

# STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF DAVID

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by

Robert H. Roe, Pastor

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We are coming to the last days of Saul's reign and the beginning of David's. It is a picture of two believers who are totally at odds with God, yet one of them is restored by God and one of them is taken home by God. David is obviously restored. Saul is not. In Saul's death, I think we have an illustration of the "sin unto death" alluded to in I John 5:16 or I Corinthians 11:30. We'll talk more about that in a couple of weeks.

I would like to look at David first. We will cover chapter 27 and a couple of verses of chapter 28 today. Next week it will be chapters 29 & 30. After that we'll pick up Saul in the latter part of 28 and then chapter 31. Even though both men are believers, they show the depravity of the natural man.

As Chapter 26 ended, David had refused Abishai's invitation to kill Saul even though God had anesthetized the whole camp and Saul's spear was right at hand. He makes the statement in I Samuel 26, verse 10, "As the Lord lives, surely the Lord will strike him, [as he did with Nabal maybe a stroke or cardiac arrest] or his day will come that he dies, [a natural death] or he will go down into battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed." Then in verse 24 he confronts Saul with his evil in pursuing David when David is not harming him, "Now behold, as your life was highly valued in my sight this day, so may my life be highly valued in the sight of the Lord, and may He deliver me from all distress. Then Saul said to David, 'Blessed are you, my son David; you will both accomplish much and surely prevail.' [literally vanquish. You are going to win] So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place."

Now, David has just had a mighty spiritual victory. He has resisted the opportunity to kill Saul and left Saul in the hands of God. It would seem that, of all times, this would be the time when David would be walking securely with the Lord with no problems of faith. God has just demonstrated his adequacy and David has just made an extraordinary statement of faith. So what happens next? David takes his eyes off the Lord and looks at the circumstances.

There is a pattern here. I John 2:15 indicates "stop loving the world and the things that are in the world,...for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, [the word "lust" merely denotes a strong desire not necessarily sexual desire, and it can be either good or evil.] the strong desire of the flesh, and the strong desire for the material things in life or the strong desire for the boastful pride of life [status, pomp, ceremony, power, position] are not of the Father but are of the world and the world is passing away and its strong passionate desires; but the one who does the will of God abides forever." There is a progression to sin. It begins with normal, natural desires. In the case of Christ and his testing in Luke, it was his normal natural desire for food after forty days without food but a desire outside the will of God. It starts with a normal natural desire, but one outside the will of God. Then it progresses into a desire for things for things sake. You make little gods of something other than the true God and possessions become your desire. The last go around is when you make yourself God, the boastful pride of life. This is the progression downward. It is exactly what happened to Eve in Genesis 3. Why should Satan change his tactics. They have been working for thousands of years. A thousand years before David look what happened to Eve.

Genesis 3, verse 1:

**Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" And the woman said to the serpent. "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.'" [God never said that, but there is a tree she wants and she starts putting little restrictions on here] **And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die!** [The Hebrew emphasizes the "Not" "NO! you shall not die," a flat denial of what God had said] **For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."** [The ultimate destiny of man apart from God. You'll be like him. You'll be a god.] **When the woman saw that the tree was good for food,** [a strong desire of the flesh, just normal natural desire. Secondly] **and that it was a delight to the eyes.** [She wanted to possess it. Beauty is part of a gift of God to women. They love beautiful things. Thirdly.] **and that the tree was desirable to make one wise,** [Like God, the boastful pride of life. The ultimate god] **she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.** [Obviously an act of love. She did not all of a sudden become a witch.]**

This is the pattern, and this is what we see happening here. David has had a phenomenal spiritual victory, but then instead of looking at Yahweh he begins to look at his circumstances. Howard Hendricks, a professor of education at Dallas Theological Seminary, said to one of his Christian students, "How are you feeling?" The student replied, "I am doing pretty good under the circumstances." Howard said, "What are you doing under there?" With God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, what is a Christian doing "under" the circumstances? Well, he's under them because he's not looking up to God who is over the circumstances. You are never at a plateau with your circumstances. You are either under them or over them.

