

Misled by a Misguided Heart

The Singer, Part 8

1 Samuel 27, 29, 30

One author retold the legend, a parable of sorts – with an obvious primary point. The devil decided to put his old tools up for sale and use some newer versions. On the date of the sale the tools were placed out in the open for public inspection and each tool was marked with a price.

There were all kinds of treacherous looking instruments; Hatred, Envy, Lying, Lust, Pride, Ambition, and so on.

Separated from the rest of the tools was a rather harmless-looking tool that looked like a corkscrew – it was small, but well-worn. And the price was astronomical.

“What’s the name of that little tool?” asked one of the purchasers.

“Oh,” said the devil, “that’s Discouragement.”

“Why have you priced it so high . . . no one can afford to buy it?”

“That’s because it’s more useful to me than most other tools. I can pry open and get inside a person’s heart with that one, when I cannot get near him with these other tools. And once I get inside, I can just about make my target think whatever I want. You’ll notice it’s a badly worn tool, because I use it on almost everyone – and it is especially powerful against Christians because most of them have no idea this tool belongs to me.”

The parable closes by informing the reader that the devil never did sell that instrument and it still is a primary tool, to this very day.¹

I would agree . . . discouragement is a tool that can more effectively lead a believer off the path of discernment and wisdom and service and fruitfulness and blessing than just about any other.

If you’ve been with us these past few weeks, you’ve watched David surrounded by discouraging circumstances.

Let me bring you up to speed before we look at the next, nearly fatal chapter in David’s life.

David is the crown prince, but he’s living on the edge of starvation – moving from one hiding place to the next – literally begging food at times from charitable farmers and ranchers.

And they all haven’t been all that charitable.

David knows he’s the next king of Israel, but for the past several years he hasn’t seen the inside of the King’s palace . . . he’s a fugitive . . . he’s a wanted man.

Let me summarize the next event that takes place after Abigail becomes his wife. The very next chapter repeats another event where David is chased by King Saul. In the night, while Saul and his men are asleep, David chooses – yet again – not to ambush Saul and kill him; only this time he takes Saul’s spear and canteen instead, while sleeping Saul is oblivious to the danger.

Once again, after David challenges him from a safe distance, Saul makes a big emotional show of apology; he also makes promises.

Saul’s promises don’t last very long and David is on the run again.

Trouble is – he now has a following – it’s growing larger all the time.

That’s good news, but bad news too.

David is now responsible now to feed and protect hundreds of men and their families too . . . his following will eventually swell into the thousands.

But even now, at this moment in his life, the stress would have incredible; life on the run wearying; the pressure overpowering. As much as we don't want to see our hero of faith crumble, David reaches the end of his rope where he will make one disastrous decision after another.

I have to admit to you that I've never heard a sermon on *1 Samuel chapter 27* and I've never preached from it myself.

Maybe that's because it's uncomfortable – or maybe it's just in the way and we'd rather skip this section and get to David's coronation.

Let's not do that . . . there are some powerful lessons to learn here.

So open your Bibles to *1 Samuel chapter 27*.

The first clue that David is heading in the wrong direction and on dangerous ground is the way this next scene opens.

Turn to *First Samuel, chapter 27 and verse 1*. ***Then David said in his heart, "Now I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will despair of seeking me any longer within the borders of Israel, and I shall escape out of his hand.***

You really have to read that again – it doesn't fit what you'd expect to read next. He's been delivered before – Saul has had him dead to rights . . . God has delivered him more often than David can even know.

But notice it again – *verse 1, David said in his heart* – by the way, that was his first mistake.

What you *should* read is something like, "Then David said to God in his heart": or – "Then David cried out with his heart to God" . . . or even, "Then David complained to God."

Not here; David concluded in his own heart – and what's worse, *without* talking to God – without receiving godly advice – without summoning the priest for God's word to weigh in . . .

David said in his heart!

In these next few chapters – David will never once mention God.ⁱⁱ

In fact, one commentator wrote that, chapter 27 through most of chapter 30 – which we'll cover today – are godless chapters; he writes, David was under severe pressure here, and he looks to Philistia rather than to Yahweh for security.ⁱⁱⁱ

Can you imagine? He convinces himself that he's better off living with the enemy of Israel, than continue trusting in the God of Israel.

David is talking to himself and he convinces himself – this makes perfect sense.

Ralph Davis writes with a blunt and yet perceptive pen on this this scene; he writes, "All of us talk to ourselves . . . we deliver propaganda to our souls . . . how crucial it is to feed our souls with true propaganda, especially about the adequacy of our God. Like the farmer who said, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years – eat drink and be merry." The junk you feed your heart can make all the difference [in your world].^{iv}

Listen, how many secular songs and movies – even children's movies – play on the theme – follow your own heart.

