

**TO TELL
THE STORY**



LUKE ITALIANO

When Hope is Gone

David thought to himself, “One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand.”

And so David led his band of men – 600 men in all – to the Philistines.

King Saul had finally driven David out of the land. And now David lived in exile.

He went to the king of the Philistines, a man by the name of Achish. And he lived there. Achish even gave David and his men a town – Ziklag. And for well over a year, David and his men lived in peace. They brought their wives and children to come live with them. And it was a good time, if bittersweet. They couldn’t go home. They couldn’t see their brothers, their cousins, visit their hometowns. And then...

The Philistines went to war with Israel. And King Achish summoned David. “Bring your men. It is time for you to prove your loyalty to me.”

And David was forced to gather his men and go to war against Israel.

Can you imagine it? Can you picture it? On mount Gilboa, the Israelite armies have gathered. And King Saul is there, with Jonathan, the crown prince, David’s closest friend. And surrounding the mountain: The Philistines. And there is one contingent in the Philistine army – there is David and his men.

How can they fight against Israel? How could they fight against their brothers?

As they stand waiting for orders, David’s men whisper to him, “What are we doing here? How are we gonna get out of this?” They’re wearing their armor. They’re ready with their swords. But they are not ready to fight their countrymen.

But God has an amazing way of working, doesn’t he?

Achish’s generals come to him and say, “Ah...Oh king? Isn’t – isn’t this the David that they sang about in their dances, ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands?’”

“David is loyal to me.”

“Well, perhaps he is loyal to you *now*, O king, but if he ever wanted to go home, this would be the perfect opportunity. He would just turn on us and slaughter us. And, well uh, then he’d be welcomed back home. Maybe this isn’t such a good idea, O king.”

And Achish was convinced. He summoned David. “David, I know you are loyal, but the other men do not. Take your men. Go home to Ziklag.”

And David objects: “A...Are you sure?”

“Yes. Go home, David.”

And so David and his men returned home to Ziklag, relieved. And worried. How was that battle going to go? Even without David and his men there – Israel looks ready to be defeated. The Philistines far outnumber them.

But as they travel home, their worries vanish and are replaced by new ones.

As they come over the final hill, they see their town, Ziklag –

-- and it's in flames.

They rush to the city. The men sprint from home to home, looking for their loved ones, looking for wives, for children!

The city has been abandoned. There is no one left – not, not even a single sheep has been left.

The men start to mutter treason against David. “If only he hadn't taken us to fight with the Philistines, we would have been here. We could have protected our families!”

David prays to God and receives an answer: “Go. Chase them.”

David takes his band of warriors to war.

They eventually catch up to the Amelekites – another group who had come in and raided while all the men were gone. And God is with David. They slaughter the Amelekites, and not one woman, not one child, not even a sheep is missing.

David and his men return home rejoicing, for David has protected them all.

But there's a thought in the back of David's mind: What is happening to Saul? What's happening to Jonathan?

Brothers and sisters,

Sometimes things happen and, and we don't know why – but God does. He has a plan. God protected David and all the families of David's men, even as something terrible was happening with King Saul.

But that's a story for next week. And this story:

This story is true.

I Samuel 27-30
<http://www.breadforbeggars.com>

