

1 Samuel 29-30 — God's Grace For The Backslidden

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My name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. This morning, we continue in our study of 1 Samuel. Next week, we will finish the book. The week after that, we begin our Christmas series. This morning, to keep us on schedule for Christmas, we will try something different. We will cover two chapters in one message. That is a lot of text for one Sunday, but I think it will hang together. Chapters 29 and 30 are about the God rescuing David from his sin and lies while he was living for himself. In chapter 29, God rescued David from himself and the tangled web he caught himself in with the Philistines because of his deception. In chapter 30, God rescued David's heart. Before this, David lost interest in God and relied on his own wit and wisdom instead of God. God broke him from that and brought his heart home.

Background

Let's remember what happened in recent chapters. In 1 Samuel 27, David was at the end of his rope. He was exhausted after years of constantly running from King Saul, who always wanted to take his life. In desperation, no longer wanting to rely on God's protection in Israel, David decided to try his own plan. He decided to hide among the Philistines, the enemy. That was David's plan for his life. It was rebellion against God's plan for his life.

While David found rest from Saul when he hid among the Philistines, it came at a high price. David's character was compromised. To live among the Philistines, he was a double agent. He pretended to be loyal to Achish, the Philistine king, while still trying to be loyal to Israel. David's life was a constant lie.

He was so committed to deception he killed anyone who could reveal his secret. His deception worked so well that when the Philistines prepared for war with Israel, Achish, the King of Gath, forcibly enlisted David in the army to be his bodyguard in the fight. David was caught in a pickle. He had always been committed to never raising his hand against Saul, the Lord's anointed. Now he was forcibly enlisted in a fight against Saul. He had to either join the Philistines or blow his cover and risk death at the hands of his new Philistine friends. David trapped himself in the web of lies he spun. How would he get out of this one? Could he get out? 1 Samuel 27 left us hanging without an answer.

In 1 Samuel 28, which we studied last week, the focus shifted from David to Saul as he prepared to defend himself from the Philistine invasion. In that desperate time, the king of Israel consulted a witch instead of God.

Today, in 1 Samuel 29, the story returns to David. The story picks up where we left off with David being forcibly enlisted into the Philistine army by King Achish of the Philistines as his personal bodyguard. Chapter 29 doesn't just shift the story from Saul to David, it actually takes place several days before chapter 28. It goes back to the Philistine mobilization of the troops at Aphek, which is 40 miles south of Shunem, where the action took place last week.

Since these chapters are about God graciously rescuing David from himself when he fell away from God, we will build our study of these chapters around the question, "How does God show grace to the backslidden?"

God saves us from ourselves.

Now the Philistines had gathered all their forces at Aphek. And the Israelites were encamped by the spring that is in Jezreel. 1 Samuel 29:1 (ESV)

We should notice that this is not a minor border skirmish. This is a major Philistine offensive. All of the Philistine forces were going to war against Israel. They left no military units behind. The fact that they left no protection for the land of the Philistines will become important later in the story.



The mention of all the Philistine forces gathering at Aphek would send chills down the spine of most Israelites. The last time Aphek was mentioned in this book was in 1 Samuel 4. At Aphek, the Philistines fought the Israelites, decisively defeating them. They captured the ark of God, and they killed the two sons of Eli the high priest. It was a time of complete humiliation for Israel. The mention of a major Philistine offensive starting at Aphek gives us an eerie feeling that history is about to repeat itself.

For the last 12 to 16 months, David, instead of trusting and obeying God, took matters into his own hands. He hid among the Philistines. He lied to Achish, the Philistine king, constantly telling him he was attacking Israelite cities when he was actually attacking Amalekites and other nomadic people around him. For a year and a half, David lied to everybody. Now that David was forcibly enlisted in the Philistine army, how would he get out of the mess?

God saved David from Goliath. God saved David from King Saul more than a dozen times. Now God had to save David from himself and the incredible mess he made of his life.

Has anybody been there? Have you turned away from God and decided to live by your own wisdom and wit only to make a mess of things? If so, the rest of this chapter is for you. Let's see how God comes to the rescue.

