

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 478

1 Samuel 29

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### Episode Summary

1 Samuel 29 tells the story of David's rejection by the Philistines. David had been living in exile with the Philistines after being anointed king of Israel by the prophet Samuel. The Philistines were preparing for battle against Israel, and David had been invited to join them in the fight. However, some of the Philistine leaders were suspicious of David and feared that he might betray them. They convinced Achish, the king of Gath, to send David and his men back home.

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 478: 1 Samuel 29. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin and he's the scholar, Dr. Matthew Halsted. Hey, Matt! How ya doing?

**MH:** Doing great, Trey! How are you doing, sir?

**TS:** I'm doing pretty good. Glad to have you back for the second chapter that you're covering for us. What's going on with you lately? Have you got anything good to talk about?

**MH:** Yeah, yeah. My goodness, it's been so busy, actually. I just sent off for the last time my eschatology book. It's called *The End of the World as You Know It: What the Bible Really Says About the End Times (and Why It's Good News)*. So I'm excited about that. I'm not sure yet exactly when it will be ready for preorder but be checking Amazon and stuff. I'm just super stoked about that. So we finished that up and sent that off to Lexham. Lexham has been such a joy to work with. It's been a lot of fun getting that done. I'm excited about it. It's been a long process. I think that book from start to finish was two or three years maybe [laughs]. It's really funny how it all transpired. But yeah, so I got that. I started a podcast as well—*The Bible Unmuted*. That's going well. I'm enjoying that. It's a lot of fun. But man, I guess other than those two things... Of course, just work and teaching at Eternity Bible College. I'm actually in the process, as well, of working on a class for AWKNG School of Theology. So my school, Eternity Bible College, and AWKNG School of Theology, we have a partnership. We are going to film a class called "The Jewish and Greco-Roman Backgrounds of the New Testament." So right now I'm in the thick of building that class and writing up all

the stuff. We'll be shooting and filming that shortly. So yeah, it's a full month, man! [laughs] It's been really busy.

**TS:** Awesome. Can you give us a brief synopsis of your book that's coming out?

**MH:** Yeah, no, that's great! My book... Like I said, it's called *The End of the World As You Know It*. And it's a popular level book, so it's not like an academic book. I wrote it to provide a general audience with an overview of questions about the end times—common questions, such as, "Is there going to be a rapture?" "How long is the tribulation?" "Will there be a tribulation?" "Can we know when Jesus will return?" "Are we living in the end times?" These are just very common questions that people are asking. I wanted to write a book to have a resource that people could just pick up and read. It's going to be a lot of fun, I think, to get that book out and I hope it's helpful to people. So it's just those common questions about what scripture actually says about the end times. I think there's a lot of confusion. There's just a ton of views out there and some of them are not really that credible of viewpoints. And many of the views that are out there these days are just... They scare people. My goal is to just write a book that shows that biblical eschatology, when it is rightly understood, actually brings us a lot of hope. So it's been a fun project.

**TS:** Well, we're definitely going to have to have you back on to cover your own book, for sure.

**MH:** Yeah, that'd be great!

**TS:** Awesome. All right, well, I'm ready for chapter 29 today. We're getting close to wrapping up 1 Samuel. Again, I appreciate you coming on to help us with that.

**MH:** Absolutely. I'm excited.

Let's dive into it. We're going to be in 1 Samuel chapter 29. I guess before I begin, I just want to tell everybody that I've got kind of a cold. So if I have to cough or take a sip of water, just forgive me. I think I'm okay, but we'll see how it goes.

Yeah, we're in 1 Samuel chapter 29. As we finish up the series, I thought it might be important to review a few things from previous chapters. I think it's important because chapter 29 is a highly contextualized section of scripture, and it relies upon the previous chapters and the previous stories. So we want to take a dive—a cursory review—of what comes before. And I know we've already listened to the previous episodes up until now, but it's good today just to kind of review some of that for the sake of this text. We're going to be looking at the way and the reasons why the Philistines—particularly King Achish—rejects David. That's the topic of 1 Samuel 29. But as we'll see, there's a lot more going on there than

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just that. So let's do a quick little historical summary of the relationship between David and this King Achish.

