

## 1 Samuel 27:1-28:2 — Wandering From God

**November 5, 2022**

If you watched this past week's sermon preview video, you know I had a chance to highlight the Spirit Lake High School Football team and some of the students on the team that are part of CrossWinds. Football is a game with much pressure. If under pressure, players crack and don't run their routes, it can easily ruin a game.

It is not just football players that can crack under stress. It is all of us. When we are overwhelmed or stressed, it is easy to crack under pressure or find pleasure in sin.

This week, as we continue studying our way through 1 Samuel as we are studying the life of David, we will see that under pressure, David cracks. He wanders from God and into sin. Isn't this something all of us can understand? Haven't all of us been there?

There is a lot about David that is impressive. He had amazing military abilities. He laid out Goliath with a single stone. Whenever there was a battle with the Philistines, if David was involved, he won.

It was not just David's abilities that were impressive. His godly character was also outstanding. He had the ability to kill Saul twice, yet he spared King Saul's life twice. He refused to put his hand out against the Lord's anointed even though Saul kept trying to kill him for years. That is a godly guy. He also publicly and boldly trusted God as the one who would rescue him from all of his troubles. There is so much in David to be desired.

We have also seen glimpses of a darker side of David. When he first became a marked man in the eyes of Saul, he tried escaping to the Philistines for protection. He trusted in Goliath's failed sword for protection instead of God. He bold-faced lied to Ahimelech, the high priest. David's lie cost the life of Ahimelech and the rest of the high priest's family.

We also saw that sometimes David had an anger problem. When a man named Nabal insulted him, he planned to kill Nabal and every man in Nabal's house for those insults. That seems a little overdone for an insult. Thankfully Nabal did not go through with those plans thanks to Abigail, his wife. She reminded David to leave justice in God's hands, and he did. That episode let us know that David had a temper, and sometimes, his emotions got the better of him.

In chapter 27, where we find ourselves today, he wanders from God because life was going poorly. David was worn out. He was exhausted. It was not that God wasn't taking care of David, but the years of constantly running from Saul and the anxiety of always living in fear of attack took their toll on David's emotional world. The constant search for a place in Israel to hide where he would not be hounded by Saul or harassed by Saul's vicious cabinet of advisors had eaten away at him.

The key to understanding what happened in this chapter is to know it is one of the few chapters in 1 Samuel that doesn't mention God. You see, in David's frustration and depression, he decided to stop following and trusting God. Instead, he would solve the problems in his life on his own.

At first, it will seem like it works. As we will see, walking away from God and relying on human wisdom instead of obedience to God's word ended up changing David's character. It brought him to places he never wanted to go, and he found himself doing things he never planned to do. Finally, his sin left him trapped in a jam from which only God could save him.

We will build our teaching points this morning around the answer to the question, "What happens when I wander from God?"

### **I will start trusting my wisdom instead of God's Word.**

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 should 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." 1 Samuel 27:1 (ESV)

If you were with us last week, you know these words are not what we would expect. Last week, when we left off at the end of 1 Samuel 26, that was one of David's finest hours. He had just restrained his hand from killing Saul after he and Abishai snuck up to him in the middle of the night and found Saul's spear stuck in the ground only inches from Saul's head. At that moment, instead of taking Saul's life, David became a great protector of Saul's life. He kept Abishai from killing Saul. David was even a better protector of Saul than Abner, the head of Saul's army and his chief bodyguard. Abner slept while David protected Saul. What an amazing godly character.

David ended the chapter by publicly proclaiming God will reward everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness. If you do what is right and place your faith in God, in the end, God will reward you. David publicly said he was trusting

in God to save him from all of his troubles with King Saul, not himself or anybody else. That was one of David's finest hours.

Here we are, a short time later, and David is down in the dumps. He was depressed. He was overwhelmed. He was saying it would only be a matter of time until he would perish at the hand of Saul. He was convinced that eventually his luck would run out and Saul would kill him. Those words sound like they come from a completely different man than the David we read about in 1 Samuel 26.

For the last 9 chapters, David escaped well over a dozen attempts on his life from Saul because God protected him. Those attempts on David's life were a constant occurrence for years.

...and Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand. 1 Samuel 23:14a (ESV)

What made David think that God's protection of him would eventually fail him? David uses the word "perish." That word in Hebrews is not a common word in the books of Samuel. It is only used three times. This word hints at the darkness of David's emotional world at this point in his life. It was used to describe the fate of Israel's kings if they disobeyed God and were harshly judged by God so their life and their legacy was wiped off the earth. David was so depressed at this point that he felt Saul would one day completely wipe every trace of his existence off the face of the earth. That is a pretty depressing spot to be for a man who was told by God he would eventually be king.

