

1 Samuel 26 - David Spares Saul Again; David Rebukes Abner, Appeals to Saul; David Trusts in God

IV. Transition from the house of Saul to the house of David (1 Samuel 16:1—31:13)

(3) David in exile from the pursuing Saul (21:1—29:11)

(J) David's exemplary character (24:1—26:25)

(c) David again spares Saul's life at Ziph (26:1-25)

1 Samuel 26

(c) David again spares Saul's life at Ziph (26:1-25)

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

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

1 People from Ziph came to Saul in Gibeah and informed him, "David is hiding on the hill of Hachilah which is across from Jeshimon, isn't he?"

1 And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon?

- Again, the scene shifts to Saul (Cf. 1 Sam 24)

— And again, his improper attitudes and behavior, and their consequences, are contrasted with David's proper attitudes and behavior, and their consequences

- Why David returned to the wilderness of Ziph, when he experienced trouble there before (Cf. 23:19ff), is difficult to understand. Perhaps it's just an illustration that he, like all men of clay, make mistakes.

— His choice to do so may reveal that he faced a desperate situation: few hiding places could provide sufficient food and water for 600 men and their families

- "...Jeshimon" - "waste" or "desert"; may refer to the general wilderness area around Ziph rather than a proper name

2 So Saul set out and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, taking with him three thousand chosen men of Israel, to search for David in the wilderness of Ziph.

2 So Saul arose and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having with him three thousand chosen men of Israel, to search for David in the wilderness of Ziph.

2 So Saul rose and went down with 3,000 select men of Israel to the Wilderness of Ziph, to look for David in the Wilderness of Ziph.

2 Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph.

- Of course, Saul pursued David: Saul's tearful confession in 24:17-21 was empty hypocrisy

3 And Saul camped on the hill of Hachilah, which is opposite Jeshimon, beside the road, and David was staying in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul had come after him into the wilderness,

3 Saul camped in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon, beside the road, and David was staying in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness,

3 Saul camped by the road on the hill of Hachilah, across from Jeshimon, while David was staying in the wilderness. When he realized that Saul had come after him in the wilderness,

3 And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon, by the way. But David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness.

4 David sent out spies, and he learned that Saul was definitely coming.

4 David sent out spies, and he knew that Saul was definitely coming.

4 David sent out spies and found out for certain that Saul had arrived.

4 David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed.

- The hunter becomes the hunted, as David knew Saul's location, but Saul was not aware of David's

5 David then set out and came to the place where Saul had camped. And David saw the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the commander of his army; and Saul was lying in the circle of the camp, and the people were camped around him.

5 David then arose and came to the place where Saul had camped. And David saw the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the commander of his army; and Saul was lying in the circle of the camp, and the people were camped around him.

5 David rose and went to the place where Saul was camped. David saw the place where Saul and Abner, his Commander-in-Chief, lay down. Saul was lying down within the encampment, and the army was camped all around him.

5 And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched: and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him.

6 Then David said to Ahimelech the Hittite and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, saying, "Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?" And Abishai said, "I will

go down with you."

6 Then David said to Ahimelech the Hittite and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, saying, "Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?" And Abishai said, "I will go down with you."

6 David said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Joab's brother Abishai, Zeruiah's son, "Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?"

Abishai said, "I'll go down with you."

6 Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee.

- The Hittites are mentioned repeatedly in the OT as one of the nations to be driven out of Canaan

- Abishai was David's nephew (1 Chr 2:15-16), one of the sons of his sister Zeruiah

— He was a courageous warrior (2 Sam 10:10) and remained faithful to David in Absalom's rebellion

— Later, Abishai was to save David's life from the giant (2 Sam 21:17). Yet, Abishai was involved in the murder of Abner (2 Sam 3:30), a crime that grieved David.

7 So David and Abishai came to the people by night, and behold, Saul lay sleeping inside the circle of the camp with his spear stuck in the ground at his head; and Abner and the people were lying around him.

7 So David and Abishai came to the people by night, and behold, Saul lay sleeping inside the circle of the camp with his spear stuck in the ground at his head; and Abner and the people were lying around him.

7 David and Abishai went to the army at night, and Saul was lying there asleep in the encampment. His spear was stuck in the ground at his head, and Abner and the army were lying all around him.

