



David's Faith Falters: Life Among the Philistines (1 Sam 27-28)

Notes: Week Sixteen

1 Samuel 27-28 (HCSB)

David Flees to Ziklag

27 David said to himself, “One of these days I’ll be swept away by Saul. There is nothing better for me than to escape immediately to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will stop searching for me everywhere in Israel, and I’ll escape from him.” ² So David set out with his 600 men and went to Achish son of Maach, the king of Gath. ³ David and his men stayed with Achish in Gath. Each man had his family with him, and David had his two wives: Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, Nabal’s widow. ⁴ When it was reported to Saul that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him.

⁵ Now David said to Achish, “If I have found favor with you, let me be given a place in one of the outlying towns, so I can live there. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you?” ⁶ That day Achish gave Ziklag to him, and it still belongs to the kings of Judah today. ⁷ The time that David stayed in the Philistine territory amounted to a year and four months.

⁸ David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites, ^[a] and the Amalekites. From ancient times they had been the inhabitants of the region through Shur as far as the land of Egypt. ⁹ Whenever David attacked the land, he did not leave a single person alive, either man or woman, but he took flocks, herds, donkeys, camels, and clothing. Then he came back to Achish, ¹⁰ who inquired, “Where did you raid today?” ^[b]

David replied, “The south country of Judah,” “The south country of the Jerahmeelites,” or “Against the south country of the Kenites.”

¹¹ David did not let a man or woman live to be brought to Gath, for he said, “Or they will inform on us and say, ‘This is what David did.’” This was David’s custom during the whole time he stayed in the Philistine territory. ¹² So Achish trusted David, thinking, “Since he has made himself detestable to his people Israel, he will be my servant forever.”

Saul and the Medium

28 At that time, the Philistines brought their military units together into one army to fight against Israel. So Achish said to David, “You know, of course, that you and your men must march out in the army ^[c] with me.”

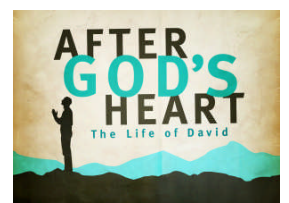
² David replied to Achish, “Good, you will find out what your servant can do.”

So Achish said to David, “Very well, I will appoint you as my permanent bodyguard.”

³ By this time Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his city, and Saul had removed the mediums and spiritists from the land. ⁴ The Philistines came together and camped at Shunem. So Saul gathered all Israel, and they camped at Gilboa. ⁵ When Saul saw the Philistine camp, he was afraid and trembled violently. ⁶ He inquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him in dreams or by the Urim or by the prophets. ⁷ Saul then said to his servants, “Find me a woman who is a medium, so I can go and consult her.”

His servants replied, “There is a woman at En-dor who is a medium.”

⁸ Saul disguised himself by putting on different clothes and set out with two of his men. They came to the woman at night, and Saul said, “Consult a spirit for me. Bring up for me the one I tell you.”



⁹ But the woman said to him, “You surely know what Saul has done, how he has killed the mediums and spiritists in the land. Why are you setting a trap for me to get me killed?”

¹⁰ Then Saul swore to her by the LORD: “As surely as the LORD lives, nothing bad will happen to you because of this.”

¹¹ “Who is it that you want me to bring up for you?” the woman asked.

“Bring up Samuel for me,” he answered.

¹² When the woman saw Samuel, she screamed, and then she asked Saul, “Why did you deceive me? You are Saul!”

¹³ But the king said to her, “Don’t be afraid. What do you see?”

“I see a spirit form^[d] coming up out of the earth,” the woman answered.

¹⁴ Then Saul asked her, “What does he look like?”

“An old man is coming up,” she replied. “He’s wearing a robe.” Then Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed his face to the ground and paid homage.

¹⁵ “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” Samuel asked Saul.

“I’m in serious trouble,” replied Saul. “The Philistines are fighting against me and God has turned away from me. He doesn’t answer me anymore, either through the prophets or in dreams. So I’ve called on you to tell me what I should do.”