So the relationship between these two people (Achish and David) goes back quite a bit. For example, in 1 Samuel chapter 21, David is said to have fled from Saul to King Achish. But the servants of Achish question David's motives. And that actually causes David to fear and to worry about his life. So let me read that section (1 Samuel 21:10-15) just as a review. So the text says [NRSV]:

**<sup>10</sup> David rose and fled that day from Saul; he went to King Achish of Gath. <sup>11</sup> The servants of Achish said to him, 'Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances,**

**"Saul has killed his thousands,  
and David his tens of thousands"?''**

**<sup>12</sup> David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of King Achish of Gath. <sup>13</sup> So he changed his behaviour before them; he pretended to be mad when in their presence. He scratched marks on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle run down his beard. <sup>14</sup> Achish said to his servants, 'Look, you see the man is mad; why then have you brought him to me? <sup>15</sup> Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?'**

So it's an interesting text here. But anyway, I just wanted to draw our attention to verse 12, that David took those words to heart and he was very much afraid of King Achish. And what ends up happening in the chapters that follow is God protecting David. And David flees, of course, from that situation and God protects him. And David has a couple of opportunities at this point to, well, kill Saul. But David doesn't take advantage of those opportunities because, quite simply, he doesn't think it's his place to kill God's anointed king. So he shows incredible restraint. Even though Saul is out to kill David, David does not return the "favor."

So it's during this time that God keeps David from sinning against this person named Nabal (or in Hebrew it would be Naval). That whole situation, as you recall... To me, at least, it reveals a lot about David's own heart and perhaps his own state of mind. As you know, in chapter 25, David is mistreated badly by Naval. And what does David want to do in response? Well, he wants to murder him [laughs], but God stops him and David recognizes God's hand of protection over him. Again, you could read this in chapter 25.

My point is that in these chapters, you get a sense of God's protective presence over David. And you also get the sense that David recognizes God's protective presence. He is confident of God's protection over him in many instances. But not always. Sometimes he lacks faith. He sometimes worries and doubt stricken his heart to the point that he does some things that are less than honorable, I guess you could say.

And this is where things do get kind of weird, namely around chapter 27. Something very interesting happens; something odd happens. David comes off of a high victory in chapter 26, and then even after coming off that victory, he succumbs to fear. So in 1 Samuel 27:1-2, we read this:

**David said in his heart, 'I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul; there is nothing better for me than to escape to the land of the Philistines; then Saul will despair of seeking me any longer within the borders of Israel, and I shall escape out of his hand.'<sup>2</sup> So David set out and went over, he and the six hundred men who were with him, to King Achish son of Maach of Gath.**

Okay, this is an interesting move on David's part. He's moving into the enemy's camp, and it's a bold move when you think about it. Because it gives us a sense of the fear that invaded David's heart. I mean, it was enough fear to cause him to flee to the land of the Philistines—the very land that he had fled earlier. Remember when he was in the presence of the king and he left out of fear there? Well, whatever's happening here, he's deeply afraid of Saul to go back to Achish. And there's a lot that can be said about that, I think. I mean, where is David's trust in God here? Why is he all of a sudden afraid? Why is he all of a sudden fearful, especially since he has seen God's hand of protection before this situation? And quite frankly (I was just thinking about this this morning), this is why I like the Bible. I mean, someone like King David is prone to fear, and the Bible shows us that. I mean, David is not immune to the anxieties of life. Neither is he a stalwart against doubt. You get the idea that he is truly human through and through. And remarkably, the text before us doesn't seek to hide or withhold the weaknesses or the sins of David. And to the contrary, they are laid out for all of us to see. They're right there in front of us. And again, this is why I like the Bible. It not only gives me a sense of what truly happened in the story of Israel, but it invites me to reflect upon my own life. It summons me, if you will, to contemplate my own frailty and my own weaknesses. Because at the end of the day, I, too, can act out of anxiety and fear. I, too, am prone to flee to Gath when my doubts get the best of me—to run to Achish for protection. As it turns out, I, too, am human through and through.

What's interesting is this part of David's story is far more than a stage upon which the life of David is put on full display. What I mean by that is, if you think this is a story about David, you're wrong, okay? Because it's true, yes, that David has a

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leading role in the story, but he does not have the starring role in the story. The main character (the one which the spotlight shines most upon) is Yahweh. It's his patience and his willingness to bear up the frailty of humanity that captures our attention in the story. Indeed, if the best of all the kings of Israel and the best of all the followers of God is King David, then we humans are in a pretty pitiful state, I would think. I mean, David is propped up in the church and through history as just a great follower of God, and even he is shown to be full of, not just sins, but weaknesses and fears and anxiety. And we see this in this story here.