So, let's look at David, I Samuel 27, verse 1:

**Then David said to himself,** [not to God but to himself. This is a personal pronoun, so you can begin to understand the problem] **"Now I will perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than to escape into the land of the Philistines. Saul then will despair of searching for me anymore in all the territory of Israel, and I will escape from his hand."**

David was getting tired of being chased around the wilderness. He began to tire of God's total provision. He wanted to have this thing over with. He wanted to be out from under the pressure, to be free from the possibility of death, to be free from the constant tension of sleeping with one hand on his sword and one ear listening for the special task force, run by a mad man, designed to get him. These were very normal, natural desires. In themselves there was nothing wrong with them, but he needed to get back to Judah, out of Moab, where he could learn that God would be his shield; that God would be his "exceeding great reward" as God had told Abraham. God was committed to David becoming king of Israel. He had anointed him to replace Saul, not to be slain by Saul, and David knew that. So his desire to get out from under the pressure may have been normal and natural but it was wrong. The Philistines were the one outfit that seemed to be holding their own against Saul, so, David figured that was the place to go to ease the pressure. Things had been seesawing back and forth. The more Saul pursued David, neglecting his kingship, the more the Philistines moved onto the frontiers and took over the land. David was just plain tired of going through the process of what God calls "boot camp," being honed, chafed, molded, "disciplined" in Hebrews 12, into the image and likeness of God, into a man after God's own heart. He wanted out. So, he said to himself, "I think I'll escape over into the territory of the Philistines."

Down the line, we have another example of looking at the circumstances instead of God. Remember a prophet named Elijah [I Kings 18] who prayed and for three and a half years it never rained in Israel? Without the Western winds, the land just shrivels and dries up. Ahab and Jezebel knew who had prayed. They looked for him for three and a half years and never found him. God hid him and provided for his needs. Then God said, "Now go back to Ahab [who has been wanting to kill Elijah for a long time] and have a showdown." Elijah, a man of real faith, goes. He gathers everyone up on Mt. Carmel. [This is Mt. Carmel up north, not the Carmel down below Hebron which we have been talking about with David.] Elijah boldly gets up in front of all Israel even though they hate him now. Except for seven thousand men, they have all turned to Baal. Jezebel,

daughter of the King of Tyre, has brought with her 450 priests of Baal and 400 priests of Asherah along with Baal worshippers. Elijah challenges them all on that mountain top. Today we'll see who is God in Israel. He sets up two altars of stone, lays wood on them, gives the priests of Baal their choice of the oxen, has them slay the oxen, cut them in pieces and throw them on the altar. Only one restriction, nobody sets the fire. He challenges the priests of Baal to pray to Baal and have him light the fire.

All morning long they go through their song and dance. Elijah restrains himself until about noon when he just can't handle it any more and begins to taunt them, "Maybe Baal has gone hunting. Maybe he is on a journey or maybe he is otherwise occupied. Maybe he is asleep and needs to be awakened." He sticks it to them. He encourages their anger and hostility. Remember, these are all powerful enemies and if Jehovah doesn't come through, he is going to be fried. All afternoon they do their demonic dances and slash themselves and cry out. Nothing happens. Elijah says, "OK, now, let's get a lot of water up here." They flood the sacrifice, the wood, the altar. They even dig a pit around the altar and fill the pit with water. They continue carrying water until everything is a sodden mess and water surrounds the altar like a moat. Then Elijah cries out to Jehovah, Yahweh, "Lord, let it be known that Thou art God in Israel...and that I have done all these things at Thy word" Fire comes out of heaven and burns up the sacrifice, the wood, the stone, the dust and the water. What a triumph! Then Elijah says, "Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape" He takes them down to the brook Kishon and slays them all. He tells Ahab, "You'd better get going. There is going to be a thunderstorm." Then he bows down and prays. He's not quite so sure it is going to happen. With his head down between his knees, he tells his servant, "Look and tell me." He keeps asking, "Do you see anything?" Pretty soon there is a little cloud way out on the horizon. Yeah! He keeps praying. The cloud gets bigger and bigger and pretty soon it is a thunderstorm. A supernatural triumph and what a demonstration of the power of God to keep Elijah. Scene 2: Ahab goes home and talks to Jezebel, a truly wicked woman. She sends a little note, a little billet-doux, to Elijah. "May the gods do to me and even more, if tomorrow you are not like one of these," speaking of the dead priests of Baal lying all over the place. So what does Elijah do? He checks the circumstances, is terrified and takes off running right out of town, a whole day's journey into the wilderness. You can read the rest of the story in I Kings 19.

Back to David, I Samuel 27, verse 2:

**So David arose and crossed over, he and the six hundred men who were with him, to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath. And David lived with Achish at Gath, he and his men, each with his household, even David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's widow. Now it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath, so he no longer searched for him.**

David, to save his own skin, exposes six hundred men and their families to the paganism of the Philistines after he had just pleaded with Saul [chapter 26, verse 20], "Don't let me be chased out of the country. 'Don't let my blood fall to the ground away from the Lord.'" He wanted to be where he could worship his God. The tabernacle, of course, was where the Jews worshipped their God. But now David is willing to pay any price, no matter how it will influence his people or how it will influence their children, as long as he can stay alive.