¹⁶ Samuel answered, “Since the LORD has turned away from you and has become your enemy, why are you asking me? ¹⁷ The LORD has done^[e] exactly what He said through me: The LORD has torn the kingship out of your hand and given it to your neighbor David. ¹⁸ You did not obey the LORD and did not carry out His burning anger against Amalek; therefore the LORD has done this to you today. ¹⁹ The LORD will also hand Israel over to the Philistines along with you. Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me,^[f] and the LORD will hand Israel’s army over to the Philistines.”

²⁰ Immediately, Saul fell flat on the ground. He was terrified by Samuel’s words and was also weak because he hadn’t had any food all day and all night. ²¹ The woman came over to Saul, and she saw that he was terrified and said to him, “Look, your servant has obeyed you. I took my life in my hands and did what you told me to do. ²² Now please listen to your servant. Let me set some food in front of you. Eat and it will give you strength so you can go on your way.”

²³ He refused, saying, “I won’t eat,” but when his servants and the woman urged him, he listened to them. He got up off the ground and sat on the bed.

²⁴ The woman had a fattened calf at her house, and she quickly slaughtered it. She also took flour, kneaded it, and baked unleavened bread. ²⁵ She served it to Saul and his servants, and they ate. Afterward, they got up and left that night.

Footnotes:

- a. [1 Samuel 27:8](#) Alt Hb tradition reads *Gezerites*
- b. [1 Samuel 27:10](#) Some Hb mss, Syr, Tg; LXX, Vg, DSS read *Against whom did you raid today?*
- c. [1 Samuel 28:1](#) DSS, LXX read *battle*
- d. [1 Samuel 28:13](#) Or *a god, or a divine being*
- e. [1 Samuel 28:17](#) Some Hb, some LXX mss, Vg read *done to you*
- f. [1 Samuel 28:19](#) LXX reads *sons will fall*

Holman Christian Standard Bible - *Study Bible*¹

1 Samuel 27-28

1 Samuel 27

[27:2](#) On 600 men, see note at [23:13](#). This number did not include the men's families, who traveled with them ([27:3](#)). David earlier had feared Achish ([21:10-15](#)), but now he determined to join him. On Gath, see note at [21:10](#).

[27:3](#) Achish granted David and his men refuge in accord with the principle, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." On Ahinoam, see note at [25:43](#). On Abigail, see various notes at [25:14-42](#).

[27:5](#) David's request that he receive one of the outlying towns may have helped Achish's reputation with his own people, since some Philistines may have wondered why their king harbored a noted Israelite warrior in Gath, the royal city. David probably also desired the safety that a little distance from the Philistine capital provided.

[27:6](#) The city of Ziklag was located approximately 25 miles southwest of Gath. It originally was allotted to both the tribes of Simeon ([Jos 19:5](#)) and Judah ([Jos 15:31](#)), but Israel never conquered it. Now Ziklag came under Israelite control without a fight. The phrase it still belongs to the kings of Judah today designates the time of the writing of the books of 1 and 2 Samuel (see note at [6:17-18](#)).

[27:7](#) Many scholars have dated the time designated by a year and four months to around 1012 B.C.

[27:8](#) The Geshurites ([Jos 13:1-2](#)), the Girzites, and the Amalekites ([Ex 17:15-16](#); [Dt 25:17-19](#)) were three non-Israelite groups under God's sentence of judgment. The Girzites occupied territory that overlapped with the promised land.

[27:9](#) David's action against these groups fulfilled God's earlier command to Israel during the days of Joshua to wipe out the land's evil inhabitants ([Jos 13:1-7](#)). It also left no witnesses who could relay word to Achish ([v. 11](#)).

[27:10](#) David's claim to have raided the south country of Judah was technically correct, and he did fight people in the region of the Jerahmeelites and Kenites, two Judahite clans. Achish thought David meant he had destroyed many Israelites in the process.

[27:12](#) Though Achish trusted David and assumed he would be Achish's servant forever, David was actually eliminating future rivals in Judah's territory.

