

1 Samuel 26 — The Spear Makes The Point

October 30, 2022

Sometimes, things repeat themselves. If you watched this week's sermon preview video, you saw me learning a little Pickle Ball, the guys who taught me the game were both named Jason. That was fun because it is a little repetitive. Of course, when it came to them teaching me Pickle Ball, they had to repeat themselves a lot for me to begin to understand the game. If you are a parent, you know all about repeating yourself. When it comes to teaching our children, we often need to tell them the same thing at least ten times before it sinks in.

We are not the only ones to repeat ourselves to teach something. Sometimes the Bible repeats itself to teach us something because the lesson it is teaching us is hard to learn, and we are slow to absorb it.

Background

This is what we find as we come to 1 Samuel 26. This is a chapter that is very similar to 1 Samuel 24. In large part, it is teaching us the same lesson as 1 Samuel 24 because that lesson is hard for us to learn.

In 1 Samuel 24, we read about David sparing Saul's life. David and his men were hidden in a cave in the Engedi. Taking a potty break, Saul just happened to wander into the same cave. David had a golden opportunity to kill Saul. David chose not to put his hand out against the Lord's anointed. God put King Saul in power. God would take King Saul out of power. David's job was to respect the king, not kill the king. Even though Saul was a corrupt king who repeatedly made attempts on David's life for no good reason, David still needed to respect King Saul and the position of authority God gave him.

Could God remove king Saul? Was God involved in history enough to do something about him?

In chapter 25, which is the chapter we studied last week, Saul moved into the background as we looked at Nabal and Abigail. Nabal insulted David. David was furious. David planned to take revenge, but thanks to Abigail — Nabal's wise and godly wife, she gently reasoned with David and talked to him about the importance of leaving vengeance in God's hands, not taking it into his own hands. David did that. He refrained from killing Nabal and left justice in God's hands. Shortly afterward, God struck Nabal dead. David learned he could leave vengeance in God's hands. God is capable of carrying out justice.

As we come to 1 Samuel 26, we find ourselves in a chapter that is a remarkably similar story to David sparing Saul's life during his potty break in the Engedi cave. Saul will return to hunting David. David will find himself with another perfect opportunity to kill King Saul. The problem is this time David knows Saul has proven himself unteachable. After David and Saul left the Engedi cave in tears, Saul admitted he should not be chasing David to kill him. David had done nothing wrong. David was not his enemy. David would surely become king.

This time we see Saul has gone back on his word. While he promised peace with David, he returned to trying to kill David. What do you do when all your kindness and peace, all your forgiveness of people has proven to make no change in their life? You tried leaving justice in God's hand, but it didn't work. Do you now take justice back into your hands, or do you still keep trusting

vengeance in God's hands instead of your own? What will David do? Will he spare David's life again? Let's find out.

This chapter divides itself into two big pieces. The first half of the chapter is the action. In the second half of the chapter are the lessons from the action. Let's start with the action. That is the part I like best.

David Spares Saul... Again!

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?" 1 Samuel 26:1 (ESV)

If you have been with us for earlier studies in this series, this will sound familiar. The words are almost identical to what we read just over three chapters before.

Then the Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is south of Jeshimon? 1 Samuel 23:19 (ESV)

In chapter 23, the Ziphites informed Saul about David's hiding place on the hill named Hachilah. It led to Saul's army attempting to surround the mountain and cut David off from escape. At the last minute, God had the Philistines attack the nation. Saul was forced into a hasty retreat right before he was able to capture David and his men.

Now David and his men are back in hiding on Hachilah hill. As soon as the Ziphites see David they jump at the opportunity to get in Saul's good graces by providing him with the location of David's hiding spot.

The last time David was on the south side of Hachilah hill. This time David was on the east side of the hill. It was the same location but a different hiding spot for David and his men. Both times it tells us they were next to the Jeshimon.

Jeshimon in Hebrew means the wasteland. It means the wilderness. When we think of wilderness, we think of trees and rivers. The wilderness in Israel is very different. It is a barren desert with hills and small mountains. Here is a photo of what it looks like.



There is something important for us to notice. Even though Saul let David go in peace, David was still living as a fugitive. He was still living in the desert outside of society, in places where nobody would want to live. David is being forced away from society. That is important for us to know as we get further into this chapter.

