

1st Samuel 26

Verses 1 - 5

Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, “Is David not keeping himself hidden on the hill of Hachilah, *which is opposite Jeshimon?*” 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. 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, ⁴ David sent out spies, and he learned that Saul was definitely coming. 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.

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.

In chapter 24 Saul confessed that David was more righteous than him, meaning Saul was wrong for trying to kill David. But here again Saul is back to his same old ways. It seems that David was right not to put much faith in Saul's repentance.

It's true that we should forgive people for their sins against us but we should also use wisdom in any future encounters with them. If Bernie Madoff repented of his actions we should forgive him but would anyone in their right mind invest with him again?

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.

Abner has been the commander of Saul's army for 35 years but all we know about him is that he is Saul's uncle.

See 1 Samuel 14:50

⁵⁰ And the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam the daughter of Ahimaaz. And the name of the commander of his army was Abner the son of Ner, Saul's uncle.

Verses 6 - 12

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." 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. 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." 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?" 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. 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." 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.

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."

David had a group of thirty men who were the strongest and most capable men in Israel's army. Abishai became the commander of those men.

See 2 Samuel 23:18-19

¹⁸ Now Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief of the thirty. And he swung his spear against three hundred and killed *them*, and had a name as well as the three. ¹⁹ He was the most honored among the thirty, so he became their commander; however, he did not attain to *the reputation* of the three.

Abishai had a brother named Joab, and he became the leader of David's army.

See 1 Chronicles 11:6

⁶ Now David had said, "Whoever is first to kill a Jebusite shall be chief and commander." Joab the son of Zeruiah went up first, so he became chief.

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?”

Abishai wanted to kill Saul, but David did not allow it. Leaders are ordained of God so regardless of how wicked and tyrannical they may be they should not be murdered by his subjects

See Romans 13:1

Every person is to be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

² Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

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.

We already knew this had to be a miracle but the writer wanted to make it clear that something like this could not happen by chance.

Verses 13 - 16

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. 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?” 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! 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!”

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!

David knew that Abner's failure was due to a miracle so we know that David is really speaking to Saul.

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!"

David wanted to point out to Saul that Abner and his men deserved to die but he would not take any action against them. However, Saul has not given up trying to kill David, who had not done anything wrong?

When good people get treated poorly and bad people get treated well, something is wrong with the leadership.

Verses 17 - 20

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

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."

It was hypocritical for Saul to talk to David using words of endearment. Saul had given his wife Michal to another man; he had tried to kill him several times and was currently seeking his life.

At Engedi David addressed Saul as "My father"

See 1 Samuel 24:11

¹¹ So, my father, look! Indeed, look at the edge of your robe in my hand! For by *the fact* that I cut off the edge of your robe but did not kill you, know and understand that there is no evil or rebellion in my hands, and I have not sinned against you, though you are lying in wait for my life, to take it.

But here David used a title of respect not endearment.

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

David had asked this same question numerous times and gotten no reply.

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

If the problem between David and Saul was from the Lord then David could offer a sacrifice to make things right but because this is coming from the king and those who want to remain in his good graces David has become an outcast in his own country and cannot partake in the benefits of being an Israelite.

Verses 21 - 25

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

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.

Saul begins by saying he sinned but then says he made a very great mistake. A mistake is something that happens by chance and causes an unintended consequence. But choosing 3,000 of your best men and pursuing someone through difficult terrain in an effort to kill them is hardly a mistake.

It’s easy for people to say they’re sorry but true repentance means a change of mind.

Some people see a lot of similarity between the event in this chapter and the one in chapter 24. However there are a number of differences between the two encounters.

Chapters 24 & 26 are represented by numbers 1 & 2 respectively.

1. Saul went by chance into a cave where David and his men were
 2. Here David searches for Saul, and finds his camp
1. The first incident happened in the day time
 2. This one at night
1. In the first event, David cut off part of Saul's robe;
 2. Here they took Saul's spear and the jar of water that was beside him.