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, 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 to me I have found no fault in him to this day." 1 Samuel 29:2–3 (ESV)

The Philistine nation was ruled by the five lords of its chief cities. These five lords served as a board of directors over the Philistine nation, deciding policy together. Before the Philistine army headed north to Shunem, this assembly of the troops at Aphek was for the Philistine lords to inspect them as they marched in front of them. The last of the troops to march before them were Achish's troops. The last of Achish's troops were David and his men. Presumably, Achish set it up this way so the Philistine lords would be so exhausted by the inspection that they would let David and his men pass through at the end. That isn't what happened.

When the Philistine lords saw David and his men, they were furious and didn't want them to be part of the battle, because they were Israelites.

Achish thought he could easily explain away David and his men by telling his fellow lords that David and his men were no longer working for Saul. They were mercenaries working for the highest bidder. Achish stretched the truth by

saying David had been with him for years and months. The truth is that David had been with Achish for only about a year.

While David had successfully duped Achish into trusting him with his lies, the rest of the Philistine lords were not so easily convinced. They gave two reasons why they didn't want David and his men to be part of the battle. The first was what I would call the wisdom of war.

But the commanders of the Philistines were angry with him. And the commanders of the Philistines said to him, "Send the man back, that he may return to the place to which you have assigned him. He shall not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he become an adversary to us. For how could this fellow reconcile himself to his lord? Would it not be with the heads of the men here?" 1 Samuel 29:4 (ESV)

While the Philistine lords were battling the Israelites of King Saul in the front, the last thing they wanted was to find themselves also battling David and his Israelites in the rear. David and his men may have defected to the Philistines, but if they ever wanted to put themselves back in King Saul's good graces, the easiest way for them to do that would be to turn against the Philistines in the battle attacking them from the back while they were fighting Saul in the front. No, having David and his men as part of the war was not wise.

The second reason they didn't want David and his men as part of the war came from history. Everyone knew the song they had heard sung about David. The women of Israel began singing it back in 1 Samuel 18 after David killed Goliath.

Is not this David, of whom they sing to one another in dances, 'Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands'?" 1 Samuel 29:5 (ESV)

"Achish, have you forgotten David's identity?" David was legendary for his fighting ability. They say he killed tens of thousands of people in war, and all

those people were Philistines! Achish, David killed Philistines just like us! It was too much of a risk to have him as part of the battle behind our lines. The Philistine lords were right.

What happens next has some humor in it. We know that for 16 months, David was lying to King Achish and deceiving him into believing David was loyal to him when in reality, all of the loot David provided to him was from people in his own country, not from people in Israelite territory. Look how apologetically Achish asks David to go home because he trusted David.

Then Achish called David and said to him, "As the LORD lives, you have been honest, and to me it seems right that you should march out and in with me in the campaign. For I have found nothing wrong in you from the day of your coming to me to this day. Nevertheless, the lords do not approve of you. So go back now; and go peaceably, that you may not displease the lords of the Philistines." 1 Samuel 29:6–7 (ESV)

The truth is that David had been anything but honest. Achish may not have found anything wrong with David, but that was only because David was good at lying. He was good at living a double life.

Has anybody been there? Are you there right now? Are you, like David, good at living a double life? On Sunday and with your friends, everybody thinks you are a fine upstanding follower of Jesus, but in reality, you are constantly lying to people and deceiving people about what you are really like. The truth is you have become a deceiver. You are good at a double life. Is that you? That was David.

God will break him of that double life in the next chapter. It will be painful. The thing to know is that David had successfully fooled Achish, but he wasn't fooling God.

While these words show us the depth of the deception David was able to achieve over this Philistine king, they are also the words David desperately wanted to hear. God saved David from the mess he made of his life, by the Philistine lords not trusting him and kicking him out of the army at the last minute before the battle.

Here we see that sometimes God, in the underserved grace he often shows to us, saves us from ourselves and the consequences of our dumb and sinful choices.

Have you been there? Has God rescued you from the consequences of your lies, deceptions, infidelities, and the mess you made in your life? David didn't deserve rescue. He wasn't even asking for rescue, but God was so kind that he saved him anyway.

