**Week Three – January 31/February 1 – I Samuel 26:1-28:2**

**Introduction**

God’s provision and faithfulness is seen again and again; David’s resolve to rest only in that faithfulness begins to see more cracks. Instead of trusting God for his provision and protection, he installs his own plan, which involves hiding under the service of a pagan king (who happens to be Israel’s biggest enemy at the time) and stacking deception on top of deception. **Tonight we will see David, who we know as a man after God’s heart (I Samuel 13:14), forsaking that for a season and turning to his own plans. Can you think of a time in your life when you were tempted to or actually did turn to your own plans instead of waiting on God or obeying God?** (Leaders, we often start with easier “wade in/warm up” questions, so be patient as you ask this because you are asking for higher vulnerability!)

**Read I Samuel 26:1-12**

**As you compare the leadership of Saul and David and where each one places himself in this chapter, what do you observe?** **What is the irony of Saul choosing such a strong “safety net” of placing himself at the center of an encampment of 3000 select Israelite troops? What is Abishai’s suggestion and why does David refute it?** This section ends with strong reminders/indicators of God’s sovereignty in both (1) David’s assertion that the Lord will take care of Saul’s end at the proper place and time and (2) the commentary in verse 12 that “the Lord had put them into a deep sleep.”

**Read I Samuel 26:13-25**

Compare the first account of David’s sparing of Saul’s life in chapter 24 with our account tonight in chapter 26. **What are some similarities and some differences in the two accounts?**

One of the differences is that this time he does not address Saul first, but instead Abner and his men. **In verses 15-16, how and why did David chastise Abner and his men?**

Verses 19 and 20 provide some potential insights on David’s state of mind and heart. There are a couple indicators here that David is in a bad place and is not himself. There are two phrases in verse 19 that sound uncharacteristic of David - “driven me from my share in the Lord’s inheritance” and “They…have said, ‘Go serve other gods.’” **What is it about these phrases that do not sound like the David that we have come to know?** (*In this rare moment David sounds full of blame and devoid of choices, even though God’s protection and direction continue to be evident.*)

Verse 20 sounds more like words we are accustomed to hearing from David, “Now do not let my blood fall to the ground far from the presence of the Lord.” **What is the great statement of faith and trust couched within David words here?** (*David is more concerned with being in the presence of the Lord than the shedding of his own blood!!*)

**There is a lot in David’s declaration in verses 22-24 - what phrases get your attention or are most meaningful to you in those verses?**

**Read I Samuel 27:1-7**

In this chapter David’s faith in Yahweh comes in the weakest expression that we’ve seen. His perpetual running from Saul has taken its toll, and we see a David who reacts with extremes and turns continually to deception. Ironically, one of the saddest parts of David’s extremes to get away from Saul is that they are no longer needed, because at the close of chapter 26 the two have seen each other for the last time. **What is it about David’s thoughts in 27:1 that seem so contrary to the way he has been thinking and has operated? What would you have said to David if he had spoken his “the best thing I can do is escape to the land of the Philistines” plan to you?** In verse 4 we see that one aspect of David’s crazy plan at least partially “works” - Saul has spent a lot of time and resources in an attempt to snuff out one life, but he is not willing to continue this hunt in dangerous enemy territory.

In verses 5-7 David adds another layer of deception. He feigns unworthiness to be in same city as the king, but is really just wanting to secure a more remote location where the king cannot observe his actions. (More about this in the rest of the chapter.) **Have you ever entered into some aspect of deception which required more deception and lies to cover up the first one? If someone confided in you that they were stuck in a string of deception like that, what advice would you give them?** We don’t know why David thought his only option was to live among the Philistines. Some have argued it was mostly to find a “safe” place to get some good, regular sleep (not in caves!) for his men and their families. Whatever the reason, verse 7 tells us that they lived there for 1 year and 4 months.

**Read I Samuel 27:8 - 28:2**

Verse 9 is especially difficult to hear as we see that David’s deceit has led him to a new level of ruthlessness. **Why is David adopting this “he did not leave a man or woman alive” approach?** (*Likely because he does not want anyone escaping from those cities to tell Achish what is really happening. David is ruthlessly covering his tracks with a “dead men tell no tales” mentality*.) Verses 10-11 reveal David’s plan - David wanted Achish to think that he was leading raids against the central enemy of Achish, which just happened to be David’s own people. I actuality, David was raiding (and killing) lesser common enemies of both the Philistines and the Israelites instead.

Reading verse 12 it again seems that his crazy plan “works” to some degree. Pragmatism has begun to replace godliness and leaning on God as his true strength. David has embraced patterns in which it can become easy to be numb to his sins. After all, his sins are “working” for him and making some aspects of his life easier, or so he thinks. **Read Ephesians 4:17-24. What do verses 17-19 teach us about the danger of desensitizing ourselves to sin? What do verses 20-24 teach us about how and to what results that a Christ-follower turns from these patterns?**

Our passage ends with a bit of a cliff hanger as it looks like the bill has come due on David’s deceptiveness. In the coming battle will David turn on his new fellow citizens or will he be forced to fight against the Israelites? **David’s answer to Achish seems to be the ultimate trying to buy time, non-committal answer. Looking at that answer, how do you feel about David right now: impressed at his quick thinking? Sad for all the ways his sins have painted him in a corner? Hopeful that he will “snap out of it”? Other?**

**Conclusion**

As we have seen throughout the second half of I Samuel, David’s writings as a Psalmist often illuminate specific moments in his life story and how he trusted God there. Another one of those is Psalm 18, where David rejoices about how God has delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. **Read Psalm 18:1-3.** This is David as we have seen him in earlier passages - overflowing love for the Lord, placing his security in God alone, and giving all credit and glory to Him. **What phrases or sentences in these verses encourage you and grab your attention the most? What do you think the coming week would look like for you if you were able to constantly set your mind on those truths?**

**Pray for each other in rooting yourselves in this kind of faith in God this week.**