1 Samuel 28

[28:1](#) Achish's words to David present a serious tension in the narrative. If David's forces were to march with the Philistines, he would end up fighting against his own people as he fought against Saul's army.

[28:3](#) The law of Moses prohibited consulting with mediums and spiritists ([Lv 19:31](#); [20:27](#); [Dt 18:10-11](#)), so Saul's effort to rid the land of them was commendable.

1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "1 Samuel 27-28".

28:4 The Philistines camped at Shunem deep into the Jezreel Valley at the foot of Mount Moreh. Saul camped at Gilboa at the valley's southeastern edge, a vantage point from which he could observe the enemy army.

28:5 Jonathan, Saul's son, knew the Lord was not limited by the size of Israel's army ([14:6](#)), but Saul trembled violently when he saw the numbers in the Philistine camp.

28:6 Saul inquired of the Lord for direction. Urim (lit "lights") denoted the device the priest used for discerning God's will ([Ex 28:30](#); [Num 27:21](#)), but Saul may not have had that available to him since Abiathar had taken the ephod to David ([23:6](#)). The prophets likewise gave Saul no answer, perhaps because Saul had cut himself off from them through his clash with Samuel ([15:34-35](#)).

28:7 Desperate to find spiritual guidance of any kind about war with the Philistines, Saul turned to the very avenue he knew was wrong and had tried to destroy. Traveling to En-dor would present some risk, since it lay about six miles northeast and two miles beyond the Philistine camp.

28:8 Saul disguised himself to avoid being recognized by Philistines who might be patrolling the valley. Traveling with only two of his men put the king in a high-risk situation, but they also looked less "official" than a large group.

28:9 The medium knew about Saul's cleansing Israel of spiritism and suspected the king of setting a trap for her.

28:10 The king swore that she would suffer no harm—an oath by the very Lord who condemned divination.

28:12 The text suggests that the spirit of Samuel actually appeared and alluded to events in which Samuel had participated ([vv. 15-19](#)); the tone of his speech sounds just like Samuel. Perhaps the woman recognized Saul in the light of Samuel's appearance, or perhaps the king pulled back his hood to look closer at the spirit who appeared before them.

28:16 Since Samuel was the Lord's servant and spoke as God's representative, it didn't make sense for Saul to ask for guidance from Samuel since God had refused to answer him. In the next three verses, however, Samuel would give Saul his answer, though it wasn't the answer Saul wanted to hear.

28:17 The spirit of Samuel specifically named Saul's successor as David, whereas before he had only alluded to him ([13:14](#); [15:28](#)).

28:18 The words of Samuel's spirit, You did not obey the Lord, is a reference to [15:1-3,7-9](#)—Saul's miserable failure regarding Amalek, whom God had commanded Saul to destroy.

28:19 The nation's defeat would come at God's hands. The words of Samuel's spirit, you and your sons will be with me, was an unmistakable verdict of death on Saul and his house.

28:20 The content of Samuel's words, along with Saul's weariness from traveling six miles, the stress of impending battle, and his fasting all day and all night (cp. [14:24,28](#)), left the king totally exhausted.

28:23 Saul's initial refusal to eat may have been because he did not wish to break his vow of fasting (cp. [14:24](#)), but the people around him prevailed upon him to take some nourishment (see note at [14:45](#)).

[28:24](#) A fattened calf was a very nice dinner in a land where meat was not eaten very often. Unleavened bread could be prepared quickly ([Ex 12:34](#)).

[28:25](#) The six-mile return journey would bring more stress on Saul, and he would also get little rest to prepare for the battle the next day.