David also said there is nothing better for him to do than to run to the Philistines. David was convinced that only if he was hiding among the enemy would Saul will finally stop hunting him. This tells us that David was tired. David

was desperate. As we saw in the last few chapters, David and his men were constantly on the run, I mean for years. Being constantly on the run makes for a great action movie, but if you are living it, it is exhausting.

In the last chapter, we saw David was so desperate for some rest from Saul that he was hiding in the desert hoping that Saul would finally stop looking for him. That isn't what happened. The Ziphites, who were desert-dwelling people, reported David's location to Saul and Saul was pursuing David even in the desert.

David was convinced that it was only if he left the nation of Israel and went over to the enemy that Saul would finally stop trying to kill him. The last time David tried escaping to the Philistines he almost lost his life. He only managed to escape by pretending to be insane. When David went to the Philistines, the prophet Gad told David to return to the land of Israel, yet here is David violating the word of God to him through the prophet Gad. This is definitely a move of desperation on David's part.

What brought David to such a low point that he wanted to escape to the Philistines?

- David's spiral into depression and sin began when he listened to the negative self-talk in his heart.

Did you notice how this verse began? It says

**Then David said in his heart... 1 Samuel 27:1 (ESV)**

When David was depressed, he began speaking negative self-talk in his heart, and he started listening to himself. I am sure he was having a pity party in his heart saying things like, "No matter how kind I am to Saul, he will never stop

trying to kill me. All the times I escaped from him was just luck. One of these days, my luck is going to run out. I will surely die. God doesn't care about me or my life wouldn't be so hard."

I am sure David is not the only one who had negative self-talk in his heart. Does anybody else have that kind of self-talk that goes on in their inner world? I think all of us struggle with it. The problem is that when we engage in negative self talk, we start to believe our own negative self-talk. We bring ourselves down. Negative self-talk is also addicting. Once we start it, we constantly engage in it. It is like having a pity party for yourself.

By the way, the danger of negative self-talk is not that we should be telling ourselves how wonderful we are and that the world should be happy to have us. That is Oprah Winfrey and Eckard Tolle.

The answer to the negative self-talk in our heart is to look at Jesus. Our identity doesn't come from how good we are but from how good God has been to us through Jesus. God loves us. Jesus died for us. Jesus died to pay for all of our sins. Jesus rose to new life so our bodies will not stay dead. One day when Jesus returns, the same bodies that were buried will burst back into new resurrection life, just like Jesus' body. In Ephesians, the apostle Paul says God has made us the most blessed beings in the universe through Jesus. That is who we are. That is what God has done for us. The reason negative self-talk is wrong is that it happens when we are only looking at ourselves and we have taken our eyes off of how much God loves us and what Jesus has done for us. That is what

David had done. All he could see were the problems in front of him and he completely forgot about how many times God had saved him.

- The way to counter negative self-talk is not by reminding myself how good I am but by reminding myself how good God has been to me.

As we go through this chapter, you will see there is no mention of God. It is a chapter all about David's plans for himself and David's schemes to lie, cheat, and steal to better himself.

What brought David to the point that he forgot about God and all he could see were problems in front of him? I don't know for sure, but I have a theory. As we will see in a few minutes, David was not just caring for himself but he was now caring for 600 men, plus their families. This was 2,000 to 3,000 mouths to feed. This was a constant logistical headache. David had turned into a businessman who was constantly solving problems. He had no time to be a godly man to reflect on God's goodness and worship his Lord.

Some of you are business men. Can't we easily get into the same place as David. The busyness of business life and family life completely eclipse any kind of spiritual life. When that happens, we are in danger of spiraling into spiritual depression and wandering from God, just like David did.

So David arose and went over, he and the six hundred men who were with him, to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath. 1 Samuel 27:2 (ESV)

There is almost something sinister in these words. David went over to Achish, the king of Gath. David crossed more than a geographical boundary that day. He went over to the other side. He didn't just leave Israel, but he left relying on God. He began relying on himself and his plans to save and protect his life.

The last time David went to Gath, it was a disaster. He almost lost his life. This time was different. This time David brought 600 men with him. As we will see in the next verse, he also brought their families. Most Bible scholars believe this was a large group numbering 2,000 to 3,000 people. David and these men were well-known and respected by the Philistines. The Philistines remembered when they were attacking the city of Keilah in Israel, and David, with his 600 men, defeated the entire Philistine army.

