

Lying Your Way Out of Trouble

1 Samuel 27

By [Dr. Derek W. H. Thomas](#)

Now turn with me to 1 Samuel chapter 27, 1 Samuel chapter 27. David has been hounded by Saul and his men from pillar to post and last week in chapter 26 do you remember David and his nephew, Abishai, went into Saul's camp where he was sleeping along with his men and took the spear and Saul's water jar. And then at the end of chapter 26 it looked as though Saul was repentant, at least he was conveying some impression of the sinfulness of his past behavior, but David, as we see at the end of chapter 26, "went his way and Saul returned to his place."

Now as we come to chapter 27 I want us tonight to do something somewhat unusual and I need your cooperation. You are summoned, all of you — men and women and boys and girls — you are summoned to jury duty tonight and standing accused is David. And there are four charges leveled against him and as we read this portion of Scripture it is your duty tonight to ascertain whether David is innocent or guilty. That is your solemn charge and duty. Now let's look to God in prayer.

Father, as we read this passage of Scripture there are some problems and difficulties in it that cause us to wonder and puzzle, but we know that all of this is written by the finger of God, that holy men of old wrote as they were borne along by the Holy Spirit. And we ask for the help of Your Spirit that we might be discerning, that we might read and interpret Scripture rightly and correctly for Your glory, for the honor of our Savior. So come Holy Spirit again and help us now to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest for Jesus' sake. Amen.

This is God's holy, inerrant 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 border of Israel, and I shall escape out of his hand." 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. 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. And when it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath, he no longer sought him.

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?" So that day Achish gave him Ziklag. Therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day. And the number of the days that David lived in the country of the Philistines was a year and four months.

Now David and his men went up and made raids against the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites, for these were the inhabitants of the land from of old, as far as Shur, to the land of Egypt. 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. When Achish asked, "Where have you made a raid today?" David would say, "Against the Negeb of Judah," or, "Against the Negeb of Jerahmeelites," or, "Against the Negeb of the Kenites." 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.'" Such was his custom all the while he lived in the country of the Philistines. And Achish trusted David, thinking, "He has made himself an utter stench to his people Israel; therefore he shall always be my servant."

Thus far God's holy, inerrant Word.

I. Charge: Does David consort with the enemy?

Now, members of the jury, here is the first charge against David: that David has consorted with the enemy. He's gone into pagan land, just as he had said to Saul in the previous chapter that Saul would force him out of Judah and into pagan land where God could not be found. Even though he had prayed outside the cave of Engedi, "May the Lord deliver me," he had said, and God had delivered him thus far. But now verse 1 of chapter 27 David has had what looks like a fainting fit. He had lost faith in the promise of God and he says to himself, "One day I will surely be killed by Saul," and that he has no choice now but to go to the land of the Philistines. He'd been there before. He had been before King Achish of Gath before. You remember he had feigned madness to get out. He had lied. Hero or villain?

Does David have a choice?

You see, he could have stayed in Judah. He could have played cat and mouse with Saul — catch me if you can among the hills of Judea. God would deliver him every time. You say he should have prayed. Where's the evidence of prayer? Where's the evidence that he sought for the Lord's guidance? Where's the evidence that he sought for the ephod to be brought to him that contained the

urim and thummim that would give him moral guidance as to which way he should go? He could have asked for counsel among his loyal friends, his six hundred men. Instead, he's defeatist and pessimistic and seems to have lost sight of the promise of God that he was the anointed king and that one day he would rule and sit on the throne. He's lost his nerve like Elijah in 1 Kings 19 when Jezebel made that threat that before the sun goes down he would be dead and he's sitting underneath the juniper tree asking that God would take away his life.

You notice how the author puts it and there seems to be some significance to the verb in verse 2, so David arose and went over. He crossed the boundary. He went over to the Philistines. He crossed the boundary. He went out of the land where God was present with His people and he went to pagan land with six hundred men and families and wives, perhaps a thousand, fifteen hundred, perhaps a couple of thousand people. But you say, "Stress will make you do things like that. You know, have pity on David. He's under stress. His life is in danger. He's not had a moments rest for a long time and stress will make you make bad decisions."

