

## The Connections of David: Achish

*Fifth in a series*

1 Samuel 27:1-4

Sunday, September 5, 2021, Aledo UMC

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Pastor Dave Schultz

### Old Testament Lesson, 1 Samuel 27:1-4

<sup>1</sup> But David thought to himself, “One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand.”

<sup>2</sup> So David and the six hundred men with him left and went over to Achish son of Maok king of Gath. <sup>3</sup> David and his men settled in Gath with Achish. Each man had his family with him, and David had his two wives: Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, the widow of Nabal. <sup>4</sup> When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him.

### Sermon, “The Connections of David: Achish”

When we last saw David, he was on the run from the murderous Saul, and nearly turned into a murder himself, on the verge of killing a greedy, boorish fool named Nabal. In fact, Nabal means *fool*. Fortunately, Nabal’s beautiful and wise wife Abigail interceded and convinced David not to reign terror down on her good-for-nothing husband.

David listened to Abigail and spared Nabal’s life, thereby preserving his own reputation as a just leader. Within days, God intervened and struck Nabal dead. David then took his widow Abigail as his wife.

God’s intervention into David’s life through Abigail should have bolstered his faith; instead, it seems as though the boost was short-lived because in chapter 27, we find David doing the improbable.

He is still being pursued by Saul, so he goes down to Gath and makes an alliance with Achish, the prince of Gath. He even goes so far as to mislead Achish into thinking that he—David—was now fighting against his own people in his own Judah.

David’s strategy works because in verse 4, Saul gives up the search for David. The strategy may have worked, but that doesn’t mean the strategy was a good one. Why not? Look again at where David sought refuge: in Gath.

Where have we heard that name before? We heard it in chapter 17: Goliath the Philistine was from Gath. *Why would David hide out in Goliath’s hometown?* Why would David seek refuge in Gath?

I believe David took refuge in Gath because he gave in to temptation. Specifically, David gave in to the temptation of taking matters into his own hands.

Look at verse 1: David *thought to himself*. Instead of praying to God, David was thinking to himself. “*One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul.*” That’s what David thought to himself. That doesn’t sound like the brave young man who stood in front of Goliath and declared, “The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of (Goliath).”<sup>1</sup>

David was completely overlooking that fact that God had a plan for him in Jerusalem: he was going to succeed Saul and become the next king of Israel. Now, for some reason, David was telling himself—God surely wasn’t telling him this—David was telling himself that Saul was going to kill him. For some reason, the great man of faith had had lost his faith in God and was filled with pessimism. So, listening to his own negative thoughts and imaginations—and without consulting with God in prayer—David decides to run away to Gath in the land of the Philistines, the archenemies of Israel. In reality, David was running out of the will of God.

And look who David took with him: his two wives Ahinoam and Abigail, plus 600 fighting men and their wives and children. When you become filled with pessimism and wander out of God’s plan for your life, you drag others down with you. Don’t take matters into your own hands. Don’t go to Gath. Don’t wander into enemy territory. And be careful what you tell yourself.

Like the little song Kathleen referenced a couple of weeks ago, we have to be so very careful of what we see and what we hear because what we see and what we hear can affect our attitude and even our faith. What we see and hear might even lead you out of God’s will and straight into Gath. And let me tell you: nothing can shatter your hope and kill your faith more effectively than watching the news—especially the news out of our nation’s capital.

Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”<sup>2</sup>

I realize that for many people, that’s easier said than done. Many people—including many who love Jesus with all their heart—battle depression. And for those people, these words from Philippians can sound harsh, even cruel. They sound like, “Just get over it,” when there’s no easy way out of depression. And I certainly don’t want to do that.

And yet, it seems clear to me that David went to Gath because he was battling depression. After all, David was a real person with real feelings and despite his victory over the lion and the bear and the Philistine, he spent sixteen months in a blue funk, living in Gath, living in depression. David, of course, lived in a time when psychiatric help and prescription therapy were nonexistent. David had to find other means to help him find his way out of Gath; he had to find other means to help him find his way out of depression. Unfortunately, things go from bad to worse for David in Gath. First, he is rejected by the Achish because his Philistines

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel 17:37a.

<sup>2</sup> Philippians 4:8.

superiors don't trust him. Would you trust David, knowing he had led the defeat of the Philistines after killing Goliath? Nonetheless, being rejected by the Philistines had to be a humiliating blow.

But that wasn't the worst of it because soon thereafter David's two wives were captured by the Amalekites. That's when David finally reached his low point.

I think Georgia Harkness could identify with David. Georgia Harkness was a pioneer in women's ministries. She was a Methodist theologian and seminary professor even before our denomination ordained women. She wrote several books and hymns, including the hymn we just sang, "Hope of the World."

Despite all her accomplishments, Georgia Harkness rather famously battled depression, and that was in a time when people didn't talk about such things. She called it her "dark night of the soul," which, in 1945 became the title of one of her books in which she described her journey from depression to inner renewal. That journey also inspired her to pen the lyrics we just sang: "Hope of the world, thou Christ of great compassion, speak to our fearful hearts by conflict rent... Hope of the world, who by thy cross didst save us from death and *dark despair*."

Georgia Harkness is right: Christ is able to save us from our depression, our sense of hopelessness, and our dark despair. In fact, God did that for David.

When David finally reached his low point, he finally quit thinking to himself and begins praying to God. In 1 Samuel 30:6b we read, "**David found strength in the Lord his God.**"

What took you so long, David? But it's sure nice to have you back on the Lord's side of things!

Are you finding strength in the Lord your God?

David then asked the priest for the ephod, which was a kind of linen apron woven with specific colors and adorned with gemstones representing each of the tribes of Israel. It was used during times of intercession and discernment. It's likely that David wore it to help him focus on the Lord in prayer.

And God not only heard David's prayer, God answered David's prayer. What we may glean from these verses is the certainty that God will hear us when we pray and God will answer us when we pray.

It might be helpful for you to use some type of a device to help you when you pray—a prayer bear or a prayer square or a shawl. Catholics, of course, have long prayed with the assistance of a rosary.

Whether or not you use something to help you pray, know this, that God hears our prayers and God answers our prayers. The prophet Isaiah declared, "Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short that it cannot save, nor his ear too dull that it cannot hear."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 59:1.

The psalmist wrote, “Call unto me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you.”<sup>4</sup>

The prophet Jeremiah gave us this promise of God, “And ye shall seek me and ye shall find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Psalm 50:15.

<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah 29:13f.