While the Ziphites informing King Saul of David's location on the same hill is a repeat of two chapters before, something is different this time. Outside the cave in the Engedi, after David spared Saul's life, a conversation took place between Saul and David that all of Saul's men and David's men heard. In that conversation, Saul acknowledged how wrong he was to pursue David. In tears, Saul admitted that David had never done anything wrong, nor had David ever lifted his hand to harm Saul. Saul even conceded, for the first time publicly, that David would surely be king and the kingdom of Israel would be established in his hands.

Given Saul's words to David the last time Saul and David met, you would think Saul would ignore this intelligence report offered by the Ziphites. He should

send the Ziphites away and tell them to leave David alone. While that is what should have happened, that is not what happened.

You see, the second appearance of the Ziphites with information on David's location was a test for Saul. It was a test to see if his confession in the Engedi was genuine or just empty words that came out of his mouth when he was caught up in the emotions of the moment.

We all know there is a difference between genuine repentance and empty repentance. Genuine repentance means there is a change of heart. Our life changes, and we head in the opposite direction. We don't do the things we used to do. Even if we don't perfectly change, there is clear evidence of steps that have been taken where we are fighting sin and trying to change. Empty repentance is when people say the right words but nothing changes in their behavior. This is an application point for us.

- **There is a difference between genuine repentance and empty repentance.**

That is a little lesson for us. When people say they are sorry or they ask for forgiveness, they may not be experiencing genuine repentance. It may be empty repentance. Genuine repentance is not just words. There is a change in the heart, so there is a change in behavior. It may not be a perfect change in behavior, but there is a real change. When that is lacking, repentance is just empty. It was only words and a show.

For example, many people struggle with Internet pornography. Empty repentance is getting caught and saying you are sorry but doing nothing to change. Genuine repentance is getting caught, asking for forgiveness from God

and your spouse, then installing filtering software on your computer, getting an accountability partner, and having software that reports the websites you visit your spouse. Genuine repentance comes with a change of heart and asking God to change the desires for the sin we have in our hearts.

Since the Holy Spirit left king Saul, heart-level change and genuine repentance is not something that happened in Saul's life.

Let's see how Saul reacts to the news of the Ziphites.

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. 1 Samuel 26:2 (ESV)

Saul hadn't learned a thing. He immediately returned to hunting David even though he promised peace to David. Saul even brought the same number of soldiers as he brought the time before, 3,000. You would think by now that Saul would have learned his lesson. After more than a dozen failed attempts on David's life, and after publicly admitting David would be king, you would think Saul would realize that no matter how many times he tries to kill David, God will make sure it will always fail. Saul had learned nothing. We all know those kinds of people, trying to get them to absorb a lesson is like shooting a bullet at a rock. There is no penetration. No matter how hard you hit them, it just bounces off of them.

And Saul encamped on the hill of Hachilah, which is beside the road on the east of Jeshimon... 1 Samuel 26:3a (ESV)

Saul and his commandos arrived. They camped at the base of the hill of Hachilah. I am not sure why Saul and his men camped at the base of this hill. It ruined any element of surprise.

What they found is that David was not on this mountain. David had moved into the wilderness. I don't know if David and his men were out camping or on a hunting trip. All we know is that the Ziphites information was out-of-date when Saul and his army arrived.

...But David remained in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness, 1 Samuel 26:3b (ESV)

After Saul and his men didn't see David on the mountain, they began to check the wilderness. To avoid them, David retreated further into the wilderness to stay out of their grasp. This time the tables were dramatically turned. While Saul's impressive military at first looked like an advantage, it turned out to be a liability. Saul and his army couldn't hide. They were easy to spot and easy for David to avoid.

David sent out spies and learned that Saul had indeed come. 1 Samuel 26:4 (ESV)

David thought there was peace between him and Saul. He didn't know why Saul had a massive army chasing him, so he sent spies to check it out. David's worst suspicions were confirmed. Nothing had changed. Saul was up to his old tricks. David was being hunted again.

This time, it would be different. The hunted became the hunter.

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. 1 Samuel 26:5 (ESV)

As we saw earlier in the photo, the Judean wilderness is not flat. It has many hills and mountains. David came out of the desert and drew closer to Saul's army camped at the base of the mountain. David and his men peeked

over the desert mountains in a place that was close enough for them to see the army and to even identify people in the army. It was evening. They could see Saul in the center among the men. Next to him was Abner, the commander of the army. The sun was going down. Saul's army was getting ready to rest for the night, but David and his men were about to get busy.