And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines and brought away their livestock and struck them with a great blow... 1 Samuel 23:5 (ESV)

David and his militia were known as a powerful fighting force. The Philistines were thrilled to have David and his little military fighting on their side.

So David and his men found safety in the last place we would expect, Goliath's hometown, the city of Gath.

And David lived with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, and David with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and Abigail of Carmel, Nabal's widow. 1 Samuel 27:3 (ESV)

If you were an Israelite, and you heard that David went over to the enemy, how would this make you feel? This felt like Edward Snowden moving to Russia and becoming a traitor. It was just wrong.

While it is easy to be critical of David, there is part of me that sympathizes with David. He was responsible to feed 2,000 to 3,000 people a day. He was constantly on the run from Saul. He couldn't find a place for his men and their families to hide in safety. He couldn't trust Saul to keep his word. As we said earlier, the years of distress have worn him thin. While it is easy to start with



being critical of David, I think we need to start by understanding David's world and what brought him to this point.

This is like counseling a man whose wife has cancer. Isn't it true that when a man's wife dies, she will be absent from the body and present with the Lord, which is better by far? Yes, that is true! But as a wife is dying of cancer, it is insensitive to spout Bible truth without crying with the husband as he watches his wife die in pain. You have to begin by putting yourself in other people's shoes and understanding their pain, not just telling them the truth in an insensitive way.

That being said, leaving Israel was still the wrong choice for David, and it will get him in trouble, but at least we can empathize with what brought him to this desperate point.

Why do we know it was a wrong decision to try and find rescue by leaving Israel and hiding among the enemy? In the Bible, we can not find one example of God providing salvation and protection for his people outside the land of Israel. God's people never find a rescue with ungodly people in ungodly places. If they went to an ungodly people and ungodly places for rescue, they always experienced suffering.

When Abraham sought safety in Egypt, he almost lost his wife. When Lot tried to raise his family in Sodom, he lost everything except his two daughters. When the sons of Jacob went to Egypt for food during a famine, at first that worked out, but they soon found themselves as slaves. That is the consistent biblical pattern. The same pattern will hold true for David. At first he will think he

has rescued himself by relying on his own wisdom and turning to the Philistines for safety but soon he will find himself trapped by the Philistines.

The same principle still holds true for us. When we get stressed and depressed, we can turn to lots of ungodly places and ungodly people for relief. Some of us turn to our party friends. Others of us turn to the bottle. At first the bottle helps us forget our troubles but soon the bottle becomes our troubles. The only place to find safety and rescue in desperate times is with the Son of God who loves us and the people of God who will be eternally with us.

And when it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath, he no longer sought him.  
1 Samuel 27:4 (ESV)

At first, it looks like David's plan to save himself and his men worked. David and his men finally had some rest. What they don't realize, is there was a hidden price to pay when David decided to save himself.

**I will try to justify my choices by pointing out the positive outcomes of my sinful decisions.**

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?" 1 Samuel 27:5 (ESV)

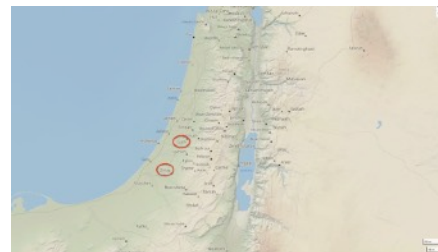
These words assume that David had found favor in the eyes of Achish, the king of Gath. This was a switch. At one time, we are told David found favor in the eyes of Saul. Now David found favor in the eyes of Achish, the enemy's king. David switched allegiances, or at least it appears that way. Based on his good relationship with Achish, David requested a small country town for him, his soldiers, and their families. This seems like a reasonable request. Gath was not a huge city, and David, his men, and their families were a lot of extra mouths to

feed. In addition, for their military service, it seemed reasonable for David to request some form of payment.

Notice how David addressed Achish. David called himself Achish's servant. *He swore allegiance to the Philistine king.* I bet you those words hurt coming out of his mouth. At least I hope they hurt. This would be like one of us pledging our allegiance to Putin, the leader of Russia. David saying those words is hard to fathom.

**So that day Achish gave him Ziklag... 1 Samuel 27:6a (ESV)**

Although the location of Ziklag is not certain, most scholars believe it is a small Philistine city 25 miles south of Gath. It would have been on the Philistine/Israelite border. We don't know if David requested this city or Achish simply offered it to him. I think



David requested this city.

Here is where it begins to get interesting. It turns out Ziklag was a town originally allotted to the tribe of Judah during the distribution of the Promised Land done under Joshua in Joshua 15:31. While Ziklag was to be an Israelite city, the Israelites had never gotten around to capturing it. David bloodlessly conquered this city and took it from the Philistines. That is how Ziklag became part of Israel. The author of 1 Samuel wants us to know this.

