

1 Samuel 26:1-27:4
David Spares Saul's Life, Again

Introduction

1. In last week's passage we saw David come dangerously close to sin when he set out to avenge himself by killing Nabal and his family—simply for disrespecting him
2. Had the wise Abigail not intervened David would have crossed the line by murdering innocent people
3. Fortunately, David listened to Abigail's plea, and came to his senses
4. Today we see a much more restrained David, reminiscent of what happened in a similar event in chapter 24

A. Saul pursues David once more (26:1-5)

1. The Ziphites betray David a second time (1; see also 23:19-20)
2. Saul sets out for Ziph in search of David (2-3a)
3. David learns of Saul's plan and spies out his camp (3b-5)

B. David Spares Saul's life, again (26:6-12)

1. Abishai and David enter Saul's camp in the cover of night (6-7)
2. Abishai offers to kill Saul in his sleep (8)
 - a. Saul, Abner, and all the guards are all asleep (7):
 - 1) We see God's divine hand here because v. 12 states that **"a sound sleep from the LORD had fallen on them"**
 - 2) This is just one more example of God's hand in protecting his people
 - b. Abishai saw God's divine hand in this and is certain that the LORD had delivered Saul into their hands (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.'**
3. But David refused to lay a hand on Saul (9-11a)—he gives two reasons:
 - a. Saul was still the **"LORD's Anointed"**:
 - 1) In spite of all that Saul had done, he was still the king of Israel and the "LORD's Anointed" (a term David uses four times in this passage)
 - 2) Harming Saul would amount to sin (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?'"**
 - b. David was certain (as evidenced by the word **"surely"** below) that the LORD would deal with Saul on His own terms in His own way and on His time table (10)
 - 1) David imagines how the LORD might do this (all of these David sees as the divine work of God):
 - a) The LORD could strike Saul dead: **"As the LORD lives, surely the LORD will strike him,"** (10a)
 - b) Or, Saul could just die: **"or his day will come that he dies"** (10b)

c) Or, he could be killed in battle: **“or he will go down into battle and perish”** (10c)

**One gets the impression that David would be fine with any one of these options

- 2) Perhaps David recalled Abigail’s words to him in 25:26-29 (READ) when she reminded him that it is the LORD who fights his battles and that he was not to take his own revenge
4. Instead of killing Saul, David takes his spear and water jug and retreats (11-12):
 - a. These were lying right next to Saul’s head as he slept
 - b. David may have taken them for symbolic reasons (especially the spear since a soldier without his weapon is weak)
 - c. He may have simply taken them as evidence to prove that he could have easily killed Saul, but chose not to
5. We can learn something from David here: His exemplary patience and self-restraint is a demonstration of his deep and abiding faith in the LORD:
 - a. Saul had made at least 15 different attempts on David’s life
 - b. Twice the LORD had put Saul within arm’s length of David where he could have easily killed him
 - c. David could have solved his own problem with his own hands, but chose instead to let God solve the problem
 - d. His companions/fellow soldiers must have thought he was nuts not killing Saul when he had the chance, but they submitted to David’s leadership (this is all the more remarkable considering that all of their lives were in danger as long as Saul was trying to kill David)
 - e. But, David was content allowing the LORD to deal with Saul because he knew the LORD would deal with Saul
6. This is a principle Paul reminded us of in Romans 12:18-21 (READ):
 - a. We should strive for peace
 - b. We are to refrain from taking our own revenge
 - c. We are to wait on the LORD to judge and execute his wrath
 - d. We are to overcome evil with good
 - e. These are all things we seen exhibited in David throughout his struggles with Saul

C. David Confronts Saul for the last time (26:13-27:4)
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1. David first confronts Abner and the rest of the Israeli army for failing to protect Saul (READ 13-16):
 - a. Abner was the commander of Israel’s army and his primary job was to protect the king
 - b. But they all failed miserably by allowing someone to sneak into the camp and approach the king completely undetected
 - c. David declares that such an offense was worthy of death because they had not only failed to protect their own king, but **“the LORD’s Anointed”**
 - d. As evidence of their guilt, David produces Saul’s spear and jug of water
2. David confronts Saul for the very last time (READ 17-20; it’s the last time they will ever speak):
 - a. Even after all that Saul had done, David still refers to him as **“my lord the king”** (17)

