

# CHAPTER 29

How Saul, who was forsaken of God, when he was in a strait was more and more perplexed and embarrassed with his own counsels, we read in the foregoing chapter. In this chapter we find how David, who kept close to God, when he was in a strait was extricated and brought off by the providence of God, without any contrivance of his own. We have him,

- I.** Marching with the Philistines (v. 1, 2).
- II.** Excepted against by the lords of the Philistines (v. 3-5).
- III.** Happily dismissed by Achish from that service which did so ill become him, and which yet he knew not how to decline (v. 6-11).

## <0201>1 SAMUEL 29:1-5

### DAVID WITH THE PHILISTINES

Here is,

**I.** The great strait that David was in, which we may suppose he himself was aware of, though we read not of his asking advice from God, nor of any project of his own to get clear of it. The two armies of the Philistines and the Israelites were encamped and ready to engage, v. 1. Achish, who had been kind to David, had obliged him to come himself and bring the forces he had into his service. David came accordingly, and, upon a review of the army, was found with Achish, in the post assigned him in the rear, v. 2. Now,

**1.** If, when the armies engaged, he should retire, and quit his post, he would fall under the indelible reproach, not only of cowardice and treachery, but of base ingratitude to Achish, who had been his protector and benefactor and had reposed a confidence in him, and from whom he had received a very honourable commission. Such an unprincipled thing as this he could by no means persuade himself to do.

**2.** If he should, as was expected from him, fight for the Philistines against Israel, he would incur the imputation of being an enemy to the Israel of God and a traitor to his country, would make his own people hate him, and unanimously oppose his coming to the crown, as unworthy the name of an Israelite, much more the honour and trust of a king of Israel, when he had fought against them under the banner of the uncircumcised. If Saul should be killed (as it proved he was) in this engagement, the fault would be laid at David's door, as if he had killed him. So that on each side there seemed to be both sin and scandal. This was the strait he was in; and a great strait it was to a good man, greater to see sin before him than to see trouble. Into this strait he brought himself by his own unadvisedness, in quitting the land of Judah, and going among the uncircumcised. It is strange if those that associate themselves with wicked people, and grow intimate with them, come off without guilt, or grief, or both. What he himself proposed to do does not appear. Perhaps he designed to act only as keeper to the king's head, the post assigned him (~~GEN~~ 1 Samuel 28:2) and not to do any thing offensively against Israel. But it would have been very hard to come so near the brink of sin and not to fall in. Therefore, though God might justly have left him in this difficulty, to chastise him for his folly, yet, because his heart was upright with him, he would *not suffer him to be tempted above what he was able, but with the temptation made a way for him to escape,* ~~1COR~~ 1 Corinthians 10:13.

**II.** A door opened for his deliverance out of this strait. God inclined the hearts of the princes of the Philistines to oppose his being employed in the battle, and to insist upon his being dismissed. Thus their enmity befriended him, when no friend he had was capable of doing him such a kindness.

**1.** It was a proper question which they asked, upon the mustering of the forces, "*What do these Hebrews here?*" v. 3. What confidence can we put in them, or what service can we expect from them?" A *Hebrew is out of his place*, and, if he has the spirit of a *Hebrew, is out of his element*, when he is in the camp of the Philistines, and deserves to be made uneasy there. David used to *hate the congregation of evil doers*, however he came now to be among them, ~~PSALM~~ Psalm 26:5. It was an honourable testimony which Achish, on this occasion, gave to David. He looked upon him as a refugee, that fled from a wrongful prosecution in his own country, and had put himself under his protection, whom therefore he was obliged, in justice, to take care of, and thought he might in prudence employ; "for (says he) he has been with me *these days, or these years,*" that is, a considerable time,

many days at his court and a year or two in his country, and he never found any fault in him, nor saw any cause to distrust his fidelity, or to think any other than that he had heartily come over to him. By this it appears that David had conducted himself with a great deal of caution, and had prudently concealed the affection he still retained for his own people. We have need to *walk in wisdom towards those that are without, to keep our mouth when the wicked is before us*, and to be upon the reserve.