That reminds me of God's own patience with David and his willingness to work through David even though David is so incredibly weak. And it all captures the essence of the situation. David *is* a man after God's own heart, and yet he is still quite (apparently, at least) a son of Adam at the same time. His strength, like all of us... At the end of the day, his strength is finite, but God's patience and God's mercy and God's strength is infinite. And you see this in this story with David. David is waffling sometimes back and forth between faith and doubt, confidence and discouragement. And yet God stays the same. That's a great story there. Again, God is the true starring role in the story. David is the leading role, but God is the starring role. God's mercy knows no boundary. And what we get here in these stories a glimpse of how there is not a depth of despair or a valley of death in which God cannot spread before us a table of feasting in the presence of our enemies. And this is something that David will come to learn in due time. I think if we have ears to hear, we can learn something here, too.

So again, that's why I like the Bible. That's why I went off on that lengthy footnote there—because the Bible creates no illusion about its human heroes. It depicts them in their fears just as much as it depicts them in their courage. And I think in doing so, scripture once again points us to the true hero. It points us to a better David, a stronger king, someone that we can rely upon in every situation.

So here's another thing to consider. From a historical-critical perspective, there's also another interesting thing to reflect upon with respect to David's fleeing to the enemy of Israel for protection. That whole scene of David going to Achish... There's something there that's pretty interesting. The fact that this is included in the text is fascinating, not only to me but to another scholar. If you're not familiar with Robert Alter, I encourage you to go check out his translation of the Hebrew Bible because it's an interesting translation on a number of levels. My own students use it for the Torah class that I teach and the Prophets class that I teach, and so I recommend you get a copy. I think there's probably an e-version online, too. But anyway, you'll definitely want to check it out. It's got great commentaries in it that are really challenging and provoking. Alter just kind of has his own signature way of dealing with the text that's pretty interesting.

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But anyway, Robert Alter is a noted Hebraist. He's a literary critic as well. He sums up this whole situation quite well in his commentary about David fleeing to

King Achish—to the enemy of Israel. He talks about why that's an important piece, just simply by the fact that it's included in the text. Let me just read from his commentary. It's pretty interesting. Robert Alter says,

For those scholars who have argued that David is no more a historical figure than King Arthur, this whole episode constitutes a problem. Why would a much later legendary (and supposedly glorifying) tradition attribute this act of national treachery to David? It would be rather like the invention of a story that Winston Churchill spent 1914 through 1918 in Berlin currying the favor of the Kaiser. The compelling inference is that the writer had authentic knowledge of a period when David collaborated with the Philistines. He was unwilling to omit this uncomfortable information, though he did try to mitigate it.

Now I think this is an interesting point to make. The story we are reading does not have the markings of legend or hagiography. To the contrary, this whole episode of David going to the enemy of Israel for refuge... This whole episode reeks of embarrassment and really brutal honesty with respect to the downcast, fearful nature of David's own heart. In one sense, I think Robert Alter is correct. What we are reading here is the account from a writer who had some sort of knowledge of an actual event. And this particular text, in other words, seems to be the stuff of religious memory, not invented legend. It's not made up. It's too embarrassing to be made up, right? If you were making stuff up, you wouldn't insert something like this, as embarrassing as this would be. You wouldn't put this in a text unless it actually happened—unless it actually represents a memory of an event.

And so let me just say, I'm not trying to play the role of a jealous apologist, per say. I don't even really consider myself a Christian apologist in the popular sense of the word. I'm simply a hermeneutics guy who likes to ask questions [laughs]. As such, I just want to let the chips fall where they may. I want the data to speak for itself. And in this case, I agree with Robert Alter. This text has all the markings of a report of an actual historical event for the reasons I just gave.

So for those of you who are interested in historical-critical questions about the Hebrew Bible, I think this is perhaps something to consider. And as a confessional scholar (a Christian myself), I find that to be a fascinating observation. So I just wanted to pass that along there. If you guys have any questions about that, feel free to email me and reach out and I'll be happy to elaborate further.

But okay, let's move on from that. What we have here is David runs to Achish. And King Achish accepts David; he welcomes him to his land. And he even gives David the town of Ziklag to live in. And David lived there for about a year and a half or so. And during that time, David made it his practice to make violent raids through the settlements of the Geshurites, the Gerezites, and the Amalekites.