- b. He begins by asking rhetorically what offense he had committed against him (18): **"Why then is my lord pursuing his servant? For what have I done? Or what evil is in my hand?"**
- c. David proposes only two scenarios (19):
- 1) The LORD had **"stirred up"** Saul against David—if this were the case then David's offense was against the LORD and David could appeal to the LORD to accept an offering
 - 2) Wicked men had stirred up Saul against David—if this were the case then such men should be **"cursed before the LORD"**:
 - a) They had completely cut David off from the presence and inheritance of the LORD:
 - They had **"driven [David] out"**—a reference to being forced out of the Promise Land
 - They had separated him from **"the inheritance of the LORD"**
 - They had effectively forced him to **"serve other gods"**
 - b) This is difficult for us to comprehend as Christians:
 - God can certainly be worshipped anywhere at any time, and David was aware of this just as we are and he clearly knew that the LORD was with him
 - However, for Israel so much of their relationship with the LORD was tied to the land, the tabernacle, the rites and customs, and the Promises God made to them
 - Essentially, to be banished from Israel was to be separated from all that God had promised Israel, including fellowship among His chosen people
 - This is why David claims that as long as he was driven out, he was no longer attached to the inheritance of the LORD and forced to serve other gods
- d. David ends with a plea to Saul not to let him die **"away from the presence of the LORD"** (20)
3. We can learn a few things here from David here as well:
- a. I'm pretty sure David knew that he hadn't sinned against Saul--Yet, when confronting Saul this one last time, he was willing to concede that if he had indeed offended Saul that it was an offense to God and he would need to work it out with Him (e.g. the offering of a sacrifice)
 - 1) For some of us, our natural tendency when accused of wrong is to defend ourselves
 - 2) Do we really take time to stop and consider that maybe we committed an offense, and even more that it was against the LORD more so than the other person?
 - 3) Maybe we are completely innocent, but are we willing to at least willing to consider that we might have some culpability?

My meeting with Scott and the struggle to find my own fault—what was my role in Scott developing his impression of me? What had I done to contribute to it?—I seemed to vacillate between being offended/being defensive and genuinely wondering whether I was at fault in anything

- b. We can also see David's desperation and passion to remain in the presence of the LORD:
 - 1) This was certainly true after he sinned--Psalm 51 is just one example (READ)
 - 2) But as we saw today, it appeared to simply be a hallmark of his life
 - 3) I wonder sometimes if I have that same passion—I certainly think about it after I sin, but outside of that I sense I don't think about it often enough (to my shame)

D. Saul offers a confession, once again (21-24)

1. Saul's confession has four parts (READ 21):
 - a. He admits his sin
 - b. He offers to let David return
 - c. He promises not to harm David again
 - d. He admits he had been a fool and gone astray of God's commands:
 - 1) The Hebrew word, shagah, means to err or go astray
 - 2) It is sometimes used to refer to unintentional sin, but generally means to wander or stray from God's commands (:
 - a) Numbers 15:22: **"But when you unwittingly fail and do not to observe all these commandments..."**
 - b) Job 6:24: **"Teach me, and I will be silent; and show me how I have erred."**
 - c) Psalm 119:21: **"You rebuke the arrogant, the cursed, who wander from Your commandments."**
2. It's not clear whether Saul's confession was sincere, but David certainly wasn't going to trust him again:
 - a. In chapter 24, he confesses but then continues to attempt to kill David
 - b. 27:4 states that after David fled to Gath Saul no longer searched for him.
 - c. David certainly seemed reluctant to trust Saul (22):
 - 1) He wouldn't let Saul come get his own spear: **"David replied, "Behold the spear of the king! Now let one of the young men come over and take it."**
 - 2) Instead of heading home, he fled to the Philistines (chapter 27:1-4)
3. David ends his confrontation with Saul with a promise and a prayer (23-24):
 - a. The PROMISE: the LORD would repay David's righteousness and faithfulness: (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."**
 - b. The PRAYER: **"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)
4. It's here that I believe we find our third and final lessons from David:
 - a. Our confidence that the LORD will reward us is anchored in our obedience just as it was David's—He was convinced that the LORD would reward his righteousness and faithfulness because he refused to harm Saul
 - b. And, we can be confident that the LORD will deliver us from all our distress when we value the things He values—just as David was confident that the LORD would value his life for valuing Saul's life as the LORD's Anointed

Conclusion

1. Our passage closes with Saul blessing David, the two going their own ways never to see each other again
2. Read 26:25 – 27:4