What was David to do? All of his restraint and the respect he showed for Saul's life in the Engedi cave was pointless. Saul had not changed. Most of us operate on the three-strikes policy. I will forgive you once. I will forgive you twice. The third time I am going to let you have it because you aren't learning. Saul was way past his third strike.

It seems like it is time for Saul to learn a lesson and for David to take his life. What will David do?

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." 1 Samuel 26:6 (ESV)

Let me tell you a bit about these guys. Ahimelech the Hittite is mentioned nowhere else in the Bible. While Saul had 3,000 commandos, David's militia was just 600 outcasts of society. Ahimelech the Hittite is representative of David's men and where they came from. Ahimelech was a Hittite living in Israel. He was an immigrant living in a foreign land. David's militia had a number of immigrants fighting in his battles. This gives us an idea of how God can use immigrants in a significant way.

The other man is Abishai. He was one of the three sons of a woman named Zeruiah. She was one of David's sisters. Zeruiah had three sons that fought with David. Their names were Abishai, Asahel, and Joab. We will hear a

lot more about these men when we get to 2 Samuel. Here we are getting introduced to this fierce trio who was extremely loyal to David. Their intense loyalty and desire for blood will eventually break David's heart.

David's crazy plan was that under cover of darkness, he and Abishai would walk right into the camp while everyone was asleep. Maybe they both planned to wear hoodies and put the hood over their head so people couldn't see their faces. Under cover of darkness, as long as nobody stopped them they would look just like another soldier walking around camp.

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. 1 Samuel 26:7 (ESV)

Under cover of darkness, they walked into the camp, tip-toeing over the bodies of soldiers in the moonlight. They made it past hundreds of people right to the center of the 3,000 soldiers. There Saul lay asleep with his spear stuck in the ground next to his head.

Just like Saul thought he was safe to take a potty break in a cave when he had 3,000 soldiers guarding the entrance, but he was wrong; Saul thought he was safe with 3,000 soldiers around him guarding him that night. Boy, was he wrong! Where were the sentries? Where was the night guard? The entire army was sound asleep!

Saul was easy to find because of the spear stuck in the ground next to his head. David knew that spear well. Saul had thrown it at him in an attempt to kill him three times. The last time David escaped from the tip of the spear leaving it stuck in the wall.

Next, Abishai won the prize for whispering in David's ear the obvious.

Then Abishai said to David, “God has given your enemy into your hand this day... 1 Samuel 26:8a (ESV)

This is another deja vu moment where things repeat themselves. These are the same words David’s men whispered in his ear when they were right behind Saul in the cave just two chapters before. Abishai had another unoriginal proposal.

...Now please let me pin him to the earth with one stroke of the spear, and I will not strike him twice.” 1 Samuel 26:8b (ESV)

David, this is a chance at poetic justice. I can kill Saul with the same spear he used to try and kill you. In the cave, the men suggested that David kill Saul, but he didn’t. Abishai was not going to make that mistake again. He offered to do the deed himself.

Just like two chapters before, when Saul was taking his potty break in the cave, he was completely defenseless. Just like in the cave, David’s men were urging him to use the opportunity to get rid of Saul. How tempting it would have been. All the promises of peace Saul had made to David meant nothing. All the kindness David showed to Saul changed nothing. Don’t you think forgiveness and restraint have gone long enough?

The truth is, this moment was not about Saul not having learned his lesson. It was about David. Had David learned his lesson? Had David learned the lesson God taught him with Nabal in the last chapter? No matter how wickedly a person acts, no matter how dense and unrepentant a person becomes, David was to still leave vengeance in God’s hands and not take it back into his hands. God took care of Nabal. God will take care of Saul. The question

is, “Will David trust God to deal with Saul and his sin, or will David follow Abishai’s advice and take matters into his own hand?”

The truth is that most of us would have followed Abishai’s advice. Let’s see what happens.

But David said to Abishai, “Do not destroy him, for who can put out his hand against the LORD’s anointed and be guiltless?” 1 Samuel 26:9 (ESV)

David learned his lesson. The reason David gave for sparing Saul’s life was not that he hoped Saul would change. That would probably never happen. It was not because David was a pacifist. You could ask Goliath if David was a pacifist. I think he would disagree. The fact was that Saul was still God’s chosen king. Since Saul was the king, it would be wrong for David to kill the king. It would be wrong for David to murder the king so he could become king. If God put Saul into office, it was God’s job to take Saul out of office. David’s job was to respect the king even if he didn’t agree with the king. Then David imaginatively talked of how God might deal with Saul.