You can read about this in chapter 27. According to the text, David and his men slaughtered everyone, leaving nobody alive. And when Achish asks David where he has been raiding, David lies about it. He tells the king that he's been raiding his own people. But in reality, that's actually not the truth. Nonetheless, Achish believes him. The truth is he's been raiding locals. And when King Achish decides to launch a war against Israel, he summons David to help him out—a proposition to which David agrees. Interestingly, it does seem like Achish isn't quite sure that David will fight against his people. And if you read in the New Revised Standard Version, you kind of capture that hesitancy in the way that the translation translates the Hebrew there. So for example, King Achish says to David (this is chapter 28, verse 1),

**'You know, of course, that you and your men are to go out with me in the army.'**

You kind of get the sense there that the king is like, "You know you're going to go out with me and you're gonna fight with me, right? David responds:

**<sup>2</sup> David said to Achish, 'Very well, then you shall know what your servant can do.'**

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That's chapter 28, verse 2. And you can sense the hesitancy, perhaps, in the king. But as we'll see in a moment, the situation here is probably a bit more complex. I'm not entirely sure what to make of it, to be honest with you. But we'll talk about that in a bit.

The part I want to focus on is the battle that's about to kick off between the Philistines (King Achish and David with him) and on the other side of the sword, Israel and Saul. And it's this battle that's about to get kicked off that leads Saul to fear and terror. And it's a fear and terror that wedges itself into the heart of Saul that leads him to seek God's guidance. But God doesn't respond to Saul. And you know why he doesn't want to respond to Saul: God has rejected him as king. Saul has proven himself to be very insincere. He's a very duplicitous person. So God is essentially releasing Saul to his own devices, right? He's just letting Saul be Saul. And the thing is, if Saul wanted a life on his own terms, well, God's going to give it to him. And here we see God do this very thing. Saul has rejected God, and God is just letting Saul get what he wants.

So when Saul sees that God won't answer him... You're quite familiar with what Saul does next. Saul goes and seeks out the medium at Endor. And the medium at Endor summons the deceased Samuel to come up from the realm of the dead. And you know that story (and I won't rehash it all here).

But this does bring us all the way up to chapter 29, and that's the passage we're really wanting to focus on today. It's here where King Achish's commanders tell

the king that they don't want David to fight with them. Why not? Well, they're concerned. Their primary concern is that when push comes to shove, that David's loyalty will be with his own people. And as a result, David and his men will turn on the Philistines.

What I want to do is take a look at that conversation between King Achish and his lords. I'm going to start reading at verse 2 and I'll go through verse 5. So 1 Samuel 29:2-5 (again, reading from the NRSV):

**<sup>2</sup> As the lords of the Philistines were marching on by hundreds and by thousands, and David and his men were marching in the rear with Achish, <sup>3</sup> the commanders of the Philistines said, 'What are these Hebrews doing here?' Achish said to the commanders of the Philistines, 'Is this not David, the servant of King Saul of Israel, who has been with me now for days and years? Since he deserted to me I have found no fault in him to this day.' <sup>4</sup> But the commanders of the Philistines were angry with him; and the commanders of the Philistines said to him, 'Send the man back, so that he may return to the place that you have assigned to him; he shall not go down with us to battle, or else he may become an adversary to us in the battle. For how could this fellow reconcile himself to his lord? Would it not be with the heads of the men here? <sup>5</sup> Is this not David, of whom they sing to one another in dances,**

**"Saul has killed his thousands,  
and David his tens of thousands"?"**

Okay, so in that sense, you get the sentiment of the Philistine lords and the commanders. They do not want David around them because when push comes to shove, they're afraid that David will fight against them. Maybe when David starts seeing his own people get beat up, he won't be able to take it and he'll switch allegiances or something. King Achish here doesn't agree. He wants David to remain with him. But because... This is the ancient world, right? Kings have their lords and their lords help govern, right? So King Achish is going to acquiesce to the request of his lords. And in the next section here of scripture (which I'll read in a moment), it's here where King Achish talks to David and tells him the news that he's going to actually have to leave the battle. So let me read verses 6-11.

