

God's Presence in a Godless Season

1 Samuel 29:1-11

¹ The Philistines gathered all their forces at Aphek, and Israel camped by the spring in Jezreel. ² As the Philistine rulers marched with their units of hundreds and thousands, David and his men were marching at the rear with Achish. ³ The commanders of the Philistines asked, "What about these Hebrews?"

Achish replied, "Is this not David, who was an officer of Saul king of Israel? He has already been with me for over a year, and from the day he left Saul until now, I have found no fault in him."

⁴ But the Philistine commanders were angry with Achish and said, "Send the man back, that he may return to the place you assigned him. He must not go with us into battle, or he will turn against us during the fighting. How better could he regain his master's favor than by taking the heads of our own men?" ⁵ Isn't this the David they sang about in their dances: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands?"

⁶ So Achish called David and said to him, "As surely as the Lord lives, you have been reliable, and I would be pleased to have you serve with me in the army. From the day you came to me until today, I have found no fault in you, but the rulers don't approve of you." ⁷ Now turn back and go in peace; do nothing to displease the Philistine rulers."

⁸ "But what have I done?" asked David. "What have you found against your servant from the day I came to you until now? Why can't I go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?"

⁹ Achish answered, "I know that you have been as pleasing in my eyes as an angel of God; nevertheless, the Philistine commanders have said, 'He must not go up with us into battle.'" ¹⁰ Now get up early, along with your master's servants who have come with you, and leave in the morning as soon as it is light."

¹¹ So David and his men got up early in the morning to go back to the land of the Philistines, and the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

1 Samuel 27:1-2

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.

1. Saul was jealous of David and pursued him, wanting to kill him. David tried many times to persuade Saul that he was not a threat to him, but Saul would not listen and relentlessly pursued him. The constant running and hiding took a toll on David and he sunk into desperation and despair. His faith in God began to waiver for he lost hope that God would continue to save him from Saul. He took things into his own hand and sought refuge in the city of Gath with the Philistines. He deceived King Achish of the Philistines into believing that he would be loyal to him and the Philistines. He raided the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites and lied to King Achish by saying that he was raiding the territories of Israel. David killed all the people in the villages

he raided to keep the truth from getting to King Achish. David was now relying on his cunning and deceit instead of turning to God.

2. David turned away from God, and he did not seek the counsel of God, nor did he rest on the assurances and promises of God. Despair had brought David to this place and he chose to remain here. The place of despair became his place of refuge. David was in a godless place and now God had to get him back on the right track.
 - What do you think God was doing, during the times you have kept him out from your life?
 - Were there times in your life where you believed that God would not act? Have you been overwhelmed to a point where you found it hard to pray and believe for deliverance?

David Was On the Wrong Side of God's Plan

1. The armies of the Philistines marched out with great numbers to mount an attack on Israel. Where was David? "*David and his men were marching at the rear with Achish.*" (v. 2)
 - Is this the place where God wanted David to be?
 - Would the future king of Israel march with the King Philistines against Israel?

1 Samuel 28:19

¹⁹ The Lord will deliver both Israel and you into the hands of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The Lord will also give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines."

2. This above are Samuel's words to Saul. God will hand over Saul and the armies of Israel into the hands of the Philistines. This battle would mark the end of Saul's reign. David will be delivered from Saul and would no longer need to run and hide. This would also open the path for David to be the next king of Israel. God was clearly in control and is putting His plans into effect.
 - What was David doing? Is he helping God or getting in the way?
3. It is unlikely that David would join the Philistines to fight against Saul and the armies of Israel. There were two occasions where David could have killed Saul, but he honoured God and would not kill the Lord's anointed king.
4. Let's say David planned to turn against the Philistines and fight for Israel during the heat of the battle. If David did this, he would be working against the Lord's will because God had handed Israel into the hands of the Philistines. David had strayed away to a place where he was in the wrong side of the Lord's will.
 - What could happen to us when we take matters into our own hands?
 - Can we get in God's way?

Reflect on the following verses:

Matthew 16:21-24

²¹ *From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.*

²² *Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"*

²³ *Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."*

²⁴ *Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."*

Deception, Treachery and Betrayal

1. Now if David's plan is to turn against king Achish during the battle, David would be resorting to treachery and betrayal. This would be a terrible thing for David to do. It would lead to fear and distrust among his own followers.
2. King Achish was so taken up with David that he did not think much of the fact that he was putting all his trust on a person who has turned against his own people.
3. David deceived Achish by telling him what he wanted to hear. Flattery (David was not truly loyal to the Philistines) is an effective way to deceive people.
 - Why is flattery effective?
 - What does this teach you about deception?