English Standard Version - Study Bible²

1 Samuel 27-28

1 Samuel 27

27:1-30:31 David in Philistia. David and his men finally gain some stability by going to Philistia and serving Achish of Gath, though they manage to avoid attacking Israel. Yet when the Philistines mobilize for a massive attack on Saul's army in the Jezreel Valley, it seems that David must become an enemy of his own people. The Philistine lords do not trust him in battle, however, so he and his men go back to their city of Ziklag ([30:1](#)), only to find that it has been destroyed by the Amalekites. David manages to pursue and destroy the raiders and gain much spoil, which he shares with the cities of Judah. [Chapter 28](#), the story of Saul and the medium of En-dor, tells how Saul, faced with the Philistine invasion, seeks advice from Samuel through divination but receives only a prophecy of his own death.

27:1-12 David and Achish. Here, as in [21:10](#), David goes to Gath as a mercenary. Whereas before he went anonymously and alone, here he goes in his own name, accompanied by his 600 men and their families, presumably having first negotiated their status with Achish. As he said in [26:19](#), he has finally concluded that he can no longer stay in Israel. The difficulties experienced by the families of the men ([27:3](#)) are also probably an important reason for his move. Whether this Achish is the Achish of [21:10](#) is not certain; "Achish" may have been a title. But if it is the same person, he is probably more impressed by David's resourcefulness than angry at the previous deception. While David stayed with the technically advanced Philistines, he may have learned some useful things (such as the military system). Though he is the rightful king, he must remain a while longer in exile from Israel.

27:5 David does not mean a specific location with the term **a place**. Asking a lord for land was not an unusual practice. The feudal practice of giving land to the servants of the king was widespread in Israel ([22:7](#)) as well as among the Philistines. David probably pointed out to Achish that he and his men were uncultured Israelites; as fugitives, they were used to rough conditions and thus unsuited to life in the sophisticated and probably crowded capital. His real motive, however, was probably to get away from Gath so that he could act freely, without interference.

27:6 The exact location of **Ziklag**, part of the Negeb ([Josh. 15:31](#)), is unknown (see note on [1 Sam. 30:9](#)). The Negeb was comparatively distant from Gath, but the nearer cities probably belonged to other vassals of Achish, a fact that David must have been well aware of when he made his request. **to this day**.

27:8 The **Geshurites** are those mentioned as living near the Philistines ([Josh. 13:2](#)), not the Geshurites living near Bashan ([Josh. 13:11](#)). The **Girzites** are not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. The **Amalekites** of [1 Samuel 15](#) and [30](#) were located to the south, toward the Egyptian border.

27:10 The **Negeb** corresponds to today's northern Negev, i.e., the district east and west of Beersheba and north of Kadesh-barnea. David would tell Achish that he attacked Judahite, Jerahmeelite, or Kenite settlements in the area. The **Jerahmeelites** and **Kenites** are mentioned in [30:29](#) and seem to have been friendly to Israel. For the Kenites, see note on [15:6](#).

27:12 always be my servant. Lit., "be my eternal servant," meaning a permanent servant or vassal. Cf. [Deut. 15:17](#); [Job 41:4](#).

2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "1 Samuel 27-28".

1 Samuel 28

28:1-2 *The Philistines Gather for War.* After David has been with Achish for over a year, the Philistines decide on a major attack on Israel involving the forces of all five of their cities. The aim is apparently to gain control over the northern Jezreel Valley, a wide, agriculturally rich plain that goes as far east as the Jordan River. **you and your men are to go out with me.** David, as a vassal of Achish, is naturally expected to participate in the attack. **Bodyguard** is a specific position, while “my servant” ([27:12](#)) refers to David’s status as the king’s subject. The story of the Philistine attack on Israel resumes at [29:1](#).

28:3-25 *The Medium of En-dor.* Saul faces overwhelming odds in the impending Philistine invasion. In his extremity he apparently decides that the only one who can guide him is the prophet who told him that he had been chosen by God as king to save Israel from its enemies ([10:1](#)). Contact with the dead was forbidden by the Lord (see note on [28:3-4](#)), as Saul well knows ([v. 3](#)), but he goes ahead anyway. This passage should not be used as an argument for having séances. Though it suggests that in some circumstances a medium may be able to contact the dead, it stresses the wrongness of the practice. Furthermore, the only message from the dead Samuel, besides a repetition of the message of Saul’s rejection, was that Saul and his sons would die. The Chronicler specifically mentions this incident as one reason for Saul’s death: “So Saul died for his breach of faith... in that he did not keep the command of the LORD, and also consulted a medium, seeking guidance. He did not seek guidance from the LORD” ([1 Chron. 10:13-14](#)).

