David, and who had been left at the brook Besor. And they went out to meet David and to meet the people who were with him. And when David came near to the people he greeted them. ²² Then all the wicked and worthless fellows among the men who had gone with David said, (yeah, well) "Because they did not go with us, (we're) ...not (going to) give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, (well) except that (which) each man (what belongs to him, I mean, we can, we'll give him) ...his wife and..., (kids back) and..." let them leave. But other than that, he can't have anything else.

Nice guys, huh? What kind of attitude does that come from? Tells us here, it comes from a wicked and worthless attitude, interestingly enough. "²³ But David said, "You shall not do so, my brothers, with what the LORD has given us." Or if you will, now given us back. Did you catch that? Do you see David's

attitude? We'll talk about it here in just a second. But he says, no, we're not going to do that.

“He has preserved us and given into our hand the band that came against us.

²⁴ Who would listen to you in this matter? For as his share is who goes down into the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage. They shall share alike.” ²⁵ And he made it a statute and a rule for Israel from that day forward to this day.”

Do you sense that David's time of building himself up in the Lord has made a difference in his walk with God now? Do you get a sense that he's coming out of cold storage as it relates to this time of compromise?

Do you get a sense that David is now re-energized for the things of the Lord, and to honor the Lord, and to recognize the Lord for who He is and what He has done? Do you get a sense of that? Do you get a sense that David is getting a grip on God's grace?

Listen, David has been living in a place of compromise, and yet when he goes, and his family's all taken, but when he goes and inquires of the Lord, God responds. Listen, David knows he doesn't deserve that response. But God says, not only am I going to respond to you, David, I'm going to give them into your hands.

And David knows before he engages that battle, guys, we're not going into battle to fight and lose. We're going into this battle to fight and win because God has given them into our hand. We can go with faith and confidence. We know how this thing is going to turn out because God told us how it's going to turn out.

Listen, when you hear that kind of something from the Lord on your way out of a difficult place in life where, you haven't been living like you should. Oh, that is music to your ears. That is the sweetest sound on the planet.

When God and that's the crazy thing about God's grace. I got to tell you something. I've told you this before, but after some of my most serious mental mistakes in my life, I have seen God's greatest blessings in my life.

And when you, when God follows up some of your blunders with His blessings, it is apparent beyond a shadow, this is God's grace. I don't deserve this. I shouldn't be getting this. I should be getting the opposite of this. And I know that this is something David was thinking. I should, God shouldn't have even

spoken to me, let alone told me, I'll give them into your hands. And then they go, and they win it back. And when these rascals start saying things like, well, we're not going to give a share of the stuff cause we're the ones that went and did the work. David says, no! God gave us this victory. Who are you to hoard what God has given?

Do you believe that what you have is stuff God gave you? David believed it. And so he's coming out of cold storage here. Things are starting to happen again, and there's a new fire that's getting lit inside of David, because David is seeing God in a new and dynamic way. A God of grace, but also a God who restores to us those things that which we lost through our own stupidity.

It's one thing to lose something just in the course of life, but it's another thing when you lose something because you were just flat out dumb. And you made really, really poor, decisions. And those decisions have cost you something.

David learned something important about the character of God this day. He learned that God, his God, is the God who restores that which has been lost, even when it's been lost due to our own mistakes. Well, if that isn't humbling, nothing is.

God, You love me so much. You will give back the stuff I lost. I did this. This was my decision that brought all this on and Lord, You brought it back. Wow. That's grace, right? People say there isn't any grace in the Old Testament. I tell you, is this not grace? This is a glorious experience or example of grace.

“²⁶ When David came to Ziklag, he sent part of the spoil to his friends, the elders of Judah, saying, “Here is a present for you from the spoil of the enemies of the LORD.” ²⁷ It was for those (and then it names the towns) ...Bethel, in Ramoth of the Negeb, in Jattir,...” And then it goes on and explains the different places where David had sent gifts for all these people. And so forth.

And it goes on now. Chapter 31 says, *“Now the Philistines were fighting against Israel, and the men of Israel fled before the Philistines and fell slain on Mount Gilboa. ² And the Philistines overtook Saul and his sons, and the Philistines struck down Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchi-shua, the sons of Saul.”*

I remember the first time I read this, I told you guys this before, I love Jonathan. He's my hero. One of the reasons I love him so much is he stood up against his father. And I also love him because he loved David. And he could see David for who he was. And I remember when I heard, when I read earlier in the text, when Jonathan said to David, he was encouraging David.

He said, David, don't worry about this thing. My dad's not going to find you. He's not going to kill you because he knows you're going to be king. And furthermore, I'm going to be second in command. And he knows it. And I remember thinking to myself, yes! That is exactly the way it should be.

And then I remember for the very first time reading this where it says and it just says it like, it's just oh, and by the way, Jonathan died. And I'm like no! Jonathan was a godly man. I don't know about the other sons of Saul, but look what happens. Men particularly we got to open our eyes.

Look what happens when we walk away from God, we can affect the people who are closest to us. And there can be this thing that, this dark cloud, this rottenness, that we invite into the life of our family members because of our own actions. It ought to sober us to read this.

“The battle pressed hard against Saul, (verse 3) and the archers found him, and he was badly wounded by the archers. ⁴ Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, “Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and mistreat me.” But his armor-bearer would not, for he feared greatly. Therefore Saul took his own sword and fell upon it. ⁵ And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell upon his sword and died with him. ⁶ Thus Saul died, and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and all his men, on the same day together.”

When we get into the next chapter, we're going to find out where the Amalekite was involved. And not in the next chapter, but the next book, in 2 Samuel.

“⁷ And when the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley and those beyond the Jordan saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned their cities and fled. And the Philistines came and lived in them.

⁸ The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. ⁹ So they cut off his head and stripped off his armor and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines, to carry the good news to the house of their idols and to the people. ¹⁰ They put his armor in the temple of Ashtaroath, and they fastened his body (headless as it was) to the wall of Beth-shan.”

You see, what they're doing is they're basically, pagans assumed that when they won the battle that meant their God was stronger than the God of the people whom they defeated. And that's what Saul has brought upon the reputation of YAHWEH, the eternal God. To these Philistines, he has left them with the idea

that their God is greater. That's why they put these things up in their temples. It's a trophy and of course, God is going to correct that. But Saul's actions have been very, very bad for God's reputation.

“¹¹ But when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, ¹² all the valiant men arose and went all night and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and they came to Jabesh and burned them there. ¹³ And they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh and fasted seven days.”

Saul had been a tyrant. His life was not something that people would necessarily honor. And yet we're blown away by these men of Jabesh Gilead, who even though Saul had done the wrong thing so many times, they didn't consider that an excuse to not do the right thing.

It was right of them to risk their lives and to go into Philistine territory. And to retrieve the body of Saul and his sons, and to give them a proper burial. It was right of them to do that, even though Saul had been wrong.

One of the things we often say today here in America is, we're very geared toward people deserving something from us. And if we don't find them deserving, we make an excuse as to why we shouldn't have to do anything good on their behalf.

And I think there's a lesson here to be learned from the valiant men of Jabesh Gilead. Saul was, he was a tyrant. He was an insane man who killed people who never should have died and hunted down David. And yet when he himself died in battle, these men decided to do the right thing.

And you know the right thing is always the right thing. And they believed that it was appropriate and proper to do what they did. I'm impressed by these men.

David, when he takes the throne, he's going to be impressed by these men. And he's going to honor them.