

“Courageous Humility”
1 Samuel 26
(Preached at Trinity, March 11, 2018)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapters 24, 25 & 26** all deal with the subject of vengeance and retribution. Will vengeance belong to David or to God? As I pointed out last time, God has much to say on the topic because in our fallen condition we feel we deserve revenge when we are harmed, and most people deny their guilt. These three chapters put the subject on display for us.
 - A. In **Chapter 24** Saul entered a cave to relieve himself, not knowing that David and his men were hiding in the shadows. David had opportunity to take the life of his enemy but refrained.
1 Samuel 24:6 NAU - "Far be it from me because of the LORD that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is the LORD'S anointed."
 - B. Then, in **Chapter 25** we again find David facing the possibility of taking personal vengeance upon an enemy. This time it involved the insult and slander of Nabal. David determined to avenge himself of Nabal's insults:
1 Samuel 25:22 NAU - "May God do so to the enemies of David, and more also, if by morning I leave *as much* as one male of any who belong to him."
It was only by the intervention of God through the wisdom of Abigail that David relented of his plan.
1 Samuel 25:34 NAU - "Nevertheless, as the LORD God of Israel lives, who has restrained me from harming you, unless you had come quickly to meet me, surely there would not have been left to Nabal until the morning light *as much* as one male."
2. Now, as we come to **Chapter 26**, we again find David in a position to take Saul's life, and again, we find David refraining.
1 Samuel 26:9 NAU - "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?"
3. After David spared Saul's life in **Chapter 24** Saul expressed sorrow over the wickedness of his actions.
1 Samuel 24:16-17 NAU - "Then Saul lifted up his voice and wept. ¹⁷ He said to David, "You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you."
 - A. One might hope that this was a genuine and lasting repentance. I expressed that genuine repentance is always accompanied by a change in behavior.

- B. As **Chapter 24** ended and we had hope that Saul's pursuit of David's life had ended. Now, as we come to **Chapter 26** we find that Saul's sorrow and repentance was just a momentary act of a carnal heart. Having heard from his favorite snitches, the Ziphites, Saul gathers 3000 of his best soldiers and resumes his pursuit of David.
- 1 Samuel 26:2 NAU** - "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."
4. As a skilled military leader, David had scouts spread throughout the region. They brought back word that Saul was once again in pursuit and was approaching the region David and his men were occupying. David learns that Saul and Abner, the commander of his army, were encamped nearby. David looks to two of his choice men, Ahimelech and Abishai and asks, "Who will go with me?" Without hesitation Abishai declares, "I will go!" Abishai is David's nephew, the son of his sister, Zeruah.
 5. David and Abishai make their way to Saul's camp. As the king, Saul slept in the center with Abner and his army surrounding him. Strategically, one could not imagine a more secure situation for Saul. He was surrounded with the best of his soldiers. For David to enter such a situation would surely be suicide.
 6. Once again, the narrator skillfully sets the scene before us and tension builds as we read it. What! David is only taking a single man into the camp of Saul? Is David really going to attempt gaining access to Saul in such a heavily fortified position? The story moves quickly and in **Verses 7-8** we find David and Abishai standing over the sleeping Saul. No way!! David is about to find himself surrounded by 3000 wide awake soldiers. That's from our perspective. The narrator tells us the whole story.
- 1 Samuel 26:12 NAU** - "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."
7. The scene is so similar to **Chapter 24** that some commentators insist that it is the same account that varied as it passed by word of mouth. There is no validity to this presumption. It is two separate accounts demonstrating David's forbearance and Saul's persistent wickedness.
 8. We can see much in the character of David in this passage.
 - A. We've already looked in **Chapter 24** at his refusal to take the life of Saul; his refusal to touch the one God had raised up as king. He follows the same policy in this chapter.
 - B. We've seen some inconsistency in David's theology. He refused to execute personal vengeance upon Saul, but was fully prepared to bring retribution upon Nabal and all in his household. He spared Saul because of his respect for Saul's position as king. But, David did not fully grasp God's universal prohibition against personal vengeance.

Deuteronomy 32:35 NAU - "Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, In due time their foot will slip; For the day of their calamity is near, And the impending things are hastening upon them."

- C. The author has also been careful to portray David as a man of deep humility.
1 Samuel 24:8 NAU - "Now afterward David arose and went out of the cave and called after Saul, saying, "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground and prostrated himself."
9. David learned humility early in life. His father Jesse had eight sons and two daughters. David was the youngest; the youngest and least in his father's house. So insignificant was David, he wasn't even invited to the feast when Samuel was sent to anoint one of Jesse's sons. David had little of which to boast.
10. When David revealed himself to Saul outside the cave it was not out of character for him to bow himself with his face to the ground. David knew humility.
11. The standard of this world has little regard for humility. Most see humility as weakness; an inability to stand up and demand your due. God sees humility quite differently. With humility comes true boldness.
12. Our Lord came in humility.
- A. He came in submission to the Father.
John 4:34 NAU - "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work."
- B. He washed the feet of His disciples
John 13:3-5 NAU - "*Jesus*, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, ⁴ got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. ⁵ Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded."
- C. At His crucifixion He remained silent
Isaiah 53:7 NAU - "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth."
- D. And yet, no one is as mighty as Christ. We can see a glimpse on the night of His arrest.
John 18:4-6 NAU - "So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" ⁵ They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said to them, "I am *He*." And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them. ⁶ So when He said to them, "I am *He*," they drew back and fell to the ground."
13. David understood humility, but he also understood bold courage. Humility and boldness are not incompatible. What I want us to see in **Chapter 26** is the humility of David alongside his great courage.
14. David sees that Saul's army has set up camp for the night. David observes the situation and weighs his options. Lesser men might have kept a safe distance. But David was a man of action, a man of courage—so he and Abishai make their way into the heart of Saul's camp. David and Abishai stand over the sleeping Saul, surrounded by 3000 soldiers. The narrator tells us that God has supernaturally put the soldiers into a deep slumber. But David does not know this!

