

Grace for the Double Life 1 Samuel 29

*“Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you **double minded...**”*

Introduction: We love and appreciate our public servants, particularly our **firemen**. They are willing to put themselves into harm's way in order to protect life, have expertise to aid those who are in need of medical attention, and are constantly vigilant since they can get called any time in the day, 7 days a week. They do this at the cost of being with their family for 24 hours at a time, although they do get to ride in cool trucks and use impressive tools. With all of this, it creates the largest form of dissonance when a **fire captain is convicted** of being a **serial arsonist**. That is exactly what happened in the 1980's and 90's here in Southern California.

John Leonard Orr was a fire captain who was so good at his job that he was promoted to **Arson Investigator**, all the while he was responsible for starting over 2000 fires which caused millions of dollars in damage in the Los Angeles area. He had advantages to evade arrest, since he knew all the procedures and how firemen are trained. He became so brash at his ability to avoid suspicion or capture that even after a 1984 fire in South Pasadena that killed four people which he started, he pressed investigators to see the cause as arson, rather than a mere electrical fire. Even more startling, Orr wrote a novel called *Points of Origin*, about a fireman who was naturally also an arsonist, a sick and twisted autobiography that no one suspected was about the author. It was not until he started a fire in 1987 that was extinguished before the flames could spread that investigators found a perfect fingerprint, leading to gathering of evidence and eventually an arrest and conviction.

Real life stories like John Orr, or Jane Toppan, the medical nurse and serial killer, or Sam Hurd, the Bible quoting Christian and drug kingpin, are shocking to us because they are so unexpected. But the idea of living a **double life** is not as shocking. In fact, double lives are far too common. It is revealed every time a spouse carries on an adulterous affair without the knowledge of their own spouse, all the while spinning a web of deceit and lies. It is displayed when there are underhanded business practices, cutting corners with the law or taxes, with no one being the wiser. But it can also be momentary, as we see in **Acts 5** with Ananias and Sapphira, who sold a piece of land and kept back some of the proceeds but brought the rest to the apostles, while posing that they gave it all! Because of their duplicity and willingness to “test the Spirit of the Lord” (5:9), they both were struck down, causing great fear to come on the whole church.

The reality is, we are all prone to having hidden parts of our life, all the while hoping others will not see it or know about it. This goes back to the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3, as Adam and Eve hid after they sinned, fearfully hoping God would not find out. We fear **rejection, judgment, loss of reputation, misplaced shame, and what people think**. In our pride we want to present something about ourselves in a sanitized way, all the while something else is brewing below the surface. We are often willing to go to great lengths to keep these things hidden, from **lying, to stealing, to abandoning family or running away from people**. This hiding of sin is a mark of an unbeliever, or a believer who cannot walk in joy and satisfaction in Christ. What we fight to **believe** is that the gospel FREES us from the need to hide, compelling us to deal with our sin, to be honest, and to receive the forgiveness that is extended to all who believe. The **grace of God** is always greater than our sin: “*where sin increased, grace abounded all the more*” (Rom. 5:20), “*so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*”

This morning we are going to look specifically at **David** once again, but through the juxtaposition of **Saul's** life as he marched toward his final demise. Each man struggled with a double life, one that led to full apostasy and destruction, while the other felt the effects for a time but was able to course correct. In David's life, it was his true relationship with the Lord that was the difference, and God's lavished grace that changed everything. Our hope this morning is to understand these two examples, but also to **evaluate** our own soul and heart, to see if there are any marks of a double life, any double minded ways, any areas that we need to **repent of and turn from**. Dealing with hidden areas is scary, but God's grace gives a pathway of joy that is FAR GREATER! We believe the truth that says,

"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there is any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" (Psalm 139:23-24).

IRONIES OF A DOUBLE LIFE

*Now the Philistines had gathered all their forces at **Aphék**. And the Israelites were encamped by the spring that is in **Jezeel**. 2 As the lords of the Philistines were passing on by hundreds and by thousands, and David and his men were passing on in the rear with Achish, 3 the commanders of the Philistines said, "What are these Hebrews doing here?" And Achish said to the commanders of the Philistines, "Is this not David, the servant of Saul, king of Israel, who has been with me now for days and years, and since he deserted to me I have found no fault in him to this day."*