Let your heart lead the way . . .

Jeremiah the prophet would say, "Um . . . your heart is actually deceitful and desperately wicked . . ." (*Jeremiah 17:9*)

Unfortunately David is not having a conversation with God – or with the word of God – his heart and his emotions are having a field day . . . he is now distraught.

F.B. Meyer wrote several generations ago on this very text these challenging words – they're worth writing down and sticking on your desk or on the refrigerator, "[When making major decisions] never act in panic; calm thyself and be still; force thyself into the quiet of thy closet until thy pulse beats normally and the scare has ceased to perturb you. When thou art most eager to act is the time when thou wilt make the most mistakes. Do not say in thine heart what thou wilt or wilt not do; but wait upon God until He makes known his way."^v

By the way, don't be too hard on David. Every one of us has our own stories of being misled by our own misguided hearts.

And frankly, David has every reason to be discouraged as he looks around at his circumstances; as he weighs the pressure; the responsibility; the relentless pursuit of a mad King.

And what you can't see is David's spiritual enemy working away with his favorite tool – that old corkscrew of discouragement as he pries open David's heart and adds reason and rational and excuses and weariness and circumstances and David finally says, "You know, I'm going to die at the hand of Saul one day . . . I'd be better off in the land of the Philistines."^{vi}

Misled by a misguided heart.

And his decision here in *chapter 27* begins a downward and dangerous spiral that I'll outline with four words:

1. The first word is: conniving

Notice verse 2. So David arose and went over, he and the six hundred men who were with him, to Achish . . . the king of Gath.

Sound familiar?

The last time David showed up at Gath he had to act like a madman and claw on the city gates and drool on his beard in order to escape.

Not this time.

The king of Gath has no doubt heard of David's years of running from Saul – the division in the kingdom. He's only too happy now to welcome David. Besides, this time around, David has 600 men and their households.

King Achish is more than happy to add to his troops – to give sanctuary to skilled warriors who've defected from Israel's army.

That's exactly what this king will tell the other philistine kings in the next scene – *David has defected to me (29:3)*.

Now notice David's request – *verse 5. Then David said to Achish, "If I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be given me in one of the country towns that I may dwell there. For why should your servant dwell in the royal city with you?"*

In other words, "Listen oh king, we don't want to crowd you over here . . . give us a town you've captured out in the country and let us settle down there."

Verse 6 informs us that the king gave David *the town of Ziklag*. This was a town originally allotted to the tribe of Judah – more recently captured by the Philistines, but not occupied by them (*1 Chronicles 4:30*).^{vii}

So David and his men and their families and more and more deserting Israelites set up in the city of Ziklag.

And by the way, David moves into a spiritually barren season of life. During these events David will not compose any sacred song . . . no Psalms are credited to this period in his life.

The singer has been silenced.

But he's not sitting still – the next paragraph informs us that he and his men go out and raid the Philistines – leaving no one alive to tell the tale –

effectively beginning the conquest of the land as the king elect.

Even in his disobedience, God's purposes were being fulfilled.

His raids brought them their necessary food and garments and cattle and camels – and whenever Achish drove down for dinner David vaguely explained that he'd been fighting those pesky Hebrews in the Negeb.

The Negeb – or literally, the dry land – was a reference to the southern region, around Beersheba.^{viii}

Look back up to *verse 4* before we leave this chapter. *And when it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath, he no longer sought him.*

That's great news, isn't it? Is it?

Well, Saul quit looking for him – David's plan worked; he asks for a city to live in – his request works; Achish is deceived by David whenever he visits – David's deceptions works!

Look . . . it works.

I mean, for the first time in years, David isn't looking over his shoulder. It must be right.

Listen, part of the problem of following your own heart – misguided as it is – is a false sense of security.

Chuck Swindoll wrote on this passage, "The pressure's gone – what a relief. The intensity of responsibility is relieved . . . there's a release of pressure . . . this is great . . . my decision paid off."^{ix}

The trouble is this false sense of peace won't last very long.

2. The second word that soon follows conniving is the word, cornered.

Notice chapter 28 and verse 1. In those days the Philistines gathered their force 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."

All of a sudden, David is effectively cornered.

He can't say no and he really can't say yes.

His plan is backfiring. Can you imagine him marching with his men toward the battlefield – to join with – if you can you believe it – the Philistines in battle against Israel?

