

CHAPTER 27

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST SAMUEL 27

David, fearing he should perish by the hand of Saul at one time or another, went into the land of the Philistines, which Saul hearing of, sought no more after him, (^{<0270>}1 Samuel 27:1-4); and finding favour in the eyes of the king of Gath, desired a place in his country might be given him to reside in; and accordingly Ziklag was given him, (^{<0275>}1 Samuel 27:5-7); from whence he made excursions into the land of the Amalekites, and others, and utterly destroyed them; but imposed on the king of Gath, pretending he had made his road into the southern parts of Judah, (^{<0278>}1 Samuel 27:8-12).

Ver. 1. *And David said in his heart*, etc.] Within himself, and to himself; while he was pondering things in his own mind, and considering the circumstances in which he was, and things appearing, very gloomy to him, he falls into a fit of unbelief and thus addresses himself:

I shall now one day perish by the hand of Saul; for though he was returned to his place, he knew he was restless and uneasy, very inconstant and unstable, and not at all to be depended on; yea, he might conclude that Saul, observing that God was with him in protecting and defending him, and by delivering him into his hands once and again, he would be the more jealous of him, and envious at him, and seek all opportunities and advantages against him; and he feared that one time or another such would offer, and would be taken, and so he should perish by him: this was a strange fit of unbelief he was sunk into, and very unaccountable and unreasonable it was, had he but considered his being anointed king by the Lord, the promise of God to him, which could not fail, and the providence of God that watched over him from time to time:

[there is] nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; which may seem strange, when he was advised by the Prophet Gad to depart from the land of Moab, and go into the land of Judah, (^{<0225>}1 Samuel 22:5), and where he had been so wonderfully preserved; and when he was in so much danger, when in the land of the Philistines before, insomuch that he was obliged to feign himself mad,

(^{<02113>}1 Samuel 21:13); and seeing this also was the very thing he lately dreaded, and cursed the men that should be the cause of his going out of his own land into an idolatrous one:

and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel; hearing that he was gone into a foreign country, would seek for him no more in any part of the land of Israel, and so despair of ever getting him into his hands, would lay aside all thoughts about him for the future:

so shall I escape out of his hand; and be for ever safe: these were the carnal reasonings of his mind, under the prevalence of unbelief; and shows what poor weak creatures the best of men are, and how low their graces may sink as to exercise, when left to themselves.

Ver. 2. *And David arose,* etc.] From the place where he was:

and he passed over; the borders of land of Canaan:

with the six hundred men that [were] with him; having neither lost any, nor had any added to him, since he was at Keilah, (^{<02313>}1 Samuel 23:13);

unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath; whether this was the same Achish David was with before, (^{<02110>}1 Samuel 21:10-13), is not certain; it seems as if he was not the same, since he is described as the son of Maach, as if it was to distinguish him from him; though it is not improbable that he was the same person. Some think ^{f532} that he is described not from his father, but from his mother, whose name was Maacha. The circumstances of David were now very much altered from what they were when he went to Gath before; then he went secretly, now openly; then as a person unknown, now as well known; then alone, now with six hundred men; then when discovered he was seized by the princes of Gath, and brought before the king, and was driven from his presence; but now he came either at the invitation of Achish, hearing how he had been treated by Saul, and thinking to attach him to his interest, and make him more and more the enemy of Saul, and so free himself from a very powerful one, and of whose wisdom and prudence, and military skill, and courage, and valour, he might hope to avail himself; or David sent an embassy to him, to treat with him about his coming into his country, and settlement in it, and terms to mutual satisfaction were agreed upon.

Ver. 3. *And David dwelt with Achish at Gath,* etc.] The metropolis of his kingdom, called, (^{<0275>}1 Samuel 27:5), the royal city:

he and his men, every man with his household; or family; which they brought with them, to secure them from the malice of Saul; who in their absence might have destroyed them, as being the families of traitors and fugitives, and might be the more readily received by Achish, as he might hope for some advantage from them; and besides were pledges of their fidelity to him, and of their design to continue with him:

[*even*] *David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife*; who had been the wife of Nabal; of these (see Gill on "^{4025B}1 Samuel 25:43").