Is he right or is he wrong? You're members of a jury now. You can't sit on the fence here. Is he right or is he wrong?

II. Charge 2: Is David a murderer?

Here's the second charge: David is charged with mass murder. He sets out. After he's been in Gath he asks to be moved from under the nose of King Achish, understandable. He's given this country town, Ziklag and the entourage of fifteen hundred people — a lot of mouths to feed wandering around the hills of Judea, a lot of mouths to feed. And he begins to go on raids, working now for King Achish. He's a mercenary. Here's a mercenary, going on killing sprees in the southern most parts, going all the way down to the borders of Egypt among these tribes — Geshurites, Girzites, Amalekites — killing them, killing them all, men and women and presumably children. It's a wholesale slaughter. It's a scorched earth policy against these desert tribes robbing their plunder and goods and even stripping them of their clothes.

One commentator calls him "the butcher of the south." Ladies and gentlemen I give you David, the butcher of the south. And don't think for one minute that David isn't capable of doing that because he's already shown it in his revenge on Nabal, the oaf with too much money but a better wife. And if Abigail hadn't intervened he'd have slaughtered them all. But wait a minute, these tribes, the Geshurites and Girzites and the Amalekites, these were "the inhabitants of the land from of old", verse 8. These are what we can call Canaanites.

David is, in fact, engaged in holy war. He's doing the job that Saul should have been doing. He is clearing the land in a holy war. What God had said they should

do in Exodus 17 and Deuteronomy 25, that they were to go into the land of Canaan and wipe them out. Now we're not members of the jury, we're not here tonight to ascertain the ethics of holy war. We are assuming that holy war is right and David, David is engaging in the completion of what God had written in the Torah, clearing out these tribes.

Is he guilty or innocent?

III. Charge 3: Is David a liar?

Charge number three: the defendant or the accused is charged with lying, boldfaced, unadulterated lying. You see, the reason he doesn't allow anybody to live in these raids is that they would tell on him because when King Achish asks where he has been, he tells Achish that he has been in the Negeb, that is in the lower, southern Judean countryside, plundering Judah, Achish's enemies.

He lies. There's no covering this over, there's no whitewashing this — he lies. He's done it before. He told Jonathan to lie when he was absent, you remember from that feast, so that Jonathan could detect Saul's mood. His own wife lied, Michal, who has now been given to someone else. She lies when Saul's troops came to find him in his house. She told a boldfaced lie because David told her to. In this very predicament with Achish in Gath he had feigned madness. It's another form of lying. It's deception.

And it's always wrong to lie, or is it?

This isn't you see, this isn't the ethics that there are no moral absolutes. No, that's not what we're saying. We're saying in times of war is it right to deceive in times of war. The D Day landings on the shores of northern France there was an elaborate, an elaborate deception for months, and elaborate deception to fool the Nazis were too inevitable. If ever you were a person to be taken, D-Day landings was inevitable, but the place was unknown and there was an elaborate plot to deceive the Nazis which worked. So therefore these ethics of truth-telling and deception take on a different form in times of war. Some of us believe, and members of the jury here tonight, there are opinions here; there are five or six different views about lying.

My position, and I've held it fairly consistently for the last thirty-five years ever since I heard it taught to me in class at Reformed Theological Seminary in 1977, that we live in a fallen world. We live in a fallen world where moral absolutes can clash against each other and sometimes, sometimes as in the case when they're asking you, "Have you Jews hidden underneath the floorboards?" what are you going to say? You don't have time to say, "Give me a day or two to think about this. I need to consult J. I. Packer. I need to call Ligon. He's not answering the phone. Give me a few days and I'll get —" "No, you've got to answer there and

then. What are you going to say? And I'm going to say, "No I do not."

And am I going to say that what I've just said is ethically correct? No, I'm not. I'm going to say, "It's the only thing I can do but it's a sin and I'm going to confess it and ask God to forgive me about it afterwards."

