

Bible Study April 3, 2024

1 SAMUEL 26 (ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION)

David Spares Saul Again

1 Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is not David hiding himself on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the east of Jeshimon?"

This is the second time the men from Ziph betrayed David (see 23:19 for the first). They would surely be counting on some kind of reward if Saul was successful in capturing him. David wrote Psalm 54 at this time.

2 So Saul arose and went down to the wilderness of Ziph with three thousand chosen men of Israel to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph. 3 And Saul encamped on the hill of Hachilah, which is beside the road on the east of Jeshimon. But David remained in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness, 4 David sent out spies and learned that Saul had indeed come. 5 Then David rose and came to the place where Saul had encamped. And David saw the place where Saul lay, with Abner the son of Ner, the commander of his army. Saul was lying within the encampment, while the army was encamped around him.

6 Then David said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Joab's brother Abishai the son of Zeruiah, "Who will go down with me into the camp to Saul?" And Abishai said, "I will go down with you." 7 So David and Abishai went to the army by night. And there lay Saul sleeping within the encampment, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head, and Abner and the army lay around him. 8 Then Abishai said to David, "God has given your enemy into your hand this day. Now please let me pin him to the earth with one stroke of the spear, and I will not strike him twice." 9 But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him, for who can put out his hand against the LORD's anointed and be guiltless?"

Abishai showed great courage when he volunteered to go into Saul's camp with David. In the heat of emotion, Abishai wanted to kill Saul, but David restrained him. Although Abishai was only trying to protect his leader, David could not hurt Saul because of his respect for Saul's authority and position as God's anointed king. Abishai may have disagreed with David, but he also respected the one in authority over him. Eventually he became the greatest warrior in David's army (2 Samuel 23:18-19).

10 And David said, "As the LORD lives, the LORD will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish. 11 The LORD forbid that I should put out my hand against the LORD's anointed. But take now the spear that is at his head and the jar of water, and let us go."

Why did David refuse to kill Saul? God had placed Saul in power and had not yet removed him. David did not want to run ahead of God's timing. We are in similar situations when we have leaders in our churches or government institutions who are unfaithful or incompetent. It may be easy for

us to criticize or move against a leader, oblivious to God's hidden purposes and timing. Determining not to do something that was wrong, David left Saul's destiny in God's hands. While we should not ignore sin or sit back and allow evil leaders to carry on their wickedness, neither should we take actions that are against God's commands. We should strive for righteousness and trust God.

12 So David took the spear and the jar of water from Saul's head, and they went away. No man saw it or knew it, nor did any awake, for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen upon them.

13 Then David went over to the other side and stood far off on the top of the hill, with a great space between them. 14 And David called to the army, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, "Will you not answer, Abner?" Then Abner answered, "Who are you who calls to the king?" 15 And David said to Abner, "Are you not a man? Who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not kept watch over your lord the king? For one of the people came in to destroy the king your lord. 16 This thing that you have done is not good. As the LORD lives, you deserve to die, because you have not kept watch over your lord, the LORD's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is and the jar of water that was at his head."

David could have killed Saul and Abner, but he would have been disobeying God and setting into motion possible cycles of vengeance and assassination. Instead, he took a spear and water jug, showing that he could have killed the king but had not done it and making the point that he had great respect for both God and God's anointed king. When you need to make a point, look for creative, God-honoring ways to do so. It will have a more significant impact.

17 Saul recognized David's voice and said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" And David said, "It is my voice, my lord, O king." 18 And he said, "Why does my lord pursue after his servant? For what have I done? What evil is on my hands? 19 Now therefore let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If it is the LORD who has stirred you up against me, may he accept an offering, but if it is men, may they be cursed before the LORD, for they have driven me out this day that I should have no share in the heritage of the LORD, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.'

This was David's way of saying he had been driven out of Israel. The whole earth belongs to God, but the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, and God's people were in Israel. Forced to leave Israel, David could not worship at the Tabernacle or participate in the annual festivals. He felt separated, living among people who worshiped strange gods.

20 Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth away from the presence of the LORD, for the king of Israel has come out to seek a single flea like one who hunts a partridge in the mountains."

21 Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will no more do you harm, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Behold, I have acted foolishly, and have made a great mistake." 22 And David answered and said, "Here is the spear, O king! Let one of the young men come over and take it. 23 The LORD rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness, for the LORD gave you into my hand today, and I would not put out my hand against the LORD's anointed. 24 Behold, as your life was precious this

day in my sight, so may my life be precious in the sight of the LORD, and may he deliver me out of all tribulation.”²⁵ Then Saul said to David, “Blessed be you, my son David! You will do many things and will succeed in them.” So David went his way, and Saul returned to his place.

The strongest moral decisions are the ones we make before temptation strikes. David was determined to follow God, and this carried over into his decision not to murder God’s anointed king, Saul, even when his men and the circumstances seemed to make it a feasible option. Who would you have been like in such a situation—David or David’s men? To be like David and follow God, we must realize that we can’t do what is wrong in order to execute justice. Even when our closest friends counsel us to do something that seems like a good idea, we must always put God’s commands first.

Saul had opportunities to kill David, but he never did. Why? First, every time David and Saul were face-to-face, David did something generous for Saul. The king did not want to respond to David’s kindness with cruelty in front of all his men. Second, David had a large following in Israel. By killing him, Saul would risk his hold on the kingdom. Third, God had appointed David to become king of Israel and was protecting him.