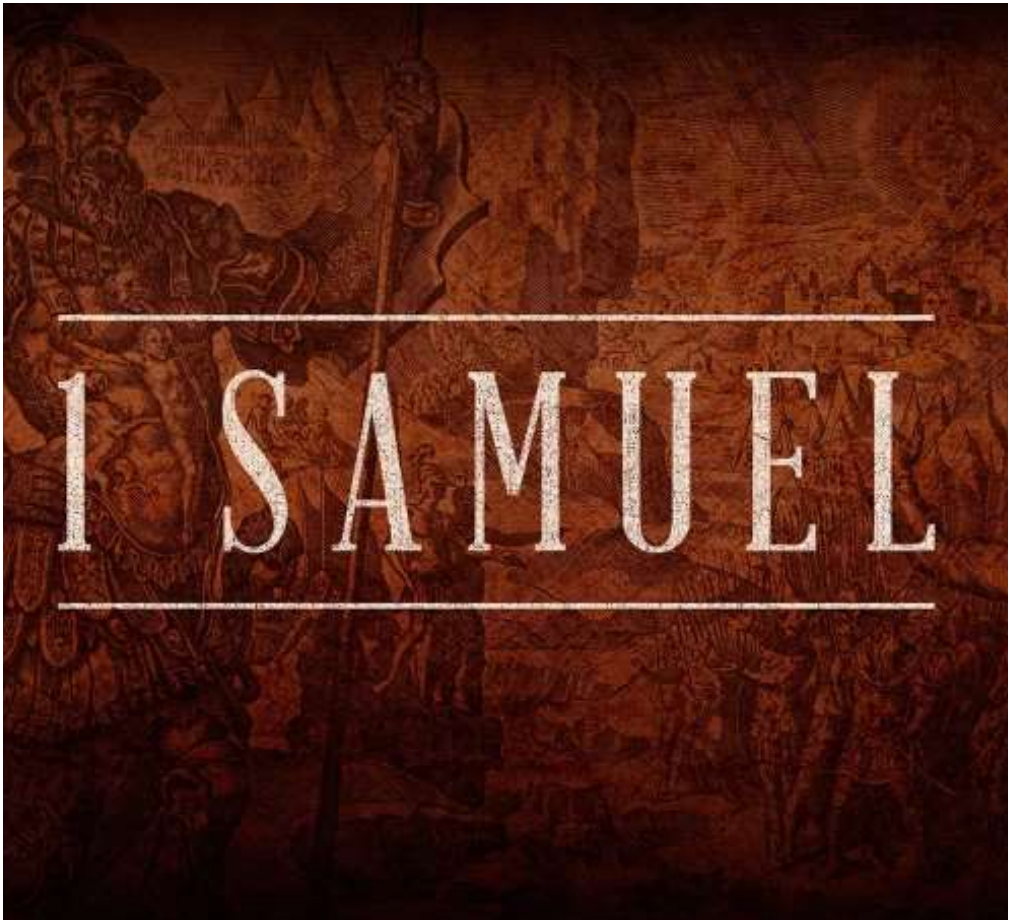


Let's Worship God

26th-31st October 2020

1 Samuel



1 SAMUEL

Monday - 1 Samuel 27:1-28:2 - In the Country of the Philistines

In chapter 27 the endgame begins for David and Saul. The note about time in verse 7 signals a picking up of the pace, 16 months in exile after being on the run for 6 to 10 years, maybe as many as 15. The story is told dramatically, alternating between scenes and leaving us with cliff hangers. This is the climax - the ball is rolling towards Saul's death.

Things take a surprising twist - David goes to the country of the Philistines, Israel's greatest enemy. Their raids and attacks had been a constant threat to Israel's very existence. David has been raised up to be the promised deliverer from Israel's enemies, including the Philistines. He has already dispatched his tens of thousands, as recorded in the pop song of 18:7; a ditty known in Philistia (21:11). David's going here is a surprise and a shock.

It's not unusual though - in war things can change pretty quickly. The truth of the saying, "My enemy's enemy is my friend" means that sides can quickly change. After the Second World War, within seven years Japan and America were firm allies, and many war criminals released and pardoned. Things change quickly in war. David arrives in Philistia as a rebel on the run, a successful general offering himself as a mercenary. King Achish jumps at the chance and David lives in the country of the Philistines.

We shouldn't let the term 'Philistine' carry the baggage of our culture: uncouth, uncultured, and uncivilised. The Philistines of 1000BC were 'couth', cultured, and civilised, having highly developed technology and civilisation. David will learn how to govern and how to fight - vital military and administration skills.

Yet, "living in the country of the Philistines" (verse 7) is not ideal. The David we see here is far from flawless, and his actions now will land him in a serious pickle in chapter 29.