What does God let happen in verse 4? Does he block David even though David is definitely out of the will of God and deep down must realize it? No? What does God let happen in verse 4? He lets the pressure lift. "Saul no longer searches for David." That is one of the horrifying things of this passage. The fact that he got out from under the circumstances, out from under the pressures, does not mean David is in the will of God. [You have a struggle in your home, and finally you say, "I've had it," and you flee to an apartment. To heck with the kids and wife. Sure you feel better. You are out from under all the responsibilities. There was a prayer in the prayer list this morning for a husband to return to his wife and two children. They are all Christians. He is tired of the responsibility. He is living in an apartment somewhere, and he feels out from under the responsibilities all right. The pressure is off. But I can find nowhere in Scripture where you are allowed to flee from your wife and children to avoid the pressure. This young man may feel better, but he is out of the will of God.] David feels better and God allows the pressure to be relieved. If you choose wrong, and you know it is wrong, God will let you have it. David feels excellent at this point. He is in Maui, on the beach, in the sunshine away from pressure. Achish loves him. Achish was going to kill him the first time he showed up, but Achish has just had a run in with Saul. Remember back in chapter 23 when David was trapped on that

mountain and the Philistines invaded the land? Saul took off after the Philistines, pursued them and won. He was a good general. He may have been a little bit mad, but he was a good general. Achish lost men. Now here comes David with six hundred, well trained, guerrilla warriors with their own equipment, and they want to fight for Achish. David is welcomed with open arms and given the run of the city. He is fed and clothed and housed, and everything is going great. He has welfare coming out of his ears. The tragedy is that it does not stop there. It moves on from the satisfying of the desires that are normal but, in this case, illegal or immoral or unlawful in the eyes of God, to something more. You cannot be satisfied with the status quo when you are heading down into sin.

So David moves to the second stage, the desire for things. There is lots of loot out in that place, and he is not getting his share of it. Since his six hundred men aren't getting their share either, they are probably giving him trouble. So look what happens next. Here we move into the "desire of the eyes," and David starts his little deceit.

I Samuel 27, verse 5:

**Then David said to Achish, "If now I have found favor in your sight, let them give me a place in one of the cities in the country, that I may live there; for why should your servant live in the royal city with you?"** [In parenthesis, "So, you can watch me and you can see what I am doing."] **So Achish gave him Ziklag that day;** [which is way down in the south of Philistine country, away from Gath, away from Achish's eyes] **therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day. And the number of days that David lived in the country of the Philistines was a year and four months.**

Ziklag was given to the tribe of Simeon when the land was first divided. Then the Philistines won it over and kind of left it deserted. David was given this deserted city which was on the border of the Negev, the south country, and it was just what he wanted. Down below the south country were wandering bedouin tribes who lived by plunder and had big herds. They wandered back and forth across the top of the Sinai Peninsula from Arabia all the way to Egypt. They didn't live in villages, towns or walled cities and could be destroyed without a trace. No one would know. What a resource! David didn't ask for Ziklag; it was given to him by Achish and was a perfect setup for raiding. We need to remember here that Achish was a feudal lord. As a feudal lord he could demand to know and had a right to know, and approve, every action David took. He also had a right to share in the spoils. The city of Ziklag was the perfect location for David to get far enough away from Achish to trick him. God lets it work again. God gives David the perfect site from which to cheat on his master. Verse 8, he moves now from deceit to deceit and murder.

I Samuel 27, verse 8:

**Now David and his men went up and raided** [literally to invade for plunder] **the Geshurites and the Girzites and the Amalekites; for they were the inhabitants of the land from ancient times, as you come to Shur even as far as the land of Egypt.** [Shur was the eastern frontier of the land of Egypt. It means wall. Apparently there was a series of walls or fortresses along there from Pharaoh's times to keep out enemies. These tribes had no roots down, no permanent settlements, nothing left as evidence.] **And David attacked the land and did not leave a man or a woman alive, and he took away the sheep, the cattle, the donkeys, the camels, and the clothing.** [He even stripped the slain. As a wandering nomad, your wardrobe consisted of what you wore. So David even stripped the slain. Do you see what is beginning to possess him now? He is no longer in charge of his sin. His sin is taking hold of him.] **Then he returned and came to Achish.**