David is probably chugging away at his canteen – only it’s filled with Pepto-Bismol . . . he’s chewing on antacids . . . he’s stuck and he has no idea what to do . . . his perfect plan is unraveling and he is about to be found out.

Can you remember some incident in your own life when your deception was discovered? Go back into the archives of your younger years perhaps . . .

I can still remember in Jr. High that one afternoon where I had to stay after school for detention. There were several afternoons actually, but I remember this one in particular.

I had evidently done something wrong . . . I don’t remember what the crime was, but I remember the cruel and unusual punishment of washing windows while on a ladder.

Actually it wasn’t that bad. What *would* be bad was if my parents found out. You see, I grew up in a time when the teachers were always right and the students were always wrong. Any of you remember those horrible days?

Our excuses never carried any weight. And if you got into trouble at school, you were automatically in trouble at home. How tragic was that?!

So I decided to keep the home front out of this detention.

The good news was that I was on the middle school soccer team and we had practice that afternoon and my detention would end when soccer practice ended . . . the providence of God was a wonderful thing. I had such peace about it.

I can still remember being up on that ladder washing a second floor window of the school building and hearing the crunch of tires on the gravel parking lot just behind me. I glanced over my shoulder and saw the family car pull up with my dad behind the wheel. He looked at me with as much surprise as I looked at him.

He’s thinking what are you doing on that ladder? I’m thinking why was I ever born?

Evidently, my father had decided to come early and watch us practice that afternoon. He’d never done that before. Where in the world did he get that idea from? From the pit!

He’d come to spend some quality time with his son. We did spend some time together . . . in very close proximity.

My perfect plan had fallen apart.

This is obviously a lot more serious than detention.

David’s plans have boxed him in. He will either lose his credibility and his right to rule by killing Israelites, or he will lose his life.

Satan must have been wringing his hands in delight. This will end the covenant promises in one afternoon.

And by the way, this will be the battle where Saul and his son Jonathan will lose their lives.

Can you believe David is in the middle of this?

He had been misled by a misguided heart.

Alan Redpath wrote years ago on this text – man’s extremity is God’s opportunity.^x

God’s at work in spite of David’s lack of trust.

Listen, even *when we are unfaithful to our Lord, God is faithful to us – for He cannot deny Himself* – we, in Christ, are in Him. (*2 Timothy 2:13*).

Now what happens next takes place chronologically in chapter 29. *So look ahead here at verse 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, “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 – literally defected – to me I have found no fault in him to this day.”*

They will hear none of it – and in the next paragraph, David and his men are forced to return home to Ziklag. David, in *verse 8* pretends to be disappointed – and somewhat offended. His acting skills are worthy of an Oscar.

Achish has no choice but to send David and his men packing.

Listen, God was at work behind the scenes, arousing these other Philistine kings to refuse David any involvement.

But David has lost a tremendous amount of credibility from his men. They aren’t saying as much, but they were led to the edge of a precipice by David’s “perfect plan” . . . and they just narrowly missed being forced to either die as spies or kill their brothers in battle.

I can imagine they aren’t celebrating, laughing or having a good old time as they spend the next 3 days returning to Ziklag.

They had all been cornered and nearly killed.

But it only gets worse.

3. The third word that comes to mind is the word, crushed.

Chapter 30 informs us that as they crest the hill above Ziklag, all they see is disaster below. *Notice verse 1. Now when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, the Amalekites had made a raid against the Negeb and against Ziklag. They had overcome Ziklag and burned it with fire, 2. 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.*

Can you see them? They all sit among the smoldering ruins and literally burst into tears . . . these battle hardened soldiers all begin to sob and weep.

And it isn't long until some of the men, *verse 6*, begin to whisper that it's all David's fault . . . they have been following him and – his perfect plans – and now everything is lost and their families are gone.

Notice the last part of *verse 6. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.*

For the first time in nearly 2 years, David talks to God.

Phillip Keller writes, David has nowhere else to go . . . he's lost his credibility; the loyalty of his men, his leadership credentials. They are flaming with hatred and explosive unpredictability . . . they picked up rocks, ready to shatter his skull and spill his blood. David has nowhere to turn . . . and nowhere to run.^{xi}

His conniving led to them all to being cornered and now they're hearts are effectively crushed.

No doubt his conscience had warned him. No doubt, Ahimelech, his priest, had suggested getting a word from God.

No – I know what I'm doing! It'll be okay.

I've mentioned Gary Richmond recently and his book entitled, "A View from the Zoo" – biblical observations from things that occurred while he worked at the Los Angeles Zoo as well as led the singles ministry in his local church.