28:3-4 [Verse 3](#) gives the information necessary to understand the rest of this chapter, reminding the reader that Samuel was dead (cf. [25:1](#)) and stating that Saul had driven out mediums (cf. [28:9](#)). [Verse 4](#) jumps chronologically to a point following [ch. 29](#); here, the Philistines are already at Shunem, a city on the opposite (north) side of the Jezreel Valley from Mount Gilboa. The Mosaic laws forbade as abominations **mediums** and **necromancers**, who consult the spirits of the dead, as well as other forms of divination ([Lev. 19:31](#); [20:6, 27](#); [Deut. 18:10-12](#); see also [1 Sam. 15:23](#)). Necromancy and other forms of divination were common throughout the ancient Near East, and many divination texts have been discovered; biblical religion is the only one known to forbid it. Such religious practices were widespread in ancient Canaan ([Deut. 18:10-12](#)), and they continued to be a problem throughout the Israelite monarchy (e.g., [2 Kings 21:6; 23:24; Isa. 8:19](#)). By driving out the mediums, Saul was certainly trying to be faithful to the Lord, in his own way. The Hebrew word rendered “medium” in [1 Sam. 28:3, 9](#) (*’ob*) can mean (1) “the spirit of a dead person” in general (as in [v. 8](#)); (2) “necromancy,” i.e., divining by an *’ob*; or (3) “a medium,” i.e., one who practices necromancy. In [v. 7](#), “a woman who is a medium” is literally “a woman who has an *’ob*.” The term “necromancers” (*yidde ’oni*), which always appears with “mediums,” is literally “(all-) knowing”; it refers to the practice of necromancy or to its practitioner, but not to the spirit of the dead.

28:6 **By dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets** were the allowable means of determining the will of the Lord. **The LORD did not answer** because he had rejected Saul from being king ([15:23](#)).

28:7 **En-dor** was 4.5 miles (7.2 km) northeast of Shunem, where the Philistines were encamped, so it was on the other side of the enemy from Saul.

28:8 **Night** was the appropriate time for consulting the spirits of the dead. Saul’s fasting ([v. 20](#)) may also have been in preparation for the ceremony.

28:11 There is no description of the wording used to call up Samuel from the dead. Perhaps the writer did not even want to mention the actual deed.

28:12 she cried out with a loud voice. Perhaps Samuel's appearance surprised the woman and she thought something was happening outside her control. Another possibility is that her previous activities had called up only deceptive demonic imitations of a dead person's spirit, but this time she suddenly realized that something much more real was happening. Readers are not told how the woman realized who **Saul** was. Perhaps the spirit called his name as he came up.

28:13-14 A god is literally "gods" with a plural verbal form, so not "God," which is a plural noun but takes a singular verb. This term is used of the spirits of the dead in ancient Near Eastern texts. The Moabite "gods" may also have been the spirits of the dead (see [Num. 25:2](#); [Ps. 106:28](#)). Saul, however, is interested in Samuel as a person and asks about **his** (singular) **appearance**. The **robe** was Samuel's characteristic garment ([1 Sam. 15:27](#)).

28:15-19 Then Samuel said to Saul. The character of this event has long been debated—whether the spirit was really Samuel, or how the medium could command the spirit of a holy prophet. As far as the narrator is concerned, this really is the spirit of the dead prophet Samuel. He is called "Samuel" in [vv. 15-16](#). He speaks much as he had spoken to Saul during his lifetime (cf. [vv. 16-18](#) with [15:18](#), [26-28](#): in both places, Samuel describes David as Saul's "neighbor"). He uses the name of **the LORD** seven times, and adds the true prophecy that Saul and his **sons** will die. It is hard to think that the narrator thought this was a deceptive illusion performed by the woman or some demonic spirit deceiving Saul. An evil spirit would not deliver a true prophecy or true words to Saul, as Samuel does in [28:16-19](#). That the woman's actions brought Samuel up is implied by [v. 15](#), **Why have you disturbed me?** So whatever the limits on a medium's power normally were, in this case the Lord let her rouse the spirit of Samuel himself.