**<sup>6</sup> Then Achish called David and said to him, 'As the Lord lives, you have been honest, and to me it seems right that you should march out and in with me in the campaign; for I have found nothing wrong in you from the day of your coming to me until today. Nevertheless the lords do not approve of you. <sup>7</sup> So**



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**go back now; and go peaceably; do nothing to displease the lords of the Philistines.’<sup>8</sup> David said to Achish, ‘But what have I done? What have you found in your servant from the day I entered your service until now, that I should not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?’<sup>9</sup> Achish replied to David, ‘I know that you are as blameless in my sight as an angel of God; nevertheless, the commanders of the Philistines have said, “He shall not go up with us to the battle.”<sup>10</sup> Now then rise early in the morning, you and the servants of your lord who came with you, and go to the place that I appointed for you. As for the evil report, do not take it to heart, for you have done well before me. Start early in the morning, and leave as soon as you have light.’<sup>11</sup> So David set out with his men early in the morning, to return to the land of the Philistines. But the Philistines went up to Jezreel.**

So there are two things I want to say about this passage. The first thing is this: if it is the case that King Achish has serious doubts about David (something I hinted at above), then he is using his lords' advice as an excuse for getting David out of the way. But I'm not entirely sure that's the best way to understand the situation. After all, when the lords approach the king about David and approach him with their concerns about David, the king initially defends David. But the lords are angry about the situation, and they don't seem willing to compromise at all on this point. The king's acquiescence to their demands seems to be rather forced, in my opinion, like he doesn't quite want to go along with it. But he does because at the end of the day he's a politician, right? He's gonna have to go with what everybody wants him to.

So at most, I think what we can say is that Achish might have had some doubts about David. And again, we see this in the words that we read (28:1-2). Achish is not quite sure if David's going to want to go fight with him. But anyway, he might have had some doubts about David. I don't know; I'm going to leave it with you guys. Just do some thinking about it and go back and read it. I'm going to do the same. But nonetheless, for me, I think Achish here might have had doubts about David, but they weren't solidified. Perhaps the king acquiesced to the lords because he found their argument convincing. I'm not sure about that, either. But when the king talks to David, he seems to genuinely think that all the gossip about David is baseless.

Whatever the case, David is sent back home away from the fight. And listen, that's very important. I'll tell you why in a moment, but he's sent away home, away from the fight. He's not allowed to fight. And this leads me, actually, to my second point. Now everything I'm about to say from here on out is super important. I think it's important to the story, I think it's important to the narrative, it's important to what the author wants us to understand. Just listen really closely here.

This battle is shaping up to be a decisive struggle between the Philistines and Israel. The narrative is weaved ingeniously such that the reader is left anticipating that something big is going to happen. I mean, the story is constructed in a way that brings two warring peoples together at one location. And the writer of the story is leading the reader to think that the back-and-forth drama between Saul and David is quite literally about to come head-to-head in this scene. Instead of David fleeing from Saul again, the scenario—the story that the author has weaved—has them now (both Saul and David) meeting on the battlefield on opposite sides of the sword. I love the tension that is built here. It's like the beginning of the end of a movie. The battle lines are drawn; the protagonist is on one side and the antagonist is on the other, and they appear to be preparing themselves to face off in a dramatic, epic duel. But just when you think that it will be a battle against these two anointed kings (between David and Saul), at just the last minute, David is sent home against his will. And the scene unfolds in such a way that our expectations are subverted. It's all anticlimactic. As it turns out, there will be no final battle between David and Saul.

Again, I'm a hermeneutics guy, and so I want to just simply ask questions. And I want to ask questions like this, "Why did this story unfold this way?" "Why were my expectations built up, only to be subverted at the last minute?" I mean, this doesn't seem to be the way the story should be told, so what's up with that? And I think, perhaps, that the answer lies somewhere in the question itself. Perhaps the subversive element of the story is itself the door through which the reader is invited to walk through. In other words, it's like this: maybe the fact that the story subverts our expectations is due to the fact that we've been expecting the wrong thing. Perhaps we're being led to look for something much more profound and something much more meaningful.

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To see how this works, we need to notice important literary features that have been embedded into the story itself. We probably didn't even notice them. And that's part of the reason why I wanted to review the previous chapters at the beginning of this episode—because we needed to build the storied context of the chapter we're looking at today. We wanted to build the storied context of chapter 29. Without that storied context, it's going to be hard to make much sense of chapter 29.

