

1 Samuel 27:1-28:2 | “Inconsistent Faith, Unstoppable God”

*Preached on May 15, 2022 by Pastor Matt Brown*

Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel 27 today.

We are back in the book of 1 Samuel, but we are nearing the end. *[pauseee]*

There was this one time in my life where whenever I went into a certain room, I got a different outcome when I flipped the light switch on.

Has this ever happened to you?

For some reason, (probably because of a bad ballast), one day you would switch the light on and it would work like a light should work.

But the next, it wouldn't turn on at all. *[pause]*

It would be frustrating because you never knew what to expect when you turned it on.

Would this day be a day of light or a day of darkness?

That light was *inconsistent*. *[pauseee]*

So also, like that light, in our story this morning, we find an inconsistent David.

In the chapter before this, David had a second chance to kill Saul, but he didn't, as he trusted that the Lord would deal with Saul.

But now in our story this morning, we find a different David.

This David is a more fearful David, for just listen to what he says, starting in verse 1...*[read 27:1-4]*

David is fearful, for he thinks that if he stays in Israelite territory that Saul will eventually kill him, and he decides to go into enemy territory.

He's really going from one enemy to the other.

He takes his family and all of his men, and goes to live with the Philistines. *[pause]*

Achish lets David stay there probably because of that common idea, “My enemy's enemy is my friend.”

Saul hears of David's departure and no longer seeks him, for any seeking after David would end up as a battle against the Philistines. *[pause]*

So David is with the Philistines for a time, and he approaches Achish, the king, starting in verse 5. *[read 27:5-7]*

This is ingenious on David's part.

By asking to be in an outlying town, he can get away from the watchful eye of the Philistine king, and can have more freedom.

And Achish sees this as a good deal for himself, for I'm sure his own people didn't like having 600 plus Israelites hanging around their royal city. *[pause]*

So what's David going to do while living in the country town of Ziklag? Let's find out in verse 8...*[read 27:8-12]*

Even in enemy territory, David's working on behalf of Israel.

How? He's making raids against different people groups who were in Israel's promised land.

You see, God had promised that land to Israel, but in the time of Joshua, they had failed to drive all the inhabitants out.<sup>1</sup>

So David is actually taking care of Israelite business, while appearing to be pro-Philistine. *[pause]*

What David would do was that he would kill every person in the raid, so that Achish wouldn't find out who he was attacking.

And then when he would bring the spoils to Achish, he would tell him that he was fighting someone else. *[pause]*

He would say that he's fighting Israelite-related groups, so that Achish was deceived into thinking that David was ostracizing himself from Israel. *[pause]*

As a result of this, Achish thinks that David is an enthusiastic and eager convert to Philistia [Phil-li-stia], but little did he know that David was no Israelite traitor.

But this leads David into a sticky situation, which we see in the very beginning of chapter 28, verses 1 and 2. *[read 28:1-2]*

In Achish's mind, David and his men were his mercenaries, and he tells them that they must fight in the war against Israel. *[pause]*

This puts David in a tough spot.

Either he says, "No," and his cover with Achish is blown, or he has to go fight against his own people. *[pause]*

He responds very ambiguously to the king by saying, "you shall know what your servant can do."

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<sup>1</sup> See Joshua 13:1-2.

So does that mean that the king will find out what he can do *for* him or *against* him? That's the ambiguousness to it. *[pause]*

The king likes this, knows David's skill in battle, and determines to make him his bodyguard for life.

And the story just ends abruptly, leaving you with a cliffhanger.

It's like a big "TO BE CONTINUED..." has flashed up on the screen. *[pause]*

Will David actually fight against his own people? Or will he turn on Achish?

The ending will be picked up in chapter 29 after a story of Saul, so we'll have to find out the ending in a couple Sundays. *[pauseeee]*

*But reflecting on our story this morning, what do we notice? First...*

### **I. The Inconsistency of our Faith**

We are inconsistent people, aren't we?

And that's what we see with David here in this story. *[pause]*

Now maybe you're sitting there wondering why I say that, for the story doesn't tell us explicitly that David was wrong for going to the Philistines.

And that's what you will find many times in the Bible.

There are times where there's something questionable and the author doesn't tell us clearly whether it was right or wrong.

So we have to pick up on some clues that the writer leaves us. *[pause]*

Now you need to know that there are *some* people who believe that David's escape to Philistine territory was good, but I take the position that it wasn't.

Why? I believe that the writer is trying to highlight how we should view this story by giving us David's motivation for fleeing up front in verse 1. *[pause]*

Back in the last chapter, David had a prime opportunity to kill Saul, but he didn't.

