

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic.,
3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 18B
FIRST SAMUEL
CHAPTER 27**

INTRODUCTION

“Cornered like a frightened rabbit with nowhere to run and hide” was the feeling that David had at the beginning of this chapter. Have you ever felt this way? Family members are there to comfort but cannot offer any concrete advice. Their words seem empty though well intended. Friends have left or are unable to help. Colleagues at your work place pour salt into open wounds by gloating and sniggering. They are happy to see your misery and torment. God seems so far away. Your dilemma has not eased one bit but has gotten worse. Your prayers have not been answered. The enemy is on the prowl and seemed to be getting stronger. The end is not in sight. To “remain steadfast and unmoveable” has become near impossible. You feel like surrendering and throwing in the towel. You do not feel like serving the LORD. It has become a chore and burden to bear a holy witness instead of a joy and a delight.

1 Samuel 27 describes how David felt when he decided to flee and hide in Philistine territory. Can things really become so bad that you feel like quitting your faith and ministry? How much can a Christian take before succumbing to his trials?

COMMENTARY

**David Decides to Hide in
Philistine Territory—27:1**

David decided to seek safety and security in the land of the Philistines. He was worried that he would be killed by Saul. This showed that he did not trust Saul despite Saul’s confession and promise not to harm him. David also did not trust God. He took matters into his own hands. There was no safe place anymore in the whole of Israel. Spies were everywhere. David could not hide from Saul’s all seeing-eye. He decided that the best way to avoid Saul was to live in enemy territory (27:1). He decided to put his life into the hands of his “enemies”. His logic perhaps was that the enemies of his enemy were his friends. The Philistines hated Saul and Saul hated him, therefore the Philistines might help him.

Why did David choose to become a servant of Achish? His own family had expanded – he had to provide for and take care of two wives. His 600 men also had their families with them. They need to settle in a place instead of leading a “hide-and-seek” existence in the wilderness of Judea. David had no intention of turning traitor. Yet he wanted to survive from the “hunt” initiated by king Saul. The “hunt” did not seem to have abated at all. David’s ascendancy to the throne was wholly dependent on the LORD but it appeared that the LORD was “taking His own sweet time”. God did not seem to be in any hurry to bring the “hunt’ to an end. At this time, David seemed to be thinking and acting out of human fear rather than trusting in an all-knowing and all-seeing God. His trust and faith in the

LORD seemed very weak at this juncture of his life.

David Meets king Achish

—27:2-7

David led his men south to Gath to meet Achish the king of Gath, a Philistine. Could this be the same Achish that David met in 1 Samuel 21:10? At that time David avoided capture by feigning madness. Psalm 34 was written out of this frightful encounter with Achish in 1 Samuel 21.

We do not know the meaning of the word “Achish”. In Psalm 34 he was called “Abimelech.” Abimelech was a title for Philistine kings just like Pharaoh for the Egyptians and “king or queen” for the English. The identity of Achish in 1 Samuel 27 is difficult to ascertain. Anyway, he received David into his audience. David lived inside the city of Gath for some time. During his stay in Gath, news came to king Saul that David and his whole entourage were living or rather hiding in Gath. With this news, king Saul left David alone. He knew that he was no match for the Philistines. To cross into Philistine territory would be perceived as an invasion of the land of the Philistines.

Later David asked that if they had found grace in the eyes of the king, that he allowed them to stay outside the capital city, Gath. It was not appropriate for David and his men to live “inside the lion’s den”. He was making use of Achish for his own survival. He asked for a small town in the suburbs away from the royal city. This was a wise request. He would be free from prying eyes and would have greater freedom of movement. Achish acceded to his request and gave him Ziklag. This countryside town was once part of

Judah (Joshua 19:1-5). Ziklag was a border town between Israel and Philistine. One can understand why Achish chose Ziklag. David could help him to take care of the locality and protect him from attacks by Saul and his army. Achish was not unaware that David was a fugitive running away from Saul. There was some risk in taking in David but Achish was confident that David could handle Saul and his men. From the time Achish allowed David to live in Gath and then later in Ziklag, 16 months had come and gone.