7 So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him.

- God put a deep sleep upon the camp (v12) so David and his nephew were not in danger

8 Then Abishai said to David, "Today God has handed your enemy over to you; now then, please let me pin him with the spear to the ground with one thrust, and I will not do it to him a second time."

8 Then Abishai said to David, "Today God has delivered your enemy into your hand; now therefore, please let me strike him with the spear to the ground with one stroke, and I will not strike him the second time."

8 Abishai told David, "Today God has delivered your enemy into your hand. Let me run the spear through him into the ground with a single blow. I won't need to strike him twice!"

8 Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time.

- Saul had previously attempted to kill David with his javelin three times (Cf. 18:10; 19:9-10; 20:33)

— Now Abishai wanted to kill Saul with his spear, but David refused to let him touch the Lord's anointed. Vengeance was in the hands of the Lord.

Abishai believed he knew God's will through his circumstances. David interpreted his circumstances in light of God's character and Word.

9 But David said to Abishai, "Do not kill him, for who can reach out with his hand against the LORD'S anointed and remain innocent?"

9 But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him, for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD's anointed and be without guilt?"

9 David told Abishai, "Don't destroy him. Who can raise his hand to strike the LORD's anointed and remain innocent?"

9 And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless?

- David's reason for not allowing Abishai to kill Saul was that he was "the Lord's anointed" (v9,11)

10 David also said, "As the LORD lives, the LORD certainly will strike him, or his day will come that he dies, or he will go down in battle and perish.

10 David also said, "As the LORD lives, surely the LORD will strike him, or his day will come that he dies, or he will go down into battle and perish.

10 As the LORD lives, the LORD will strike him down, or his time will come to die, or he will go into battle and perish.

10 David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish.

- In the middle of his reply, David noted alternative ways that God might terminate Saul's life

— This was a reminder to Abishai that God could deal with Saul without their help (Cf. Deut 32:35; Heb 10:30)

11 The LORD forbid that I would reach out with my hand against the LORD'S anointed! But now please take the spear that is at his head and the jug of water, and let's go."

11 The LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the LORD's anointed; but now please take the spear that is at his head and the jug of water, and let us go."

11 The LORD forbid that I should raise my hand against the LORD's anointed. Now take the spear that is at his head and the jug of water, and let's go."

11 The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.

- David's reason for entering Saul's camp was not to kill him, but to teach him a lesson
- By taking his spear, David would teach Saul that he had the power of death, but chose (once again) to spare Saul's life
- By taking his water jug, a life-giving vessel for life in the wilderness, David taught him that he had the power to take Saul's life

12 So David took the spear and the jug of water *that were* at Saul's head, and they left; and no one saw or knew *about it*, nor did anyone awaken, for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen on them.

12 So David took the spear and the jug of water from *beside* Saul's head, and they went away, but no one saw or knew *it*, nor did any awake, for they were all asleep, because a sound sleep from the LORD had fallen on them.

12 So David took the spear and the jug of water at Saul's head, and they left. No one saw, and no one knew, because no one was awake. They were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen over them.

12 So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked: for they were all asleep; because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them.

- This was a slumber so profound and unnatural that it was regarded as sent directly from the Lord

— The same term is used for the sleep of Adam while the Lord created Eve from a rib taken from his side, and upon Abraham during the Covenant Ritual (Gen 15)

13 Then David crossed over to the other side and stood on top of the mountain at a distance *with* a large area between them.

13 Then David crossed over to the other side and stood on top of the mountain at a distance *with* a large area between them.

13 Then David crossed over to the other side and stood on top of the hill some distance away with a large distance between them.

13 Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of an hill afar off; a great space being between them:

14 And David called to the people and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, "Will you not answer, Abner?" Then Abner replied, "Who are you who calls to the king?"

14 David called to the people and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, "Will you not answer, Abner?" Then Abner replied, "Who are you who calls to the king?"

14 David called out to the army and to Ner's son Abner, "Abner, won't you answer me?" Abner answered: "Who are you who calls out to the king?"

14 And David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered and said, Who art thou that criest to the king?

15 So David said to Abner, "Are you not a man? And who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not guarded your lord the king? For one of the people came to kill the king your lord!

