

# Divinely Discharged (1 Samuel 29)

## 1. Details (28:1-4; 29:1-2)

- The geographical references of 29:1 indicate that this is a resumptive sentence (it picks up the earlier narrative strand set aside from 28:3-25). While the narrator does not provide a chronological order (chapters 28-30), they are structured intentionally for suspense and resolution.

### Chronological order:

- The Philistine forces are mustered at Aphek, in preparation for moving farther north to confront the Israelite in the Jezreel Valley (29:1).
- At Aphek, the Philistine commanders object to David's presence, and the events narrated in chapters 29-30 occur.
- Subsequently, the Philistines move into Jezreel Valley (about 30 miles away), where they encamp at Shunem. On the opposite valley of the to the south lies the Gilboa range, where Saul deploys his forces to meet the Philistines.
- Saul's visit to the medium at Endor occurs the evening prior to this battle (28:3-25).

## 2. Disagreement (v.2-10)

### A. Distrust of the Philistine commanders (v.3-5): They do not trust David for two reasons:

- *David is a Hebrew*: this was a disparaging name for Israelites by foreigners (4:6, 9; 13:3, 19; 14:11, 21).
- *David's Resume*: David may not have been welcomed among the Philistine commanders because of his past dealings with them (17:51; 18:27, 30). Additionally, the Philistines still know the victory song verbatim (18:7; 21:11; 29:5) and are suspicious about David's true loyalty. They would like David to return to Ziklag for fear of their own "heads" (v.4). They don't trust Achish's "bodyguard."

### B. Dependable nature of David (v.2, 6-10): In response to the concerns of the commanders, Achish defends David's blamelessness (v.3) and is convinced of David's loyalty since he "deserted to him." Achish is convinced that David is still a stench to his own people (27:12). David has been so blameless before Achish (from his duped vantage point) that he likens David to "an angel of God" (v.9). He will also speak to David of his "honesty" (v.6).

- The irony about this conversation between Achish and his commanders is that despite Achish's advocacy, the commanders are the only ones in all of Philistia who really know David.
- Achish acquiesced and conceded to the demands of his Philistines commanders while communicating to David his preference to have David at his side (v.6-7).

- Interestingly, Achish lies to David: the lords were not the ones who disapproved of him (v.6) since the lords refer to the five kings of the five cities in Philistia (Ashdod, Ekron, Gaza, Ashkelon, and Gath). The commanders, who were inferior to Achish, spoke of their complaint (v.3).

## 3. Displeasure (v.8-10)

- Despite Achish's high compliments to David, and dismissal, David argues for his case to stay. He is protesting Achish's decision to send David back to Ziklag. The deceived defends his deceiver, and the relieved disputes his relief. David is protesting the decision without contesting the ground.
- David asks, "what have I done?" (17:29; 20:1; 26:18). This is the first time that David knows he is not innocent.
- While three times "lord" is used (v.4, 8, 10), David is intentionally ambiguous (v.8) in his discussion with Achish. Who is David's "lord and king"? Achish assumes it is himself. Instead, it has been Saul the whole time (24:8; 26:17, 19). Saul is not David's enemy. Achish is!
- David plans to \_\_\_\_\_ Achish (14:21; 28:2; 29:4, 8).

\*David cannot be at this battle, for Saul must die (28:19). David is over 100 miles away when Saul falls on his own sword (31:4).

## 4. Discharged (v.11)

- David is providentially discharged with the highest honors and returns to Ziklag where he can advance the interests of Judah with more flexibility, since all of Philistia's forces has been emptied to fight against Israel (v.1).
- Saul and Achish are like one another in many ways. Both kings:
  - made David their personal bodyguard (22:14; 28:2)
  - were impressed with David, particularly his fighting abilities
  - ended up removing him from the ranks of their armies
  - were responsible for David making his abode in southern Judah
  - badly misjudged David
  - made inappropriate use of oaths taken in the Lord's name (14:39; 29:6)

Saul considered David his enemy, yet he was in fact his most loyal subject. Achish considers David his most loyal subject, but he was actually his most dangerous enemy. Both kings are "just like all of the other nations" (8:5).

Saul has been irrevocably abandoned by the LORD (28:16), while David is providentially and divinely discharged from this supposed predicament. David is unaware of the LORD's providential workings behind the scenes and will never be informed about Saul's visit to the medium at Endor shortly. While there is no mention of the LORD, other than by Achish (v.6, 9), the LORD will superintend all these details, despite David's unbelief and cunning stratagems. David is the LORD's chosen and will be king (13:14; 15:28; 16:3, 12-13, 24:20).