David Played a Double Game—27:8-12

David was in dire straits. He knew that Israel was aware that he was living in Philistine territory. He also knew that one day he would return to Israel as king. How could he do so if Israel thought that he had gone over to help the Philistines against Israel? On the other hand, he had to survive inside Philistine territory pretending to be against Israel so that Achish would not kill him. This is what happens when a Christian takes matters into his own hands. He practises situation ethics thinking that he is smarter than God. He thinks that he is helping God. This is foolishness. God does not need our help. His ways are far higher than our ways.

During his stay in Ziklag, David and his men invaded the Geshurites, a southern people mentioned only once in Joshua 13:2; the Gezrites, relatively unknown; and the Amalekites. The word “invaded” is the Hebrew word *pashat* which means to “strip off”. They pillaged from and looted the people, confiscating their livestock and garments; and killing all the

inhabitants of these cities. But because the Amalekites were more numerous, not all of them were killed, some were scattered. The reason why David and his men killed everyone was to make sure that no one could inform Achish at Gath

This was wrong on the part of David. He disposed of the enemies of Israel to cover his own wrongdoing. He had to let Israel know that he was not a friend of the Philistines. He received no word from God to attack the enemies of Israel. This was one of the grave consequences of living outside the will of God. A Christian who practises situation ethics will slide deeper and deeper into sin. David showed a lack of faith and trust in God by going into Philistine territory.

When Achish paid him a visit and asked him where he had been, David lied — another sin. He told Achish that he had gone to attack the southern part of Judah and against the Kenites (27:10). Achish believed him and was delighted to hear this for it would make the people of Israel hate David. David would then be his servant forever. Achish was deceived by David whom he had trusted.

PRACTICAL VALUE

David created his own dilemma when he did not pray and ask God for directions. This resulted in a series of sins that he had to commit in order to cover up his previous sins.

His lack of faith and trust in God caused him to hide and deceive. He was playing a very dangerous game of cat and mouse with Achish. Balancing the line of

deceit in pleasing both sides brought out the worst in David. He was seen as deceptive and cunning in this chapter. It was a sad episode in David's life.

As Christians, we need to learn to pray and ask God for directions before making decisions. To go ahead of God without seeking Him is foolishness and indulging in self confidence. This self confidence will lead to problems which can escalate into more problems. God is always there for us. Let us consult Him. He will not turn us away.

To cover up his stay in enemy territory, David had to pretend to be someone else. He could not be himself, a man after God's own heart. He became a deceiver and a liar. To make matters worse, he had to kill to prove to his own people that he was still on their side. At the same time, he lied to save his own skin.

David should have prayed and consulted God before hiding in Philistine territory. Instead he compounded one sin after another. Situation ethics is a very dangerous principle to use. There are no objective guidelines, only subjective principles based on self-preservation. Christians must never practise situational ethics. We must trust in God and obey the Bible always, no matter what happens. We can leave the outcome of our obedience to the Almighty God.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: 1 Samuel 27:1-7.

Tuesday: 1 Samuel 27: 1-12.

Wednesday: 1 Samuel 27: 1-12.

Thursday: 1 Samuel 27:1-12; Psalm 42.

Friday: 1 Samuel 27:1-12.

Analysis

Text	Practical Value
1 Samuel 27:1-7	
1 Samuel 27:8-12	

Discussion Questions

1. Why did David seek refuge in Philistine land? Was David right in doing so?

2. In your opinion, did David go outside of God's will in this matter of hiding in Philistine territory?

3. What makes situation ethics so enticing? Have you practised situational ethics before in your work place or at home?

4. What can you say about David's faith in 1 Samuel 27:1?

5. Name one aspect in 1 Samuel 27 that you would like to avoid.