What I also like is how God saved David from the mess. God saved David by having the Philistine lords kick him out of the army at the last minute. God used the enemy to save David from himself. God was in charge of the hearts of those wicked Philistine rulers. Who would have guessed that God would save David from his sinful choices by using the enemy to come to his rescue? Isn't it true that many times God saves us from the mess we have made of our lives, and he often does it in the strangest of ways? God rescues us in ways we would never expect and could not possibly imagine.

As we continue in the text, it is strange. When David was told he wouldn't be allowed to fight his fellow Israelites, we would expect him to be excited, but that isn't the reaction we see.

And David said to Achish, “But what have I done? What have you found in your servant from the day I entered your service until now, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?” 1 Samuel 29:8 (ESV)

Why does he protest? Where is the thankfulness for getting out of this jam at the last minute?

There are two possible reasons for this unexpected reaction.

One option is that David knows there is no chance he will be called back to the battlefield. If he acted with excitement, his deception of Achish would be over. His cover would be blown. So instead of acting excited, to keep his cover in place, he acted like he was disappointed. To ensure his deception is still working he asked, “What have I done that I cannot go and fight with you?” He was just checking to be sure the reason he was excluded from the battle wasn’t that his cover was blown. Personally, I think that is the correct option.

Some Bible scholars think David’s disappointment for not being allowed to fight was not another plank in his deception of Achish, but it was a genuine disappointment. They think the Philistine lords properly understood David’s plan. David did want to be in the rear during the battle so he could turn and fight against the Philistines during the battle. Either way, it doesn’t matter. The point is in these verses we see God graciously rescuing David from the mess he made of his life, and David didn’t deserve it. David didn’t even thank God for it.

Have you been there? Has God rescued you from the mess you made of your life by unexpectedly closing a door? Were you facing disaster in your life and God averted the disaster in a way you didn’t expect? Now you look back on it and see God’s gracious hand of protection on your life, but at the time, when

your heart was hard to the things of God, you had no idea how good God was being to you.

And Achish answered David and said, "I know that you are as blameless in my sight as an angel of God. Nevertheless, the commanders of the Philistines have said, 'He shall not go up with us to the battle.' Now then rise early in the morning with the servants of your lord who came with you, and start early in the morning, and depart as soon as you have light." 1 Samuel 29:9–10 (ESV)

This is funny. Achish was apologizing to David that he couldn't give him a chance to fight in the battle. Achish still thought David was as blameless as an angel of God. Boy did he have him fooled! In reality, David was a complete liar.

So David set out with his men early in the morning to return to the land of the Philistines. But the Philistines went up to Jezreel. 1 Samuel 29:11 (ESV)

Now the Philistines leave for Operation Shunem, but David and his men headed back to Ziklag.

Applications

1. **God's grace saves us from ourselves.** David's lies and deception put him in a tangled web and made a complete mess of his life. Just as God saved David from the Philistines and King Saul, God graciously saved David from himself and the mess he made of his life. Please understand that David did not deserve to be saved by God. At this point, he had still turned his back on God. He was living life his own way. He had left God behind. Yet, God still loved him. God still saved him from the mess he made of his world. I don't know what mess you have made of your life this morning. I don't know how far away from God you have walked. I don't know how backslidden you are in your faith. You need to know that God still loves you. He loves you so much that even when you don't care about him and have turned away from him

many times, he is still rescuing you and protecting you from the consequences of your dumb and sinful choices. Even if you have turned away from God, he hasn't turned away from you. He still loves you and is graciously pursuing you.

2. **God's grace saves us in unexpected ways.** Who would have guessed that the way God would save David from having to fight against King Saul was by the Philistine lords kicking him out of the army right before the battle? The Philistines, the enemies of God's people, were being used for God's good purposes, and they didn't even know it. When we make a mess of our lives and we see no way out, what we don't know is that God, who loves us and is incredibly gracious to us, has over a thousand surprising ways to rescue us that we can never imagine. That is the God we serve. This is why we never lose hope.