In one chapter, he told the story of a young zookeeper named Julie. The zoo had purchased a baby raccoon and it was among her duties to care for him. It was playful, cuddly; it soon won Julie's heart - and everyone else in that division.

Julie could often be seen doing her duties with her cute little raccoon perched on her shoulder. She even named him Bandit.

But Gary's experience caused him to worry for Julie - He warned her that raccoons go through a glandular change at about 24 months of age. After that they will often, unexplainably, viciously attack their owners. A 30-pound raccoon can do the same kind of damage as a large dog.

Over and over again, Gary warned his young friend about her growing pet. She would always listen politely as he explained the coming danger. Richmond wrote, "I will never forget her answer; it was always the same. "Gary, it will be different for me." And she smile as she added, "Bandit would never hurt me."

Then Richmond wrote, "Three months after my last warning Julie had to undergo extensive plastic surgery for severe facial lacerations sustained when her adult raccoon attacked her for no apparent reason. Bandit was later released into the wild."

I can handle King Achish . . . I know what I'm doing. I don't need any advice from God . . . or His priest . . . or His word.

I know we're not supposed to be in league with the Philistines, but I've got plans . . . it'll work out . . . it'll be different for us.

Conniving, Cornered, Crushed

4. A fourth word now comes to mind – it's the word, corrected.

For the first time David calls the priest to lead him in seeking the wisdom of God – notice *verse 8. And David inquired of the Lord, "Shall I pursue after this band?" Shall I overtake them?" He answered him, "Pursue, for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue."*

Don't miss this change – this corrected response.

David is as panicked as he was earlier in *chapter 27*. His natural instincts screamed – chase after those Amalekites and rescue everyone – that's the only way you'll get your credibility back and your family too.

It's obvious David . . . hunt them down. Listen to your heart.

But David isn't interested in listening to his heart. His heart has caused him enough trouble already.

He now wants to hear from God.

The narrative ends happily with David and his men rescuing their families and defeating their enemies.

Let me wrap our study up with two closing observations.

First, be careful: listening to your heart is dangerous.

You and I can talk our hearts into just about anything. Be careful of the junk you tell it . . . of the influences you allow into it in the days ahead.

Contrary to the latest movie – or book – or blog – the last thing you want to do is follow your heart.

It's an easy playground for the devil . . . he's got his tools ready . . . he's seeking someone to discredit, Peter wrote (*1 Peter 5:8*) – especially that ole' corkscrew of discouragement.

So be careful: listening to your heart is dangerous.

Secondly, be thankful: God is ever ready to be gracious

I wonder how we would have responded to David after nearly two years of a cold shoulder.

This is the first time he pulls in the priest to pull out the ephod and inquire of the Lord.

Shall I serve You, Lord by pursuing the enemies of Israel?

And the Lord might have answered – “David, you're in permanent detention . . . you're going to wash windows for the rest of your life.”

At least six months of probation.^{xii}

David, I can't trust you . . . that heart of yours keeps getting in the way.

Instead, God is ever gracious to respond to a repentant, humbled son or daughter and His message in response is, get back in the battle . . . I have another victory for you to enjoy.

Listen, don't believe the propaganda that God is finished with you – that you stayed too long with the Philistines and now He's moved on without you.

That's a lie . . . that the devils propaganda.

The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses you from every sin (1 John 1:7-9). Repent . . . seek His will and His word and then suit up.

But learn with David – his success isn't due to his planning savvy . . . it's due to God's providence and mercy.^{xiii}

And it won't be long before you, like the Singer of Israel, are filled with a fresh song of the grace of God.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 2/23/2014 by Stephen Davey.

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i Adapted from Charles R. Swindoll, *Tale of a Tardy Oxcart* (Word Publishing, 1998), p. 164

ii Dale Ralph Davis, *Expositions of the Book of 1 Samuel* (Baker, 1994), p. 138

iii Ibid, p. 140

iv Davis, p. 141

v F.B. Meyer, *David: Shepherd, Psalmist, King* (Christian Literature Crusade, reprint, 1973), p. 111

vi Alan Redpath, *The Making of a Man of God* (Revell, 1962), p. 114

vii Meyer, p. 113

viii J. Carl Laney, *First & Second Samuel* (Moody Press, 1982), p. 77

ix Charles R. Swindoll, *David: Man of Passion & Destiny* (Word Publishing, 1997), p. 112

x Redpath, p. 121

xi Phillip Keller, *David: Book I* (Word Books, 1985), p. 187

xii Redpath, p. 126

xiii Adapted from Davis, p. 166