Wisdom in the ranks

³ *The commanders of the Philistines asked, "What about these Hebrews?"*

Achish replied, "Is this not David, who was an officer of Saul king of Israel? He has already been with me for over a year, and from the day he left Saul until now, I have found no fault in him."

⁴ *But the Philistine commanders were angry with Achish and said, "Send the man back, that he may return to the place you assigned him. He must not go with us into battle, or he will turn against us during the fighting. How better could he regain his master's favour than by taking the heads of our own men?"*⁵ *Isn't this the David they sang about in their dances: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands"?"*

1. The Philistine commanders considered Achish actions unwise, and they were angry with him. They wanted David and his men to be sent back. This was their reasoning.
 - What are the Hebrews doing here? Is it really wise to think that we can lead 600 Israelite soldiers in a battle against their own people?
 - David has switched sides for his advantage. Why wouldn't he switch sides again to gain favour with Saul?
 - David once enjoyed the love and adulation of the people of Israel when he led them in battle against the Philistines victoriously. Why wouldn't David seek such praise and adulation again?

2. There were wise men among the captains of the Philistines. They were careful in such matters and did not want to take such a risk. They were willing to confront the king and make a stand with good reasoning. They not only understood war, but they also understood people.
3. As Christians, we must acknowledge that wisdom can be found in many places. There are people in the world that possess the wisdom and knowledge needed to make them successful and thrive in this world. Here, wisdom is expressed in three ways:
 - (i) Wisdom to be cunning, deceitful, and manipulative.
 - (ii) Wisdom to be discerning and thoughtful.
 - (iii) Wisdom to know the Lord and represent His will.

Reflect on the above. What does the above teach us about the use and pursuit of wisdom?

David Was Sent Home

1. In His grace, God spared David from a difficult situation and the consequences of unwise choices. Even though David tried to challenge the decision he was sent home,
 - (i) David was spared from resorting to treachery.
 - (ii) David was kept away from the place where God would judge Saul.
 - (iii) David would be cleared of any association with Saul's death.
2. God grants us wisdom when we revere him by seeking His counsel and putting our trust in His word. There is a wisdom that only belongs to God; we may not fully know or understand how God chooses to act but we can be fully assured that He is just, faithful, and true. There is no deceit Him.

Reflect on the following verses:

Isaiah 55:9-11

⁹ *“As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

¹⁰ *As the rain and the snow
come down from heaven,
and do not return to it
without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread
for the eater,*

¹¹ *so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

Jeremiah 9:23-24

²³ *This is what the Lord says:*

*“Let not the wise boast of their wisdom
or the strong boast of their strength
or the rich boast of their riches,*

²⁴ *but let the one who boasts boast about this:
that they have the understanding to know me,
that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness,
justice and righteousness on earth,
for in these I delight,”
declares the Lord.*

Prayer Items

1. God will deliver us from despair.
2. We will guard our hearts and not indulge in ungodly self-talk
3. We will be careful on how we use the wisdom and understanding that God has given us.
4. We will revere the Lord, 'trusting His word', and 'growing in our knowledge' of Him.

Church

1. Protection and Grace during this Pandemic.
2. God would open doors for us to reach out to the community around us.
3. God will guide and bless the ministries of the church.
4. The Lord will teach us to discern and understand His purpose and plans for the church.
5. The church will grow in love and unity. We will reach out in love, overcoming every form of prejudice, pride, and selfishness, with a deep desire to see Christ formed in every heart.

³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35)

6. Passion Week

- (i) The message of the cross and resurrection will transform our lives.
- (ii) Spiritual renewal and breakthrough.
- (iii) Good Friday and Easter Service.

Malaysia

1. God will deliver us from this pandemic.
2. Covid-19: healing and recovery (physical, mental, and economic).
3. Wisdom as the government begins the vaccination plans.
4. Compassion: people in power and with resources will show compassion and love towards those who are in need.
5. Grace and protection for school children and teachers.
6. Racial reconciliation.
7. Justice and Mercy
 - The poor, oppressed, foreigners, widows, and orphans.
 - Pray against the works of greed and corruption.
8. Leadership and good governance.
9. The Church will be God's instrument for unity, integrity, and racial harmony.