Ver. 4. *And it was told Saul that David was fled to Gath*, etc.] Who very probably had his spies out to watch his motions, and report to him where he was, and what he was doing:

and he sought no more again for him; by which it seems as if he would have sought after him again, had he continued in the land of Israel; but now being gone, and in an enemy's country, and having nothing to fear from him while there, he laid aside all thoughts of seeking after him.

Ver. 5. *And David said unto Achish*, etc.] After he had been some time with him:

if I have now found grace in thine eyes; or was in favour, as he thought himself to be, by various instances of respect shown him:

let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: he does not ask for a city or town, but a place in one of them, though one was given him; but of whom he asks it, it is not easy to say; though it is certain that Achish gave it him, (^{4027B}1 Samuel 27:6). Perhaps he might desire it might be given him by Achish, with the consent of his princes and nobles, or at least of his privy council; that so it might be to general satisfaction, and the grant more authentic; though it may be impersonally read, as in the Vulgate Latin version, "let there be given me", etc. David's view in this might be partly to prevent the envy of the courtiers of Achish, who might think that David was too near the king, and might have too great an interest in him, and receive too many of his favours, and become his chief confidant and prime minister; and partly to preserve himself and people from all temptations to idolatry, and corruptions in religion; as also that he might have an opportunity, without the knowledge of Achish, to fall upon the enemies of Israel; though the excuse he made was as follows:

for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee? for so Gath was; and six hundred men and their families might seem to crowd the city; and this reasoning of his might suggest, that he and his men were a straitening of him, and a burden on him; and it might seem as if he was a rival with him in state and dignity, when he was no other than a servant of his.

Ver. 6. *Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day,* etc.] A city which in the division of the land was given to the tribe of Judah, and after that to the tribe of Simeon, (^{<0151>}Joshua 15:31 19:5); though it seems not to have been possessed by either of them, at least not long, but soon came into the hands of the Philistines, who kept it till this time, and now it returned to its right owners; according to Bunting ^{f533} it was twelve miles from Gath:

wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day; not to the tribe of Judah, though it originally belonged to it, but to the kings of it, it, being granted to David, who quickly after this became king of Judah; and this was annexed to the crown lands, and ever after enjoyed by the kings, of the house of Judah; for this was not given for a temporary habitation, but for perpetual possession. This clause seems to be added by the continuator of this history, after the death of Samuel; who might be Gad or Nathan; some say Ezra, and Abarbinel that Jeremiah was the writer of it.

Ver. 7. *And the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines,* etc.] At Gath and Ziklag:

was a full year and four months; or “days and four months”; days being sometimes put for a year, (^{<0170>}Judges 17:10); though some interpret it not of a year, but of some few days out of the fifth month, besides the four months; so Jarchi and Kimchi; and Josephus ^{f534} makes his abode to be four months and twenty days; but, according to the Septuagint and Vulgate Latin versions, it was only four months; and so it may be rendered, “days, that is, four months”; for according to the Jewish chronology ^{f535} Samuel died four months before Saul, and this flight of David was after the death of Samuel, and when Saul died he left the land of the Philistines, and took the throne of Judah; (see Gill on “^{<0251>}1 Samuel 25:1”).

Ver. 8. *And David and his men went up,* etc.] From Ziklag, where they dwelt:

and invaded the Geshurites; some of the old inhabitants of the land of Canaan, the remains of the Amorites, whose land was given to the half tribe of Manasseh, but could never be expelled; and therefore David had a just right to invade them, and, if he could, either expel or destroy them; (see ^{<6834>}Deuteronomy 3:14 ^{<6825>}Joshua 12:5 13:11,13); these are the Geshurites which are joined with the Philistines, (^{<6832>}Joshua 13:2);

and the Gezrites; the inhabitants of Gezer, which place fell to the tribe of Ephraim; but that tribe could not drive out the inhabitants of it, and therefore David now fell upon them as the enemies of Israel, and seized on their country, as belonging to them, (^{<6848>}Joshua 16:3 ^{<6709>}Judges 1:29);

and the Amalekites; the sworn and implacable enemies of Israel, and whose memory they were laid under obligation to root out. These were such as had escaped the sword of Saul, and had fled to the more distant parts, against whom David now went; and perhaps these had fled to and mixed themselves with the people here mentioned:

for these [nations were] of old the inhabitants of the land; of the land of Canaan;

as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt; (see ^{<6857>}1 Samuel 15:7).