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will. Proverbs 21:1 (ESV)

3. **God's grace doesn't give up on us, no matter how far we have gone.** We tend to make God in our own image. We tend to look at people and circumstances and say, "I have given up on that person. Let them fry. Let them get what they deserve." That is not the God David served. That is not the God we serve. No matter how far David had gone, no matter how deceptive and ruthless David had become, God did not give up on him. God did not turn his back on him. God rescued him from his mess even when he had no interest in repenting and turning back to God. God did not give up on David, even though we would have given up on David. Thank goodness God

is not that way. This means that no matter what we have done and how far from God we have run, God will not give up on us. So many times, he does not hold back his love and kindness to us. Thank goodness we serve a God that is not like us.

God's grace may ruin our life to save our life.

So God saved David from the consequences of his choices, but David's heart was still far from God. He was still living for himself and trusting in himself instead of God. 1 Samuel 30 is the story of God breaking David's heart, bringing him to his knees, then turning his heart back home to the God who loves him. Let's see how he does that.

David and his men left Aphek and began the 60-mile march south to Ziklag. During the three-day journey, their hearts must have been encouraged. God saved them from having to fight against Saul and their fellow Israelites. They were looking forward to a little relaxation with their families. They couldn't wait to see their wives, hug their children, and enjoy their homes.

But as they drew near, there was the sight of smoke on the horizon. It put all of them into a panic. What was a march home became a sprint. What they saw when they arrived was the kind of stuff that only nightmares are made of.

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 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. 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. 1 Samuel 30:1-3 (ESV)

After all the years of deprivation in the desert, fighting the Philistines, and running for their lives, this took the cake. The entire city was burned to the

ground. There were no bodies. The Amalekites hadn't killed anyone. They took everyone. Why did they do this? This was to sell them into slavery and make money. The idea of their wives and children being sold as slaves to be abused and used by perverted people living in godless nations around them was a horrifying thought.

Remember what we learned earlier, the Philistines mustered all their forces to Aphek. They left their homeland defenseless. David and his men were nowhere near Ziklag to protect it. If you were with us in earlier studies of previous chapters, you know David and his men raided the Amalekites. This Amalekite invasion and burning of their city was payback for what David had done to them. In addition, the Amalekites also traveled into Israel, raiding the Negev, but only Ziklag they burned to the ground with fire, destroying everything these men owned and taking their wives and children into captivity.

You can imagine what happened.

Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept until they had no more strength to weep. 1 Samuel 30:4 (ESV)

At one moment, they were thankful God rescued them from fighting against their fellow Israelites. This was worse! They came home to find everyone they loved and everything they owned gone.

A few years ago, a friend of mine built a beautiful house on a lake. It was expensive. He built it by hand. A month after he moved in with everything he owned, an electrical short in the dryer burned the house to the ground. Thankfully nobody died, but they were devastated when they lost everything. I know how

devastated my friend felt. I am sure David and his men felt ten times worse knowing they lost their loved one as well!

David's two wives also had been taken captive, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel. 1 Samuel 30:5 (ESV)

This hurt wasn't just for David's men. It was close to David's heart too. He lost his wives. Now, it gets worse.

And David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters... 1 Samuel 30:6a (ESV)

Sometimes God lets the bottom drop out of our world to get our attention, to bring us to our knees, to turn us from living for ourselves and relying on ourselves back to the God who loves us. That was the moment David faced. David was greatly distressed. The David who was so self-reliant, who had the world by the tail, who could lie to people and manipulate people to do what he wanted, the man who thought he could manage life on his own without God came to the end of himself. His heart was broken. Relying on himself for life ruined his life. Even worse, even the men who loved him and had risked their life for him had turned upon him and were talking of killing him. It doesn't get much worse.

Why did God allow this terrible tragedy to come into David's life? There are two reasons.

1. The Bible reminds us that when we sin, we will suffer. Since David went to the Philistines, we have heard nothing about God from David's mouth, only lies and ruthless killings. David's sin led to suffering for him and the people around him. We must remember that God loves us. Jesus died for us. All of God's words

to us are good for us. The Bible has laws and commandments. Instinctively we bristle against them, thinking God is trying to ruin our lives. The opposite is true. God's laws are all for our good. Whatever commands God gives us, are all for our good because he wants what is good for us and what is best for us. None of God's commands are to take away our life. They are all good for our life. This is why sin always leads to suffering.