15 So David said to Abner, "Are you not a man? And who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not guarded your lord the king? For one of the people came to destroy the king your lord.

15 David told Abner, "Are you not a man, and who is like you in Israel? Why didn't you guard your lord, the king? Indeed, a soldier came to destroy the king, your lord.

15 And David said to Abner, Art not thou a valiant man? and who is like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord.

16 This thing that you have done is not good. As the LORD lives, *all of you* undoubtedly must die, because you did not guard your lord, the LORD'S anointed. And now, see where the king's spear is and the jug of water that was at his head!"

16 This thing that you have done is not good. As the LORD lives, *all of you* must surely die, because you did not guard your lord, the LORD's anointed. And now, see where the king's spear is and the jug of water that was at his head."

16 This thing that you did is not good. As the LORD lives, you deserve to die, you who didn't guard your lord, the LORD's anointed. Where is the king's spear and where is the jug of water that was at his head?"

16 This thing is not good that thou hast done. As the LORD liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the LORD'S anointed. And now see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster.

- After crossing the ravine opposite Saul, David shouted to Abner, who supposedly was guarding Saul, and tauntingly chided him for his carelessness in allowing the king's spear

and water jug to be taken

— Abner deserved to die for his failure in duty, but David spared his life too

— David more faithfully defended Saul's life than even Saul's most trusted servant

17 Then Saul recognized David's voice and said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" And David said, "It is my voice, my lord the king."

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17 Saul recognized David's voice and said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" David replied, "It is my voice, your majesty."

17 And Saul knew David's voice, and said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And David said, It is my voice, my lord, O king.

- Saul's realization that David or Abishai could have killed him, but did not, led Saul to respond nicely to David

— However, David did not address him as "father" as he did previously (24:11)

— David was less affectionate to Saul because he continued to pursue him without cause, after repeated promises to stop

— Saul was also no longer David's father-in-law (25:44)

18 He also said, "Why then is my lord pursuing his servant? For what have I done? Or what evil is in my hand?"

18 He also said, "Why then is my lord pursuing his servant? For what have I done? Or what evil is in my hand?"

18 David said, "Why is your majesty pursuing his servant? For what have I done, and what evil do I bear toward you?"

18 And he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil is in mine hand?

- As in the cave, David questioned Saul (24:3-15)

19 Now then, please let my lord the king listen to the words of his servant. If the LORD has incited you against me, may He accept an offering; **but if it is people**, cursed are they before the LORD, because they have driven me out today so that **I would have no share in the inheritance** of the LORD, saying, '**Go, serve other gods.**'

19 Now therefore, please let my lord the king listen to the words of his servant. If the Lord has stirred you up against me, let Him accept an offering; but if it is men, cursed are they before the LORD, for they have driven me out today so that I would have no attachment with the inheritance of the LORD, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.'

19 Now let your majesty listen to the words of his servant. If the LORD incited you against me, then may he accept an offering. But if it is people, may they be cursed in the LORD's

presence, because they have driven me out today from sharing in the inheritance of the LORD by saying, 'Go serve other gods.'

19 Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the LORD; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods.

- David presented his case before Saul: the idea here is that if it was the Lord's prompting that led Saul to pursue him, David would seek God's pardon by a suitable expiatory offering — David recognized the legitimacy of Saul's intention but offered to atone for any sin on his part. This was going more than halfway.

- "...but if it is people" - the second half of the verse suggests that possibly men were seeking to set up human barriers between Saul and David. If this was the case, David pled for their just punishment.

- "...I would have no share in the inheritance" - Saul's persistent attacks on David resulted in his separation from the Lord's inheritance (God's blessings to Israel, including rest in the Promised Land), since he had to live as a fugitive

- "...Go, serve other gods" - driving David out of the land of Israel was akin to telling him to go serve other gods

20 Now then, do not let my blood fall to the ground far from the presence of the LORD; for the king of Israel has come out to search for a single flea, just as one hunts a partridge in the mountains."

20 Now then, do not let my blood fall to the ground away from the presence of the LORD; for the king of Israel has come out to search for a single flea, just as one hunts a partridge in the mountains."

20 Now, don't let my blood fall to the ground away from the LORD's presence. Indeed, the king of Israel has come out to seek a single flea, like someone hunts a partridge in the mountains."