28:19 Be with me may simply mean that Saul will die, but some think it implies more, that Saul's spirit will join Samuel's in the place of the dead (perhaps even among those whose sins are forgiven). In [2 Sam. 12:23](#), David says he will eventually go to his dead son. Sometimes the term "Sheol" refers to the place of the dead, which was pictured as being below the earth (the spirit of Samuel is "brought up"; cf. [1 Sam. 28:8](#), [13](#), [15](#)). In such cases, no distinction is made between the pious and the wicked. In other cases, a distinction is crucial (see note on [Ps. 49:15](#)).

28:24 A fattened calf is a stall-fed calf that was being prepared for eating, rather than a pasture-fed calf.

28:25 Saul went away, back to Gilboa. Saul apparently accepted that his death was the unalterable word of the Lord; he does not try to escape the battle on the next day.

NLT Life Application Study Bible³

1 Samuel 27-28

Chapter 27

[27:4](#) Saul finally stopped pursuing David. His army was not strong enough to invade Philistine territory just to seek one man. Besides, the immediate threat to Saul's throne was gone while David was out of the country.

[27:5-7](#) Gath was one of five principal cities in Philistia, and Achish was one of five co-rulers. David may have wanted to move out of this important city to avoid potential skirmishes or attacks upon his family. He may also have wanted to escape the close scrutiny of the Philistine officials. Achish let David move to Ziklag, where he lived until Saul's death ([2 Samuel 2:1](#)).

[27:8, 9](#) David probably conducted these guerrilla-style raids because these three tribes were known for their surprise attacks and cruel treatment of innocent people. These desert tribes were a danger, not just to the Philistines, but especially to the Israelites, the people David would one day lead.

[27:10-12](#) Was David wrong in falsely reporting his activities to Achish? No doubt David was lying, but he may have felt his strategy was justified in a time of war against a pagan enemy. David knew he would one day be Israel's king. The Philistines were still his enemies, but this was an excellent place to hide from Saul. When Achish asked David to go into battle against Israel, David agreed, once again pretending loyalty to the Philistines ([28:1ff](#)). Whether he would have actually fought Saul's army we can't know, but we can be sure that his ultimate loyalty was to God and not to Achish or Saul.

Chapter 28

[28:1, 2](#) Achish's request put David in a difficult position. To refuse to help Achish fight the Israelites would give away David's loyalty to Israel and endanger the lives of his soldiers and family. But to fight his own people would hurt the very people he loved and would soon lead. David, however, never had to solve his dilemma because God protected him. The other Philistine leaders objected to his presence in battle; thus, he did not have to fight his countrymen.

[28:3-8](#) Saul had banned all mediums and those who consult with the spirits of the dead from Israel, but in desperation he turned to one for counsel. Although he had removed the sin of witchcraft from the land, he did not remove it from his heart. We may make a great show of denouncing sin, but if our hearts do not change, the sins will return. Knowing what is right and condemning what is wrong do not take the place of *doing* what is right.

[28:5, 6](#) Casting sacred lots meant using the Urim and Thummim to determine God's guidance in certain matters. (See the notes on [2:18](#) and [10:20](#) for further information on the use of the Urim and Thummim.)

[28:5-7](#) Saul was overwhelmed at the sight of the Philistine army, and so he turned to the occult. Regard life's difficulties and obstacles as reminders to turn you in God's direction and make you depend upon him. As we see from Saul's story, turning to anything or anyone else leads only to disaster.

3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under "Chapter 27" & 454.