And David tells us the reason when he says of Saul, "As the Lord lives, the Lord will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish."<sup>2</sup> *[pause]*

So he has confidence that God will deal with Saul, and now he uses the same Hebrew word translated 'perish' to say that Saul will catch him and *he* will perish.

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Samuel 26:10.

Doesn't make sense, right?

He was so confident in God taking care of him in chapter 26, but now he thinks *he* will perish, instead of Saul. *[pause]*

Also back in the last chapter, David knew that the Lord had given Saul into his hand,<sup>3</sup> and even confidently said...

“May my life be precious in the sight of the Lord, and may he deliver me out of all tribulation.”<sup>4</sup>

But now he acts like God isn't even reigning, for it's like he forgets all of the promises of God and past acts of deliverance in his life. *[pause]*

Think of all the past deliverances...

Did he forget Goliath? Did he forget the Nabal incident?

Did he forget all the times that God saved him from spear throws, murder plots, and even when he had to act insane?

What about at Keilah, when he sought the Lord as to what to do?

What about the two times that he could have killed Saul? *[pauseeee]*

Think also about the promise of God upon his life...

Did he forget about how he was anointed and promised to be king?

Did he forget about Jonathan's affirmation of his future kingship?

What about how even Saul knew he was going to be king, and how Abigail showed great confidence in that promise, also?<sup>5</sup> *[pause]*

How could David show great displays of faith in the face of intimidating circumstances, yet now he thinks that Saul will kill him? *[pause]*

David, isn't God your refuge? Why then are you seeking refuge among the Philistines?

David, aren't you the one who wrote in Psalm 56:4, “...In God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?”

Didn't God through the prophet tell you to go to the land of Judah when you were hanging out in Moab?<sup>6</sup> *[pauseeee]*

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<sup>3</sup> See 1 Samuel 26:23.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Samuel 26:24.

<sup>5</sup> See 1 Samuel 16-26 for all of these things.

<sup>6</sup> See 1 Samuel 22:5.

How hard we can be on David, when we do the same, yet way more often.

We are inconsistent people, just like David.

One day, we are trusting God for our needs, the next, we are overcome with worry, wondering if our needs will be met.

One day, we are believing the promises of God, singing, “Standing on the promises that cannot fail, when the howling storms of doubt and fear assail.”<sup>7</sup>

The next day, when the “howling storms of doubt and fear assail,” we are no longer standing on those promises, but feel like we are in sinking sand, and the promises are the furthest thing from our minds. *[pauseeeee]*

We are forgetful, inconsistent people of faith.

We forget the promises of God.

We forget His past acts of power and might.

Like the Israelites complaining about food when they have the God who provides manna and who delivered them out of Egypt, so we act the same. *[pauseeee]*

Doesn't this inconsistency in our lives remind us that we are “works in progress”?

It reflects the theological truth of progressive sanctification.

Even though we are saved and forgiven, that doesn't mean that we are morally perfect, sinless creatures.

We can never feel like we have made it and can sit back and do nothing.

We don't reach a place of moral perfection on this side of Heaven, so we must take up our cross daily and seek to walk by the Spirit everyday.<sup>8</sup> *[pauseeee]*

Just because we had an amazing spiritual victory yesterday doesn't mean that the battle doesn't continue today.

Satan can use that spiritual victory to bring you down, if you let him.

David's amazing faith-filled moments didn't preclude him from having times of wavering faith. *[pauseeeee]*

When you look at David's motivation for fleeing, you see that he didn't look to the Lord for guidance, but he looked inward, for we are told that he “said in his heart”. *[pauseeee]*

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<sup>7</sup> “Standing on the Promises” by Russell Kelso Carter, 1886. Lyrics found at: <https://www.godtube.com/popular-hymns/standing-on-the-promises/>.

<sup>8</sup> See Luke 9:23-24 & Galatians 5:16.

The long and tiring hunt for his life had finally gotten to him.

Fear overtook him, and it may have been the added weight of thinking about his family with him.

The constant running and hiding had gotten too much, and all he could think about was being killed by Saul as he looked with worry around every corner. *[pause]*

As Matthew Henry says, “Long trials are in danger of tiring the faith and patience even of very good men.”<sup>9</sup> *[pause]*

This is what can happen to us when we are constantly pressed on every side with uncertainty and danger.

Fear can all of a sudden overtake us because we start to look inward and not upward. *[pause]*

Like David, when circumstances cloud our view, and we can’t see in front of us, we are tempted to no longer live by faith, but by sight.

We look inward and think, “What can *I* do to solve this?”

And that’s exactly what David was thinking...

He was considering the constant danger of Saul, and thought to himself, “Let me think up a plan to get out of this.” *[pauseeee]*

Here’s a question to ponder for yourself.

When you come upon a hard, scary, or difficult situation, what do you do?