20 Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD: for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.

- David's message to Saul was actually a plea for David to return to the Lord

— David wanted Saul to grasp the sorrow he experienced away from the Tabernacle and the fellowship of God's people (Ps 42:4-5; 63:1-3)

- David again compared himself to a flea, harmless but annoying to Saul (Cf. 24:14)

— A partridge darts from one bush to another when a hunter pursues it, as David had been doing. It eventually tires quickly, then is easily caught.

— David's point in comparing himself to a partridge and a flea was that Saul's pursuit of such an insignificant person as him was beneath the king's dignity

21 Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will not harm you again since my life was precious in your sight this day. Behold, I have played the fool and have made a very great mistake."

21 Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will not harm you again because my life was precious in your sight this day. Behold, I have played the fool and have committed a serious error."

21 Then Saul said, "I've wronged you. Return, my son David, for I won't harm you again because my life was precious to you today. Look, I've acted foolishly and have made a very great mistake."

21 Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.

- Saul again confessed he had sinned (Cf. 15:24,30; 24:17), but there was still no genuine repentance (Cf. 27:1)

— Contrast Saul's words with Paul's testimony (2 Tim 4:7)

— Even though Saul's words of confession went further than preceding chapters, his behavior remained unchanged

We play the fool...

- When we run ahead of the Lord (13:8ff)
- When we fail to obey completely (1 Sam 15)
- When we turn our back on our godly friends (David & Samuel)
- When we seek guidance from the devil (1 Sam 28)
- When we refuse to repent even when we know we are wrong

22 David replied, "Behold, the spear of the king! Now have one of the young men come over and take it.

22 David replied, "Behold the spear of the king! Now let one of the young men come over and take it.

22 David replied, "Here's the king's spear. Have one of the young men come over and get it.

22 And David answered and said, Behold the king's spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it.

- David returned Saul's spear, the symbol of his right to rule

23 And the LORD will repay each man *for* his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the LORD handed you over to me today, but I refused to reach out with my hand against the LORD'S anointed.

23 The LORD will repay each man *for* his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the LORD delivered you into *my* hand today, but I refused to stretch out my hand against the LORD's anointed.

23 The LORD repays a person for his righteousness and his faithfulness. The LORD gave you into my control today, but I refused to raise my hand against the LORD's anointed.

23 The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness: for the LORD delivered thee into my hand to day, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S anointed.

- David did not directly acknowledge Saul's confession; instead, he spoke of God's justice
— David trusted God's unchangeable character, not Saul's momentary change of heart
— David was confident that God would repay each of them eventually, and was determined to wait for Him to do so (Cf. Prov 20:22; 24:29; Rom 12:17,19)

24 Therefore behold, just as your life was highly valued in my sight this day, so may my life be highly valued in the sight of the LORD, and may He rescue me from all distress."

24 Now behold, as your life was highly valued in my sight this day, so may my life be highly valued in the sight of the LORD, and may He deliver me from all distress."

24 Look, just as your life was valuable in my eyes today, so may my life be valuable in the LORD's eyes, and may he deliver me from all trouble."

24 And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation.

This may have been the occasion for David writing Psalm 54.

25 Then Saul said to David, "Blessed are you, my son David; you will both accomplish much and assuredly prevail." So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

25 Then Saul said to David, "Blessed are you, my son David; you will both accomplish much and surely prevail." So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

25 Saul told David, "Blessed are you, my son David. In whatever you do you will surely succeed." So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place."

25 Then Saul said to David, Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

- So far as can be determined Saul, became resigned to his fate and never again tried to interfere with the will of God for the kingdom and its next anointed leader

- These are the last recorded words of Saul to David
- After this encounter, David left the Land (27:1) and moved to Philistine territory; he returned after Saul's death

Once again, Saul seemed to sincerely repent. But later he fell back into the same sinful pattern. He confessed his sin, but he never mentioned the bitter jealousy and rebellion against God that fueled his obsession. Repentance is more than confessing our wrong: God calls us to dig deep (Ps 51:1-10,17). True repentance goes beyond just words. It results in change in attitude and actions. All sin is first against God. Saul confessed his wrong toward David, but never acknowledged his rebellion against God (15:22-30). Saul's life kept moving away from God.