Ver. 9. *And David smote the land*, etc.] In which the above mentioned people dwelt, that is, the inhabitants of it:

and left neither man nor woman alive; for these being the old Canaanites and Amalekites, according to the law of God were not to be spared, but utterly destroyed; which may be observed to remove the charge of cruelty that might be brought against David on this account, (^{<6870>}Deuteronomy 7:2 25:19); though this must be understood of such that came within his reach; for it is certain there were people of these several names after this; (see ^{<6881>}1 Samuel 30:1 ^{<6888>}2 Samuel 3:3 ^{<6895>}1 Kings 9:15);

and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish; at Gath, to make a report of what he had been about and done; and what he brought was a good booty for the support of his men and their families.

Ver. 10. *And Achish said, whither have ye made a road today?* etc.] Or whither had they rushed in, or poured in and spread themselves? or where

had they made their excursion to fetch in the prey and booty they now brought?

and David said, against the south of Judah; he meant against some people that lay to the south of the land of Judah, without it; but expressed himself so, that Achish might think he meant the southern parts of Judah within the country; which, though not a downright lie, was an equivocation, and made with a design to deceive; and was by no means agreeably to the character of David, nor to be defended nor imitated:

and against the south of the Jerahmeelites; these were the descendants of Jerahmeel, the son of Hezron, the grandson of Judah, and so inhabited in the tribe of Judah, and very probably in the southern part of it, (⁴³⁰1 Chronicles 2:9,25,26),

and against the south of the Kenites; the posterity of Jethro; these, at least some of them, at the first seating of the children of Israel in the land of Canaan, went with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which lieth in the south of Arad, (⁴⁰¹⁶Judges 1:16).

Ver. 11. *And David saved neither man nor woman alive to bring [tidings] to Gath*, etc.] How David had fallen upon these people, and destroyed great numbers of them, and carried off their substance; which would have given great offence to Achish, and caused him to have driven him out of his country once more; though Abarbanel is of opinion that these Geshurites, etc. were haters and enemies of Achish, and therefore were smitten and spoiled by David; or otherwise it would have been such a piece of perfidy, rebellion, and ingratitude, as must have made the name of David to stink, since it could not but be known sooner or later; but being the enemies of Achish, no notice was taken of it afterwards, nor inquiry made about it, nor complaint made of it, by any of their neighbours: nor does he suppose they were all cut off, and much less that this was done that it might not be told in Gath what destruction he had made; but that the sense is, that he did not carry the captives to Gath, to be disposed of there; for they would have told from whence they came, and so have contradicted what David said, and what he would have Achish understand, as if he had been out against and smote some of the cities of Judah, that he might place the greater confidence in him; which end would not have been answered, if he had brought any of them to Gath; and so the words may be read without the supplement we make, “spared neither man nor woman alive to bring to Gath”: and so could tell no tales. Though Josephus expressly says ^{f536} that

David spared the men, and abstained from the slaughter of them, fearing lest they should declare to the king what he had done in plundering them:

saying, lest they should tell on us, saying, so did David: in such and such places, such numbers of people he destroyed, and such quantities of cattle and goods he carried off:

and so [will be] his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines: this is what may be expected will be done by him in one place or another, as long as he stays here; nothing will be heard of but desolation and destruction, in some part of the country of the Philistines or another; or among those that were tributaries to them; so that it was not safe that he should be allowed to abide in it.

Ver. 12. *And Achish believed David,* etc.] As he would have him understand his story; imposing upon him by ambiguous terms, insinuating he had been against the southern parts of Judah, when he had been against foreign nations that lay to the south of Judah:

saying, he hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; they shall never forgive him the destruction of their cities, and the inhabitants of them, and the plunder of their goods and cattle; his name will be had in the utmost detestation and abhorrence, and he must never return thither any more:

therefore he shall be my servant for ever: would be glad to continue with him as a servant, and be obliged to serve him faithfully and truly, since his own people, and even those of his own tribe, would never more receive him; it being, as he understood it, the south of Judah that he had been plundering.