

**1 Samuel 26**  
**April 16, 2023**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Q: When are you most tempted to trust yourself and take matters into your own hands instead of trusting God? [Let people engage]

**Transition:** We are selfish, impatient people who want situations to work out the way we want them to and at the time we want them to. I think we have all experienced getting ahead of the Lord and finding ourselves in situations that were more stressful because we just got too impatient to wait for answers! But not David. David will have a second opportunity to kill Saul, but because of his trust in the Lord, David doesn't lay a hand on him, nor does he allow his sidekick, Abishai, to lay a hand on him. Let's read the text and let the story unfold.

**BOOK:**

**David Again Spares Saul's Life**

**26** The Ziphites went to Saul at Gibeah and said, "Is not David hiding on the hill of Hakilah, which faces Jeshimon?"

<sup>2</sup> So Saul went down to the Desert of Ziph, with his three thousand chosen men of Israel, to search there for David. <sup>3</sup> Saul made his camp beside the road on the hill of Hakilah facing Jeshimon, but David stayed in the desert. When he saw that Saul had followed him there, <sup>4</sup> he sent out scouts and learned that Saul had definitely arrived (or had come to Nacon).

<sup>5</sup> Then David set out and went to the place where Saul had camped. He saw where Saul and Abner son of Ner, the commander of the army, had lain down. Saul was lying inside the camp, with the army encamped around him.

<sup>6</sup> David then asked Ahimelech the Hittite and Abishai son of Zeruah, Joab's brother, "Who will go down into the camp with me to Saul?"

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

<sup>7</sup> So David and Abishai went to the army by night, and there was Saul, lying asleep inside the camp with his spear stuck in the ground near his head. Abner and the soldiers were lying around him.

<sup>8</sup> Abishai said to David, "Today God has delivered your enemy into your hands. Now let me pin him to the ground with one thrust of my spear; I won't strike him twice."

<sup>9</sup> But David said to Abishai, "Don't destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the LORD's anointed and be guiltless? <sup>10</sup> As surely as the LORD lives," he said, "the LORD himself will strike him; either his time will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish. <sup>11</sup> But the LORD forbid that I should lay a hand on the LORD's anointed. Now get the spear and water jug that are near his head, and let's go."

<sup>12</sup> So David took the spear and water jug near Saul's head, and they left. No one saw or knew about it, nor did anyone wake up. They were all sleeping, because the LORD had put them into a deep sleep.

<sup>13</sup> Then David crossed over to the other side and stood on top of the hill some distance away; there was a wide space between them. <sup>14</sup> He called out to the army and to Abner son of Ner, “Aren’t you going to answer me, Abner?”

Abner replied, “Who are you who calls to the king?”

<sup>15</sup> David said, “You’re a man, aren’t you? And who is like you in Israel? Why didn’t you guard your lord the king? Someone came to destroy your lord the king. <sup>16</sup> What you have done is not good. As surely as the LORD lives, you and your men deserve to die, because you did not guard your master, the LORD’s anointed. Look around you. Where are the king’s spear and water jug that were near his head?”

<sup>17</sup> Saul recognized David’s voice and said, “Is that your voice, David my son?”

David replied, “Yes it is, my lord the king.” <sup>18</sup> And he added, “Why is my lord pursuing his servant? What have I done, and what wrong am I guilty of? <sup>19</sup> Now let my lord the king listen to his servant’s words. If the LORD has incited you against me, then may he accept an offering. If, however, men have done it, may they be cursed before the LORD! They have now driven me from my share in the LORD’s inheritance and have said, ‘Go, serve other gods.’ <sup>20</sup> Now do not let my blood fall to the ground far from the presence of the LORD. The king of Israel has come out to look for a flea—as one hunts a partridge in the mountains.”

<sup>21</sup> Then Saul said, “I have sinned. Come back, David my son. Because you considered my life precious today, I will not try to harm you again. Surely I have acted like a fool and have erred greatly.”

<sup>22</sup> “Here is the king’s spear,” David answered. “Let one of your young men come over and get it. <sup>23</sup> The LORD rewards every man for his righteousness and faithfulness. The LORD delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the LORD’s anointed. <sup>24</sup> As surely as I valued your life today, so may the LORD value my life and deliver me from all trouble.”

<sup>25</sup> Then Saul said to David, “May you be blessed, my son David; you will do great things and surely triumph.”

So David went on his way, and Saul returned home.

### **Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

### **LOOK:**

David has a second chance to kill Saul, but he spares him. Again, we learn the wonderful truth that God protects His people, delivers them, and vindicates them as they trust in Him. This lesson should lead us to experience hope and encouragement because of God’s ultimate protection and vindication through His Son Jesus.

### **Close in Prayer**

## **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (1 Sam 26)*. Victor Books.**

We come now to the tragic end of Saul's life. The man who "stood higher than any of the people" (10:23) now falls to the earth in a witch's house (28:20) and then falls dead on the battlefield (see 2 Sam. 1:19). Perhaps the best way to study these sad events is to notice the obvious contrasts between David and Saul.

### **I. Love and Hatred (26)**

Why David returned to the wilderness of Ziph when he had experienced trouble there before, is difficult to understand (23:19ff). Perhaps it's just an illustration that he, like all men of clay, made mistakes. It has been suggested that David's polygamous marriage (25:42–44) hindered his close fellowship with the Lord, since such a marriage was not in God's will. Of course, Saul pursued David! Saul's tearful confession in 24:17–21 did not last, for it was not from his heart.