2. The other reason why God allowed this tragedy in David's life was that God was ruining David's life to save his life. God was bringing David's heart to the point of repentance so his heart would turn back to God. Many times the only way God can get our attention is to let our life crash and burn. God doesn't do that because he hates us. He does that because he loves us and wants our hearts to turn back to him. Just as God's grace saved David from his web of lies and deceit, God's grace was now saving David from his hard heart that turned away from God. Here, at the bottom of his world, at his most desperate moment, David finally turns back to God. Maybe you have been there.

...[But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God. 1 Samuel 30:6b \(ESV\)](#)

What does it mean that David strengthened himself in the Lord his God? This was not some kind of magical routine. Strengthening himself in God meant that he turned his heart back to God. He called out to God for forgiveness and help. He went back to the promises God gave him in his younger years.

If you are in a spot today where you are at the end of yourself, turn back to God, just like David did. God will not turn you away. Open your Bible. Read God's word to you. Read the promises God has given to you that we know are true. God will forgive and restore you, just like he is about to do for David.

And David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "Bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. 1 Samuel 30:7 (ESV)

If you were with us earlier in this study, you know Saul killed all the priests. One priest managed to escape to David. When he did, he brought a priestly garment called an ephod. Through two rocks in the breast piece of the ephod, a priest could ask questions of God and receive answers from God. For a few chapters, David ignored Abiathar while ignoring God. Why ask God for directions when if you are committed to living life on your own? Now that David has turned back to God, instead of living by his own direction in life, through the priest he turns back to God and asks for God's direction in his life. What does God want me to do in this desperate moment?

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." 1 Samuel 30:8 (ESV)

God told David to chase the Amalekites. Of course, at this point, David didn't know it was the Amalekites that raided Ziklag and took away the women and children. They were a nomadic people. He didn't know which way they had gone. All David knew was that he was to pursue them, and eventually, God promised he would overtake them. At this point, that is all David knew. God only gave him the first step. The question was, would David and his men march into the desert, not knowing which way they were going? They were marching into the desert simply to obey God's word.

Isn't this how God often works in our lives today when we turn to him? God doesn't give us all the steps for obedience. He only gives us the first step and asks us to trust and obey him. We don't know how it will turn out. The

question is, will we obey God and move forward even if we don't know where it will lead?

God's grace is quick to restore us and use us.

So David set out, and the six hundred men who were with him, and they came to the brook Besor, where those who were left behind stayed. But David pursued, he and four hundred men. Two hundred stayed behind, who were too exhausted to cross the brook Besor. 1 Samuel 30:9–10 (ESV)

The brook of Besor was probably the southern boundary of Philistine territory. It was about 12 to 15 miles south of Ziklag. The men had already marched for three days. Some of them were so exhausted they couldn't go any further. The Hebrew word behind the word exhausted was used to describe a dead body, a corpse. These men were not stubborn, they were literally dead tired.

So David is an example for us. Just as those who have backslidden in their faith need to obey just the first step of God's words, even when they are not sure where it will lead, David obeyed God's words and headed into the desert not knowing where to find the raiding party that destroyed his homes and took the families. David and his men are obeying God by faith walking blindly in the desert. Look what happens next.

They found an Egyptian in the open country and brought him to David. And they gave him bread and he ate. They gave him water to drink, and they gave him a piece of a cake of figs and two clusters of raisins. And when he had eaten, his spirit revived, for he had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights. 1 Samuel 30:11–12 (ESV)

This is divine providence working on David's behalf. They just happen to run across this dehydrated Egyptian. They gave him water and food so he can talk and look what he said.

And David said to him, “To whom do you belong? And where are you from?” He said, “I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite, and my master left me behind because I fell sick three days ago. We had made a raid against the Negeb of the Cherethites and against that which belongs to Judah and against the Negeb of Caleb, and we burned Ziklag with fire.” 1 Samuel 30:13–14 (ESV)

Bingo. This throw-away Egyptian servant of an Amalekite ended up being the key to David’s entire recovery operation. This Egyptian knew where to find them. No bells go off in the text to tell us this was God’s hand at work helping David, but that is what happened. This was God at work helping David as David was willing to follow and obey him.

