

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

An Unexpected Salvation I Samuel 29

Intro: If you are an impatient reader then the author of I Sam will drive you crazy! It is a common literary practice in novels to have several narratives going at the same time so that, when you get to a cliff-hanger in 1 story line, you can leave the reader hanging by switching to another story line; building drama & keeping the reader from catching their breath. I doubt that's the author's objective here. He's not worried about making it on the NY Times "Best Sellers" list; he has a greater purpose in alternating the narratives: *maintaining* a continued **contrast** between David & Saul.

At the beginning of ch28, David is faced w/ the worst possible scenario of his life. In the rest of ch28, Saul hears the worst possible news of his life. The last line of ch28 has the air of despair as Saul stumbles into the dark of night. We don't get to see what happens to Saul just yet b/c we are going back in time & returning to the David narrative. Both of these men are experiencing the consequences of life apart from **YHWH** but the end results w/b vastly different.

1-5- Apehek- this would've been a few days b/4 the Philistines made their big push to Shunem (28:4). All the troops from the 5 Philistine cities have mustered at Apehek & are passing in review b/4 Philistine royalty. Achish & his Gath division passed by last & at the end of Gath's formation was an odd looking regiment. When the princes recognized who it was, they were aghast! "What are **they** doing here? Don't you know **who** we're fighting?" Achish has a ready response: "You never heard of mercenaries? That's what they are. They've been w/ me for some time & have proven themselves faithful." But the military brass was having none of it. They argued from **logic**: what better way for David to be reconciled w/ Saul than to turn on us in the middle of the fight; & from **pop culture**: every kid in Philistia knows that hit Hebrew song (still on the charts?). "Achish, what were you thinking? How could you be so dense; so naïve?"

Their directive was to cut David loose & send him back to Ziklag; at least he can't stab them in the back from there.

6-11- Achish goes to David to deliver the "**bad news**" which was actually **good news**: "**return... & go in peace**" (7). This is where it gets funny: Achish stands there, apologetically insisting that David should be allowed to fight alongside him in this battle & he applauds David's "faithfulness" which he has no reason to applaud! David, on the other hand, w/ disappointment on his face & disbelief in his voice, protests the rejection which he has no reason to protest. So, the deceived Achish is defending his deceiver & the relieved David is disputing his relief! It's just a crazy situation.

But, after David vents his fake exasperation, Achish basically tells him, "Look, I trust you w/ my life but these other princes, well; they don't! They're the majority so my hands are tied. Come morning, you & your men are outta here." David & his men happily comply although they can't let on that they are happy about it at all.

This is a short story w/ some comedic situations but there's more 2 it than just humor. This is not a story about a lucky break 4 David; this is an unmistakable account of a divine deliverance, a merciful deliverance. But what is seen in the particulars of this story that bears witness 2 our God & will help us 2 know Him better? There are a few...

A Quiet Presence- 1 of the most telling aspects of this story concerning **YHWH's** goodness is that it actually says nothing **about** **YHWH's** goodness. In fact, it almost fails 2 mention **YHWH** at all! Pagan Achish throws out a couple of references 2 David's God, thus preventing the story from being completely secular. But, we have seen this many times b/4; the Holy Spirit doesn't always make God's presence so obvious in these stories. Maybe He's expecting us 2 invest some thought on the subject, 2 ask some questions; 2 discover God's presence 4 ourselves. We don't need an extra verse saying, "**Thus the Lord delivered David...**" we can see **YHWH** is here, quietly delivering His servant.

More often than not, that's the way God presence appears in our lives today: silently working, quietly active. It would do us good 2 go back over the experiences of our lives & try 2 recognize the times when God was clearly but quietly present 2 deliver or provide. Not just in the small things, but in the big things. If you are happily married, it wasn't dumb luck that brought you your spouse, it was God's silent working; even if neither of you were saved at the time. There's a multitude of similar life events the Lord's carried you thru. He was obviously there, just not obvious 2 you.

Why does the Lord work that way? B/c it challenges us 2/b constantly on our toes, looking out 4 His working in our lives. God's presence doesn't come blasting at us like a TV commercial else we'd soon tire of it & take it 4 granted. Rarely does the Lord **declare** His presence 2 us. Instead, He allows us the opportunity 2 **discover** it 4 ourselves. This requires us 2 frequently tune our hearts (& ears) 2 that divine frequency. It forces us 2 listen 4 that still, small voice. It requires effort on our part, deliberate effort; but the effort is not w/o great benefit. you see, if you're required 2 think about & wrestle w/ the fact of God's presence in your life (not just **assuming** or **taking it 4 granted**) then you have greater opportunity 2/b led into more **intelligent** worship: perceiving God in greater light, (clearer perspective).