Questions

1. Have you ever "lived in the land of the Philistines?"

Prayer Points

1. Pray that this week we would learn the lessons of David's time in the land of the Philistines.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Psalm 37:3

Praise: Psalm 120 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Tuesday - 1 Samuel 27:1-4 - David's Disappearing in the Country of the Philistines

I remember wondering when I was younger if I was the only person who talked to themselves; if what I now know as 'thoughts' were common to others. I remember the moment I realised I wasn't! Well, those who talk to themselves are in good company - verse 1. Here are David's thoughts and feelings, alongside his own summary of events so far. It is time for David to "escape" and disappear into the country of the Philistines.

What do you make of David's analysis and actions? Is he accurate in his forecast of the outcome? Compare verse 1 with verse 4. Is he accurate in his reasoning: "I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul"? What do you think?

It's a tricky one - there is no mention of God in the chapter. Neither is there a moral commentary by the author. He simply reports the event without approving or disproving. We need to handle with care.

But consider what David said to Saul at their last confrontation - read 26:19-20 again. To be away from the people of God and his land is to be away from God. The land is the place of God's promise and blessing, always presented in Scripture as the better option. Consider too the promises repeated by Jonathan (20:15) and Abigail (25:29). There are also the words spoken by Saul (24:20). God had promised he would be king and his enemies defeated. It is ominous too that David does not consult with God as he did at other times, and he will do later. Overall, David "looks to the country of the Philistines rather than God" (Dale Ralph Davis).

The writer doesn't criticise David and overtly point the finger. He seems to be sympathetic to him. Yet David is presented as being in the wrong, and the sense only grows as the chapter develops. David disappears into the country of the Philistines because of doubt - doubt over God's protection and preservation. His faith wavers and he places it elsewhere. But not one of us should throw stones at David - we see ourselves.

Questions

1. When have you doubted and fled the place of hard obedience, like David?

Prayer Points

1. Ask for forgiveness for looking to other sources of help instead of God.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.
Psalm 37:3

Praise: Psalm 37:1-6 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Wednesday - 1 Samuel 27:5-7 - David's Dwelling in the Country of the Philistines

There's an air of permanence as David disappears into the country of the Philistines. He goes with 600 men, their families, and his own wives. David settles and dwells there, making it his home.

We can easily imagine that over 1000 refugees arriving in Gath created its own problems, putting pressure on supplies, space, security, and society. David asks for his own turf (verse 5). This is not an unusual request. In a feudal society the lord or king would give land to his servants. It is a clever request, veiled in humility (why should little old David, a mere Jewish mercenary, live in the royal city of glorious Gath) but giving him space and privacy. It is a revealing request, in that, by it he gets Achish to reveal how much he trusts him ("if I have found favour").

He is granted the town of Ziklag, far from the Philistines and far from Saul. It seems to work out well for David, but that word appears again and again: David "dwelt" or "lived" there. How can Israel's (future) king be living among Israel's enemies?

It's just not right. Not only has he disappeared there, but he's dwelling there. He disappeared because of doubts, and he dwells in Doubtsville. He stays put where he is not meant to be. If "home is where the heart is", is David's heart in Philistia? This is no short-term wobble of faith - it is 16 months of doubt.

Have you been there? A prolonged spell of doubt-fuelled disobedience? Failing to do your duty before God, crippled by fear? David could have argued that God was opening doors for him with Achish, granting him favour in his eyes. God was opening doors, but that doesn't mean God wanted him to go through them. The right road was the road home. But sometimes we settle down on Sin Street in Doubtsville.

Questions

1. How could David have tried to justify his prolonged stay in Philistia?
2. Have you had a prolonged spell of doubt-fuelled disobedience?

Prayer Points

1. Ask for God to awaken you to any areas of persistent and prolonged disobedience in your life.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Psalm 37:3

Praise: Psalm 42:1-5 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Thursday - 1 Samuel 27:8-12 - David's Deceit in the Country of the Philistines

These verses are hard and murky - David is raiding, robbing, massacring (verse 9), and deceiving (verse 10).

The first thing we have to say is that in striking down the Geshurites, Giritites, and the Amalekites, David is striking down those who were to be struck down. In Deuteronomy 20:16-17 God passes the death sentence on pagan, sinful people. This is not genocide - they are not killed on the basis of race, but of sin. It is God's own judgement on them for idolatry and immorality. It is a bringing forward of the Day of Judgement, and it is no less than they, or we, deserve because of sin. God has been very patient - see Genesis 15:16, spoken 1000 years earlier. In carrying out God's judgement on the Amalekites David stands in contrast to Saul (chapter 15). God's king (in waiting) is carrying out the just judgements of God, like a king should.