And David said to him, “Will you take me down to this band?” And he said, “Swear to me by God that you will not kill me or deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will take you down to this band.” 1 Samuel 30:15 (ESV)

This was better than having the Find My Phone app on your cell phone. The man took David and his men right to the Amalekites. Look what was happening when they snuck up on them.

And when he had taken him down, behold, they were spread abroad over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing, because of all the great spoil they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah. 1 Samuel 30:16 (ESV)

They were having a party. They were drunk. They were sloshed. David and his men will need the element of surprise to carry out an attack, but the element of surprise on a bunch of drunk people really tips the odds in your favor.

And David struck them down from twilight until the evening of the next day, and not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men, who mounted camels and fled. David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and David rescued his two wives. Nothing was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that had been taken. David brought back all. 1 Samuel 30:17–19 (ESV)

As the sun went going down, when they were completely sloshed, David and his men began their attack. Under cover of darkness, they attacked and

continued throughout the night and into the next day. Finally, in the evening of the next day, it came to an end. While David's men were only 400, the Amalekite raiders numbered in the thousands. David and his men overcame incredible odds.

Incidentally, 1 Chronicles 12:20-21 comments about this raid telling us that warriors from the tribe of Manasseh, who were probably also in the process of hunting for the Amalekite raiders, join David in this raid, giving David a larger fighting force to battle his enemy.

The text emphasizes what David recovered. He recovered everything. The same God who took everything away from David to get him to the end of himself turned around and restored to David everything he took away. He restored to David much more than he took away. Isn't God gracious?

What a reminder to us that the same God who may take everything away from us to get us to the bottom of ourselves is fully capable of restoring everything, plus much more. That is how good God is to us.

The only Amalekites who survived were 400 men who mounted camels and escaped. Otherwise, David killed all of them.

Before we go any further, I want to take a moment to look at this event panoramically. In 1 Samuel 15, Saul was commanded to destroy the Amalekites. He didn't carry out that order completely. As a result, he was rejected as king. In the next chapter, Saul will die largely due to not obeying God's word about destroying the Amalekites. If we line the chronology, at the same time Saul was dying on Mount Gilboa by the hands of the Philistines in the north of the country,

David was wiping out the Amalekites in the south of the country, the very thing Saul was commanded to do but had not done.

Now, let's look at our last point about how God is gracious to the backslidden. When David turned back to God, he didn't just become obedient to God, but God also restored his character. Remember that David had become a deceptive liar and ruthless murderer while living life by his own rules. Now that David turns back to God, we see an incredible transformation of his character.

God's grace transforms a deceptive heart into a gracious and generous one.

David also captured all the flocks and herds, and the people drove the livestock before him, and said, "This is David's spoil." Then David came to the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to follow David, and who had been left at the brook Besor. And they went out to meet David and to meet the people who were with him. And when David came near to the people he greeted them. Then all the wicked and worthless fellows among the men who had gone with David said, "Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, except that each man may lead away his wife and children, and depart." 1 Samuel 30:20–22 (ESV)

David didn't just recover the wives, children, and stuff for his men, but they recovered everything else the Amalekite raiders took from everyone else.

When they were coming home with all the stuff, some of the wicked and worthless men among him didn't want to share any of this treasure with the 200 exhausted men who stayed behind. Those men would be allowed to take their wives and children, but that was it. Look how David reacts to this suggestion and we can see the change in his heart.

But David said, "You shall not do so, my brothers, with what the Lord has given us. He has preserved us and given into our hand the band that came against us. Who would listen to you in this matter? For as his share is who goes down into the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage. They shall share

alike.” And he made it a statute and a rule for Israel from that day forward to this day. 1 Samuel 30:23–25 (ESV)

David pointed out that the reason they were victorious was God. All this spoil was what the Lord had given them. The reason they won the battle against overwhelming odds was that God was gracious to them, not because they were better than anyone else. All of this success was a gracious gift from the Lord, so they should be willing to share it with others. As recipients of God’s grace, they should be able to share God’s grace.

