

Success, Cunning and Deceit: The Things We Can Achieve without God

1 Samuel 27:1-28:2

¹ But David thought to himself, “One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand.”

² So David and the six hundred men with him left and went over to Achish son of Maok king of Gath. ³ David and his men settled in Gath with Achish. Each man had his family with him, and David had his two wives: Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, the widow of Nabal. ⁴ When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him.

⁵ Then David said to Achish, “If I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be assigned to me in one of the country towns, that I may live there. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you?”

⁶ So on that day Achish gave him Ziklag, and it has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since.

⁷ David lived in Philistine territory a year and four months.

⁸ Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites. (From ancient times these peoples had lived in the land extending to Shur and Egypt.) ⁹ Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive, but took sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes. Then he returned to Achish.

¹⁰ When Achish asked, “Where did you go raiding today?” David would say, “Against the Negev of Judah” or “Against the Negev of Jerahmeel” or “Against the Negev of the Kenites.” ¹¹ He did not leave a man or woman alive to be brought to Gath, for he thought, “They might inform on us and say, ‘This is what David did.’” And such was his practice as long as he lived in Philistine territory. ¹² Achish trusted David and said to himself, “He has become so obnoxious to his people, the Israelites, that he will be my servant for life.”

¹ In those days the Philistines gathered their forces to fight against Israel. Achish said to David, “You must understand that you and your men will accompany me in the army.”

² David said, “Then you will see for yourself what your servant can do.”

Achish replied, “Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life.”

David’s Despair

¹ But David thought to himself, “One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand.”

1. David was experiencing a very difficult season in his life. He is hunted down by Saul, He was forced to live as a fugitive. David had confronted Saul twice yet nothing Saul said gave David the assurance that Saul was going to stop trying to kill him.
2. Reflecting on his situation, David comes to a conclusion that he will eventually ‘be destroyed’ (swept away) by Saul. His best option is to escape to the land of the Philistines once again.
3. David is down and out. The situation got to him. In the previous chapter David tell Abishai that Saul will be destroyed (*the Lord himself will strike him, or his time will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish.* 1 Samuel 26:10), but now he

confesses that Saul will get his way and destroy him. In spite of being delivered by God and even having Saul delivered into his hands, David has lost hope. Even though the Lord had encouraged him through the words of Jonathan and Abigail, David felt that his only hope was to flee to a foreign land away from the place of worship he longed for.

4. There are times when the challenges we face will get the better of us. The problems and the pressure start to grow to a point it eclipses the presence of God from our life. We find it hard to hold on to the promises that God has given us because of the growing fear and cynicism within our hearts. We want to run away from everything.
 - Who are we listening to? Are we looking at our situation in the light of God's word or are we listening to the accusative and discouraging words of the enemy?
 - What do we say to ourselves? What is dominating the conversations in our hearts?
 - How do we understand God's kingdom, power, and presence when we face challenges?

David's Deceit: What Happens When We Stop Leaning on God

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1. The last time David went to Gath, he pretended to be mad to save himself, but on this occasion things were different. King Achish would have received news that Saul wanted to kill David. Achish believed that 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend'. David well aware of the advantage this situation provides, asked the King to bestow favour on him by granting him and his men place to stay. David wisely used his situation and his words to get a city for his men.
2. David is now leaning on his wisdom. He has gotten Saul off his back. He had gained favour with King Achish of Gath. Well, he can say that he has done nothing wrong. He did not touch the Lord's anointed and he has procured a place of refuge for his men and their families. The narrator is very sympathetic towards David's plight and yet the name of God is not mentioned in this story.
 - Where is all of this going? What happens when we start leaning on our own wisdom and resourcefulness?

⁸ Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites. (From ancient times these peoples had lived in the land extending to Shur and Egypt.)⁹ Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive, but took sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes. Then he returned to Achish.

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1. The story gets difficult and darker. We begin to see what David is capable of. David starts raiding the other tribes living in the land God had given the Israelites. He then lies to Achish by informing him that he had been raiding the Israelites. David wins the trust of king Achish by means of deception.
2. In his raids, David does not take prisoners. He kills everyone to prevent any news of his true activities from reaching King Achish. David is shrewd, cold, and calculative. His ability as a military strategist is now put to use in a way that raises so many questions on what he is truly capable of.
3. As we study the book of Samuel, we begin to see that God chooses to insert Himself in the presence of a godless people. Even though anointed by God, Saul turned against God and committed so many wicked acts because of his desire for power and greatness. (Not to mention Eli and his sons and even the sons of Samuel.) Now David, anointed by God and gifted as a charismatic leader, decides to lean on his ability and shrewdness to achieve his goals. This are fallen people that God has chosen, and made a covenant with. Here again we are reminded how broken our world is. Only God can save us from ourselves.