Do you pray about it?

Do you remember God’s promises and past works in your life?

Many times we don’t.

Many times we act like David, where we talk to ourselves and try to come up with a plan.

Essentially, we trust our own solutions, wisdom, and power. *[pauseeeee]*

You can see David’s mindset further when he says, “There is nothing better for me than that I should escape to the land of the Philistines.”

Really David?

Absolutely nothing better for you to do? What about seek the Lord’s guidance as to what to do? *[pause]*

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<sup>9</sup> Henry, Matthew. Found at: [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/1Sa/1Sa\\_027.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/1Sa/1Sa_027.cfm).

The contrast of David in chapter 26 and David in chapter 27 is glaring.

Last chapter, he had a chance to kill Saul and end it all, but trusted that God would take care of Saul and himself.

Now he says, "I'm going to perish by the hand of Saul." [pause]

Think also how David's lack of faith in going to the Philistines affected him.

He put himself in a bad spot where he felt like he had to kill every inhabitant of the towns that he attacked. [pause]

David's sin had put him in a bad spot where he had to potentially go fight against His own people in war. [pause]

David in this chapter starts to become a deceptive, kind of shady person, which is far from the dignity and trust that a covenantal king should be displaying. [pause]

So what are we to do with such an image of David as this man of inconsistent faith at times?

It reminds us that David is a lot like us.

The men and women of faith in the Bible weren't perfect, but a lot of times they reflect how we can be. [pause]

It also highlights God's grace, doesn't it?

No one deserves God's goodness, for we all fall short, but God in His grace, determines to be with us and help us even amidst our weak faith. [pause]

*Like David, we are people of inconsistent faith, but thanks be to the Lord that His purposes are unstoppable...that's point 2...*

## II. The Unstoppable Purposes of God

Have you ever faced something unstoppable?

One such thing is a storm. [pause]

No matter who you are (unless you're Jesus) you can't stop a storm.

If you are outside when a storm comes, you can't stop it from happening, but you can only find cover.

No amount of wishing, thinking, or doing will make it stop.

It is unstoppable from the mere human side of things. [pause]

You can try to build a wall to make it stop, but the storm will just keep going.

You can try to lift up your hands to make it stop, but it will just keep on moving and pelt you with wind and rain. *[pause]*

Storms are truly unstoppable, but there's something even more unstoppable than a storm: God's purposes. *[pause]*

Many times, if we want to do something, we are prevented from doing it by something else.

But not for the Lord - if He wants something to happen, it happens.

No matter who puts their hands up, or who tries to put obstacles in the way - God will do what He wants. *[pause]*

That's what we find here in this story.

David's lack of faith didn't mess up God's purposes.

Neither did Achish's authority over David stop God's purposes from happening. *[pause]*

Think of it this way...

Even when Achish, the Philistine king, thought he had the upper hand on Israel, he didn't. *[pause]*

He thought he had control and use of one of Israel's best leaders in David, but he didn't.

David was deceiving him and carrying out his own agenda without him even knowing it. *[pause]*

He thought he was being wise by giving Ziklag to David, but he was shooting himself in the foot.

Why? Because he handed over the town to David and Israel had control of it all the way up to the writing of 1 Samuel. *[pause]*

Achish thought that Israel was weakened by David's raids, but he was wrong.

David was pursuing Israel's objectives while making it seem like Philistine tasks were being completed. *[pauseeee]*

The situation of David in Philistine territory seemed like a dark period, but in God's providence it was a time of great strides for Israel.

God was still building His kingdom by adding Ziklag to it. *[pause]*

So also, even if the situations seem bleak, God is building His kingdom.

Even in times where the church in America is making some wrong choices, God's providence is moving His purposes along.

Do you believe this? *[pause]*



Do you trust that even in the bleakness and chaos of our day, God is accomplishing His objectives and building His kingdom?

He is!

People are still being saved and coming to the Light, even though the Darkness seems to be everywhere.

There are people longing for God's Word and growing, even though others disregard it and push it to the side. *[pauseeee]*

Not only was God building His kingdom through gaining a city, but He was building His kingdom through conquering His enemies. *[pause]*

The Lord used David's raids to push more and more people out of the land promised to Israel. *[pauseeee]*

Though we don't always see it, even amidst the sin of the world, God is conquering more and more ground.

More people groups are hearing the Gospel. *[pause]*

Think about this...

Even during the really tough time of COVID lockdowns, it pushed churches to learn how to put their sermons online.

Now the Gospel is on the internet more than it ever was before!

More and more people are being confronted with the message of the good news of Jesus Christ. *[pauseeee]*

This isn't the first time that a biblical person of faith has done something questionable and God's purposes have still gone forward.