**...therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day. 1 Samuel 27:6b (ESV)**

The kings of Judah were David's descendants. The way Ziklag was conquered and brought into Israel as a nation was through the craftiness of David, who made this arrangement with the Philistines.

Now we begin to get a glimpse of David's strategy. He was a double agent. He pretended to be loyal to the Philistines while he was working for Israel's best interests and lying to the Philistines the whole time he was in their country.

**And the number of the days that David lived in the country of the Philistines was a year and four months. 1 Samuel 27:7 (ESV)**

That is not a long time, but it was long enough for David to get himself in a heap of trouble by trusting in himself and his wittiness to save his life.

**I will become increasingly selfish and deceptive.**

**Now David and his men went up and made raids against the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites,... 1 Samuel 27:8 (ESV)**

As David relied on himself instead of God, he became increasingly selfish and deceptive. We know David was a man of exceptional military ability. Once he was out from under the watchful eye of Achish, and he was 25 miles to the south in Ziklag, he began to attack and plunder the local people. The Geshurites were a people group who lived around Ziklag. The Girzites are only mentioned here in the Bible. From the context, it is safe to assume they were another local people group. The Amalekites were another local people group that were larger and more powerful. Look what else we are told.

**...for these were the inhabitants of the land from of old, as far as Shur, to the land of Egypt. 1 Samuel 27:8 (ESV)**

The people David and his men attacked were the inhabitants of the land. There were the people groups God told Moses to devote to destruction. While the Israelites were to wipe them out, the generations after Moses had not done that work.

Here we see David's strategy. He was serving the Philistine king, but to justify his reliance on a Philistine king for his safety, he not only bloodlessly conquered a city that was to be taken by Israel, but he used his militia to destroy people groups of the Israelites were commanded to annihilate. Are you seeing how David is trying to rationalize and justify his godless choice to leave the land by focusing on all the good things that were taking place with his sinful choice?

To make sure nobody spilled the beans about what was happening, David was ruthless.

And David would strike the land and would leave neither man nor woman alive, but would take away the sheep, the oxen, the donkeys, the camels, and the garments, and come back to Achish. 1 Samuel 27:9 (ESV)

David kept bringing to Achish all of the goodies from the people he conquered, but he killed off everybody, so nobody knew the true story of where the stuff came from.

When Achish asked, "Where have you made a raid today?" David would say, "Against the Negeb of Judah," or, "Against the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites," or, "Against the Negeb of the Kenites." 1 Samuel 27:10 (ESV)

At this point, David completely lied. He told Achish he was conquering Israelite territory. He wanted Achish to believe he had become a true enemy of God's people. The truth is, he was conquering other people groups in the land.

And David would leave neither man nor woman alive to bring news to Gath, thinking, "lest they should tell about us and say, 'So David has done.'"... 1 Samuel 27:11 (ESV)

David's motto was, "Dead men don't tell tales." As long as he killed everyone, his lies worked. This didn't just happen once, but it happened all the time.

Such was his custom all the while he lived in the country of the Philistines. 1 Samuel 27:11 (ESV)

As we saw earlier, abandoning God and trying to save yourself will lead you to places you do not want to go, and you will end up doing things you did not plan to do. In the last chapter, David was a courageous and godly man. In this chapter, his depression and negative self-talk led him to defect to the enemy and become a ruthless killer who is a perpetual liar. He is saving himself, at least for a while, but there was a price to pay. His character changed.

And Achish trusted David, thinking, "He has made himself an utter stench to his people Israel; therefore he shall always be my servant." 1 Samuel 27:12 (ESV)

Achish trusts David. He admires David. After Achish sees all the spoil David has won, he looks up to him. The problem is all that admiration of David was based on a lie.

In one sense, I admire David. How many people could pull off a deceptive scheme like this for a year and a half? He ruthlessly killed off entire populations. He kept Achish happy by giving him lots of stuff. He is feeding his men and their families. He conquered Ziklag without lifting a finger. He killed off people groups that were enemies of Israel. It seemed like David's lies and deceptions were working well until he was trapped.

**I will end up trapped by my sin.**

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." 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.” 1 Samuel 28:1–2 (ESV)

Achish liked David so much that when war arose between the Philistines and the Israelites, Achish wanted David and his men to join him in fighting the Israelites, God’s own people. David was suddenly caught in the unintended consequences of his lies. Remember that David’s loyalty to Achish was fake. When you are asked to join the front lines of the Philistine army, you can’t fake your loyalty anymore. David’s lies, like our lies always do, landed him in a pickle.