Galatians 2:20

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

David's Success

¹² Achish trusted David and said to himself, "He has become so obnoxious to his people, the Israelites, that he will be my servant for life."

¹ In those days the Philistines gathered their forces to fight against Israel. Achish said to David, "You must understand that you and your men will accompany me in the army."

² David said, "Then you will see for yourself what your servant can do." Achish replied, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life."

1. Through deceit, David has won the trust of the Achish. Now Achish states his expectation. He wants David by his side when he fights against Israel. David plays along and finds himself deeper in in deceit. The man anointed to be the king of Israel has taken refuge with the Philistines.
 - Will David be labelled a collaborator by his own people? Is David putting His call to be the King of Israel at risk? David is successful, but at what cost?

A Godless Life

1. In this story, we see David's downward spiral.
 - He first allows his circumstance and his 'self-talk' to remove him from the presence of God.
 - He begins to do what he needs to do without considering the ramifications of his actions. He does what he believes the only thing he can do under such circumstances.
 - Slowly the lines are blurred, we no longer can clearly tell if he is serving God or serving himself, or if he still has a hold on things or his circumstances has got the better of him.
 - David is slowly drifting away for God and only God can save him.
2. We can achieve a lot of things without God. Through wisdom, cunning and deceit, people can attain a huge amount of success. Yet this success comes to us at a great cost. Every time we take matters into our own hands and play according to the rules of the world, we lose sight of God. We are set on a slow drift away from God. The lines that differentiate right from wrong, truth from lies, God's will from our will slowly disappear. We may even deceive ourselves into thinking that everything is fine because we are serving God, yet slowly and surely our hearts turn away from God and all the things He stands for. The call of 'embracing the Cross' becomes distant and unrealistic.
3. There are two important lessons to learn here.
 - A prolonged season of challenges can get to you. Do something about it. Scripture teaches us the importance of prayer, unity, being part of the body (church), getting help, meditating on God's word, and it reveals to us so much wisdom and understanding to help us navigate through difficult times. God's word strengthens our faith and teaches us to be more aware of His love and presence in our lives. We need to be humble enough to know that we cannot do this on our own and any attempt to do so will not end well.
 - We also need to be aware of our depravity. We are very capable of bad behaviour. Pay close attention to what you do even the small thing (they have the potential of becoming big). Always be sensitive to any form of manipulative practices in your life. Embrace humility and reverence to God as a way of life.
4. We are born in sin and we are rebellious against God. Only in Jesus Christ our sinful nature is put to death. This is why the 'I' must die. It must be crucified with Christ. Jesus says this about being disciples.

Please take time to meditate on the following verses. In what way does the expectations of Jesus Christ bring comfort to us?

Matthew 16:24-27

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

Prayer Items

1. We will be mindful of God's promises and presence in our lives.
2. Be careful that our 'self talk' is not dominated by our circumstances.
3. Embrace humility and reverence before God.
4. Fully understand only Jesus Christ can save us from our sin.

Church

1. To be steadfast in our pursue of God and His call over our lives.
2. An intimate desire to be in His presence in prayer and worship.
3. God will continue to shape our lives through His word.
4. God will help us touch lives for His glory in our work place, schools and homes.
5. To unite our hearts as a Church to care and stand together.
6. Ministries: Life Explorers, Redeeming Roses, Destiny Kids & Teens, Sunday School, Lifeline Youth, Worship Team, Pulpit Ministry & Church Leadership..
 - God will help us do His work during the MCO.
 - God will help us raise leaders.
 - God will open doors for us to reach others
7. God will help us use our resources and abilities to help the people around

Covid-19

1. Children, Parents and Teachers
2. Healing and quick recovery for those who are affected
3. Wisdom for Government
4. Economy/those who are out of work

Healing

1. Suba

Malaysia

1. God will guide the leaders of our nation.
2. Healing that brings unity. God will raise His church to be His instrument of reconciliation.
3. God will restore justice and compassion. The leaders will look into the needs of the poor and vulnerable. We will care for the foreigners.
4. Revival in the Church of Malaysia.