Now, some of the literary features that I think we should attend to are these motifs that are easily missed but very much there, I think. It's the contrasting motifs of light and darkness with respect to David and Saul. For example, if you go back to chapter 28, you will see Saul approaching the medium of Endor by night, under the cover of darkness. He's full of fear and full of terror at the report that Samuel gives him there. So Saul leaves the meeting with the medium. He leaves under the cover of the same darkness, okay? And Saul realizes, finally, that yes, sadly, he will have to face judgment by means of a battle with the Philistines.

Robert Alter observes in his commentary how this is a "symbolic darkness" for him. I think that's interesting. The darkness (the motif there) is a symbolic darkness. It's meant to, perhaps, symbolize something—say, the state of his heart, the state of his situation. But the conflict itself is not something that David is going to have to experience. David, as we just read, is allowed to escape at the morning's first light. Chapter 29:10 says that. And if you're attentive to the narrative flow, these literary features are the things you can't miss. The motifs here, I think, are subtle, but are very loud. They're cryptic but clear. And I think if you're interested in that narrative movement and the light and darkness motif, I highly recommend checking out Robert Alter's Hebrew Bible, and you can find his commentaries on this. It's pretty interesting. At the very least, it puts (as somebody once said) a "pebble in your shoe" to cause you a little discomfort and maybe make you think, "Ah, I wonder if there's something there!"

Let me just say a little bit more about that. Let me say a little bit more about the importance of paying attention to the Bible's narrative features, such as the light/darkness motif that I mentioned above. I remember N.T. Wright, the well-known New Testament scholar, saying a long time ago that yes, we want to be careful about reading too much into the text. But he went on to add that he fears that the problem isn't that we are prone to read too much into the text as much as that we don't read enough out of it. And I think he's right. The problem is not that we notice too much, the problem is that we don't observe enough. I, for one, find the Hebrew Bible full of such literary features. As modern readers, we are often blinded to the beauty of the text's chiasmic structures, to its rhythmic lines, and the plethora of illustrative images all embedded in the text, and all of which add depth to the meanings that we were intended to discover. But we don't often notice them. As a result, our readings live in a poverty of imagination. And as a hermeneutics guy, I want to recapture the Bible's literary enchantment. I want to find all the nuggets embedded in these places that, I think, add a little bit of depth to the text and to the text's meaning.

For example, consider once again the narrative flow of the text. The story thus far seems to have been building toward a final climactic battle between Saul and David, only to at the last minute withdraw David from the battle and thus subvert the reader's expectations. Why is that important? Why is that literary feature important? I think it's important because, as I mentioned earlier, such literary features serve to highlight important theological points. And in this case, the point is that in the history of Israel, God is pivoting Israel's trajectory toward a new king—that is, toward David. And by building so much tension throughout the chapters between David and Saul, the reader is forced to hone in his or her focus on both David and Saul. But when David is suddenly and surprisingly withdrawn from the scene of the battle, the reader is left with just one focus. We're left to observe only Saul and his sad demise. And by telling the story this way, the biblical writer sucks the air out of the room and he causes readers to gasp as they behold the end of Saul's would-be yet failed dynasty.

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We'll get to the death of Saul in the next episode, but it's important to anticipate Saul's death even now because it helps us get the full scope and context of the situation. By telling the story in this way, it's interesting because the writer is revealing something important about God and the way God deals with humans. Before David could be king, there obviously needed to be a vacancy of the throne. In other words, Saul needs to be removed. And of course, there were many ways to do this. David himself had plenty of opportunities to remove Saul swiftly and with relative ease, and yet David never dared to touch Saul in a violent way. You know that very well—all the instances David could take out Saul, he refused. And the story, as we'll see, is such that David will be crowned king another way. He doesn't need to do anything at all, actually. He simply needs to resign the situation. Even when he is on the run and scared for his life, David relinquishes control of the situation into God's hands. He lets God take care of it. And perhaps the author here is showing us how David has nothing to do with Saul's death. David is removed at the last minute from the battle. And I think that's an important piece to observe here.