A Surprising Deliverance- we may think this whole situation is funny but the Philistine weren't laughing. They are fit 2/b tied in vs3 & furious at Achish 4 his foolishness in 4a. It's not looking good 4 David, or Achish 4 that matter. But then, strangely enough, they proclaim the **good news** of deliverance in 4b! There's nothing Achish can do but repeat this **gospel** 2 David. We've seen this divine characteristic revealed in God's workings b/4. What instrument does **YHWH** use 2 rescue His servant from his dilemma? The commanding officers of the Philistine army! This isn't the 1st time God turned enemies into saviors. They previously rescued David & Co from capture by Saul in ch23. Sure, they didn't mean 2 do that but the Philistines unwittingly seem 2 make some very effective servants 4 **YHWH!** Now, the text doesn't offer us a guarantee. There's no promise here that God will always rescue us from our mess. Just b/c He did it 4 David doesn't mean He'll do 4 me. What it does teach is that even in our foolishness & failures, God has multitudes of ways 2 rescue His people: even by the mouths of Philistines. He can make the enemy serve us as a friend. He not only prepares a table 4 us in the presence of our enemies but sometimes He makes the enemy prepare the table as well! The truth of **Isa 59:1a** should be a constant reality in

our lives.

There's a story about a Christian woman long ago, destitute & w/o food, who was sharing her plight w/ her heavenly Father & asking 4 her daily bread. As the story goes, her agnostic (or atheist) neighbor happened 2 overhear her prayer & decided 2 have some fun w/ her. He went out & bought 2 loaves of bread & left them at her door. When she discovered them, she burst into a grateful prayer of praise. Her neighbor then began 2 dog her about it, explaining that he had bought the bread & left it at her door so it wasn't "God" after all, who answered her prayer but he. The lady was ready 4 him tho, "*Oh yes, it **was** the Lord who answered my prayer – even tho He used **the devil** 2 do it.*"

We see this divine ploy used thru-out Scripture. God used Satan 2 refine Job's understanding of Him & 2 bless him far above all that he had lost. God used Balaam 2 bless Israel while Balak was paying him 2 curse Israel. This ploy was also critical in bringing about God's greatest gift 2 mankind – salvation. **Rom 3:23-26** = clearest statement of the significance of atonement in Scripture. Man is sinful & will always remain so w/o divine intervention while God is just & must remain so; that's the dilemma. **God is light** so He **must** uphold His holy Law & **God is love** so He wants 2 forgive & save sinners. How can God forgive sinners & still be consistent w/ His holy nature? The cross! There Jesus Christ bore the punishment 4 sin & met the just demands of the holy Law. There God reveals His great love & makes it possible 4 men 2/b saved. But how was Christ's death accomplished? He couldn't kill Himself & His disciples certainly would never have done it. No, He used the sinful lusts of the Pharisees, the greedy covetousness of the chief priests, the latent insecurities of Pilot & his desire 2/b pleasing 2 men & man's natural hatred of a holy God. All of these things conspired 2 bring Jesus 2 the cross. They came together like a perfect storm of immorality 2 destroy His life & they accomplished it completely. What they didn't know was that they also accomplished God's perfect plan 4 bringing salvation 2 mankind. God used His greatest enemy 2 bring about His greatest gift.

What an amazingly wonderful God we serve. Whether in Scripture or in life, whether thru Philistines or agnostics, when we see God working in such ways, we are supposed 2 respond. The wonder & surprise of God's ways are meant 2 lead us 2 worship & praise; they're meant 2 lead us into greater faith & obedience. Do they?

A Tenacious Mercy- David's in Ziklag b/c he decided 2 forgo life in Israel, in God's presence. His decision was understandable but not advisable; logical but not faithful. But in his foolishness & failings, God's mercy won't let go of David. God's not short tempered w/ His people. His mercy & patience don't run out when we choose foolishness over faith. God doesn't insist that David lie in the bed he's made. No, His mercy can find David even in Philistia! David really did know something about **goodness & mercy pursuing** him all the days of his life (Ps 23:6a) All of this serves 2 show that David's success wasn't due 2 his cleverness, intelligence but only 2 **YHWH's** mercy. We can see that but can David see it?

Final observation: what's telling about vs8 is that David maintains his ruse! Of course, he has 2 now. He can't let on that he's happy 2/b leaving but it begs the question: after 16 mo in Ziklag, why does David still think his safety & provision is up 2 him & his ability 2 deceive Achish? That's some kind of persistent mind set! He's been thinking this way 4 some time now, persisting in this "slight" delusion. He hasn't rejected his calling or his God but he sure

hasn't been seeking Him either. What will it take 4 **YHWH** 2 break this mind-set, this way of thinking 4 David? A confrontation from a prophet maybe? He's got 1 w/ him but apparently, he hasn't been paying much attention 2 him. What will it take 4 David 2 finally come 2 his senses & seek the Lord again as he once did, as he should again? What will it take? What's going 2 do it? Maybe something stronger is required 2 get his attention.

What about is? Jesus died on the cross & rose from the grave so that we might have new life; so that we might live openly, w/o hiding, w/o deception; walking b/4 Him & the world w/ honesty, integrity & transparency. His gift 2 believers is the fact that we don't have 2 live secret lives or lives w/ secrets. We may have secrets – past failures or present struggles – but those things don't have 2 define who we are. Let Christ define you, let His life live thru you as you seek 2 press into Him; His life, His Spirit, His Word, even His people b/c there's grace & mercy in all of that!

Today, we need 2 seek freedom from the mind-set that's holding us back from being the servants God's calling us 2/b. Let us lay aside every weight & the sin which so easily ensnares us & let us run w/ endurance the race that is set b/4 us. God's grace is available 4 the asking, His mercies are new every morning. He has everything we need 2 affect a proper spiritual walk & more. Will we accept it, will we avail ourselves of it? There's no downside 2 accepting His grace & no up side 2 resisting it, as David will soon discover.