1 Samuel 26:12 NAU - "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."

15. David, did not know what the narrator tells us, but David trusted God's superintending direction.

1 Samuel 26:10 NAU - "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."

16. This must be our life. We must walk in humility, in meekness and gentleness. But we must also go forth in boldness and courage.

Psalms 27:14 NAU - "Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD."

I. The Christian is a blend of courage and humility

A. We can see this in the New Testament in the life of the Apostle Paul

1. Paul knew there are times when it is best to stand with humility, gentleness and meekness. But there are also times that demand boldness.

2 Corinthians 10:1 NAU - "Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ-- I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!"

2. Paul was always ready to face his enemies head on with boldness and courage if necessary
3. Matthew Henry – "Religion tends to make men, not cowardly, but truly valiant. The righteous is bold as a lion. The true Christian is the true hero."¹ Paul was meek and gentle, yet when necessary he stood bold as a lion.
4. Paul courageously faced his enemies.
 - a. Paul never backed down. He never retreated. He never compromised the Gospel.
 - b. In the end Paul was executed for the sake of the Gospel of Christ

B. The Bible gives us countless examples of God's people standing courageously:

- Noah boldly built the ark for 120 years while he was mocked daily
 - Abraham boldly took 300 men and conquered four kings and their armies
 - Joshua fought valiantly, Caleb fought with courage.
 - Esther risked her life to defend her people
 - Jeremiah stood firm upon God's Word at great personal loss.
- The list goes on and on

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 38.

- II. The Christian is portrayed as a soldier fighting the battles of faith. As a Christian soldier we must manifest strength and courage.
- A. This has always been expected of God's people
1. Christianity is not for the faint of heart – We are commanded to count the cost. The Christian life is difficult!
 2. Unfortunately, many Christians today have been influenced by our hedonistic society. We lust for pleasure – the good life. Few are willing to be inconvenienced.
 3. Christianity has never been described in this manner
Throughout history men and women have suffered greatly for their faith. Thousands and thousands of Christians have died simply because of their faith in Christ.
 4. What a blessing to have a church full of valiant soldiers.
David asked, "Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?"
"Who will go with me?"
 - a. This has always been the prayer of God's leaders
Joshua: **Joshua 24:15 NAU** - "choose for yourselves today whom you will serve . . .but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."
 - b. Peter: **1 Peter 1:13 NAU** - "Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."
 - c. Paul's charge was always, "Get ready for battle!"
Ephesians 6:1 NAU - "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm"
- B. Discipleship demands that we behave like men – with strength, courage and boldness - This applies also to ladies as it applies to the Christian life
1 Corinthians 16:13 NAU - "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong."
1. Joab before the Assyrians:
2 Samuel 10:12 NAU - "Be strong, and let us show ourselves courageous for the sake of our people and for the cities of our God; and may the LORD do what is good in His sight."
KJV - 2 Samuel 10:12 – "Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the LORD do that which seemeth him good."
 2. William Barclay – "As a sentinel, be ever on the alert. When under attack, stand fast in the faith, and yield not an inch. In time of battle, play a hero's part. Like a well-equipped and well-trained soldier, be strong to fight for your King."²
 3. We must stand our ground. We must overcome temptation. We must stand in opposition to all that would bring dishonor to our Lord. We must be resolved maintaining our integrity.
We must do what we know to be right to the honor of our God.

² Barclay, William, *Letters to the Corinthians*, The Daily Study Bible, (Edinburgh: Saint Andrews Press, 1956), 565.

- D. Our strength is not our own
1. Such strength does not come naturally
 2. David knew this more than anyone. He knew his weakness. But he also knew the source of his strength.
Psalm 18:1-3 NAU - "A *Psalm* of David the servant of the LORD, who spoke to the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. And he said, "I love You, O LORD, my strength." ² The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. ³ I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, And I am saved from my enemies."
 3. David knew the risks, but he served a mighty God. David surrounded himself with other men who fought beside him with valor.

Conclusion:

1. May God grant us the grace of humility, but may it be accompanied with great courage. There will be times when we have to speak forcefully, with courage and with humility.
2. This is the model our Lord gave us. He boldly called out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees but humbly submitted to His captors.
3. May we be a people who boldly walk in unwavering holiness, not willing to compromise before men. And may we never forget the source of our courage. We must never cease to rest upon the sufficiency of our great God.
4. It should be noted that God did indeed deliver David.
1 Samuel 26:25 NAU - "So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place."
 David and Saul would never again see each other. Saul would go his way, and David would go his. We'll see where those two paths lead.