So you have to understand that... Before I became a full-time professor, I was a full-time pastor. I think most of you guys know me as "Dr. Halsted" or "Professor Halsted," but if I may, let me bring out "Pastor Matt" for just a moment here. I think there is a pastoral and devotional truth that I think we can learn from all this. Because as human beings, we all have the luxury of living in a strange world. This is a world where we all at times, like David, find ourselves on the run. It seems that wherever we turn, we have our own Sauls chasing us down, trying to beat us up—or worse, destroy us altogether. And sometimes we find ourselves in tough circumstances and situations. We find ourselves neck-deep in a mudslide that's falling toward darkness. I guess what I'm saying is that life can be tough! And if there's one thing we can learn from the life of David, it's this: God can take care of us and we can trust that he'll take care of us. I mean, David was far from a saint. David did a lot of things that weren't right. Some of them were pretty despicable. But fortunately, David is not the star of the show, as I said earlier. 1 and 2 Samuel is not about David, it's about God and it's about God weaving his will through the lives of messy (and at times evil) people. And as a human being breathing the air of this strange world, it gives me a lot of hope that no matter how many hard times I go through, no matter how thick the darkness and fearful the situation, I know that one day God will protect me until the very end where I, just like you and all of our brothers and sisters in Christ, will be given the authority of ruling and reigning with Jesus. That's the day we look forward to. And even today, we are sons and daughters of God. And one day that truth will be revealed in the glory of the resurrection.

What all of this means is that no matter what the enemy throws your way today, you can have confidence to trust God and let him bring you safely into the kingdom. You can trust God to bring you safely into that day when you will share in the rule and reign with Christ. He did it with David and he'll do it for us. And so

I just want to encourage you to take heart, friends, because your God has overcome the world.

Let me make another observation about this text. I want to talk briefly about the way God's judgment works because I think this text (the removal of David and Saul's unfortunate demise—that whole scene) illustrates the way God's judgment works. What's interesting is how the battle itself will become the means by which Saul is dethroned, and at the same time, the means by which David will be enthroned. Let me repeat that: *What's interesting is how the battle itself will become the means by which Saul is dethroned, and at the same time, the means by which David will be enthroned.* I think this is a good illustration for how to think about divine judgment. See, judgment cuts both ways. For those who choose to align themselves with that which is good (that is to say, with God), then they will reap what they sow. They will reap that which is good. But for those who choose to align themselves with that which is not good (that is, with the forces of evil), then they will, sadly, reap what they sow. They will reap that which is not good.

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I don't want to travel too far down into that rabbit hole, but I think this is a way the concept of judgment functions theologically in scripture. See, given God's ontological status as the Supreme Good (the true, the beautiful), anything that chooses not to align itself with him will by consequence experience that which is not good and that which is not true and that which is not beautiful. In other words, it's not because God is mean that he brings judgment upon Saul. Judgment is simply what you get when you experience God. Think of it this way: if candle wax and clay rock comes into contact with light and heat, there will be consequences. And the consequences will vary depending upon the respective constitution. So for example, wax melts in the presence of light and heat because it's wax. Clay, however, hardens in the presence of light and heat because its constitution is clay. It doesn't harden because the light or the heat is being mean to it. No, it just hardens by virtue of the stuff its made of.

In the sad case of Saul (which we'll continue to outline in a future episode), much of the same could be said. See, Saul, simply put, is not a man after God's own heart. He looks the part. He's handsome, right? But the constitution of his heart is not conducive for a thriving life with God. Saul is a man who has his own agenda. He's got his own desires. He's got his own thing. And when it comes right down to it, God's just going to give him what he wants, and that's not a good thing. But for those who do align themselves with God, then experiencing God's judgment will be a blissful thing. It will be a blissful experience. The only question is, "What do you choose?" What sort of life will you lead?

Just in closing, I'll say this. I'm reminded about something our late brother, Dr. Heiser, always asked. He always asked this question: "What does God want?" Well, he wants a family. And the only question you and I need to answer is, "Do

we want to be part of the family that God is building?" Let that question settle in deep. Muse on that question. Think about David as a man after God's own heart. Think about Saul who was a man after his own agenda. And look at the consequences that both of them experienced in the judgment of God. I think there's something there that's worth considering.

Okay, with that, let's call it a day. And when we return next time, we're going to look at chapter 30 and chapter 31. And I hope today's tour through the text has been helpful for your understanding of scripture. And I hope it's been encouraging to your faith and to your walk with Christ. I think the takeaway here today is follow after God and give him all of your heart, and be a person after God's own heart. Thanks again, friends.

**TS:** Okay, Matt, you did a fantastic job wearing the different hats. I liked Pastor Matt. [Matt laughs] That might be my favorite.

**MH:** Oh cool, okay, good!

**TS:** [laughs] Well, you mentioned it. We are going to close 1 Samuel next week with chapter 30 and 31. We appreciate you doing that. And we appreciate Dr. Halsted for coming on, and I want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.