How will David get out of this jam? Will he get caught? What will happen? You need to come back in two weeks to find out. This chapter ends on a cliff hanger. Next week, we turn back to Saul. He celebrates Halloween as he dresses up in a costume and visits a witch.

As we look back on this godless chapter in David’s life, there are many lessons to learn. When we wander from God, we will:

1. Trust in our wisdom instead of God’s Word.
2. Try to justify my sinful choices by pointing out the positive outcomes of my sinful decisions.
3. I will become increasingly selfish and deceptive.
4. I will end up trapped by my sin.

Let me also remind us of some of the other applications we learned along the way.

### **Applications**

1. **When I wander from God, I will go to places I do not want to go, and I will do things I do not want to do.** David, who was a courageous and godly

man in the last chapter, found himself turned into a liar and deceiver when he left God and decided to save himself. The same kind of thing will happen to us if we walk away from our Savior.

2. **If we fill our mind with negative self-talk, we will eventually believe it and**

**live it.** While David was under incredible stress and was constantly running from Saul, he chose to focus on the negative things happening to him, not the good things God had done for him. Yes, he was constantly on the run. Yes, he was tired. Yes, he was stressed. Yes, it felt like Saul would never stop chasing him. However, David seems to have forgotten how God saved him over a dozen times from Saul's grasp. When we are stressed, it is easy to forget all the good things God has done for us and just focus on the difficulties in front of us. Friends, when I am in a spot where I am depressed and overwhelmed in life, there are three things I need to do. One is I need to read the Bible. God always gives me a different perspective on my life and my problems when I read His Word. Second is I need to keep up the practice of prayer and journaling. Journaling is simply writing the prayers of my heart to God instead of speaking them. The problem with my prayer life is I am easily distracted. I start praying and end up thinking about football. When I write my prayers and concerns to God, I stay focused. Third, I need to talk to a good Christian friend to give me perspective. Sometimes that is my amazing wife who helps me see things from a different perspective. She has a way of saying just a sentence or two that can jolt my brain back into the right place. Sometimes that is my Life Group. Sometimes that is the men in my Iron Man group. We



need godly, Christian people we can trust to talk about things when we get in a funk. If we don't have those who help us stop our negative self-talk, we will end up listening to and believing our negative self-talk.

3. **No matter how cleverly we manage our lies, we will always regret where they take us.** The problem with David's deception is no matter how carefully he manages it, it will always end up trapping him. That is always the way deception works. One lie leads to another lie, until you have built a house of cards that comes crashing down.

...be sure your sin will find you out. Numbers 32:23 (ESV)

When Moses wrote those words, he was talking about the way sin works in our lives. It doesn't matter if other people discover our sin, our sin will always discover us. Sin carries in itself the power to pay us back. Moses was telling us that sin can not be managed, tamed, or outrun. No matter how clever we think we are or how safe we think we will be, we will eventually find ourselves trapped and caught in the consequences of our sin, just like David found out. When we are finally trapped by our sin, the only one who can get us out of that trap is the one who came to save us from our sin. His name is Jesus.

4. **Don't be guilty of Bible character hero worship. The only perfect person in the Bible is Jesus. Take comfort in the fact that no Bible character was perfect. All of them had massive failures in their lives. God still forgave them, loved them, and used them for his good purposes, just like he offers to forgive, love, and use us for his good purposes when we turn to Jesus.** Did you realize all of the Bible's heroes are messed up people with skeletons in their closets, just like you and me? For the last few

chapters of 1 Samuel, Saul was the villain, and David was the hero. Many of us subtly held David up as our hero. One of the big points of this chapter is that David is not a hero. He had some massive failures in his life. He needed God to save him from his sin, just like you and me. Moses was the same way, Peter the same way, Paul was the same way, and so was Abraham. The good news is the Bible shows us God forgiving and saving people who wander from God and mess up their lives. Maybe today, you sit here having done the same thing. You started out in church, you started in a good family and a godly home. Like David, you wandered from God. Like David, you decided you would live life by your own plans and not trust God's word. Like David, you found your life filled with deception and selfishness. Maybe like David, you sit here today trapped in the consequences of your own sin. The good news is that God still loves you. He offers to forgive you just like he will do in the upcoming chapters for David when he repented of his sin and turned back to God. Today, if you have wandered from God and made a mess of your life, turn back to him. He loves you. He cares about you. He offers to forgive you completely. He will still use your life for his glory if you will but repent and turn to Him.



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