It is working beautifully, isn't it? We have another thing working beautifully for David, the grace of God. David was down in the "Wilderness of the Cherethites" and the Pelethites who were actually Philistines [Cherethites comes from the word for Crete, which is where the Philistines came from. Pelethites was one of the words for Philistines.] David, even in the midst of his sin and apart from God, was a very attractive person. He had great charisma and aroused great loyalty. When he was living in Gath and in this wilderness, he made lots of friends among the Philistines. We are told later on that when David became king, his personal bodyguard was made up of Cherethites, Pelethites and Gittites, Gath people [II Samuel 15:18]. Six hundred people and their families left their country, joined themselves with David, and became his most loyal

bodyguard. It is amazing the grace of God. In the midst of David's sin, God provided for David's needs down the road. After his son Absalom chases him out of town, the Cherethites, the Pelethites and the Gittites take their stand with David when they have everything to lose and nothing to gain. When he admonishes Ittai the Gittite to go back rather than cast his lot with a fugitive, Ittai says, "No, as the Lord lives and my lord the king lives, surely wherever my lord the king may be, whether for death or for life, there also your servant will be." [II Samuel 15:21] Six hundred pagan Philistines and their families move into Jehovah land and obviously became Jehovah worshippers. God was in the business of saving Philistines, even using a disobedient king. Ittai the Gittite became one of the three leading generals of Israel. God was doing a redemptive work at the same time he was dealing with David.

But now we have reached the final state, the boastful pride of life. David has it made, his own resources, his own ability, his own deceit, all these wonderful things are what sustain him.

I Samuel 27, verse 10:

**Now Achish said, "Where have you made a raid today?" And David said, "Against the Negev of Judah [that is the south country of Judah] and against the Negev of the Jerahmeelites [that is another part of Judah] and against the Negev of the Kenites. [That was the tribe of the father-in-law of Moses and they were proteges of the tribe of Judah. So what David tells Achish, his feudal lord, is, "I've been raiding south into Judah." instead of south into the Negev of the Amalekites. He does not bring back any captives. He slays everybody, and he wants this done.] And David did not leave a man or a woman alive, to bring to Gath, saying, "Lest they should tell about us, saying, 'So has David done and so has been his practice all the time he has lived in the country of the Philistines.'" So Achish believed David, saying, "He has surely made himself odious among his people Israel; therefore he will become my servant forever."**

For sixteen months everything David turned his hand to succeeded. In I Chronicles, chapter 12 we are told people were attracted to him and warriors came from many parts of Israel to join him. He had an immense army and he was rich beyond his wildest dreams. He was accepted. He was the chief. He reigned. Now he was a local hero in Philistine country as he once had been in Israel. Remember, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." [I Samuel 18:7]

David is sitting on top of the world. He has been telling Achish, "I am raiding the south country of Judah, and I am pillaging them, and I am slaughtering all the inhabitants." He had to claim it was Judah he was pillaging because nobody came back with him. The conqueror always brought back slaves. Slaves were very much in demand, especially in Egypt. Slaves were real booty. In I Samuel 30 when the Amalekites raided Ziklag they took all the women, all the people small and great. They didn't kill anybody. They planned to take them to the slave market in Egypt. David brings nobody back. He can't. He has to kill man, woman, child, even babies. Why? Because he has to remove anything that might tip off Achish that he is actually raiding Philistine country.

A baby Amalekite has different facial features than a Jew. The Girzites, Geshurites, Amalekites probably also have some kind of alliance with the Philistines. Actually what David is doing is planning for the future. He is securing the borders of Judah. He is removing these wandering tribes that strike on camels overnight then dash back into the desert. He is getting very rich by retaliating. For sixteen months he does this and every time Achish seeks an accounting of the spoils, he cheats Achish out of his share. He surely isn't going to give Achish any clothing because Achish would immediately recognize it as not being Jewish. David could maybe give him camels or a few things that had no identifying marks, but he isn't going to give him anything identifiable. So he's even cheating on his feudal lord. Mind you, for sixteen months he has been slaughtering babies and maintaining this deceit and this is "a man after God's own heart." All the while, of course, he's feeling more and more secure, more and more accepted, more and more like he is quite a guy. The thing is God is letting him do it. He does deceive Achish. Achish says, "He has surely made himself odious among his people Israel. Therefore he is my servant forever." The first time in David's life, except for that first brief period with Saul, he finally really feels accepted, secure and getting what is his, and God is letting him do it. But now it stops there.