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. The LORD forbid that I should put out my hand against the LORD’s anointed... 1 Samuel 26:10–11a (ESV)

God would take Saul out of office. Just because David and Abishai had the opportunity to kill Saul did not mean they should kill Saul. This is a great application for us.

- **If God allows us to get something we want, but it involves getting it in a sinful way, that is a test from God. It is not an opportunity given by God.**

A chance to cheat on an exam in school so you can ace the exam is not a gift from God to help you get a better grade. It is a test from God to see what we will do. Will we do the right thing and trust God with the results?

While David and Abishai did not take Saul's life, they did take something.
...But take now the spear that is at his head and the jar of water, and let us go." 1 Samuel 26:11 (ESV)

What I find interesting is that while David told Abishai to take Saul's spear and water jug, David didn't trust Abishai with that spear in his hand. David then picked up the spear and water jug himself.

So David took the spear and the jar of water from Saul's head, and they went away... 1 Samuel 26:12 (ESV)

Just like David cut off the corner of Saul's robe in the Engedi cave to prove to Saul that he could have killed him, David took Saul's spear and water jug, both of which were right next to Saul's head, as proof that David could have killed him but didn't.

One thing that amazes me in this chapter is the stealthiness of David and Abishai. How were they able to do all this with 3,000 soldiers around them, yet none of them awoke? Everyone stayed asleep, even the guard. Now we find out why this was possible.

...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. 1 Samuel 26:12 (ESV)

In 1 Samuel, we see how God is at work in the world. Many times he works behind the scenes in very indirect ways protecting his people. He had the Philistines attack at just the right time to force Saul into retreat and save David at the last minute. He had Michal, David's wife, ready with some kind of rope to let

David out the window so David could escape from Saul's assassins. Here we see God putting everyone into a deep sleep so nobody sees David or Abishai in the camp.

Notice that God did not take David out of the desert, but he was at work behind the scenes protecting David in the desert. This is how he works in our lives as well. We often look for God to show up in dramatic ways when he is most often at work in subtle behind-the-scenes ways. When we go to the doctor, he tells us it is good we came in when we did because if we had waited another month or two, cancer would have been too far to treat. That is God showing up. When we are struggling to make ends meet, and an unexpected check shows up in the mail. That is God at work carrying us behind the scenes.

- When we face difficult times, look for little ways God protects us and carries us, especially in times of suffering. That is the way God carries us through.
- Another great point of application is that, like David, we must respect those whom God puts in a position of authority over us, even if we do not agree with them. God has them in that position for a purpose, at least for now. David did not kill Saul because God put Saul in a position of leadership over the people. Until God took Saul out of that position, it was David's job to respect him in that position, not to try and kill him if he had the opportunity.

"You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people. Exodus 22:28 (ESV)

God's people are not to curse the ruler of the people. For some of us, this is a challenge. We are not thrilled with our leaders. This respect for leaders is not just an Old Testament thing. We also find it in the New Testament.

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Romans 13:1 (ESV)

Incidentally, when Paul wrote this, there were some pretty wicked rulers in Rome. They were in charge. God put them in charge, at least for now. God would take them out in his time and in his way.

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. 1 Peter 2:13–15 (ESV)

We are to have respectful conduct toward the people in government offices, even if we don't agree with them. Even if they are treating us poorly or unfairly, just as Saul treated David poorly and unfairly. Just as David was known for his respect of Saul in his position of leadership, even when Saul didn't deserve it, we are to be known for the respect of our leaders, even if we don't think they deserve it. God is a God of justice. In his time and in his way, he will take out evil rulers, just like David trusted God would take Saul out of the picture in God's timing and God's way; we must do the same.

I know this is hard for some of us to swallow, especially given the politics in our nation. We live in a country where we have freedom of speech, but as Christians, we must still be respectful in our speech toward our leaders, no matter which party they come from.

Folks, the temptation to take revenge, especially after we have been kind to people and forgiving of people, but our kindness and forgiveness haven't changed a thing, is a powerful temptation to beat. This is the Rambo movie. You know the movie. Rambo was kind... for a while. He turned the other cheek... for

a while. After his patience didn't make a difference, it was time for revenge. They drew first blood. I have a right to get even. As Christians, that is not true. We still leave justice in God's hands. Here are a few helpful applications.