David is before King Achish and he's being asked, "Where have you been today?" and he says the only thing that he can say. He says, "I've been raiding the southern Negeb of Judea" and he lies because this is war and these are the ethics of war.

Now, is David innocent or guilty?

While you're thinking about that, members of the jury, let me add little pieces of information here just to help you think this through. First, that the writer of 1 Samuel chapter 27, the author of 1 Samuel chapter 27, whether that's the human author or whether that's the Holy Spirit Himself, does not tell you whether David is innocent or guilty. Isn't that frustrating or what? Because you and I are being charged with a solemn task to find whether David is innocent or guilty and the text does not help us. Let me add, while you're still pondering — I'm going to send you out in a minute to come with a verdict. 1 Chronicles tells us, 1 Chronicles round about chapters 8, 9, and 10, repeats this period of history. 1 Chronicles tells us that during this period when David was in Ziklag, that thousands, thousands of Saul's men came over to David. They saw him as a leader. They saw that God was with him.

Is he innocent or guilty?

IV. Charge 4: Is David guilty of treason?

And I have to say to you tonight, well how are you doing, by the way? How's your moral, ethical conscience doing on this ethical, multi-ethical dilemma, as you put David in the dark and you begin to judge him and you say, "David, David how could you do this?" And then turn to chapter 28 just for a second, the first two verses, because it gets a little worse. "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 into the army.'" Oops. "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.'" Oops. David, now because of the mess that he's got himself into, he now has to fight against his own people. So charge number four: treason. Is he innocent or guilty?

You know, do you ever watch one of those programs it says, just when it's getting really exciting, it says, "To be continued." I hate that. I absolutely hate that. That's why I record things if I suspect that's going to happen I won't watch part one until

I know that I can immediately watch part two. And the writer does it here. He says, "To be continued" because the answer won't come until chapter 30.

Now some of you are saying, "Where's Jesus in this text? Where's Jesus in this text?" And He ain't there. You can search for Him everywhere in this text and you won't find Jesus. Let me ask a better question. Not, "Where is Jesus in this text?" — let me ask a better question. What is Jesus saying in this text? Members of the jury, what is Jesus saying in this text to you tonight? "Beware of the leaven of the scribes and the Pharisees." What is Jesus saying to you in this text? "Judge not lest you be judged." Now I know that's the most misquoted text in all the Bible, but don't you think, don't you think that as you're sitting in judgment on David Jesus is saying to you, "Be very careful because underneath the layer of epidermis lies Phariseeism, the spirit of one-up-manship, the spirit of Johnny-goody-two-shoes that says, "I can sit in judgment on David who's tried to save his life in a time of unparalleled difficulty."

I have been trying to judge David all week long. For my part, I think I pretty much exonerate him on all counts for my part.

But maybe, maybe you come down on the other side and maybe, maybe you're saying tonight, "Guilty on all four charges."

I don't want you in my jury. I really don't want you in my jury. Beware, beware of the leaven of the scribes and Pharisees that somehow we place ourselves on a model plane that somehow or other makes us better than David. These are extraordinary circumstances, incredibly difficult circumstances, and it's the easiest thing in the world to sort of condemn him.

For sure, he's not my Savior. For sure, he's not Jesus. We need a Savior and it's not David.

But this passage, this passage is saying, be very careful. Be very careful that you do not move away from that point that says, you know, I am just a sinner like David, capable of making decisions like David, capable of making wrong decisions like David.

What are we going to sing? We're going to sing, "The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose I will not, I will not desert to His foes." Praise God for that. Praise God for that.

Let's pray.

Father we find ourselves sitting in judgment on some of these battle characters, even David himself and we have never sat in judgment like that upon ourselves. And if we began to do so, for sure the verdict would be guilty as charged and more. So we bless You tonight for the Gospel, we bless You for the gift of Your

Son and for forgiveness through the blood of the cross. In Jesus' name we thank You. Amen.

Please stand. Receive the Lord's benediction. Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

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