Interesting thing about this particular period of David's life, we have no Psalms. We cannot trace any psalms back to this period. He is not the beautiful singer in Israel. He is not having fellowship with his Lord. In fact, there is no place to worship. He cannot make altars outside of Jerusalem, or where the Arc of the Covenant happens to be at the moment. He cannot sacrifice any place but with the Arc of the Covenant. He can hardly talk to his children about Yahweh and the attributes of truth and love when he is out slaughtering babies. His men cannot either. There is a sizable spiritual void right through this period of his life. He is no longer the sweet singer of Israel. He is the butcher of the south country.

Now God begins to squeeze. God does not allow Christians to go on like this, so he begins to put the thumb screws to David.

I Samuel 28, verse 1:

**Now it came about in those days** [those days when David was doing all this raiding and making a big name for himself, killing off the Jews] **that the Philistines gathered their armed camps for war, to fight against Israel. And Achish said to David, "Know assuredly that you will go out with me in the camp, you and your men."**

Oops! Now we are in trouble. The Philistines are about to launch a major campaign. They have been winning a lot of little battles. Now they are going to go way up into the north country of the Israelites, up where David is not liked. Let us face it, by now David is known to be a traitor. He is known to have settled down in Gath. He is known to be a feudal subject of Achish, king of Gath. He is a deserter. This was probably another contributing factor that delayed his reign over all of Israel for seven years. The first seven years he only reigned over Judah, his own tribe. They were the ones who received presents from the raiding that he did. From the standpoint of the ten northern tribes, he is a traitor. They didn't care for Saul any more than he did, but they didn't defect. David had taken his whole armed band over to the Philistines, and you can see why when he became king of Judah the ten northern tribes wanted no part of him.

Getting back to David's present predicament, because of his proven loyalty in Achish's eyes, Achish said, "We are going to mount a massive campaign up north, and David, you are going to fight with me." So, who is David going to fight? Saul. What covenant had he made with Saul? A covenant not to hurt him. What about that drink offering he poured out to Jehovah, symbol of the blood of Saul which he would not shed. Saul's blood belonged to Jehovah. Jehovah would strike Saul down. Jehovah would take him away with natural death or would kill him in battle. David had made a covenant with God. He had made a covenant with Saul. He had also made a covenant with Jonathan, his beloved friend, never to touch him either. Now Achish is requiring him to fight them all. David is in what might be called a sandwich, and he is the bologna in the middle.

I Samuel 28, verse 2a:

**And David said to Achish, "Very well, you shall know what your servant can do."**

That is a broad statement. That doesn't get him too deeply involved. I don't believe as some commentators do that David has come so far that he wants now to actually fight Israelites. I believed that at the beginning, but I don't believe it now because he deliberately did not slay any people of Judah. He hit the other nations that were enemies of Judah when he did his raids, but he never touched any Jews. So I had to change my opinion. I think he is a liar, a cheat, a hypocrite and a murderer, but, in his heart, he is not a traitor to the Jews. However, now he must be one or die. He left Judah to get out from under the pressure of Saul. Now where is he? Right back in the pressure cooker, but this time it's the Philistines squeezing him. So he gives this kind of broad answer that really doesn't mean much to anybody, "Very well, then, you shall know what your servant can do." I may be loyal or not. You don't know, but it sounds good doesn't it? David is a master of deceit by now. He has had sixteen months of experience, but look at what happens. God is really going to give it to him.

I Samuel, verse 2b:

**So Achish said to David, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life."**

David, you are so lucky! I'm going to bring you back to the royal city and make you my personal bodyguard. When we go out to battle, you will surround me. Well, who do you think will be surrounding David? Thousands of Philistines. About this time David's blood pressure is 300 over 250 with a little fibrillation and not a cardiologist in the camp.

Tune in next week to see what happens. We'll look at chapters 29 & 30 next week. Watch God redeem David. Painful, yes! Perfect, yes! We'll do the balance of 28 the week after next.

**Prayer:**

Father, we thank you for your Word and the way it does show us the way we really are, that each one of us is capable of the most dastardly crimes and but for the grace of God we would do them if we had the opportunity. That a man like David, a man after your own heart, the sweet singer, the sweet psalmist of Israel could stoop to deceit and hypocrisy and the slaughter of kids and stripping the slain, Father, everyone in this room could do exactly the same thing given the same opportunity and the same motivation. Thank you, Father, for letting us know what we are really like, so we can understand how much you really love us and how total and absolute your acceptance is and that no matter what we do or say or think, you are never disgusted; you are never upset; you are never angry with us. You have known us from all eternity and, in spite of all that, you loved us enough to die for us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Thank you, Father, in Jesus' name.

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