- David fought the temptation for revenge by constantly turning his thoughts to God's justice and the lessons he learned from Nabal. In this section, David mentions the name of the Lord five times. He kept having to remind himself that not taking revenge is not ignoring justice. It is waiting for God to carry out justice.
- When we wait for God's solution to injustice rather than forcing our own solution, it always turns out better. In the last chapter, David learned that waiting for God's solution to Nabal's hurts worked out better than his plan. David planned to kill Nabal and every male in his household. He admitted he probably would have also killed Abigail, Nabal's extremely wise, godly, and beautiful wife. It would have been a blood bath. When he waited for God to carry out justice after God killed Nabal, David ended up with Abigail as his wife. She was the godly and wise woman he needed in his life. God's solution to Nabal's insults was a much better solution than David's solution. The same thing is always true for us. When we focus on showing grace, love, forgiveness and mercy to people who hurt us instead of trying to get revenge and hurt them, God will work out the best possible solution, not the worst. So when we have a hostile boss, an angry parent, or even a persecuting government, God's people always wait on the Lord for justice. We go out of our way to do good. We avoid getting even, and we know God will take care of injustice in his timing and his

way. God's solution, when it arrives, will always be better than the one we planned.

David was protecting Saul's life, not trying to take it.

Then David went over to the other side and stood far off on the top of the hill, with a great space between them. 1 Samuel 26:13 (ESV)

Before David revealed himself, he was smart enough to put a big distance between himself and Saul's army. He went to the top of one of the surrounding hills and called out.

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?" 1 Samuel 26:14 (ESV)

The last time we saw Abner was after the battle between David and Goliath. Abner was the commander of Saul's army. He was Saul's right-hand man. Once David had Abner's attention, he continued.

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. 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." 1 Samuel 26:15–16 (ESV)

Abner will appear in a big way in 2 Samuel, which we will get to this winter. David began giving Abner a hard time. You haven't done your job! Your job was to guard the king. Someone came into the camp to destroy the king, and you were asleep. In most armies, if you were a sentry asleep at your post, that is a capital offense. If the secret service agents who stood outside of the president's door fell asleep on duty, they would be fired.

David's point is that the army was chasing David because they thought David was disloyal to the king and deserved to die. David's point is that is

backward. The one who was disloyal to the king was Abner. He failed to protect him. The one who protected the king that night was David when Abishai wanted to kill him. To prove it right, David tells them to look for Saul's spear and water jar.

At this point, Abner was speechless. He didn't know what to say. Now we hear from someone else.

Saul recognized David's voice and said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" ... 1 Samuel 26:17 (ESV)

Notice Saul's words. Does he hate David? Absolutely not. If he doesn't hate David, why is he part of an expedition to kill David? We will find out in a moment.

...And David said, "It is my voice, my lord, O king." And he said, "Why does my lord pursue after his servant? For what have I done? What evil is on my hands?" 1 Samuel 26:17-18 (ESV)

David says to Saul, haven't we been through this before? Why are you chasing me, trying to kill me? What have I done? What evil is in my hands? Why are you going back on your word?

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.' 1 Samuel 26:19 (ESV)

Here we get a window into what was happening. David offered two reasons why Saul returned to pursuing David.

1. The Lord may have stirred up Saul against David. Sometimes, as part of God's judgment on people. He gives them impaired reasoning so they waste

their time on foolish and pointless pursuits in life. God sometimes does this as part of his judgment on people if they persist in sin.

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. Romans 1:28 (ESV)

God, in his judgment on people who persist in sin, will allow them to waste their lives in unprofitable things, like Saul chasing David, even when he knows there is no way God will allow him to kill David. David says, if the reason you were led astray into this foolish pursuit is that God is punishing you because of your sin, then get right with God. Go to the temple. God may accept an offering. Confess your sin and ask for forgiveness of your sin. When we get right with God, through Jesus he gives us a new mind so we can see the things we are doing in life that are foolish and pointless. There was another possibility that David put forward. I think this is what was happening.

2. If it is men that have stirred you up against me, may they be cursed by the Lord. I am reading between the lines a bit on this one, but I think this is what was happening. As we have followed Saul in this book, from the beginning we have seen Saul is a highly impressionable leader. He was always looking to other people for ideas. He rarely had his own idea or convictions. Saul knew from the cave that David was at peace with him, but it was the people around Saul that were stirring him up and putting thoughts in his head about David still being a threat to him and about the importance of hunting David down to kill him. Did you notice how Saul spoke affectionately to David as soon as he heard David's voice? Why did David begin by humiliating Abner and proving Abner wasn't loyal to Saul and protecting Saul? Who do you think stood to

lose everything if David became king? It was Abner. Saul had already publicly admitted that David deserved to be the next king. Who do you think was manipulating Saul in his weak leadership and running a shadow government? Abner. Notice what David says that Abner and his men have done. They had driven David out from before the Lord so he would have no share in the heritage of the Lord. They were trying to push David out of the country so they would be in charge and David wouldn't become king. Saul had surrounded himself with people who were using him. They were not truly loyal to him. His cabinet was running the nation more than he was running the nation. The Bible warns us about being careful who we put around us.

Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." 1 Corinthians 15:33 (ESV)

What an incredible lesson for us.

- We must be careful about the people we keep around us. Be very careful about the people we call our friends.

Be very careful about the people with whom we spend Friday and Saturday nights. I had some great Christian friends in my twenties but I had to cut some of them out of my life because I found myself being talked into poor choices when I was with them. For Saul, after the Engedi cave, he was headed in the right direction, but it was the people around him that turned him around and headed him in the wrong direction.

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." 1 Samuel 26:20 (ESV)

David says, “They may want me out of the country. They may want me to serve other Gods, but that is not me. I am faithful to my God. If I die, I only want it to be in the presence of God, not in another country.”

I am harmless to you. I am like a single flea. A single fruit fly. You send a massive army to hunt a little bird in the mountains. This is complete overkill, especially to someone so harmless to you.

Saul’s Superficial Repentance

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.” 1 Samuel 26:21 (ESV)

Saul was right. He made a big mistake. He listened to friends who were leading him the wrong way. This time he said it would be different. Instead of peacefully parting ways with David, he urged David to return with him. David would no longer need to be away from the house of worship. He could come back into Saul’s household and be part of the royal family. This looks great. Will David take him up on the offer?

And David answered and said, “Here is the spear, O king! Let one of the young men come over and take it. 1 Samuel 26:22 (ESV)

Why didn’t David renew his trust in Saul? Why didn’t David take up Saul’s offer and return with him? The problem was that David didn’t know if Saul’s repentance was genuine, and neither do we. David was willing to forgive Saul, but he was not willing to trust Saul. There is a lesson here for us.

- There is a difference between words of repentance and restoring trust.

Saul had repeatedly broken his word. Saul had repeatedly demonstrated that his repentance was not genuine. It was empty. It didn’t stick. Was this

confession of sin and Saul's repentance genuine? We don't know. David didn't know. When you break trust, it takes time to rebuild that trust. That is why David didn't run back to Saul, but instead, he wisely kept his distance. The same is true for us. When people repent of their sins against us, we must forgive them, but that doesn't always mean we immediately restore trust in them. Sometimes people have demonstrated they are not trustworthy. It will take time to earn trust back with people who have broken their word too many times.

While David doesn't trust Saul, there is one person he does trust. That was God. God will be faithful to him when Saul won't be trustworthy for him.

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. 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." 1 Samuel 26:23–24 (ESV)

David came to realize a principle. This principle of life was not just true for David, but it is also true for us.

- It is always right to do what is right. God always rewards us when we do the right thing, and then in faith, trust God to handle the results.

That means when we do the right thing, when we obey God's word, we may not see how it will work out we have faith in God and trust it will work out. He will reward us. The Bible tells us to have faith that it is always right to do what is right.

God will always reward us for doing the right thing. David did the right thing. This is the second time he could have killed the king but didn't kill the king. He trusts that God will reward me for that and rescue him from all his troubles, not Saul.

David can't put his future in Saul's hands, but he can put his future in God's hands. Just do what is right and, in faith, let God take care of the results.

Friends, this is such an important principle for life. It is easy to want to get even with people who hurt us. It is easy to say sarcastic comments to people who are mean to us.

This doesn't mean God will instantly reward us. David had to run from Saul for many years, but God eventually removed Saul from the throne and worked it out. If God doesn't reward us for doing the right thing in this life, he will for sure in the next life.

How does this chapter end?

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. 1 Samuel 26:25 (ESV)

Saul and David parted ways. They would never see one another again.

Applications

Along the way, I gave you a number of applications. Let me take a moment to remind us of some of the big ones.

1. It is always right to do what is right. God always rewards us when we do the right thing and place our faith in God to handle the results.
2. Be careful whom we have as friends. The friends we keep around us can lead us to good choices or sinful ones.
3. Letting God handle injustices in our life always gives a better result than forcing our solutions and getting revenge.



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