Yet, these verses are still troubling. The writer doesn't note that God's judgement is being carried out; it is left unspoken and somewhat ambiguous. If David were properly carrying out God's judgement then the animals should have been slaughtered as well; instead, they are spared (verse 9). David's reasoning for these attacks is not based on fulfilling God's judgement; it is merely pragmatic (verse 11). God's command, guidance, approval, and even his name are all absent. Here is a murky picture of a massacring marauder. The writer neither condemns God for allowing this to happen nor vindicates David - it is murky.

Then there is the outright deceit of verse 12. David tells Achish that he's been raiding Judah, and conveniently there are no survivors to tell any tales. Achish is sold the dummy and banks on David's treachery to his own people.

Despite all this, David ends up in quite a comfortable condition. He has an income stream; he is safe, trusted, and able to spend his time removing threats from Israel. All through his deceit.

Questions

1. David seems to do quite well out of his doubting and deceiving stay in the country of the Philistines. How do we explain this?

Prayer Points

1. Thank God for his grace to deceivers and doubters.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Psalm 37:3

Praise: Psalm 83:1-4, 8-9 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Friday - 1 Samuel 28:1-2 - David's Dilemma in the Country of the Philistines

Despite David's doubts and deceit, all goes well for 16 months. Then he finds himself painted into a corner, required to march out against Israel under the Philistine banner. David's stay in the country of the Philistines ends with David in a pickle. Something will have to give; it is a no-win situation. He will either have to raise his hand against the Lord's Anointed (something he has steadfastly refused to do) and against his own people, or his ruse will be rumbled and his true colours revealed. David's time in the country of the Philistines leaves him in a dilemma; and I'll say no more about it today, because the text doesn't. The camera cuts abruptly to Saul, and we're left wondering: "What on earth will David do?" David is in a fine mess of his own making and it is hard to see him getting out of it.

Do you see yourself in David? I see myself. Here is one under incredible stress - it's hard to comprehend fully, and his thinking probably isn't straight. Here is one disappearing due to doubt: doubting God's protection, safekeeping, and security. We take matters into our own hands and place our trust somewhere else. We are driven to say, "There is nowhere better for me than to be in a place of disobedience." Here is one dwelling in Doubtville, remaining where he knows he shouldn't be. How often we stay in some sin, refusing to trust God, our heart settled where it shouldn't be - a season of life which turns out to be one long wobble of faith. Here is one deceiving, living a lie before everyone else, pretending everything is okay. It's made life easier, but it's not right. Here is one who is in a dilemma as a result. We've made a mess for ourselves; what on earth do we do now? I can think of times when I have gone to the country of the Philistines.

Questions

1. When have you given in to doubt, disobedience and deceit and found yourself in a dilemma?

Prayer Points

1. Thank God for his mercy to disobedience-prone doubters and deceivers.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.
Psalm 37:3

Praise: Psalm 122 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

I SAMUEL

Saturday - 1 Samuel 27:1-28:2 - Grace in the Country of the Philistines

Thankfully, the message of the Bible is good news to people like David: those fleeing from where they ought to be, those who've remained where they ought not to be, and those living lives of deceit. David is undeserving, but God is a God of undeserving love.

We see it throughout the chapter. David is wrong to disappear to the country of the Philistines, but God uses it to give him respite from Saul (verse 4). David is wrong to dwell (remain) there, but God provides a home away from home, and Ziklag becomes a place of security and safety away from the Philistines and Saul. David is wrong to deceive, but God uses David's raids to protect and defend Israel, and God will use David's spoils of war to bless his people (30:26-31). David is in a dilemma of his own making, but God will wonderfully intervene to solve it (though not before it gets worse). God is not mentioned in this chapter, but his gracious fingerprints are all over it, despite David's sin. God is a God of grace - undeserved love.

If you are aware that you have, metaphorically, been in the country of the Philistines like David, living a lie in Doubtsville - this is the God you need. This is the God who gave his own Son to deal with the consequences of our seasons of disobedience-fuelled doubts and deceptions. This is the God who gave his own Son so he could deal with us, not as our sins deserve, but with undeserved favour. The cross is a sign of what God does for his chosen people in the country of the Philistines.

Perhaps you're contemplating going there, to the place of disobedience. You are weakening in a particular battle against sin and considering giving in to a certain temptation. Perhaps you have already gone and are still there. Perhaps you know your heart well enough to know that you'll visit there again someday. You need to know that God is a God of grace - grace that forgives, solves, sorts, heals, restores, and provides, even in the country of the Philistines.

Questions

1. Where do you need God's grace today?

Prayer Points

1. Bring your weakness and temptation to our gracious God in prayer.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Psalm 37:3

Praise: Psalm 67 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The goal of Let's Worship God is to encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.

**God tells us that
Ezra read from
the book of the Law
day after day
and that
the people of God
were filled with joy!**

Let's Worship God is produced
by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

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