**3.** Yet the princes are peremptory in it, that he must be sent home; and they give good reasons for their insisting on it.

**(1.)** Because he had been an old enemy to the Philistines; witness what was sung in honour of his triumphs over them: *Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands*, v. 5. “It will be a reproach to us to harbour and trust so noted a destroyer of our people; nor can it be thought that he will now act heartily against Saul who then acted so vigorously with him and for him.” Who would be fond of popular praise or applause when, even that may, another time, be turned against a man to his reproach?

**(2.)** Because he might be a most dangerous enemy to them, and do them more mischief than all Saul's army could (v. 4): “He may *in the battle be an adversary to us*, and surprise us with an attack in the rear, while their army charges us in the front; and we have reason to think he will do so, that, by betraying us, he may reconcile himself to his master. Who can trust a man who, besides his affection to his country, will think it his interest to be false to us?” It is dangerous to put confidence in a reconciled enemy.

## <0206> 1 SAMUEL 29:6-11

### DAVID LEAVES THE PHILISTINES

If the reasons Achish had to trust David were stronger than the reasons which the princes offered why they should distrust him (as I do not see that, in policy, they were, for the princes were certainly in the right), yet Achish was but one of five, though the chief, and the only one that had the title of king; accordingly, in a council of war held on this occasion, he was over-voted, and obliged to dismiss David, though he was extremely fond of him. Kings cannot always do as they would, nor have such as they would about them.

**I.** The discharge Achish gives him is very honourable, and not a final discharge, but only from the present service.

**1.** He signifies the great pleasure and satisfaction he had taken in him and in his conversation: *Thou art good in my sight as an angel of God*, v. 9. Wise and good men will gain respect, wherever they go, from all that know how to make a right estimate of persons and things, though of different professions in religion. What Achish says of David, God, by the prophet, says of the house of David (<sup><3818></sup>Zechariah 12:8), that it shall be *as the angel of the Lord*. But the former is a court-compliment; the latter is a divine promise.

**2.** He gives him a testimonial of his good behaviour, v. 6. It is very full and in obliging terms: *“Thou hast been upright, and thy whole conduct has been good in my sight, and I have not found evil in thee.”* Saul would not have given him such a testimonial, though he had done far more service to him than Achish. God's people should behave themselves always so inoffensively as if possible to get the good word of all they have dealings with; and it is a debt we owe to those who have acquitted themselves well to give them the praise of it.

**3.** He lays all the blame of his dismissal upon the princes, who would by no means suffer him to continue in the camp. *“The king loves thee entirely, and would venture his life in thy hand; but the lords favour thee not, and we must not disoblige them, nor can we oppose them; therefore return and go in peace.”* He had better part with his favourite than occasion a disgust among his generals and a mutiny in his army. Achish intimates a reason why they were uneasy. It was not so much for David's own sake as for the sake of his soldiers that attended him, whom he calls *his master's servants* (namely, Saul's), v. 10. They could trust him, but not them.

**(4.)** He orders him to be gone early, as soon as it was light (v. 10), to prevent their further resentments, and the jealousies they would have been apt to conceive if he had lingered.

**II.** His reception of this discourse is very complimentary; but, I fear, not without some degree of dissimulation. *“What?”* says David, *“must I leave my lord the king, whom I am bound by office to protect, just now when he is going to expose himself in the field? Why may not I go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?”* v. 8. He seemed anxious to serve him when he was at this juncture really anxious to leave him, but he was not

willing that Achish should know that he was. No one knows how strong the temptation is to compliment and dissemble which those are in that attend great men, and how hard it is to avoid it.

**III.** God's providence ordered it wisely and graciously for him. For, besides that the snare was broken and he was delivered out of the dilemma to which he was first reduced, it proved a happy hastening of him to the relief of his own city, which sorely wanted him, though he did not know it. Thus the disgrace which the lords of the Philistines put upon him prove, in more ways than one, an advantage to him. *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way.* What he does with us we know not now, but we shall know hereafter, and shall see it was all for good.