28:7, 8 God had strictly forbidden the Israelites to have anything to do with divination, sorcery, witchcraft, mediums, spiritists, or anyone who consults the dead ([Deuteronomy 18:9-14](#)). In fact, sorcerers were to be put to death ([Exodus 22:18](#)). Occult practices were carried on in the name of pagan gods, and people turned to the occult for answers that God would not give.

Practitioners of the occult have Satan and demons as the source of their information; God does not reveal his will to them. Instead, he speaks through his own channels: the Bible, his Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

28:12 Did Samuel really come back from the dead at the medium's call? The medium shrieked at the appearance of Samuel—she knew too well that the spirits she usually contacted were either contrived or satanic. Somehow Samuel's appearance revealed to her that she was dealing with a power far greater than she had known. She did not call up Samuel by trickery or by the power of Satan; God brought Samuel back to give Saul a prediction regarding his fate, a message Saul already knew. This in no way justifies efforts to contact the dead or communicate with persons or spirits from the past. God is against all such practices ([Galatians 5:19-21](#)).

28:15 God did not answer Saul's appeals because Saul had not followed God's previous directions. Sometimes people wonder why their prayers are not answered. But if they don't fulfill the responsibilities God has already given them, they should not be surprised when he does not give further guidance.



The Battle at Gilboa

David pretended loyalty to Achish, but when war broke out with Israel, he was sent to Ziklag from Aphek. The Philistines defeated the Israelites at Mount Gilboa. David returned to Ziklag to find that the Amalekites had destroyed Ziklag. So David and his men pursued the Amalekite raiders and slaughtered them, recovering all that was taken.

Life Essentials Study Bible⁴

A Principle to Live By:
Spiritual Regression
from [1 Samuel 27:1-12](#)

We must be on guard against regressing to self-centered patterns of behavior.

Not for the first time, David stopped consulting God and began to focus on his own abilities. He “said to himself”—not the Lord ([v. 1](#)). Note also the number of times he used first-person pronouns: “I’ll be swept away by Saul. There is nothing better for me . . . Then Saul will stop searching for me. . . I’ll escape from him.”

In spite of God’s continual protection from Saul’s attacks, David once again allowed fear to cause him to regress in his faith. He fled into Philistine territory and ingratiated and aligned himself with a pagan king. Sadly, in order to impress Achish, he began lying again. He also engaged in raids that left whole towns wiped out. Since these were non-Jewish cities, he probably rationalized his behavior and saw himself as the means that God was using to judge the pagan inhabitants of Canaan ([vv. 8-12](#)).

It’s easy to stand amazed at David’s spiritual ambivalence and to raise the question, “How could this happen?” However, when we feel we lack wisdom to face difficult times in our lives today—even with all we know from the whole of Scripture—it’s easy to vacillate, waver, and even regress to old patterns of behavior that focus on ourselves rather than on God. This is why James exhorted us all,

Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without criticizing, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without doubting. For the doubter is like the surging sea, driven and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. An indecisive man is unstable in all his ways. ([Jms 1:5-8](#))

Reflection and Response

Why is it so easy to forget God’s promises and past provisions and to take matters into our own hands when we are facing difficult challenges and pressures in our lives?

4. Gene Getz, *Life Essentials Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2011), *WORDsearch CROSS e-book*, 386-388.

A Principle to Live By:
Finishing Well
from [1 Samuel 28:1-25](#)

*As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, our goal should always be
to conclude our lives on earth fulfilling God's will.*

This scriptural account is difficult to understand, but the Bible clearly says that Samuel spoke to Saul. His words send a message to all of us who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ. He summarized how this Old Testament king did not finish his spiritual journey well.

Saul's end-of-life event stands in great contrast with another man's experience in the New Testament. He too was named Saul, but his name was changed to Paul after his conversion. Facing a martyr's death in a Roman prison, he wrote to Timothy,

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time for my departure is close. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ([2Tm 4:6-7](#))

Reflection and Response

What steps can we take in order to live in God's will throughout our Christian lives?