

1 Samuel 29

The rulers of the Philistines mustered their troops and marched north to the town of Aphek. It is interesting to note that the first place the Philistines mustered their troops for battle against the Israelites in this book was at Aphek (4:1), and the last place they did so was also at Aphek. This indicates that Israel had not subdued her neighbor enemy effectively during Saul's reign, because of his failure as her leader.¹

As the opposing sides gathered for battle, with David and his men marching at the rear with Achish, what was the dilemma that David faced (vv. 1-2)? David is now facing the consequences of his earlier decision to move to the land of the Philistines without consulting God. David is in a “catch 22” situation. If he truly fights for Achish, with the rest of the Philistines....**what’s the problem?** He will be fighting against his own people (the Israelites), his king (Saul), and his beloved friend (Jonathan).

If David does not fight with the Philistines, his only other option is to turn against them in battle.....**what’s the problem?** Insurmountable odds – 600 men against the Philistine army. David found himself caught in the middle with no apparent way out. He now found himself in a place he thought he would never be.....among the ungodly, ready to *fight against* God’s people.

But God.....!! God's way of escape then took the following form: **Who approached Achish with a concern (v. 3)?** It was at this point in time that help came from a very unlikely source – the Philistine commanders. The Philistine commanders noticed David and his men and asked each other why Hebrew soldiers were accompanying them, since they were going to war against the Hebrews. The rejection of David’s willingness to go into battle by the Philistine commanders is a perfect example of how God, in His sovereignty, often uses the ungodly to accomplish His purposes. In this case, He used the Philistine commanders to prevent David from fighting against his own people.

How did Achish respond to the concerns of his men (v. 3)? Achish, whom David had deceived into thinking that he was no longer loyal to Saul, came to his defense. Achish had implicit confidence in David and argued with the other leaders that he should be allowed to fight against Saul. After all he knew David was a great warrior (27:8-12) and he had lived in Philistia now for almost 16 months (cf. 27:7).²

How did the Philistine commanders answer Achish? What was their concern (vv. 4-5)? Some of the Philistine commanders wisely objected to David’s presence. They could hardly believe how naive Achish was being. They figured that David would probably turn against them in the upcoming battle in order to regain acceptance with Saul. How could he better reconcile himself to King Saul than by producing a row of Philistine heads?³

They proceeded to use the same phrase Achish had just used to defend David, "Is this not David..." (vv. 3, 5), to impress on their gullible comrade what a danger David posed to them. David had slain many of Israel's enemies, including many Philistines.⁴

How did Achish respond (vv. 6-7)? Their arguments seemed reasonable, so Achish reluctantly requested that David return to Ziklag.

How did David react to Achish's explanation (v. 8)? David's answer seems unworthy of a man of God. He protested that he should be allowed to enter the fight against "*the enemies of my lord the king*"—even though these "enemies" were his own people. David had lied to Achish before ([Chapter 27](#)), and this was probably another attempt to deceive the Philistines. If, as seems unlikely, he actually intended to fight against Israel, God prevented it and saved him from the shame of killing his fellow Israelites and strengthening the arm of the Philistines against them. David would not be allowed to use Goliath's sword against Israel.⁵

How did Achish answer (vv. 9-10)? He again threw the Philistine commanders under the bus and told David to get up early in the morning and leave.

What did David and his men do (v. 11)? They obediently left to go back to Ziklag.

This chapter is an encouraging revelation of how God takes care of His own when they are under extreme stress and not entirely obedient. David had come close to running out of ideas about how he could preserve his life (cf. 27:1). He had even resorted to deception to protect himself (cf. 27:10-12; 29:8). He had apparently received no special guidance from God in answer to prayer. The name of God does not appear in chapter 27 or in chapter 29, suggesting that God's guidance was rare while David was in Philistine territory.⁶

Nonetheless, God continued to guard His anointed servant, even in a foreign land. He enabled David to convince Achish of his loyalty, which yielded a measure of protection for David. He also enlightened the other Philistine commanders as to David's threat to themselves, which resulted in their sending him far from the field of battle. The very same Philistines who will finally dispose of Saul ([Chapter 31](#)) are the ones who unwittingly rescue David. In short, God providentially caused the reactions of people, as different as those reactions were, to protect David (cf. [Romans 8:28](#)). Even when God's people do not sense it, God cares for them, as their shepherd (cf. [Psalm 23:37:23](#)).⁷

¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on 1 Samuel, 2024 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 207.

² Ibid., 208

³ William MacDonald, Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 319.

⁴ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on 1 Samuel, 2024 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 208

⁵ William MacDonald, Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 320.

⁶ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on 1 Samuel, 2024 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 209.

⁷ Ibid.