Do you see how God’s grace changed David’s heart? He realized the victory was what God had given. When a backslidden person returns to God and experiences God’s grace, that grace infects all their relationships with other people. Once they have experienced God’s grace, they can’t help but extend God’s grace.

This chapter concludes with another result of David’s return to the Lord. Not only was David’s character transformed so he became a gracious man but he character was also transformed so he became a generous man.

When David came to Ziklag, he sent part of the spoil to his friends, the elders of Judah, saying, “Here is a present for you from the spoil of the enemies of the Lord.” It was for those in Bethel, in Ramoth of the Negeb, in Jattir, in Aroer, in Siphmoth, in Eshtemoa, in Racal, in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, in the cities of the Kenites, in Hormah, in Bor-ashan, in Athach, in Hebron, for all the places where David and his men had roamed. 1 Samuel 30:26–31 (ESV)

These cities are in the southern part of Judah, mostly around the city of Hebron. Many of these communities were the places that endured the Amalekite raids. God’s generosity to David overflowed from his life and he wanted to be generous with other people and share the Amalekite loot with those in need of

help. The backslidden who have returned to God and experienced God's generosity to them can't help but extend generosity to other people.

Let me wrap up what we have learned from these chapters about God's grace to the backslidden.

Applications

1. **God saves us from ourselves.** Just as God saved David from the Philistines and Saul, God's grace saved David from the mess he made of his life. Many times God does that for us, even when we don't ask to save us; God in his love for us many times saves us from the consequences of our own foolishness and stupidity as we live our lives in rebellion against him. All of us can think of times when God saved us from sinful and stupid choices even when we weren't looking for it, and we certainly didn't deserve it.
2. **God's grace may ruin our life to save our life.** That is what God did to David in Ziklag. David and his men lost everything. David was almost killed by his own men. God ruined David's life to save it. It was only when David finally reached rock bottom and was broken from his sin that he finally stopped living by himself and for himself. He finally called back to God. This didn't just happen with David, it is the way God still works today. When we walk away from God, he may ruin our life, but that is all because he loves us and wants to save our life.
3. **God's grace is quick to use us when he restores us.** When David finally turned back to God, God quickly began using him. God didn't make David sit in the penalty box for three years. God immediately charged him with pursuing the Amalekites and rescuing the women and children. God

immediately began helping him. God will treat us the same way. Today you may have backslidden in your faith. You may have walked away from God. Return to God with all of your heart and you will be shocked at how quickly he will begin using you for his good purposes in ways you never thought possible, just like he did with David.

4. **God's grace transforms a deceptive heart into a gracious and generous one.** Apart from God, David was a deceptive and ruthless man when he lived among the Philistines. When he turned back to God, there was a complete transformation of his character. David became a very gracious man who was generous toward others. Once he was touched with the grace and generosity of God, grace and generosity overflowed from his life into all of his relationships.

As I was studying for this message, I kept thinking that God wanted this message to be heard by someone in particular. I don't know if that person is in this room or if they are joining us online. Maybe that is you. Maybe you have lived like David. You have backslidden. You have walked away from God. You are living life by your own wisdom and have gone over to the Philistines. You are comfortably living among the enemy because you live like the enemy. You have made a huge mess of your life. Maybe you can look back right now and see how God has stepped into your life and saved you many times from the mess you have made. Maybe you can see right now how God has ruined your life to turn your heart back to him to save your life. The question is, now that you are at rock bottom, will you be like David and call out to God, or will you continue ignoring

the God who loves you and live for yourself? Will you continue making your life a mess of sin and suffering as your back is turned to God?

If you turn back to God, know God desperately loves you. No matter what you have done, God has not turned his back on you. If you return to him, he will quickly begin using you for his good purposes, and nothing can be more exciting than that. He will transform your character from a selfish lying person to a grace-filled generous person, just like David.

The question is, if you started in the church but have backslidden and wandered away from Jesus and his church, will you turn back to the God who still loves you and desperately wants you back home in his arms?



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