At the close of 1 Samuel 28, we left Saul leaving in the cover of night from the *medium at Endor*, where, in his desperate attempt to find information from Samuel, received a message of destruction that awaited him the next day at the hand of the Philistines. Not only would he meet his demise, but his three sons would join him in death. Saul's life was characterized by a **double life**, leading Israel as her king, having access to God Himself and receiving promises of success, but his character could not meet the challenge. Saul lived his life scrambling from behind, afraid, jealous, and doing what he felt was the right thing in situations instead of simply trusting God obediently, and it left him desolate. In fact, as the narrative shifts back to David once again, the Philistines were gathered at **Aphék**, a mere 30 miles south of Shunem and Gilboa. This is NOT the first time Aphék was the source of defeat. If you remember way back in chapter 4, this was the location where Israel was defeated soundly by the Philistines, Hophni and Phineas, the wicked sons of Eli, died followed by Eli himself. It was also where the Ark of the Covenant was taken, and the beginning of the call for a king like all the other nations. Now, after the entire reign of Saul, bookending his rule, Israel is once again facing defeat from the Philistines, which illustrates a most important truth: ***following our own desires and will CANNOT actually move us forward in life, but simply leaves us where we started, in need of hope and true salvation.***

At the same time, David found himself in a conundrum. He had led a **double life** for the last 16 months, pretending to be a deserter from Israel and seeking salvation from the pursuing Saul with the Philistines. In order to obtain safety, he played a duplicitous game. He convinced **Achish of Gath**, one of the five chiefs of the main Philistine cities, that he was loyal to him. Remember, David had begun to act like a vigilante and mercenary, conducting land raids throughout the South, leaving no one alive to tell any tales, and reporting back to Achish with both plunder and stories of attacking Israel itself in the Negev region. While it is clear that David NEVER turned his back on his God or his people, he played the role so convincingly that Achish invited David to be his personal bodyguard as they went to all out war with Israel. One of the **great ironies of this narrative** is the fact that most of the dialogue is dominated by a foreign king who defended David and his character, even though he was the one who had been duped the most.

But the rest of the leaders of the Philistines did not buy it (rightly!):

1 Samuel 29:4-5 - ⁴ *But the commanders of the Philistines were angry with him. And the commanders of the Philistines said to him, “**Send the man back**, that he may return to the place to which you have assigned him. He shall not go down with us to battle, **lest in the battle he become an adversary to us**. For how could this fellow reconcile himself to his lord? Would it not be with the heads of the men here? ⁵ *Is not this David, of whom they sing to one another in dances,**

‘Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands?’”

These Philistine chiefs actually saw the scene clearly. They appealed to **prudence and history**. They pointed out the most likely outcome of this situation, even though David had been with Achish for *16 whole months*, was that he would turn on them when the battle started. **Ironically**, the text seems to confirm their suspicions. David had told Achish that he would see what his servant could do in battle (28:2), and in 29:8, David told Achish that he was planning to go and fight against the enemies of **my lord the king**, which the Philistine would have understood as HIM! But this is the same language that David had used for Saul earlier (1 Sam. 24:8, 26:19), and it was most likely his plan to double cross in battle. The commanders of the Philistine army also pointed out the obvious: *that David was so known as a Philistine killer that there was a catchy but irritating song written about him, like all the one hit wonders rolled into one...from mmm bop to baby shark!* From their perspective, David’s track record spoke for itself, and he should be sent away from the battle.

This is where God’s grace shines through. His grace preserves and intervenes, and that is exactly what David needed.

The rest of 1 Samuel 29:6-11 unfolds in an **ironic way**. Achish extols David for his **honesty** (when he had only deceived) and that it would be **right** for him to march into battle with him (even though David had other plans). He said he **found nothing wrong in him** and that he had been as **blameless as an angel of the Lord** (though he was running a scorched earth campaign behind his back). Achish simply appealed to the fact that he could not move the needle when it came to the rest of the chiefs, and that he reluctantly encouraged David to head back ‘home’. It is fascinating that David protested, asking “*what have I done?*” The question is begged as to why he did this. Either it was a doubling down of the deceitful role he had played, almost feigning hurt as he was given his release, or it was because David wanted to go into battle and fight with his people. Either way, David got out of the jam, and in the final **irony of the chapter**, David left in the light of morning (29:11) where Saul had left in the cover of night (28:25). David’s double life was over and he could move forward, where Saul’s double life concluded in judgment. Here, David lived out the truth of **Psalm 118:14, 18**: “*The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation...The LORD has disciplined me severely, but he has not given me over to death.*”

LESSONS FROM THE DOUBLE LIFE

So what do we learn from these two lives lived in a duplicitous way?

1. **Self-Reliance is the enemy of faith** – David was talented, skilled, and shrewd. He had the ability to masterplan, lead, and inspire. He could convince both friend and foe that he was for them, and even could swing his sworn enemy to his side! He could wield both a sword and harp with

the same deft touch. But David needed to learn that for all of his exceptional ability, his self-reliant plans had led him to the brink of ruin, so that his only hope lay in the grace of his saving God. Self-reliance can get us far, but only so far before we no longer can control all the factors before us. When we operate out of self-reliance, we function by **works** and **personal strength**, and ONLY rely on God when this finally crashes to the ground. Remember, this is NOT what pleases the Lord, since *without faith it is impossible to please the Lord* (Heb. 11:6), and *that He rewards those who seek Him*. We were never designed to function in life alone or in our strength, but we actually glory and boast in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9), since it is only then that His power rests upon me. **But if we are honest, our pride prevents us from showing weakness or embracing this fact.** So God's grace is not only available, but it is His grace that brings us low, through trial, circumstance, or persecution.