Abishai was David's nephew (1 Chron. 2:15–16) and was a courageous warrior (2 Sam. 10:10). Later, Abishai was to save David's life from the giant (2 Sam. 21:17). However, Abishai was involved in the murder of Abner (2 Sam. 3:30), a crime that grieved David. God put a deep sleep upon the camp (v. 12) so David and his nephew were not in danger. The word "trench" in v. 7 indicates a barricade of baggage and wagons. Once again, Satan used others to tempt David to slay Saul (v. 8, and see 24:4), but David resisted the temptation. Vengeance was in the hands of the Lord.

David's message to Saul was actually a plea for him to return to the Lord. "If God has led you to pursue me because of some sin in my life, then I will offer a sacrifice with you and get the matter settled," he said. "But if men are cursing me, then you can be sure God will settle the matter for me." Listen to Saul's empty confession in v. 21: "I have sinned! I have played the fool!" Yes, he had—but he still did not repent! We play the fool when we run ahead of the Lord (13:8ff); when we fail to obey completely (chap. 15); when we turn our back on our godly friends (David and Samuel); when we seek guidance from the devil (chap. 28); and when we refuse to repent even when we know we are wrong. "Be sure your sins will find you out!"

**Merrill, E. H. (1985). *1 Samuel*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 452-453) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books**

**Chapter 26.** Once again **Saul** learned from **the Ziphites** about David's place of **hiding**, so the king and **3,000 chosen men** went to **the hill of Hakilah** (cf. 23:19) in **the Desert of Ziph** to **search** for **David**. Again the Lord miraculously delivered His chosen one who this time came—with **Abishai**, a skilled and faithful soldier and **Joab's brother** (26:6; cf. 2 Sam. 2:24; 10:14; 18:12; 21:17; 23:18)—so close to the sleeping king that **David** stole both his **spear and water jug** (1 Sam. 26:5–12). Again **David** dared not harm **the LORD's anointed** (vv. 9, 11, 23; cf. 24:6, 10).

After crossing the ravine opposite Saul, **David** shouted to **Abner**, who supposedly guarded Saul, and tauntingly chided him for his carelessness in allowing **the king's spear and water jug** to be taken (26:13–16). **Saul** then awoke and once more heard David's plea that he be left alone.

If God were leading Saul in the pursuit, then David would repent (v. 19). **If, however, men** were responsible, they should **be cursed** by God because they had intervened in God's purposes by driving David **from** both his home (**inheritance**, v. 19) and his public worship of God (**Go, serve other gods**, v. 19).

So evident to **Saul** was God's protection of his young rival that he could only confess his own wickedness (v. 21) and recognize fully and finally that **David** was destined to be the shepherd of Israel (v. 25). 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 (cf. 27:4).

**Mathews, K. A. (1998). *The Historical Books. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (p. 118). Broadman & Holman Publishers.***

**David Spares Saul Again (26:1–25).** The Ziphites feared David and urged the king to pursue him in their territories (see 23:19–24). When David learned of Saul's arrival, he discovered the location of the camp. Abishai joined David in spying out the camp at night. They discovered Saul asleep with Abner resting nearby. Although Abishai interpreted the occasion as the Lord's opportunity for him to kill the king, David rebuked Abishai, pointing out that Saul was the Lord's anointed. Instead, David took a spear that was stuck in the ground at the king's head along with the king's water jug. David left without detection because the Lord had caused Saul to fall into a deep sleep.

David crossed to a distant hill and called out to awaken Abner. He challenged him to consider his lapse in protecting the king. When the king realized that David had taken the spear and jug, he regretted unjustly pursuing David. He believed that because David had spared the Lord's anointed that the Lord in turn would deliver David. Saul confessed a second time that David would triumph (see 24:20).

Some scholars hold that this account is a retelling of how David spared Saul's life at En Gedi (1 Sam. 24). While there are a number of similarities, David's different responses show that the two stories are distinct incidents. As a result of En Gedi and the encounter with Nabal, David realized that God would care for him. David left Judah for a life among the Philistines in order to avoid further contact with Saul.

**Philbeck, B. F. (1972). *1 Samuel. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher's Bible Commentary (p. 177). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.***

### **Ziphites Repeat Treachery (1 Sam. 26:1–25)**

*The passage*—There are a number of remarkable similarities between this incident and that in 23:19–24:22. On both occasions David's position was betrayed by the Ziphites. Saul employed 3,000 troops, and God delivered him into David's hands. Likewise, on both occasions Saul said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" and eventually ended by confessing his injustices toward David.

The present context, however, portrays David in an even more daring role. Taking only one companion, he stole into the very heart of the enemy camp and stood beside his sleeping king. He took Saul's spear and canteen as evidence of his opportunity to kill the king. Confronted with this proof of David's innocence, Saul reluctantly confessed that he had misjudged his rival.

*Special points*—In this passage (vv. 19–20), David recognized that he was being driven from Israel. In a plea addressed both to God and to Saul, David begged for some opportunity not to have to leave his own people.

David used an interesting description of Saul’s pursuit: “like one who hunts a partridge in the mountains” (v. 20, RSV). This bird would not fly from danger unless abruptly startled, but it would run along the ground. Hunters would keep the bird moving until it was exhausted, and then it could be captured with ease. This was exactly Saul’s strategy.

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (1 Samuel 26). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**

© 2023 Lee Ann Penick