Many "heroes" of the faith have failed, but God's work is still going strong.

Think of Peter's denials of Jesus.<sup>10</sup>

Or just read the book of Judges and you have examples galore, but also, think about Abraham. *[pause]*

Abraham goes down to Egypt, doesn't trust God to protect him, and lies to Pharaoh about Sarah being his wife.

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<sup>10</sup> See Mark 14:66-72.

Yet through it all, God protected Abraham and still fulfilled his purposes.<sup>11</sup> *[pause]*

God wouldn't go back on His promise to bless Abraham, and God wouldn't go back on His promise to make David king, no matter what.

When God promises it, He does it.

Though David had a lack of faith, yet God still used David to do some good things. *[pauseeee]*

Even amid our inconsistent faith, God's purposes go on.

Though we are inconsistent in our faith, God is still in control.

Isn't that encouraging?

God's purposes don't rely solely upon our shoulders, and the Gospel reminds us of that constantly. *[pause]*

The Gospel reminds us that we are sinners, we are weak, we are inconsistent in our faith, but Christ is not.

Christ did what we couldn't do.

Our faith was inconsistent, but His perfect life was perfectly consistent and righteous for us.

He accomplished what we couldn't in living for the Father.

And then He even died the death that we deserved, taking our place. *[pause]*

Praise God that God's purposes didn't rest on our shoulders, but they rested on the Son of God's, who carried them out to flawless completion.

And now because of him, we get to experience complete forgiveness and everlasting life by simply placing our faith in Him. *[pauseeeee]*

In this story, the enemy (Achish) thought that he was winning, but in reality, Israel's purposes were going forward.

So also, Christ's death seemed like victory to the enemy, but it was their defeat.

He conquered through His death and resurrection. *[pause]*

The Lord's purposes always go forward, they never fail. *[pauseeee]*

What's truly amazing is this...

Though David's faith was inconsistent, God still worked through him.

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<sup>11</sup> See Genesis 12:10-20.

He shows off his power through our weakness.<sup>12</sup> *[pause]*

I love this quote by commentator Dale Ralph Davis...

“The Bible does not claim that God’s servants are dipped in Clorox so they will be infallibly sin-free and attractive to you.

The living God does not have clean material to work with.

And don’t get sentimental when you sing hymns about the Potter and the clay; remember it’s only sinful clay the Potter works with.

We should not criticize the Potter because of the clay but rather marvel that he stoops to work with such stuff.”<sup>13</sup> *[pauseeee]*

God in His mercy and grace works despite our foolishness and lack of faith.

His glory can shine through our muddied lives. *[pause]*

This pushes us to no longer look at our amazingness, but look at God’s.

So although our inconsistent faith can’t mess up God’s purposes, yet He wants to use us (imperfect clay pots) for His good purposes. *[pause]*

So this doesn’t mean that we sit back and say, “Well it doesn’t matter what I do!”

But we live for Him, knowing that our all-powerful God wants us to live for Him and wants to use us for His own glory. *[pause]*

*So we see from this passage that...*

**Our inconsistent faith doesn’t mess up God’s good purposes!**

Though David wasn’t exactly the shining example of righteousness and faith in this story, God was at work through it all.

He truly works all things together for good.<sup>14</sup>

And thank the Lord that he doesn’t give up and abandon us because of our inconsistent faith!

God was still with David through it all, and God has promised to always be with us through everything that we face. *[pause]*

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<sup>12</sup> A reference to 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

<sup>13</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 287.

<sup>14</sup> A reference to Romans 8:28.

So this morning we have talked a lot about how we are like David in our inconsistent faith, but I want us to consider one more thing as we conclude this morning.

I want us to consider how Christ is NOT like David.

David is the future king of Israel, and he even someday becomes one of the greatest kings in Israel...

...But this story kind of knocks David off of his pedestal, as we realize that even faith-filled David falls short of being the promised Messiah. *[pause]*

David's deception in this story sort of looks like the snake more than the snake-crusher.

He could be a man of great faith, and then right after be a man devoid of faith in God. *[pause]*

Even the most promising of people in Israel fails, and it pushes us to see that only the future Davidic king is worthy, Jesus Christ.

Only David's descendent, Jesus, trusts in God fully, even when death is certain.

Only He is able, only He is the perfect King, for "He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth."<sup>15</sup>

Only He could be the one to deal with sin, to conquer the enemy, and provide us with salvation. *[pause]*

So in our faith the size of a mustard seed<sup>16</sup>, we look to Jesus, who did the work for us, and who perfectly accomplished God's purposes...

...Standing amazed that He still wants to use us in this world.

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<sup>15</sup> 1 Peter 2:22.

<sup>16</sup> An allusion to Luke 17:6.