2. **A duplicitous life is harmful to our own life and our witness** – In some respects, David was a genius. Modern warfare strategy would say he used tactics to his advantage and maximized resources, turning a dire situation into a positive. Modern leadership would praise him for winning friends and influencing people, with his ability to turn an enemy into an ally and friend. Governments would use this as a template to go behind enemy lines to turn the hearts of enemies and turn double agents. But this is not the way of the Lord. In some ways, David made Achish look like a fool and weakling. I think sometimes that is how **modern day Christians function as well, operating according to worldly wisdom and justifying the means by the ends it produces.** But this is the way of compromise, not Biblical wisdom. **Alexander Maclaren** said this about such a compromised believer:

*“Do you think that the world respects that type of Christian, or regards his religion as the kind of thing to be admired? No; the question that they fling at such people is the question which David was humiliated by having pitched at his head ---“What are these Hebrews doing here? Send the man back. This is no place for them.” **The world respects an out and out Christian; but neither God nor the world respects an inconsistent one.**”¹*

3. **From Saul – an ongoing double life will lead to destruction** – Saul was and is an illustration of a person who spends their life *around* the truth, *next to* salvation, *circling by* others who believe, but have never actually believed themselves. Again, Saul had every advantage and access to all that he needed for salvation and joy, but never completely yielded to it. Saul had all the motions down, he knew the songs, attended all the services, could recite verses, but his heart was far from the Lord. Saul never denied himself, never turned from his own way, and clutched onto that reality until the day he died. He lived out these Biblical realities:

Luke 9:23-26 - *23 And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. 25 For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? 26 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”*

¹ Richard D. Phillips, “1 Samuel: Reformed Expository Commentary”, p. 492.

Matthew 7:21-23 - 21 *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not **prophecy** in your name, and **cast out demons** in your name, and do **many mighty works** in your name?’ 23 And then will I declare to them, ‘**I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.**’*

Do not let your double life keep you from salvation! A double life will lead to double pain – convincing yourself that you are fine, but finding out you never were. No one here this morning should deceive themselves into thinking that **faking** a relationship with the Lord is what the goal is. You may fool people around you, but remember, God knows your heart, mind, desires, motivations, and life! You can hide it for a time from your family, this church, and even yourself, but you cannot **hide from the Lord**.

4. **From David – We must be willing to deal with the “one thing”** – David, at this stage and when we get to his sin with Bathsheba, is an illustration of dealing with a sin that drags down. This is not a salvation issue per se, but a hidden sin that becomes an anchor to the soul. This is the double life that has most areas in life yielded to Christ but has grown weary or negligent in battling sin in a specific area. Hidden lives can become more prevalent with the advent of our phones, with young people able to carry on relationships but keep anonymity, or engage in relationships that are not known in public. This has become a dangerous platform that carries away our hearts and makes double lives much more feasible. We often think we can control this area on our own, keep hidden because of shame, or hold onto because it has become so comfortable and we cannot imagine life without it. It is like putting on the *iron mask* of our past because we still think it's part of who we are. But that is not the case. Here is what **Colossians 3:5-10** says:

5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming. 7 In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Aggressive, proactive, faith-driven killing off of our sin. Never are we to be comfortable with or yielding to those sins that dog us, but we can put them off BECAUSE they are part of our old self.

5. **God’s grace is the answer to the double life** – The answer to the double life is NOT merely MORE EFFORT, but in the recognition of the grace of God in our lives. We are saved and sanctified by grace. God did the work through Christ to redeem us. He came to bring freedom from sin, from guilt, from shame. We can freely **acknowledge our sin, confess it openly, turn from it completely, and replace it totally. God’s grace allows us to put off our sin but also PUT ON SOMETHING FAR GREATER, more pleasing, and more joyful.**

Titus 2:11-12 - 11 *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,*

Titus 3:3-6 - 3 *“For **we ourselves were** once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. 4 **But** when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 **he saved us**, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of **regeneration and renewal** of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior”*

This morning, we are compelled by the lives of David and Saul, to willingly call out any double life we’ve been living and acknowledge, understand, and embrace the grace of God in our lives. He saved us, redeemed us, and made us NEW CREATIONS. This gives us the ability to break free from the duplicitous, to unlock our self-deceived thinking, and to embrace the freedom that comes from knowing Christ and being known by Him. May the only double life we live be the recognition that our **old self has passed away, and a new life has come.**